**Draft Meeting Notes**

**Executive Oversight Committee**

**Bi-State Sage-Grouse**

**July 2nd, 2019**

**Location:** Nevada Department of Wildlife State Office

 6980 Sierra Center Parkway, Reno NV

**Time:** 10:00-14:00

Present: Bill Dunkelberger, Max Symonds, Dave Martin, Tammy Randall-Parker, Steve Nelson, Shawn Espinosa, Justin Barrett, Steve Abele, Roy Dodson, Kris Boatner, Lee Ann Carranza, Scott Gardner, Katrina Krause, Katherine Miller, Arlene Kosic,,Tom Moore, Amy Sturgill

1. Intros and Co-Chairperson Comments by Bill Dunkelberger and Tony Wasley
2. The Tribal Natural Resource Committee will meet at the end of July. Sherri Rupart has resigned as director. A new TNRC director will be selected at the July meeting. The October TEK summit has been postponed until next spring. TEK funding originally slated for this fiscal year will need to be set aside to fund the rescheduled event. USFS’s Melissa Navis will attend the next EOC meeting and provide the group with an update.
3. Bill noted there are some future funding concerns for the USFS. The focus for the next funding cycle is fuels reduction and timber harvest with less of a focus on sage-grouse. Sustaining funding into the future may require some creative leveraging of existing funds.
4. Tony remarked on the impressive accomplishments and dedication of staff to effect on the ground conservation. He commended the group for their collaborative effort.
5. Approval of March and May Meeting Notes
6. New action item-John Severson was previously the contact for USGS monthly field report updates. Amy Sturgill will acquire contact information for the USGS staff member that will disseminate those reports in the future.
7. Service First Agreement
8. The Service First statute authorizes agencies within the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct shared or joint management activities to achieve mutually beneficial land and resource management goals. The three primary goals of Service First are to: (1) Improve customer service to the public; (2) Increase operational efficiencies among the agencies; and (3) Improve coordination and implementation of land and resource management activities across agency jurisdictional boundaries.
9. The existing Service First Agreement expired on June 6th. A new agreement has been drafted and signatures were collected.
10. USDA authority was only delegated to the USFS. There is interest in having authority given to NRCS as well considering they are an important partner.
11. The USGS will not sign this agreement as they have existing agreements in place to acquire funding
12. Kris Boatner will send the agreement to those not present for signatures.
13. Amy Sturgill will distribute the agreement to the rest of the group when all signatures have been acquired.
14. Commitment Letters
15. The USFWS stressed the importance of these commitments in the court of public opinion as they provide proof that the Partnership will maintain on ongoing commitment to sage-grouse conservation efforts.
16. Outstanding letters from the USGS and CDFW will be submitted soon.
17. LADWP’s commitment letter has been submitted. LADWP cannot make funding commitments but their letter demonstrates their willingness to maintain sage-grouse habitat on LADWP managed lands and to continue working with the Partnership to benefit Bi-State sage-grouse.
18. The USFWS will send LADWP’s signed letter to Amy Sturgill to include on the Bi-State website.
19. Listing Decision Update
20. The USFWS has completed the Species Status Report and it is in the recommendation team’s hands now. CDFW and NDOW participated in the process of briefing the recommendation team. Steve Abele estimates that they will make a decision soon. The Regional Director’s decision, which is usually well accepted, will be sent to Washington by the end of July.
21. The USFWS may still request a six-month extension if more time is deemed necessary. If this extension is utilized the opening of an additional comment period is required.
22. If listing of the Bi-State DPS is found warranted and the decision becomes permanent, the Action Plan will be updated and morph in to a recovery plan. Together the EOC and TAC would form a Recovery Implementation Team. Downlisting criteria would be developed and included in the Plan.
23. If the Service proceeds with a final listing rule, it is unclear at this point if a critical habitat rule will publish concurrently or at a subsequent date.
24. The Service does not have any additional information or support needs from outside agencies at this point. During the briefing there seemed to be little concern around regulatory mechanisms and funding commitments. Concerns were focused on population analysis findings and accomplishment implementation. The USGS’s analyses attempts to address the former while the Accomplishment Report will help address the latter. There was discussion of how to track things that don’t happen on the landscape as a result of regulatory mechanisms. Bill Dunkelberger will provide the Service with examples.
25. The USGS is finalizing a very comprehensive analysis to include in the listing decision packet. It will be available soon as an Open File Report and includes the following information:
26. Population abundances that date back to 1995, given IPM predictions adjusted for sightability, visitation, sex ratios, and unknown leks
