

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership
FROM: Julia Babcock, Oregon Solutions Staff
SUBJECT: July 18th SageCon Draft Meeting Notes

This memo follows up on the July 18, 2014 meeting of the Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership. The memo includes the following: (1) upcoming meetings calendar and (2) identified action items and (3) overview meeting notes and (4) attendance list.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Date	Meeting	Location	Potential Agenda Items
Mondays Ongoing Next Meeting: July 28	Core Team Meetings	Portland	Share updates to align federal and state planning processes
Mondays Ongoing Next Meeting: August 8	Mitigation Technical Team Meetings	Portland	Develop mitigation framework for state plan
July 22	Policy Focus Group	Burns	To build agreement on definition and application of a development threshold and discuss other disturbance including Agriculture
August TBD	Policy Focus Group	Prineville	
August 22	SageCon	Prineville	To review progress on ALAT Plan and share related federal and state efforts.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Who	Date
State will work with BLM to sync process timelines for ALAT State Plan and Governor's Consistency Review	Core Team	Ongoing
Share Conservation Online Database with State	USFWS	Fall TBD
Draft ALAT Plan available for review	All	Fall TBD

MEETING MATERIALS POSTED TO SAGE CON WEBSITE

- [Final Draft Agenda](#)
- [Ch. 5 Hierarchy and State and Transition Model Approach-Jay Kerby](#)
- [Ecosystem Management as an Organizing Vision for Sage Grouse Conservation-Chad Boyd](#)

BRIEF MEETING SUMMARY BY AGENDA ITEM

Welcome from Conveners, Agenda Review and Introductions

- Richard Whitman, welcomed everyone and thanked them for participating especially in light of recent fires. Want to take time to acknowledge the challenges ranchers, farmers and the community as a whole are facing this fire season. Our hearts go out to the communities. Recognize where we are in the process, working hard on state portion of all lands all threats portion of the plan to meet fall deadline for USFWS review. Come September, we'll be a year away from listing decision.
- Jay Gibbs, NRCS had meeting with Secretary Vilsack in Salem on the 21st went well. Sage Grouse issues were a major part of the discussion.
- Mike Haske-I and my staff are feeling stretched thin over the last few days with fire. Doing everything we can to tell folks back East why Oregon's ALAT approach is important moving forward. Core team and district teams working

hard to transition from preferred to proposed plan. Ongoing projects, some high profile to help us address threats now. Significant fire threats, stepping out at 10:30 a.m. today for fire update to learn latest on how fires being prioritized in WA and OR. 22 fires reported so far this year in OR and WA. Buzzard complex being monitored with great concern.

- Brett Brownscombe, want to acknowledge Oregon’s regional engagement and the concerted efforts of all 11 states with sage grouse habitat to have a high level of coordination amongst the states as well as with federal partners. Dept. of Interior leadership in town last week including Director Neil Kornze from BLM. Encouragement from BLM leadership about Oregon’s ALAT approach. Happy to talk over lunch with folks about the ongoing regional level of discussions. Reminder that though the fires are significant, there are many success stories coming from RFPA and local efforts to contain fires.

Recent article on fires: http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwestnews/index.ssf/2014/07/oregon_wildfires_ranchers_surv.html#incart_river

