

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Fire and Invasives Work Group**

**FROM: INR Staff**

**SUBJECT: September Fire and Invasives Work Group Meeting Notes**

**DATE: October 7, 2013**

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This memo follows up on the September 19, 2013 meeting of the Fire and Invasives Work Group. The memo includes the following: (1) upcoming meetings (2) identified action items and (3) brief meeting summary.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Potential Agenda Items</b>
Mondays Ongoing	Core Team Meetings	Portland	Share updates to align federal and state processes
September 24, 25	Federal Family Meeting	Denver	Focus will be on status and conservation management of sage grouse and species habitat
September 30	Agency Alignment Meeting	Portland	Coordinate federal and state processes
November 21, 22 (October 24-cancelled)	Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership	Prineville	Next iteration of baseline maps showing disturbance by PAC's and further delineation of the impact and footprint of threats in OR  BLM RMP Process, anticipated public comment period  Review draft state action plan
October TBD	Energy/Utility Focused Meeting	Portland	Review ODOE draft feasibility analysis

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Who	Date
Structure and clarify action plan to assure all threats identified in the COT Report are assigned to someone (including isolated small populations, grazing, feral horses, etc.)	Ken and Garth conducting initial review of F&I section	Report out at October Work Group Meeting
Review and incorporate current invasive plant species information to understand current and potential issues	Dawn Davis, Ken Mayer, Dan Hilburn	Report out at October Work Group Meeting
Follow up on the status of FSIM Modeling data	Garth Fuller and Craig Goodell	Report out at October Work Group Meeting
Convene fire subteam to initiate technical analysis of prevention, suppression and resilience practices that should be prioritized in the short, medium and long term	ODFW, NRCS, BLM, ODF, TNC, ARS	Meet and report out at October Work Group Meeting
NRCS and ODF are collaborating to independently develop a pilot project with a Rangeland Fire Protection Association to determine where to put fuel breaks, where to do controlled burns, etc. and how to build capacity working with willing and able land owners.	NRCS, ODF	Report out at October Work Group Meeting
CCA and CCAA acres covered and expected conservation actions	Angela Sitz	Report out at October Work Group Meeting
Review pages 194-199 of ODFW Conservation Strategy to identify what's working, what's missing and what should be improved.	All Work Group Members	Discuss at October Work Group Meeting
Core team meeting summaries and updates	Jamie and staff	Ongoing weekly to be shared with SageCon listserv

## MEETING MATERIALS TO ADD TO WEBSITE

- ODFW Fire Response Update Presentation (Dawn Davis, ODFW Sage Grouse Conservation Coordinator)
- Trout Creek Mountains Sage Grouse Postfire Monitoring Presentation (Dawn Davis, ODFW Sage Grouse Conservation Coordinator)
- Wildfire and Invasives - Update on Great Basin Working Group Presentation (Ken Mayer, WAFWA)

## BRIEF MEETING SUMMARY

### **Welcome and introductions**

- Brett Brownscombe welcomed everybody and shared that he and Richard Whitman are developing initial policy guidance that will benefit from feedback and analysis from folks at the table. He is hoping to prepare a fire and invasives strategy together that will include actions for fire prevention, suppression and resilience to proactively prepare for impacts to sage brush habitat.
- Ken added that everyone can expect there to be linkages between policy and associated field units. The data layers are being created to inform these linkages with Theresa's lead.

### **Discussion: Baseline and Existing Conditions – Fire and Invasives Focus**

- Dan Hilburn -there is a lot of data to further populate the maps but he needs direction on what plant species are of interest. What else do we want to know beyond the understory conditions such as cheatgrass conversions?
- Dawn Davis -from the ecosystem health perspective, cheatgrass and medusahead are of major concern because they are changing ecosystem conditions that will directly impact sage grouse.
- Cathy Macdonald -need to screen all invasives to document and understand which are problems now as well as which will be problems into the future.
- Dawn Davis - review LIT notes for weed issues at the local level (dalmation toadflax as an example).
- Dan Hilburn -all of the data is available online through [Weedmapper](#).
- Angela Sitz -the CCAA includes the identification of weeds in addition to annual grasses.
- Ken Mayer -USFWS is tracking invasives as well in other states and it could be useful to review expected threats from USFWS data to anticipate biological concerns for sage grouse.

