



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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May 31, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shane DeForest, Pinedale BLM Field Manager

FROM: Scott Smith, Wildlife Management Coordinator

COPY TO: Lund, Hartman, Stroud, Randall, Clause, File

SUBJECT: Response to Actionable Items from February 23 Meeting

Listed below is a set of responses to the 5 actionable items you have requested following the February 23, 2011 Wildlife Planning Meeting.

***BLM #1** - We would like to discuss with you your ideas and suggestions for extending monitoring of mule deer habitat conditions out of the immediate Mesa area. The purpose of this monitoring would be to identify opportunities and attempt to learn more about how other parts of the Mesa mule deer range may be affecting body conditions and to identify where future habitat improvements could be most effective.*

WGFD Reply - We would propose to extend monitoring outside the 198,000 acre PAPA. A detailed analysis of Sawyer's migration/stopover habitat areas is ongoing and serves as the first step in prioritizing important mule deer habitat. Data collection would include techniques to evaluate shrub and herbaceous species composition, canopy cover, shrub density/age/hedging class. Further analysis of collared mule deer and associated use areas may be beneficial. This may be a GIS based analysis that could be performed by PAPO GIS Specialist, along with a current project that is analyzing whether any specific ecological sites are being selected for by mule deer. Based on the ESD Baseline information that was collected in 2009-2010, some areas already identified have been inventoried and may have potential for treatment. Finally, fence inventories should be considered as a part of this assessment, in particularly those that are not compatible with mule deer migration needs.

***BLM #2** - We request you review the current reclamation seed mix and provide BLM with a list of reclamation species which could be added or substituted for existing seeding mix for reclamation of disturbance on the Anticline.*

WGFD Reply –We would refer you to the list of additional species (see below) for “enhanced reclamation”. These could be obtained from a variety of sources (Granite Seed Company, local seed trials, etc.). Presently, the list of species identified by soil type in Appendix A, PAPA

Reclamation Monitoring Plan, 2009, does a good job of outlining native species adapted for specific soil types. We propose to focus on native/non-native herbaceous species that would “green-up” early and/or enhance shrub diversity with highly palatable species/biovars. We have taken initial steps in identifying some of these species, however, additional species may be added in the future. These include the following:

1. Rubber Rabbitbrush – one or more of following subspecies:
salicifolius, hololeucus, albicaulis
2. Hobble Creek Sagebrush (if available)
3. Russian Wildrye
4. Falcata alfalfa
5. Cicer Milkvetch
6. Small Burnet
7. Forage Kochia
8. Winterfat

An additional component of enhanced reclamation may include shrub transplants from adjacent undisturbed sites. These mature shrubs would be immediately able to produce seed and are already adapted to the climate and soils of the site in need of reclamation. This has been completed on some locations in the Jonah field.

***BLM #3** - We would like to receive recommendations and rationale from your office regarding where priority emphasis for enhanced reclamation (i.e. direct planting of container raised browse species, and other measures you think may speed recovery of or enhance use of habitat) or other treatments targeting the preservation of key late winter sagebrush habitats could be instituted on the Anticline to benefit wintering mule deer.*

WGFD Reply – The first priority area would be any fully developed pad where standard reclamation has been initiated. A second priority area would be interim reclamation sites from pads or pipelines designated as crucial big game winter range or core sage grouse habitat throughout the PAPA. We would look forward to working with BLM on developing “success standards” for enhanced reclamation practices.

***BLM #4** - We would like to receive suggestions from you identifying in priority order, unfragmented blocks of mule deer winter and transitional ranges which may benefit from management emphasis for mule deer habitat and habitat improvement.*

WGFD Reply – In regards specifically to those mule deer that use the PAPA, we’d like to provide the following priorities: For Habitat Treatment - 1. Ryegrass, 2. Soapholes, 3. Cora Butte, 4. Migratory Corridors identified by Sawyer et. al. 5. Southwest portion of Mesa. For Important Mule Deer Habitat in Need of Management Emphasis - 1. Mesa Flanks, 2. Northern portion of Mesa. Areas adjacent to disturbance are not always the most appropriate for traditional treatments causing a decrease in sagebrush, but would benefit greatly from good grazing management, fence modifications to wildlife friendly standards and travel management.

BLM #5 - *We would like to discuss opportunities for coordinated habitat condition monitoring of transitional ranges to maximize efficiency and minimize overlapping monitoring efforts of our respective staffs.*

WGFD Reply – We agree and are more than willing to sit down with you to discuss this and prioritize where and who will be doing this. PAPO has set up training to be done by Teton Science School, and several of your staff are being included in that training. Thus far, it appears that PAPO staff may be concentrating on the Soap Holes area initially and the BLM biologists are planning to cover the Ryegrass. We would welcome a meeting or other avenue for aiding in prioritizing areas and personnel on the assessment. BLM Wildlife Biologists have recently learned the WGFD winter range shrub monitoring methodology with WGFD Terrestrial Habitat Biologist Jill Randall in an attempt to apply this methodology to a broader landscape. In addition, we feel that there needs to be both a process, format and database set up for everyone to use to house the information collected in one place for all personnel working on this assessment. This would also be a good place to discuss habitat management philosophies and what we can actually get done in light of the sage-grouse core area, which is prevalent over much of the assessment area.