Status Report – Overview of Work Since Our Last SageCon

BLM DEIS RMP – *Mike Haske*

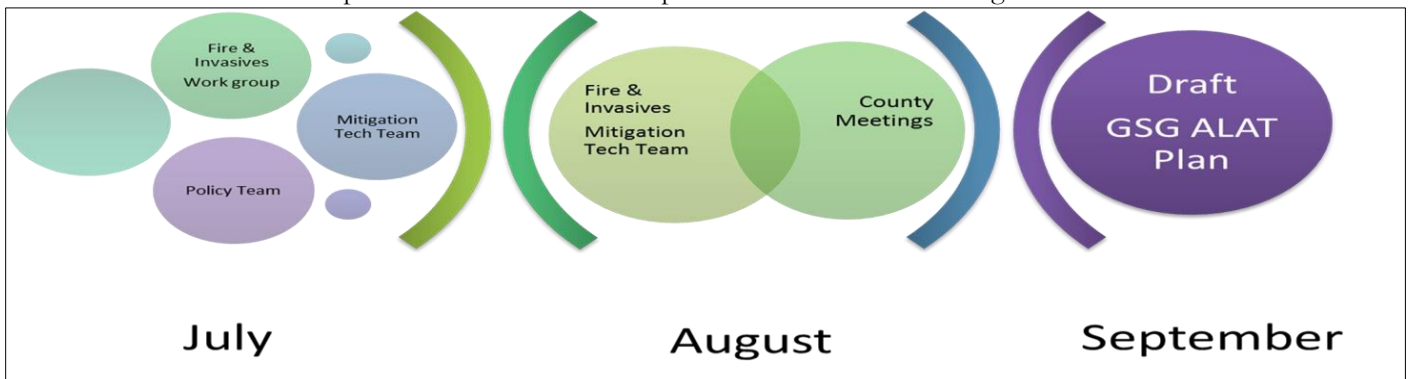
- Oregon BLM working with cooperating agencies to move from preferred to proposed plan revisions. Next step regional coordination across BLM and with federal family partners to review science, data and management models to align planning efforts.
- Every Spring BLM hosts a summit with RFPA’s. Since 2012, hearing improved communication and coordination between BLM and RFPA. Director Neal Kornze has been encouraging other states to review Oregon’s model and lessons learned.

USFWS update on work across the west- *Jeff Everett*

- USFWS bringing additional staff resources to sage grouse. Most hiring across the range is complete, out of 40 new positions around 30 filled.
- Introduced Anna Harris, moved to Portland from D.C. specifically to support public involvement and outreach for sage grouse efforts.
- USFWS working to release a database for reporting conservation efforts for states, counties, individual conservation districts and ngo’s. Working to ensure metrics equitable across scales of reporting. Log in available for states in the next few weeks.
- Working with BLM on rmp amendments as well as state plans.
- OACD-USFWS built an agreement for a new position with local SWCD to encourage more sign-ups for CCAA’s. 47 landowners in Harney County alone have signed covering over 270,00 acres.
- Working through rest of sage grouse county CCAA’s based on Harney County template. On track to build EA process for all 7 counties under one umbrella (instead of separate processes).

ALAT Plan status – *Jamie Damon*

Below is an illustration which provides a window into the process we’ve undertaken to get to the Draft ALAT Plan.



- First step has been defining all the threats, to build understanding about what are we facing in Oregon. In some ways threat identification is an ongoing effort always more work to do, more data to collect, etc.
- Once we built a base understanding of major threats, worked with stakeholder groups (e.g. energy/utilities) to understand what we have in place to address major threats including resources, metrics for monitoring progress as well as where there are policy gaps.
- Became clear we needed a state level policy discussion. Created the Policy Focus Group with diverse membership to work through outstanding policy issues.
- Next major step, pulling together to document all of the work that has been done as well as what needs to be done in the ALAT Plan. Holly Michael, ODFW will be leading the assembling of the document. Please be responsive if she requests information from you as we are all on a tight deadline.
- In a lot of ways, Oregon is leading western states because through this multi-year process we have been building meaningful partnerships across the range.

