

Pinedale Anticline Working Group

Minutes

Pinedale Field Office, Pinedale

1625 West Pine

Rendezvous Conf. Room

1:00 PM, Thursday, July 24, 2008

In Attendance

PAWG Members - Chris Corlis, Scott Smith, Robin Smith, Nylla Kunard, Cathy Purves, Paul Hagenstein

BLM – Chuck Otto, Dave Crowley, Kellie Roadifer

PAWG Task Group Members – Therese Hartman, Pete Guernsey

Public – Susan Kramer, Cally McKee, Debbie Stanberry

Task Group Updates

Wildlife –

The wildlife task group (W.L.T.G) submitted their sage-grouse recommendations at the last PAWG meeting and will discuss those recommendations during today's meeting. They have compiled big game recommendations (supplied as a handout to all present) and ask that the PAWG members review those recommendations so that they can be discussed at the next PAWG meeting. The next W.L.T.G meeting will be held on the 21st of August. Therese Hartman said that the W.L.T.G is changing its focus from species specific to a broader habitat based focus.

The 11 W.L.T.G. sage-grouse recommendations are:

- 1) Continue to monitor and collect data. Previous monitoring and data collection is summarized in the ERG report. The ERG report looks at all data collected and analyzed the adequacy of stips, COAs, and other protective measures. It was a PAWG recommendation which BLM approved and implemented. Therese will distribute copies to all PAWG members or put links to the document on the website.
- 2) Use data collected to identify and map core grouse habitat on the PAPA and monitor those areas to verify grouse use and confirm return-use. Through this mapping and monitoring combined with continued data collection, we can learn about cause and effect and find out what is happening inside and outside of core habitat
- 3) Complete lek perimeter mapping for all leks on PAPA. According to Scott Smith of WG&F, this was completed this spring.
- 4) Continue active participation and encourage completion of the PAPA habitat inventory project. Robin Smith qualified this recommendation by saying that the key is BLM participation and that there has been no BLM attendance at recent meetings. Chuck Otto ensured more BLM participation in the future. Pete Guernsey provided a status update on the habitat inventory project. They are currently using existing data at WYGISC to map upland data habitat which will

dovetail with the state survey, thus completing the upland map. Next year they will conduct on-the-ground verification of the data. Upland habitat is the primary concern because lowlands are often private property and we cannot utilize or protect it. The purpose of the study is to find the best sites for mitigation and to define the ecological site description or parameters of healthy grouse habitat. The inventory project will wrap-up by late 2009 or early 2010

5) Establish alternate lek buffers outside of proposed high development areas: 0.6 miles “no surface occupancy” around lek perimeters and within core habitat (once core habitat has been defined) and 4.0 mile breeding and nesting season “controlled surface use” around lek perimeter and within core habitat (once it has been defined). To clarify, those areas not defined as “core habitat” but located within the 0.6 or 4.0 mile buffers would not have restrictions.

6) Initiate a modeling study to determine “source” and “sink” habitats on the PAPA within 6.2 miles of leks. “Source” habitat is defined as habitat that grouse like and do well in. “Sink” habitat is habitat that the grouse like, but do not do well in. The purpose of this study is to define the characteristics of habitat which lead to successful nesting.

7) As a result of recommendation #6, propose a strategy to increase protection of “source” habitat.

8) As a result of recommendation #6, implement habitat improvement projects to increase sagebrush and understory cover components in “sink” habitat.

9) Acquire additional data from existing collared grouse to supplement other data to determine all important winter grouse use areas and identify habitat characteristics. Winter habitat can be important depending on the harshness of the winter. The WyG&F is currently working with BLM biologists to use existing data to map winter areas.

10) Use data from recommendation #9 to define winter concentration areas on the PAPA and apply appropriate protections for those areas.

11) If grouse habitat improvements are proposed for the PAPA, the guidelines presented in Bohne et. al. 2007 are to guide implementation. According to a WyG&F document about habitat improvement, if habitat improvements are not considered and implemented carefully, they can cause adverse effect, thus we need to follow established improvement guidelines.

Robin Smith thanked the W.L.T.G for functioning well and providing recommendations and reviewed the priority rank associated with each recommendation – four were ranked as medium priority and seven were ranked as high priority.

Cathy Purves made a motion to change recommendation #9 to high priority. Scott Smith and Paul Hagenstein both seconded the motion. After Nylla Kunard returned to the meeting, the PAWG had a quorum and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Scott Smith made a motion to eliminate recommendation #3, since it had been completed. Robin Smith seconded the motion.

Paul Hagenstein then recommended to change the motion because he felt that the lek maps are baseline data and should be updated every year.

Scott Smith allowed that the WyG&F does visit each lek up to three times per year and then he revised his motion to remove recommendation #3. Instead of removing the recommendation he proposed that it be changed to read “update lek perimeter yearly or as necessary.” Cathy Purves seconded the motion. After Nylla Kunard returned to the meeting, the PAWG had a quorum and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Therese Hartman will revise the recommendations and forward them to Robin Smith.

Robin Smith asked if there were any recommendations which lacked funding. Therese Hartman indicated that the operators had funded radio collars in the past. Robin indicated that we could suggest funding sources and Chuck Otto agreed that it would be a good idea. Pete Guernsey indicated that he had a list of sage-grouse funding contacts. Robin Smith asked Pete to forward that list and we would discuss funding sources.