- Garth Fuller –what is the action plan template and how other risk factors and threats will be addressed and in what working groups? As an example, who will focus on grazing and recreational impacts?
- Brett answered that some of those topics will be covered by the Habitat Fragmentation Work Group and that the Core Team will work to delineate these tasks by the October meeting. Generally, the CCA and CCAA’s will be utilized and advanced in the Habitat Fragmentation Work group since they were developed with a mix of public and private input. There is a need to separate policy actions from actions on the ground.
- Angela -CCA data collection is site specific by allotment, by ranch. BLM has AUM data.
- Glenn further clarified that there is an upcoming technical review with USFWS regarding allotments. EIS will address grazing, grazing effects, alternatives and impacts to species and to the allotment holders. CCA is not directly changing the allotments and AUMs.
- Brett had a question for Zola about the status of enrollment in CCAA’s and how to continue these efforts to build agreement on actions for threat reduction. If we are seeing low enrollment then we need to discuss why and what that means for implementations strategies.
- Back to the technical inputs discussion, Theresa will address in greater detail some of the fuels and vegetation questions that arose with ILAP data to update LANDFIRE. We’ll still need to refine with local input.
- Craig Goodell -Missoula Fire Lab is running some data on fire probabilities in sage grouse territories. Still questions about how Fire Simulation Model (FSIM) will inform fire probabilities on non-annual grassland vegetation types. Craig will provide update at next meeting for the fire models BLM has been running.
- Brett-at the last WGA meeting where USFWS was piloting a new approach to cheatgrass in ID, NV, OR in post fire areas. Has anyone heard more about the status of this work and the role of soil bacteria?
- Angela- bacteria is naturally occurring and could be scaled up to inhibit cheatgrass while native herbs and forbs are better established.
- Ken- it will be 2016-17 before the bacteria product gets through the EPA review, permitting process.

**Presentation and Discussion: ODFW Fire Response Update, Initial Findings and BLM Coordination – Dawn Davis**

Dawn shared ODFW’s recent coordination meetings with BLM. The goal is to develop a cohesive plan to reduce fire risks below are some of the questions that arose:

- Where do fire breaks exist now, where are breaks planned in the future?
- Should there be wider mowing strips as part of BLM operations

- Are new roads seen as fuel breaks, and part of fire management or just adding to habitat fragmentation?

#### Participant Discussion

- COT reports guidance on fires shows some internal conflicts in management strategies between fire and invasives because the landscape is changing from fire suppression which impacts vegetation conditions.
- Discussion about complexity for the fire cycle and management intervention as there are short, medium and long-term outcomes that coincide with prevention, suppression, post-fire recovery and resilience.
- Oregon has been successful at fire suppression with 98% of fires contained changing the fire cycles with 2% of fires still impacting rangeland.
- Reminder that RFPA's still need to be part of discussion about local capacity and management strategies.
- It is worth reviewing the CWPP model for forests.
- Will put together subteam to sort through technical questions and issues to review what has been done successfully to mitigate fire risks.
- Dawn Davis shared initial findings from ODFW research on sage grouse response to Holloway Fires within Trout Creek Mountains. Approximately 245,500 acres burned of which 90% was core habitat and 10% low density. The area represented one of the healthiest population of sage grouse. The preliminary results are from the first field season of short-term results to begin to understand post-fire habitat conditions as well as population loss and response. Observed high mortality of 69% of the sample population of birds that were being monitored. See presentation for more information.

#### **Presentation and Discussion: Rangelwide Wildfire/Invasive Initiative Working Group Product Overview and Update**

- Ken presented on tool development for federal decisionmakers, see presentation for more information.
- Suggestion to utilize soil/temperature data to guide restoration.