Progress Report: Approach and Practices for Fire, Invasive Species and Conifer Threat Reduction

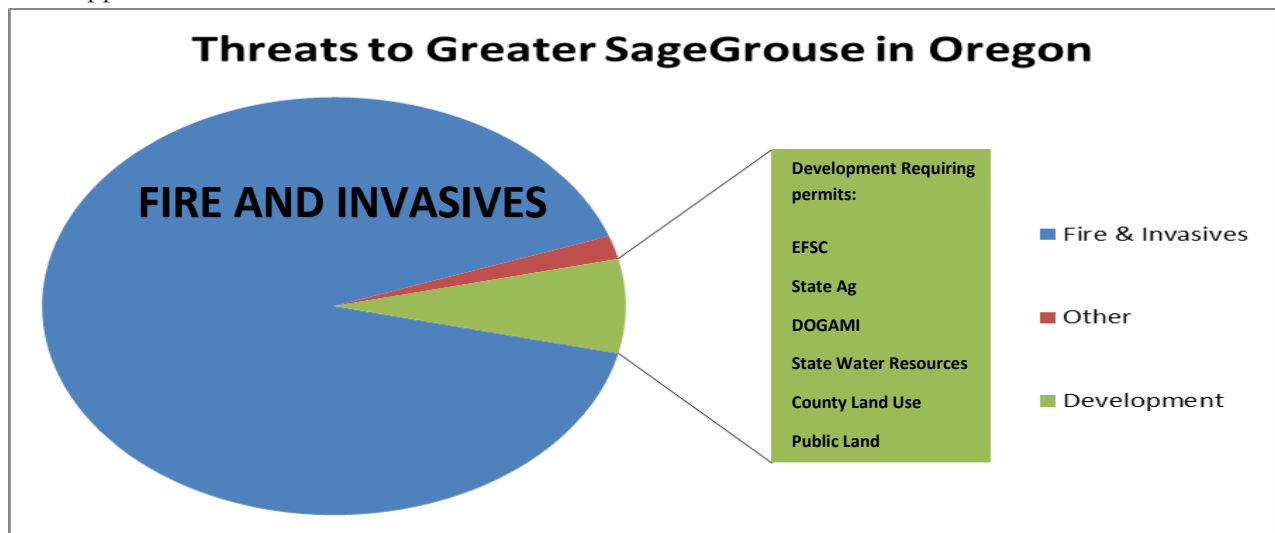
Conservation Practices Framework_Presentations from Chad Boyd and Jay Kerby. To review their powerpoint slides, click on the links below:

- [Ch. 5 Hierarchy and State and Transition Model Approach-Jay Kerby](#)
- [Ecosystem Management as an Organizing Vision for Sage Grouse Conservation-Chad Boyd](#)

Discussion:

- CCAA model successful because it's a framework for adaptive management. CCAA's are founded on ecological values, assessing what's on the ground and using the State and Transition Model to develop lists of site specific conservation actions to monitor trends over time.
- Need to create a positive incentive for land owners that ties the rural economy to environmental outcomes to help establish land ethic around sage grouse conservation and create long-term assets. Chad has developed a draft STM model tied to a conservation bank as a potential model.
- SageShare (formally CIG) is a database of sagebrush steppe conservation practices developed by synthesizing current literature and gathering expert input.
- NRCS is pursuing \$9 million dollars in funding through the Regional Conservation partnership program. Potential funding to help create incentives for effective land management practices.

Status of fire approach- *Brett Brownscombe*



- Extreme fire events remain a problem. We are getting incrementally better at controlling them. Working with BLM and RFPA's to ascertain resource gaps, document best practices and be proactive for presuppression.

- Fire departments across the state facing regulatory requirements for training that are so strict, limiting capacity. How to set standards that make sense for folks who are full-time ranchers and can't meet 100 hour training criteria.
- ODFW has a fire map with data updated regularly through the fire season. Click on the link below, agree to the terms and conditions and add the sage grouse layer to see how fire spread overlays with core habitat.
<https://nrimp.dfw.state.or.us/compass/>

State and County Update

Emerging State Funding/Budget Package Options- *Richard Whitman & Brett Brownscombe*

- Working to understand opportunities to mobilize additional and in some cases new funding to implement state plan. Researching potential allocation of dollars already in state system such as OWEB lottery dollars as well as general fund. Potential for new funding source tied to actions that benefit sagebrush ecosystems for the bird as well as other species. Governors budget development in process, legislature 2015 session as well as concepts for new funding. Richard leading effort on potential initiatives for next biennium in healthy environment area. Around working lands, farms and forests. Working across state and federal budgets to be complementary.
- Driver for this work also development activity. Need economic driver to assist with mitigation work. Designing program, need all 3 elements of sustainability to be considered. If major development, requires significant contribution to protect sage grouse.

