

SUMMARY MINUTES
PECOS DISTRICT RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN HABITAT PRESERVATION AREA OF CRITICAL
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (LPC ACEC) – LIVESTOCK GRAZING
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
February 04, 2015

Kyle Arnold, BLM Acting Field Manager, Resources, opened the meeting and thanked Ms. McDaniel (Tish), Mr. Farmer (George), and Mr. Beauprez (Grant) for the work they have put into this endeavor. All in attendance then introduced themselves. Copies of the draft recommendation and ranking criteria were distributed to all.

Tish explained that a skeleton outline was developed and then written up and sent out for comments. Those received were incorporated where appropriate.

Grant B reviewed the parameters and explained that research studies relative to habitat for the LPC were incorporated. He stated that these could be identified if necessary. There was a question as to where the studies were done, in this area or others. It was stated that some were done in other areas and they can be identified. Brood and nesting parameters were used.

Roswell Field Manager Chuck Schmidt asked if these areas have been mapped. He was told that these different areas will be evident in the monitoring. It is goal oriented. It is not completely definitive as areas are intermingled (leking etc.).

It was stated that ecological site descriptions can be used and monitored differently. Different vegetation can be monitored within a transect.

Grant asked for opinions of Robel. It was stated that the original paper was written for the prairie-chicken but it has been modified and changed since. It was mentioned that it was not felt that it was the Committee's place to decide how BLM would monitor.

It was stated that suggested options would be welcome from the Committee.

It was suggested to measure grass height every three years or so. It was also suggested to monitor an areas outside the transect as well.

There are four (4) groups doing monitoring for prairie chicken. It was suggested that since all do basically the same thing on what is needed that data could be shared. This could be worked out outside of the Committee and possibly a standardized method be defined.

Chuck stated that due to BLM Plan methods in place, these methods could possibly be changed or worked with to accomplish a better way than Robel.

Grazing Recommendations

The recommendation was reviewed and Kyle stated that he would like the 33% statement in the second paragraph to include the words "of annual growth".

It was asked if it should be decided when monitoring should be done, that it would need to be done during nesting season. Chuck stated that traditionally it is done after nesting season. If done twice it would require much effort.

It was stated that nests are usually set up prior to nesting and vegetation will be different several weeks later.

Different ways of monitoring were discussed. What, when and how, as well as how much, must be decided upon. There was discussion as to whether to be specific or vague and general. This must be decided and completed to be ready for March 10 RAC meeting.

It was asked what kind of monitoring would be done to count the number of birds. BLM already does this yearly and could be referenced in the document.

It was asked if correlations between ecological parameters occurring and if a significant increase is seen, is it going to change management throughout the whole RFO?

Much research is already being done on these things currently.

Who would do the monitoring and how it would be paid for was discussed and it was suggested that whoever leased the area could pay for and/or receive points of some kind.

Kyle asked for discussion on grazing recommendations, the area being one unit or several.

There had been previous discussion of possibly starting with the "south end" first and it was asked what the definition of the south end was. This was not known. The map was looked at and Adam marked up a preliminary idea of what would be three managed units.

It was asked how the total disturbance desired could be accomplished with large pastures. Chuck suggested using "consider using" language in the recommendations to the RAC. Also, include other options, as well as fencing. It was stated that BLM should make the decisions as to how.

It was suggested that the lessee should be able to have some input as to the "how".

It was asked if the whole area would be managed for leks and the answer was no. It will be a dynamic management. It should be managed separately to be able to monitor compliance more effectively, with repercussions if not in compliance.

Discussion was heard concerning the 90-day recovery period and it was pointed out that full recovery is the goal and would take more intensive monitoring. It was suggested that better results could be achieved with ~~shorter~~longer recovery and ~~shorter~~longer grazing periods.

It was stated that current thinking by many current practitioners is longer recovery periods.

Rewording of the 2nd and 3rd "bullets" should emphasize adequate recovery with definitive rest periods.

Chuck stated that the discussions was getting very "tight" in some of the recommendations, that the recommendation should contain expectations, rather than specifics. In order to not fail must be flexible.

It was said that benefit is seen of putting in some specific recommendations rather than leaving it all up to BLM.

RAC endorsement of the recommendations of this Committee is the goal of the Committee. Without locking participants into specific management practices.

It was suggested that the words "contracted rancher" be changed to "grazing participant".

Fire Recommendation

It was suggested that natural fire should be included as a tool to accomplish some of the goals. It was asked what a definition of a small fire is.

There was discussion of using fire as a disturbance in a unit, but not the whole unit at a time. It would be difficult to accomplish this way.

It was stated that correlating precipitation with the use of fire be done and that the recommendation should include the use of the word "planned" rather than "done".

Application Process

Cow/calf operation would be changed to only "grazing".

An "out clause" needs to be included.

Also need to include a re-evaluation at the end of the permit time to be able to renew the agreement.

Discussion was heard on charging the participant to be able to pay for improvements, etc..

This is an area not previously discussed. It was suggested looking at improvements needed in each unit and decide how to proceed with obtaining.

Chuck mentioned that much of this needs to be looked at with the Solicitor.

BREAK

After a short break, the "ranking" document was reviewed. Grant stated that there might be a question as to the eligibility question and may need a question re monitoring. Proximity might be an issue.

The insertion of the words "actively engaged" in livestock grazing, own or control of livestock, and willingness to perform/engage in monitoring should be considered.

It was suggested that those interested apply for each unit under question #1 and changing the miles numbers from "20" to "10" in question #1 under Ranking Criteria

Question #2 - Using points of "one point per mile" be used only as a tie-breaker bonus question.

A written grazing plan should be required concerning rest/rotation system other than yearly in question #3.

The word "help" should be removed from question #4.

The words "or had experience with" should be inserted re prescribed burning in question #5.

Separate points should be given for successfully completing any of the listed contracts in question #6.

An additional question should be:

Do you have current ability to supply supplemental water or are you able to provide supplemental water to support grazing for Unit #___.

