**Meeting Notes**

**Executive Oversight Committee**

**Bi-State Sage Grouse**

**May 2, 2019**

**Location:** USFWS Office 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234 Reno, Nevada 89502

**Time:** 11:00-14:00

**Present:** Steve Abele, Kary Schlick, Steve Nelson, Justin Barrett, Kris Boatner, Jon Raby, Casey Stemler, Raul Morales, Mary Grim, John Severson, Steve Nelson, Steve Abele, Shawn Espinosa, Anne Orlando, Amy Sturgill, Scott Gardner, Wendy Sugimura, Sheila Anderson, Arlene Kosic, Katrina Krause, Clarence Martin, Max Symons

1. **Species Status Report & Commitment Letters**
2. Species status report has been drafted and comments have been solicited from federal, state and tribal agencies for peer review
3. Steve is incorporating comments into next draft. The service will continue to accept comments until it is no longer logistically feasible
4. USFWS Listing decision timeline
5. May 17-Species status report submitted to Service
6. End of May Recommendation Team Meeting scheduled. The decision will be made by USFWS Regional Director
7. June 11-Comment period closes
8. June-Service will draft Federal Register notice
9. July 1-Listing decision is submitted to Washington
10. October 1-Listing decision published in the Federal Register

  d. The Service feels they have all of the necessary products and information

                to complete the species status report. Mary stressed the importance of

 the completing updated commitment letters to demonstrate willingness

 to fund future conservation effort

1. There was a discussion about proposed changes to the ESA Section 9 4d rule. Previously the ESA extended all take prohibition to all threatened species but exempted activities (through the 4d rule) if they are not in conflict with the conservation of the species. The proposed revised rule would require the Service to specifically identify the actions that are a threat to the conservation of the species.
2. What has changed since 2015? New stressors? Positive steps?
	1. Recent proposed changed to water allocation by LADWP is a new potential variable to viability of bi-state sage grouse in Long Valley
	2. Population trends and performance has changed slightly
	3. LADWP has joined the Bi-State Partnership and has been working with partners to identify science needs and towards assuring their continued commitment to incorporate conservation of bi-state sage grouse in land and water management decisions
	4. LADWP is beginning a hydrological modeling project that will entail drilling 40-3” diameter wells at 20 different locations in Long Valley. There was a brief discussion about how the drilling of these wells can be conducted in suitable conditions without impacting grouse during lek, nest, and brood-rearing seasons. Mono County has expressed concern to LADWP through a comment letter (April 30, 2019).
	5. NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant has provided substantial funding for conservation work on important private lands in the Bi-State area
	6. Carson BLM and HTNF have adopted new land use plan

Amendments providing regulatory assurances for the

 conservation of Bi-state sage grouse

* 1. Comprehensive commitment letters have been drafted

The 2012-2018 Bi-State Action Plan Accomplishment Report is in final round of drafts and will be completed in the next couple of weeks. The Bi-State Collaborative group has a proven track record of commitment and implementation

1. **Commitment Letters**
2. The Service requested completed and updated letters of commitment

 within 30 days (By May 30th would be best)

1. USGS-letter in progress. Complete soon.
2. CDFW-letter in progress. Complete end of May
3. LADWP-working with the Service to draft letter
4. **NDOW Vegetation Report**
	1. Final draft will be available soon
	2. This report utilizes a robust data set including 400 vegetation plots monitored 2011-present
	3. Looks at species richness, forb cover and conifer cover
	4. Analyzes general habitat quality, vegetation response to conifer treatment, meadow restoration and wildfire
5. **USGS Research Products**
6. Working on 3 products that will be incorporated into an Open File Report to be published within the next few months
7. Survival analysis related to Long Valley mesic resources, irrigated pastures and brood success
8. Analysis of sage-grouse response to management actions**.** This product incorporates the Integrated Population Model (IPM) with the Conservation Planning Tool (CPT) to understand how management actions influence vital rates and affect demographic trends. It willincrease the predictive power of the CPT and help prioritize future management actions with greatest ecological benefits for sage-grouse
9. Updated IPM**.** The latest model run will incorporate 2018 data

and contains a trigger warning analysis that can identify decoupling from other subpopulations or the population as a whole

1. **Lek Counts and Field Update**
2. Nevada Leks-initial counts are down 3% from last year
3. Rough Creek: 17 males compared to 45/50 last year. This lek didn’t peak until late April last year—peak may not have been realized yet this year
4. Sweetwater Flat: 2-25 males counted after years of no birds present
5. Wiley Ditch: 19 males, same as previous years
6. Desert Creek: 46 males down from 58
7. Desert Creek Pasture: 16 males
8. Mt. Grant leks: heavy snow; 0 males counted
9. Aurora: inaccessible from the ground, flight did not detect birds
10. Pine Nut: Aerial infrared survey of 41,000 ha. South Pine Nuts:12 females; small number of birds on the Buckskin leks
11. White Mtn NV: no birds

b. California Leks-late start of surveys due to snow. Long Valley saturation

             counts (BLM) close to complete-down 30% from last year. USGS counts at

 Parker Meadow, and Bodie.

1. Long Valley-peak April 17. 105 males counted. Birds present at 11 of 22 leks surveyed
2. Parker-consistent count of 7 males
3. Bodie counts will begin next week. USGS has conducted a couple

                        surveys and noted the following: Dry Lakes-46 males; Seven

                       Troughs-16 males, Racetrack-11 males

1. USGS Field Crew
2. Captures: Bodie Hills-27 birds. Long Valley-10 birds. White Mtn-Nevada-8 birds
3. Starting nest surveys
4. Translocated 7 hens from Bodie to Parker
5. Birds online: Bodie Hills-71, Parker Meadows-19, Long Valley-46, White Mtn. Nevada-22
6. Initiating raven work in Long Valley. Will include camera monitoring of nests and egg oiling
7. USGS provides monthly summaries. If you would like to receive

  updates contact John Severson at jpseverson@usgs.gov

* Note-John has accepted another job and his last day in Reno will be May 17th, we will look for alternate email address for contact information
1. **Accomplishment Reporting**
2. Draft reviewed by a subset of the TAC
3. Waiting on vegetation report from NDOW
4. Final draft to EOC by June 1
5. **Agency Updates**

 **Bishop BLM**- Access issues have made for a slow start for project

             implementation. Conducting lek counts. A vacancy will be flown soon for

             BLM biologist position.

 **LADWP**- Continuing to meet with Service and EOC to draft a commitment

 letter that meets Partnership standard and makes sense for DWP.

 **HTNF-** Collaborating with NDOW to acquire funding for priority conifer

 treatment work. Plans to conduct treatment maintenance in the

 sweetwater area. Detail position is still open for Monique Nelson’s Sage-

 grouse Coordinator positon. Working on renewal of Service First

 Agreement.

 **Carson BLM-**Completed February horse gather in the Pine Nuts PMU with

             plans to continue work in July.  Two technicians dedicated to Bi-State

 work this summer. Summer work includes habitat analysis, fence marking

 and rehabilitation efforts within the Lyons fire footprint.

 **USGS-**John Severson accepted a new USGS position in Anchorage Alaska

 **INYO-**Conducting White Mountain lek counts on Nevada segment while

             waiting for access into the California segment. Submitted a request with

             USGS to monitor cattle in the Deep Springs area to track herd

             management where we are monitoring sage-grouse.

**NEXT EOC Meeting TBD-A doodle poll will be sent out the week of May 13th.**