27. Trends in abundance across multiple time periods, after accounting for population cycling as a result of climatic conditions
28. Early warning system that detects leks declining and decoupling from patterns driven by climatic conditions and leks that signaled in 2018
29. Maps of habitat for each season (spring, summer/fall, and winter) and reproductive life-stage (nesting, brood-rearing) based on selection patterns
30. Updates space use and abundance layer and calculation of occupancy across seasonal habitats
31. An analysis of selection for irrigated pastures and wet meadows using NDVI (greenness index) with implications for water delivery (focus is on Long Valley)
32. The USGS compared the Bi-State population growth rate to the rest of the range. Lambda for the Bi-State is hovering around 1.0 while decreases up to 4-5% are seen across the rest of the range. This suggests a decoupling of the Bi-State DPS from the rest of the Great Basin. This could be due to climatic factors— fire and invasive species have more of an impact in the Great Basin compared to the Bi-State or this could be a sign that Bi-State conservation efforts are having a positive impact.
33. The new IPM run suggests that that overall abundance has increased over time but has migrated—meaning there seem to be more birds but they are concentrated in strongholds like the Bodie Hills and smaller populations may be decreasing. Steve Abele believes this signals range erosion due to climate (drought) and fire. Bodie has more resistance and is more resilient to these factors than other PMUs in the Bi-State. The population growth rates in Bodie utilize a robust dataset are more statistically meaningful while the smaller populations are less significant due to the fact that populations are small and data is sparse.
34. Projections for smaller populations that are less resistant and less resilient are concerning but could be propped up with increased demographic data collection. The White Mountains is a good example, relatively little data exists due to difficulties accessing this PMU during much of the year. Model runs show this population is performing poorly but results are based on very little data and may be more resistant that statistics indicate.
35. 2012-2018 Accomplishment Report Review
36. The group reviewed the report. Suggestions from the group include the following:
37. Provide examples of Plan regulations that benefit sage-grouse and their habitats.
38. Make corrections to the funding graph.
39. Add bullet to conservation timeline depicting what % of work has been completed since the last not warranted decision in 2015 to show conservation commitment despite listing decision.
40. Highlight the TEK summit in the collaborative conservation section.
41. Add NDOWs vegetation analysis report as an appendix.
42. EOC comments will be accepted through Friday July 12th. Please submit comments to bistatesagegrouse@gmail.com.
43. Agency Updates
44. USFWS-Lee Ann Carranza is acting field supervisor through next week. Brad Potter will take over those duties through September 18th. The permanent supervisor position should be filled by the time the detail closes. Dan Hottle’s public affairs position was filled by Joanna Gilkeson. She comes from the Carlsbad office and will start July 28th.
45. H-T-Susan Ellsworth moved to Milwaukee, acting behind her is Kendall Young. The Carson District Ranger position will be filled soon. NEPA work has slowed in Monique’s absence, however, current projects under contract include: 1700 acres of conifer treatment in the Sweetwater area, 1500 acres in Rough Creek, 500 acres in western Rough Creek and 1000 acres at Monitor Pass. The H-T is actively planning four new projects and may add one more.
46. NDOW-An interim committee is being established to address fire and invasives. Western governor’s association has formed a group as well. Awareness is growing. Regionally and nationally the issues to the sagebrush ecosystems are being highlighted which may help up leverage funding.
47. Inyo- Inyo forest Plan final ROD will be signed in November. Sage-grouse came up in the comment period. Objectors were Southern California Edison (SCE), Western Watersheds Project and friends groups. They worked together to draft language for plan which may lead to the formation of a mitigation fund in lieu of putting up perch deterrents. They were able to include collaborative language in the Plan. SCE has reached out to National Forest Foundation to manage funds or opportunities that arise. The Inyo is working on a categorical exclusion for forest-wide prescribed burns to utilize fire on the landscape. All three district ranger positions are filled. Interviews tor Leanne Murphy’s open position are occurring now.
48. LADWP-Crowley lake fire regulations are in place for the 4th of July holiday to decrease fire threats. Peak runoff is expected this weekend. A Long Valley field tour is scheduled for July 17th.
49. Bishop BLM-Sage-grouse funding remains solidly in place. The vacant wildlife biologist position will be filled soon. Conifer work in the Bodie Hills will commence in late fall/early winter. A 1500 acre project in Sagehen is slated to start. Future land acquisitions are slated to be completed.

**Next Meeting-Tuesday October 15th 10:00AM-2:00PM. This meeting will be held in the southern part of the Bi-State area.**