



**Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain District
Annual Report
January 2013**



Phoenix Project: Phoenix Pit

Wildlife, Special Status Species and Riparian/Wetland Management

2013 Priorities:

Greater Sage Grouse - Continue to support non-renewable projects in identifying areas of important greater sage grouse habitat (PPH and PGH) and work with the State Office and proponents in finding mitigation measures to enhance habitat.

Greater Sage Grouse Projects within PPH/PGH: -

Placement of flight deterrent markers on fence lines;

Construction of protection enclosures in high value greater sage grouse habitat; and

Work with NDOW and USGS to place 22 telemetry collars on sage greater to better understand movement patterns and for project support.

2012 Accomplishments

Enhancement Project - This Project occurs within the Simpson Park, Dry Creek and Grass Valley Allotments and includes the use of UNR Bootstraps crews to hand thin pinyon and juniper trees on up to 1,250 acres to enhance greater sage grouse habitat.

Battle Mountains Riparian Enclosure Project - Within Wildhorse Basin and the North Fork of Trout Creek, the UNR Bootstraps crew, in coordination and cooperation with local mining interests, constructed two 20 acre enclosures to enhance greater sage grouse brood-rearing habitat.

Sage Grouse Habitat Monitoring - In 2012, the MLFO conducted surveys of springs and meadows throughout important greater sage grouse habitat (PPH and PGH) in the Battle Mountain, Diamond Mountain, Fish Creek (Eureka County), Roberts, Simpson Park and Toiyabe Mountain ranges and adjacent valleys. Additionally, BMD partnered with the Great Basin Bird Observatory to survey along the Shoshone Off Highway Vehicle trail prior to the completion of Phase I of the trail and in on-going efforts for the life of the project. This monitoring information will be used to 1) identify critical sage grouse riparian habitat and 2) guide future management.

Sage Grouse Habitat Improvement Projects - MLFO has been working cooperatively with Ormat, NDOW, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and other agencies to develop habitat improvement projects within the sage grouse Toiyabe Population Management Unit (PMU). The goal of these projects will be to increase sage grouse productivity within the management unit through the improvement of nesting and brood-rearing habitat.

Special Status Species, Threatened and Endangered Animals and Plants - Biologists assessed the condition of LCT habitat with NDOW biologists after the 2012 Frazier Fire impacted important habitat in the Roberts Mountains. This assessment was used to develop long-term rehabilitation and management actions.

MLFO biologists participated in winter raptor surveys with NDOW, night jar surveys with the Center for Conservation Biology, and annual monitoring of LCT habitat conditions with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), as required by the terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion for the Livestock Grazing System for the JD Allotment, Eureka County, NV (August, 2004).



2012 UNR Bootstraps crew constructing riparian enclosures

Three-Bars Restoration Project -

In 2009, the BMD began work to develop a landscape scale restoration project in the 3-Bars/Roberts Mountain area north-west of Eureka. This area contains high value resources for sage grouse, LCT, mule deer and other wildlife species. This area boasts largely intact native or perennial plant communities and is at high risk of catastrophic wildfire due largely to pinion and juniper encroachment. The BMD, MLFO initiated an EIS level planning process that analyzes numerous restoration and fuels treatments within a 750,000 acre footprint. Cooperating agencies with BLM on this project include NDOW and Eureka County.

The preliminary draft EIS is scheduled to be completed by mid-2013 with an anticipated decision being issued sometime in 2014. Upon the signing of the ROD, the BLM will seek out and formalize partnerships to leverage funding and support for multi-year implementation of this important project.

Tonopah Field Office

2013 Priorities:

The TFO renewable staff will continue to monitor wildlife habitat conditions in conjunction with rangeland monitoring. Further, TFO staff will continue to assist with population surveys with cooperating agencies including, but not limited to, surveys for Sagegrouse, Amargosa toad, Toiyabe spotted frog, and raptors.

TFO will perform Section 7 consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on a demand basis to protect Threatened or Endangered Species within the area. Typically, this will be one to three consultations per fiscal year. Protective measures and mitigation will also be continued for those special status species that do not require consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

Funding will be pursued to complete the Beatty Spring Rehabilitation Project in FY 2013.

2012 Accomplishments:

Study of Riparian Vegetation Recovery - In an effort to evaluate the response of riparian vegetation to the exclusion of livestock, personnel from the TFO established a series of small enclosures in the Point-The-Rock riparian area.

This evaluation is the initial phase of a larger study designed to assess the most cost-effective means of restoring this riparian habitat.

Beatty Spring Rehabilitation Project - All NEPA and project planning documents have been completed for the rehabilitation of Bryan, Trespass, Upper and Middle Indian, and Burro Springs near Beatty, NV. The project is currently awaiting funding sources.

TFO Receives Award for Armargosa Toad Conservation - TFO was recognized at an awards ceremony held at Red Rock by the US FWS and NDOW for BLM's role in working to restore and maintain Armargosa Toad habitat that led to the USFWS decision not to list the toad as threatened or endangered. In addition, staff from Senator's Reid and Heller and Congressman Heck's offices presented Certificates of Commendation.

Desert Tortoise Consultation - TFO completed Section 7 consultation for the 2012 Vegas to Reno Race. No tortoises were identified along the route which crosses tortoise habitat.