

Prineville Local Implementation Team Meeting September 5, 2019

Participants

Julie Unfried (Pheasants Forever), Lee Foster (ODFW), Chuck Gates (Joshua Foundation), Stu Garrett (East Cascades Audubon Society (ECAS)), Jade Cooper (ZX Ranch), Greg Jackle (ODFW), Mike Schmeiske (DSL), Randy Weist (DSL), Pat Green (ECAS), Tom Lawler (ECAS), Kyle Hensley (BLM), Emily Weidner (USFWS), Corey Heath (ODFW), Brock McCormack (Deschutes National Forest – USFS), Lauri Turner (Deschutes National Forest – USFS), Jeremy Austin (Oregon Natural Desert Association), Angela Sitz (USFWS), Lisa Deitchler (Hampton Rural Fire Protection Association (RFPA)), Bill Armstrong (Hampton RFPA), Jeff Kitchens (BLM), Teresa Sue (BLM), Tim Deboodt (Crook County), Andy Gallagher (Crook SWCD), Chris Mundy (NRCS), Robbie Piehl (Ochoco National Forest – USFS), Nicole Mardell (Deschutes County), Larry Ashton (BLM), Carol Hearne (BLM), Stephanie McKinny (BLM), Nathan Hovekamp (Central Oregon LandWatch), Jim Greer (ECAS), Monica Tomosy (ECAS), Cari Taylor (BLM), Dennis Teitzel (BLM), *others?*

Meeting Objectives

- Introduction to LITs – history and purpose
- Present examples of existing, successful collaboratives
- Begin discussion about group structure

Review of what’s happened since we last meeting

Julie Unfried, Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Team (LIT) Coordinator, reviewed notes from previous meeting. Since the last meeting in July 2017, ODFW determined they did not have the staff capacity to continue facilitating effective LITs. In April 2019, Julie was hired through a partnership between ODFW, BLM, Intermountain West Joint Venture, and Pheasants Forever to facilitate Vale and Prineville LIT meetings and help each team identify areas for collaboration that align with action items identified in the Sage-Grouse State Action Plan (Action Plan – appended).

The Purpose of LITs was identified – *LITs are named in the 2015 Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan (Action Plan) as the primary catalyst for the implementation of the Action Plan at the local level. Furthermore, LITs should serve to identify priority areas for habitat conservation within their respective areas of concern, and promote coordinated actions, across jurisdictional boundaries to address threats to sage-grouse habitat and populations within those priority areas.*

Lee Foster - Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Sage-Grouse Conservation Coordinator

Statewide status of sage-grouse - Presentation

24.9% decline from 2018. Current estimate is 13,827 (53% below 2003 baseline).

Prineville District Population Estimate – 19.2% decline from 2018 (1404 individuals). Two areas, Brothers and Paulina. Metric used does not account for movement of leks. Based primarily on ground surveys. Density areas depicted on slide.

- Paulina Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) – 18.7% decline, 16.7 males/active lek
- Brothers PAC – 16.8% decline, 8.9 males/active lek. Major decline beginning in 2011, very little population growth.

For context, Vale District was down 16%, Burns District down 33%, Lakeview District down 35% and Baker Resource Area up 25%. Surveys may have been affected by weather due to late winter and studies

in CO supports weather impacts on sage grouse showing up in leks. Flight surveys were difficult to detect birds because of snow, and they'll need to redo the flights.

ODFW Raven Surveys – Presentation

Survey in Brothers PAC showed detections are below threshold to determine impacts to population. Three ravens per sq. km. Paulina/12-mile Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) had higher rates of raven detections. Changed survey design in 2019 – data has not been analyzed yet. Does juniper encroachment affect raven presence? Unknown, no studies known to be conducted for correlation.

Stephanie McKinney – BLM Prineville District Wildlife Biologist

Brothers PAC Hard Trigger - Presentation

Causal Factors Analysis conducted to identify probable causes of population decline. Not a decision document or NEPA.

- Monitoring – West Nile Virus, raven surveys, lek surveys
- Traf X vehicle counters
- Moffit Fence enclosure removed
- Millican and Williamson Creek Allotment permit renewal
- 47 guzzlers maintained 2017, 46 in 2018, 39 in 2019

Additional BLM Projects

- 2018 Playa Restoration Project – Filled in two dugouts in 2018, seeded, harrowed, and built fence with flight diverters. Completed to create brood rearing habitat by increasing forb production.
- 197 AIM plots completed since 2016, 36 in Brothers/N. Wagontire, 30 in 12 mile/Paulina
- High Desert Shrub Steppe DNA – Juniper encroachment removal. Cut and pile burn. 17,341 acres cut in Brother's area. 78,244 acres cut in Paulina.
- Prineville BLM is implementing Appendix J of ARMPA
- 19 miles of fence markers and have 31 more miles of markers to put up.

