

Kristi, I am not sure what to report on what came from our working group that was looking at the Sage Grouse Stuff.

We had two meetings.

The first on Monday night 6:00 - 7:00 pm.

A lot of Monday's discussion revolved around what was being protected. The group came up with 3 basic protections:

- 1) The lek itself
- 2) The nesting habitat around the leks
- 3) The crucial winter range.

Tim Novotny did a great job of rewriting the alternatives in the July 14 document to include those four protection categories so it was easier to see what the goal of each protection type was.

There was a lot of discussion of the science of sage grouse, unfortunately at this point there is still a lot of randomness in anyone's science. About the only thing that was agreed upon was the newest data for Moffat County showing that within 2 miles of the lek approximately 45% of birds nest and within 4 miles of the lek, about 75% of birds nest.

There was a lot of discussion around the local Sage Grouse working group, however, the plan is not finished, they have left out some very controversial decisions to date, especially concerning disturbance around the leks (same issue we are dealing with!). I have a paper with Brad Petch's thoughts on them (paper). I think that Tim has it on email. Brad put his thoughts about the Monday's meeting and about what the science is to date.

We had a second meeting on Friday, July 15 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon.

About the half the group was able to make it, and no one from out of town was able to attend the whole meeting. Renee Taylor was able to listen in to the first 45 minutes.

Tim went through the major changes to the Sage Grouse sections. He had re-written the whole thing and put a lot of our thoughts from Monday's meetings into the new document. He also briefed us on the BLM's new thinking regarding Claire's point on using the least restrictive stipulations for oil and gas. The new document reflected a lot of new thinking around the least restrictive stipulations. (a bit disappointing for most in that in some cases even the Conservation alternative provided little protection.)

We talked a lot about several different ideas but really could not get everyone in agreement on one approach to take for either outcome based approach or adaptive management approach.

The only thing the group could agree on together is that in Alternative D, under lek and habitat management, the group would like to see the BLM analyze a NSO radius of 1 mile from the lek. Tim says there is no science suggesting the one mile radius, however, the new science suggests that the 1/4 mile NSO around lek sites is probably not enough. No science exists to say whether 1/2 mile, 3/4 miles or 1 mile would make any difference. Tim says he will talk the guys at the state level and see if they can come up with the science to allow the BLM to increase the 1/4 NSO to something more for analysis purposes.

The new alternatives from the June 14 document still need a lot of flushing out, however, the group was able to give Tim a lot of input. Some of what we wanted to accomplish, such as tackling appendix X, or trying to tie the BLM/local sage grouse working plans into the document did not get done due to the failure of both groups to have a product at this time.

While the group would have liked to have given the BLM more direction on this, I am not sure they could have taken it, with the concern of the least restrictive stipulations and the lack of current science. One of the things Tim is still working on is the details of the stipulations. A lot of those used in the local sage grouse plan came from the BLM originally. There is still a concern about what should be put in as a stipulation.

The other thing I am not sure we resolved is whether we could put a changing document into the RMP, such as putting an appendix X stipulation list together for the analysis and then having a working document that BLM updates every couple of years.

That is all I have to offer on our three hours of meetings.

NWCOS Sage Grouse Subcommittee

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Suzanne Jones

Jane Yazzi ??

Luke Schafer

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Jeff Comstock

Brad Petch

Tim Novotny

Rick Hammel

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