

North Vale – Sage-grouse Local Implementation Team

Meeting Minutes – 27 January 2020

Participants: Julie Unfried (Pheasants Forever - LIT Coordinator), Lee Foster (ODFW), Scott Torland (ODFW), Curtis Martin (private landowner), Mike Schmeiske (DSL), Carter Crouch (Burns Paiute Tribe), Brandon Palmer (Burns Paiute Tribe), Derek Burkhardt (Landowner), Dave Stiefvater (Pheasants Forever), Eric Evans (Malheur County), Linda Rowe (Malheur SWCD), Don Hodge (Malheur County), Pat Ryan (BLM), Megan McGuire (BLM), Jackie Cupples (USFWS), Kelley Weidman (Malheur Watershed Council), Dave Bunker (Branch Enterprises), Sergio Arispe (OSU Extension), Kathy and Les Bertalotto (Ten Mile Ranch), John Blake (Mud Flat Ranch), *others?*

Meeting Objectives,

- Identify local interests
- Answer questions about LIT and why partners might want to get involved

Re-cap from last meeting in October

- Julie provided review of the last LIT meeting in October and an overview of the actions taken since then. Most actions focused on generating interest/awareness about the LIT among private landowners and livestock producers. In order to improve attendance, meetings may switch to Vale.
- Based on information provided by community members, the LIT will start out acting as a forum to improve communication between organizations, interest groups, landowners, and all other partners involved with the LIT.
- Julie provided a status update for the Baker and Prineville LITs as examples for how the Vale teams could progress in the future. In addition to coordinating the Vale LIT, Julie is also the coordinator for the Prineville LIT. That group is moving at a faster pace, primarily because members of the group have a history of working together and more members were already familiar with the LIT.

Discussion: what additional questions do folks have about the LIT and how can the LIT help norther Malheur County?

After explaining the success of the Baker LIT, some members of the group asked about Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funding (OWEB) – state lottery dollars. The Baker LIT received an OWEB grant for \$6 million (the money is to be spent over the course of 6 years). OWEB funding is highly competitive but could be an option for the Vale LIT to pursue. The Vale LIT should also consider additional funding sources.

Sergio

- Look to other existing collaborative groups for guidance, such as the 2 local working groups in Idaho. What are the challenges they've face and what tools have they utilized to overcome those challenges? Both region-wide and on individual ranches.
- We need to develop a central place where folks can refer to for information across organizations. There are lots of resources, programs, opportunities available to the community that are underutilized because people don't always know where to look – the LIT would be a great resource to house all pertinent information about programs and opportunities all partners have to offer (NRCS, SWCD, BLM, ODFW, etc.) – i.e., LIT as information "hub".

Curtis

- Need to get the message across to private landowners that the LIT is **non-regulatory**. Recommendations identified by the LIT cannot be enforced; any actions implemented as a result of LIT recommendations will be done **voluntarily**.
- The LIT should be a locally driven collaborative effort. Word-of-mouth is key to get landowner participation.
- The LIT needs to be locally driven and to have grass roots participation from local ranchers to be successful.

- Consider hosting a dinner as enticement to get ranchers in the room.
- Meetings in Vale or Borgan might result in more private landowner involvement.
- Consider the language used when trying to reach community members – rather than using terms that place blame, such as *restoration*, use *enhancement*. Don't lay blame; focus on moving forward.

Julie scheduled to speak at Malheur Cattlemen's Association Dinner on February 8th to spread the word about LITs to landowners.

The group discussed developing a charter. Trust and buy-in from landowners are necessary before we can develop a charter. Curtis noted that food/entertainment is a good start to build trust. Additionally, we should look to the RFPAs as an example. A lot of mistrust and controversy to start, now a great program but it takes time / word-of-mouth / follow through / success stories. No magic wand. The LIT needs a non-threatening / non-regulatory message. Dave Bunker also noted that the LIT needs to emphasize landscape-scale priorities.

Kathy noted that cattle grazing and sage-grouse are compatible.

Dave Stiefvader suggested that the LIT need to develop a list of existing resources and identify potential funding sources. He told the group about ODFW's Access and Habitat program, for which he currently serves on the board. Additionally, Sergio recommended conducting focus groups – meet with each of the representative groups that make up LIT membership. Focus groups will help us understand what the needs, interests, challenges are among each partner. From those meetings, develop a reference sheet to distribute to the entire LIT – a breakdown of each partner's needs, challenges, interests, etc. that LIT can build from.

John agreed the LIT should outline project needs. He also reminded the group about the Sage Grouse Initiative and suggested we try and find a way to get another SGI employee back in the area.

Les asked why sage-grouse hunting still legal. Don explained that Data collected through hunter-harvest results allow for proactive management by ODFW. Harvest rate in Oregon is set well below the allowable threshold. Furthermore, raven predation is a concern - education is needed regarding predators.

Megan told the group the message the LIT should project should not just be about sage-grouse but about the health of the land. Additionally, the LIT should be opportunistic and look for early, small successes – for example, areas where NEPA has been completed – juniper treatments, shrub plantings, recent fires that still need rehab, etc. It will be hard for the LIT to tease apart treatment success with population dynamics but the goal of the LIT should be to figure that out; furthermore, the LIT should be able to measure treatment effectiveness.

Sergio brought up research needs – local drive required to identify research needs, which may also help procure funds.

Action Items

JULIE – begin coordinating and conducting individual focus groups with each partner group (landowners, BLM, NRCS, conservation groups, etc.). Start inventory of interests, needs, etc. that can be distributed to entire LIT to use a framework to begin developing the LIT.

JULIE – attend Jordan Valley RFPA meeting. Talk to Marvin Vetter with ODF to try and get on RFPA Summit agenda this spring

JULIE – contact BLM. Find out what opportunities exist for short-term project implementation that LIT could assist with?

JULIE – research funding opportunities to host and LIT dinner (sponsorship options). **ALL** – contact Julie with any ideas and/or sponsorship opportunities.

Attached Documents

- Charter developed by the Prineville LIT – North Vale team can use as an example if/when the group decides a charter is necessary to LIT development

- Flip chart with ideas identified during the meeting to develop the LIT (ideas on the flip chart are also reflected in the meeting minutes).

Resource Hub

Hosted Dinner

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LIT Non-Regulatory

Local in Put

Resource Funding Ailbity

Don't Lay Blame - Move Forward

Focus Groups

Inventory Needs

- Education Fire Protection
- R FPA - Coordination
- Research Needs
- Opportunistic Projects