

South Vale – Sage-grouse Local Implementation Team

Meeting Minutes – 31 January 2020

Participants: Julie Unfried (Pheasants Forever - LIT Coordinator), Lee Foster (ODFW), Josh McKenzie (producer), Clint Filmore (Rancher), Jeremy Austin (ONDA), Jared Bunker (Branch Enterprises), Jackie Cupples (USFWS), Jerry Hoagland (Owyhee County Local Sage-grouse Working Group), Bob Skinner (PLC Rancher), Eric Morrison (JVCWMA), Pat Ryan (BLM), Megan McGuire (BLM), Lynn Larsen (NRCS), Fred Eiguren (producer), Mike Greeley (producer), Philip Milburn (ODFW), *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.
- 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.

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

Mike noted that the LIT can act as a platform to address concerns across the landscape and that the LIT should work collaboratively to help to keep sage-grouse off the Endangered Species List.

The group discussed predation to sage-grouse, particularly regarding raven predation. Several members noted that raven predation is a primary threat facing sage-grouse populations. The group discussed the need to take immediate actions including lethal and non-lethal measure.

Bob

- Fear of ESA listing for sage-grouse.
- Raven predation is a primary issue that needs to be addressed. Historically, 1080 was used to kill ravens, which is what kept populations in check – we're not going back to that but need to figure out another way to manage ravens. Look at the Nevada raven control program.
- Habitat conditions are better now than ever before.
- Need to manage food subsidies to ravens (e.g., deer, cows, rodents).

Jeremy

- Need to understand and address the full suite of threats toward sage-grouse habitat and populations.
- Need to understand more about raven ecology and non-lethal alternatives to manage ravens.

The group decided it would be beneficial to invite the OSU research crew from the Baker area to come present on their data and discuss with the group what options the LIT should consider with regard to raven management across the area.

Many landowners agreed the primary threats facing sage-grouse populations and their habitat include predators (particularly ravens), largescale wildfires, West Nile virus, access and tourism, and limited water on the landscape.

The group agreed that action needs to start happening. Additionally, to generate greater buy-in, particularly with private livestock producers, the LIT needs to showcase at least small successes first. The group discussed the best strategy to begin achieving successes. Members agreed the LIT should develop short and long-term goals – the strategy could involve taking a phased approach to address threats: look at the resources we already have ready to go and begin implementing actions for those projects while strategizing to address larger projects in the future. Pat noted that the NEPA process can take up to 3 years but that established partnerships can be instrumental in getting NEPA approved.

The group discussed coordination around largescale wild fire response, rehabilitation, and strategies to make the landscape more resilient and resistant prior to fire events. Pat noted that BLM is limited on funding available through their Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation program. It was also noted that the LIT should work to identify what resources each organization and member of the LIT can bring to the collaborative process to streamline communication and project implementation across the landscape and across jurisdictions; once that information is collected, the LIT will be able to identify what else is needed (e.g., funding, resources, capacity) to fill in the gaps across the landscape.

Action Items

JULIE – Coordinate with OSU research crew to come speak at next LIT meeting about raven ecology and real-world actions LIT should consider moving forward.

JULIE – Coordinate with BLM to establish strategy to identify existing NEPA and opportunities for “low-hanging fruit” project opportunities for LIT.

JULIE – Acquire raven research report from Lindsey Ryan (OSU) to distribute to LIT members.

Attached Documents

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

Communications

1) Share Concerns

- ESA
- Fire → Fine Fuel Loads
→ Grazing
- Water — Livestock + Wildlife
- Public Use
 - Tourism
- Habitat Protection Rules
 - Affect Livelihood
- Predation - Ravens
 - \$ For Raven Control
 - OSU Research Update

2) Share Actions

→ Increase LIT Support

3) State of Science Update
Re: Predator Control (Raven)

4) Immediate vs. Long
Actions Term

5) Effective Rehab

6) Disease - WNU
- Mosquito Control

7) Realistic Expectations

Coordination

→
Cross Border Post Fire Rehab
\$ For Private & Public Land

Obstacles - Can LIT Help

BLM - \$ Priority Across Range
Scale Issues

NRCS - ~~BLM~~

Private - What Resources are
Avail? ↓ Missed Opps

Fire Contingency \$ or Seed

Fire Rehab Cont

Rehab Capacity

Pre Plan & Pre Position

Barriers or Opps For Rehab
~~Time A~~ Years After Dist / Fire

- ~~Rest on~~
Restriction on Cont Burn
- Tier to Existing NEPA
 - New NEPA takes Time / Work load
- Funding Cycles
- Fund 3rd Party to Do Restoration
 - Stabilize Funding Cycles
 - Pool Funds

Water ~~is~~ Development

- 1) NEPA on Public - New is Difficult
- 2) Assoc Benefits
 - Improved Livestock Dist
 - Range Health