Emily Weidner – US Fish and Wildlife Biologist

WNv Study - Presentation

West Nile project (started in 2017) collaborative with multiple agencies and partners. Deployed mosquito traps to determine if West Nile virus is present in area, no detection of virus, but sample is small. Deployed more traps the following year at guzzlers along with trail cameras. Trapped 700 mosquitos, no detection. Grouse were detected by trail cameras at multiple sites. Baker is trapping this year, tested positive in Keating Valley, but none in uplands.

Partner Updates

NRCS – juniper removals projects completed in low density areas and now moving into higher density areas. BLM cuts are tying in nicely with NRCS' work.

Deschutes National Forest - USFS

- Since 2016, have been installing escape ramps on water holdings.
- Conducting recreation monitoring to collect baseline data of use in sage grouse areas.
- Installed fence markers on high collision probability fences.
- Ongoing Travel Management program – adding trail signage and treatment of weeds.

Department of State Lands – installed fence markers and continuing juniper cuts in areas BLM is not treating.

Other??

Partner Discussion – the group commented that a lot of work has already been done but currently, there is no way to track progress across jurisdictions. LIT will need to compile a comprehensive data set of projects and available resources to help the group formulate LIT priorities.

Introduce LIT Charter Adapted from Wyoming LWG - Presentation

Draft distributed for review and discussion. Would like to have a finalized charter by the end of the third meeting.

Purpose of the Charter - A group charter defines the protocols of the collaborative process and gives the group a framework to follow. It is a written outline of the process and includes information about what the group intends to accomplish and how. The charter gives the group a framework in which to meet; discuss problems and solutions; and make decisions. It is an agreement between the members of the group, and as such it acts to bind the group together in a common language and working union.

Julie outlined the utility of implementing a charter and explained the variety of ways a charter can be modified to fit a collaborative effort.

Introduce LIT Charter Adapted from Wyoming LWG – Discussion

Concerns regarding the word “binding” were addressed. Julie and Lee agreed that word should not be included in the LIT Charter given the non-regulatory nature of the collaborative.

A discussion ensued over who all will attend LIT meetings. The group asked if we plan to limit member participation at LIT meetings. Currently, because the LITs are non-regulatory and do not have funding allocations, the LIT meetings will be open to everyone who is interested in attending. However, the group thought an effective way to develop the LIT and begin setting and meeting goals will be to establish a sub or steering-committee, which would consist of an elected set of representatives from each of the interest groups. The committee would be responsible for developing meeting agendas and guiding the direction of the LIT. The group suggested the committee in an effort to streamline the decision-making process. Group structure and function will be discussed in further detail at the next meeting on November 13, 2019

Subsequently, it was noted that very few landowners were present at the meeting. Julie acknowledged this and asked that members help her get in touch with other landowners. She will also provide the group with the contact list she currently uses and asked the group to provide feedback to ensure the list is comprehensive and representative of the community.

Participants asked if the group should expect to have funding allocations to meet the goals outlined by the LIT. One of the primary goals for establishing LITs is to secure funding to carry out the recommendations outlined by the LITs. The LITs will develop a strategic/collaborative plan and use that as competitive leverage to secure grant funding and other financial opportunities.

LIT ground rules – Discussion

The group decided not to review the ground rules at this time as many of them are irrelevant to the group structure. Participants were asked to review the ground rules prior to the next meeting, at which time they will be modified and finalized.

Examples of successful collaborations – Presentations

Julie and Lee each gave presentations about existing successful collaborative efforts focused on improving conditions for sage-grouse populations and their habitat. The intent of the presentations was to give the participants ideas and tools to begin developing a similar plan, customized to address the local interests and issues.

Examples of successful collaborations – Discussion

We began to discuss how these plans could be modified to suit the Prineville LIT. Discussion included,

- Developing a method to ground truth projects to ensure the goals of the LIT plan are met
- How we can compile information and data regarding planned, on-going, and completed projects across jurisdictions, while maintaining privacy laws, simultaneously allowing the LITs to make the most efficient/effective project recommendations?
- The group discussed if a strategic plan would be necessary and decided a written plan with clearly stated goals and objectives would be the most effective method to procure funding. However, developing a plan should be somewhat streamlined given the existing resources available to the LIT.

Action Items Prior to the Next Meeting – 13 November 2019

- All – review charter and ground rules. Come to next meeting ready to modify both documents.
- Julie, all – Julie will share with the group, the contact list she has. All, please provide Julie feedback and contact information for any missing participants.
- Julie – send links to WY Local Working Group website and Baker Threats Reduction Plan
- Julie – send Brothers Final CFA (2017) to group

Preliminary Meeting Topics for November Meeting

Topics outlined as discussed in the September meeting.

- Begin to develop a charter based on example provided; finalize the ground rules.
- Discuss geographic scope.
- Discuss group structure and options to establish a steering committee to streamline the LIT planning process.
- Provide the group with information about the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

Other Updates

Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund – potential opportunity to procure funding for LIT identified projects. If funding becomes available, would need to be spent by 2021.

June 2020 – Sage and Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse Workshop. Information sharing opportunity to learn about current science and ongoing management of grouse and their habitats.