Cathy Purves asked "since development is approaching the rivers, would fish be considered in the W.L.T.G discussions and recommendations." Pete Guernsey asked what beyond water quality and sedimentation should be examined, and Robin Smith indicated that the water quality task group looks at TDS and asked if that was sufficient. Cathy indicated that it was not and we should discuss this in the future.

Cathy Purves asked about the W.L.T.G sagegrouse recommendations relative to the Governor's sage-grouse plan. Scott Smith said that the plan is in draft form but reminded everyone that the Gov's plan is state wide, whereas the W.L.T.G recommendations are Anticline specific. Since it was not finalized we could pass the W.L.T.G recommendations onto the Governor if appropriate.

Pete Guernsey indicated that there is an ongoing impact assessment on the age oil and gas fields relative to the passerine bird populations. That study looks at more than just the PAPA and compares the effects to birds from developing fields vs. older fields. It is being done by WLCI and a grad student at U.W. and has an expected completion date of 12/2009.

After Nylla Kunard returned to the meeting, Robin Smith made a motion to forward the recommendations on to the BLM. Cathy Purves seconded the motion and the motion was passed by a unanimous vote.

Air Quality

An Air Quality Task Group (A.Q.T.G) report must be submitted to the PAWG prior to 11/08. Paige will set up next A.Q.T.G meeting.

The recommendations from the last meeting were to have BLM discuss their role and responsibility with regards to air quality.

Chuck Otto indicated that it was still unclear. Otto would like the BLM to team with WyDEQ to support their actions. The federal responsibility is through the Clean Air Act and agencies like the BLM cannot violate that Act. The BLM would use any and all means necessary to not surpass the standards. The PAWG is involved by monitoring the situation and responding as appropriate. PAWG is important as we implement the FSEIS and it is a key component in adaptive management.

Cathy Purves asked if BLM would hire an air quality monitor. Chuck Otto said that BLM has air quality specialists on staff in the state office but not in Pinedale. BLM may be able to hire a joint position, perhaps after the Anticline Interagency Office is created as a result of the ROD.

Robin Smith asked if BLM had done anything with the previous Air Quality Recommendations. Chuck Otto indicated that BLM had put the recommendations in the preferred alternative and alternative E of the FSEIS. One requirement is for operators to upgrade to best available technology immediately after the ROD is implemented.

Cathy Purves asked if BLM has the authority to regulate air quality. Chuck Otto said no, only the statutory obligation to not violate the clean air act, which if necessary, could include slowing the pace of development via APDs. However, the ROD is coming out soon and it is likely that we are at our highest level of emissions now and we would be reducing emissions after the ROD is signed.

Robin Smith suggested that we have a DEQ official attend the next PAWG meeting.

Cathy Purves made a motion to write a letter to John Cora (DEQ director) asking to send a representative to the next meeting. Robin Smith suggested Cara Kessler. Nylla Kunard Seconded the motion and the motion passed with a unanimous vote. Cathy Purves will draft the letter and forward it to Robin Smith.

PAWG Tour

The charter says that a PAWG tour will occur annually. We should schedule it this summer or early fall.

The day after our next meeting (September 26th) was suggested because it would be convenient to all members.

Destinations for the tour may include an air quality monitoring site, contaminated water wells, and the liquids gathering facility.

I will check to see if the tour must be open to the public or simply PAWG and TG members.

Last year the operators provided busses. Could they do it again? What about lunch? It would be best if we could limit the number of people to fit in one large van.

We need to publish the tour in the Federal Register.

Charter

The Charter has been renewed by the Secretary of the Interior.

Nominations

BLM has received nominations from the Environmental Groups, Adjacent Landowner, Town of Pinedale, and Livestock Operator.

Robin Smith has announced his resignation at the end of his term (October 2008)

The nomination period has closed so we will have to re-advertise in the Federal Register for the Sublette County and Oil and Gas Operator Positions.

RMP

The RMP Final SEIS is scheduled to be released 8/28 followed by a 30 day protest period and the Gov's 60 day review period.

Meeting minutes from 5/29/08

PAWG members reviewed the minutes. Cathy Purves indicated that Paul Hagenstein was present and should be included in the list of attendees. Robin Smith made a motion to accept the minutes. The motion was seconded and passed by a unanimous vote.

Agenda for next meeting

Topics suggested for next meeting include:

Review W.L.T.G Big Game recommendations

Discuss SEIS ROD

Air Quality/DEQ discussion

Meetings in evening?

Sage Grouse collar funding

Fish analysis by W.L.T.G?

Action Items for D. Crowley before next meeting

Develop and email draft tour schedule and advertise in Federal Register.

Advertise two open PAWG seats in federal register.

Email and invite Air Quality Task Group members to attend.

Attend W.L.T.G on 8/21

Attend DEQ meeting on 7/30 - done

Check with Caleb on Task Group meeting deadlines

Advertise Transportation and Socioeconomic Task Group membership in papers/radio

Review ROD task group recommendations.

Call Carmel regarding Socioeconomic Task Group

Scout more northern location for Mesa Big Game sign relocations.