Policy Focus Group; roles/outcomes/next steps – *Mike Freese & Jamie Damon*

- Details of what type of development is allowed and how to determine whether county is meeting or exceeding that threshold is evolving. Consensus largescale industrial development in core needs to be regulated.
- COT report indicates ag conversion factor in declining sage grouse habitat/quality acres. Question what are the conditions/types of ag. in Oregon that need to be addressed and potentially mitigated for. Working with ODA to develop quantitative analysis of ag. To determine level of future threat.

County Meetings; outcomes/next steps – *Judge Steve Grasty & Jamie Damon*

- Held meetings with Crook/Deschutes and Harney/Lake on July 14th
- Reviewed methodology for mapping existing development/disturbance, walked through examples of development types and potentially permitted activities, regulatory framework, etc.
- Counties expressing need for sage grouse work to translate to other wildlife issues as counties don't have the capacity to be at the table the same way for each threatened species.
- Need to have clear, local statute to demonstrate clear and consistent path for review for sage grouse impacts. Codify good process that is already happening. Affirm counties are doing a lot of things right in recent reviews.
- Need ODFW capacity at preapplication process to be consistent in review.

Mitigation Technical Team

- Technical protocol for mitigation developing, presentation at August meeting.
- Focusing on technical aspects such as eligibility criteria, how to select suitable sites and verify credits. Working through project administration components as well as how to connect to STM for eligible actions.

Technical Work Update– *Theresa Bursu*

- Developing sagecon website for data sharing, there is an alpha version available for interested parties. The site will be released on OR explorer in early Fall TBD.
- Developing protocols to monitor development threshold. Recruiting review team if anyone is interested in providing input.
- Working with Holly and Julia to put technical products into state plan.

Partner Updates

Oregon Cattlemen's Association Quarterly Meeting-*John O'Keefe*

- Committed to continue conversation around funding. Wrestling with the tradeoffs of moving forward with a sage grouse dedicated fund to receive credit under USFWS policy vs. development of a general endangered species fund that would potentially create more revenue but also have to meet competing demands.

Landscape Decision Support Tool—*Garth Fuller*

- Geodatabase to be queried to create maps and attribute tables for quantitative information. Funding through ODFW from last session. Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool. Robust tool, summarized by hexagons. Webinar SGI for DSS for summer/wet habitat. Fully functional end of August/Early September. Interest for it to be in sync with ALAT Plan.

OWEB – *Meta Loftsgaarden*

- \$300,000 approved for sage grouse conservation in April. Portion PSU and OSU for SageCon efforts. \$92,000 out to conservation districts working on CCAA's.

ATTENDANCE

Conveners

Mike Haske, BLM
 Jay Gibbs, NRCS
 Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resource Office

Participants

Andrew Shields, Roaring Springs Ranch
 Anna Harris, USFWS
 Bob Skinner, OCA
 Brett Brownscombe, Governor's Natural Resource Office
 Brandon McMullen, Harney County
 Bruce Taylor, Defenders of Wildlife
 Cathy Macdonald, TNC
 Chad Boyd, ARS
 Dan Hilburn, ODA
 Dan Morse, ONDA
 Dede Steele, USFS
 E. Lynn Burkett, BLM
 Eric Rickerson, ODFW
 Garth Fuller, TNC
 Isaac Sanders, DOGAMI
 Jay Kerby, TNC
 Jeff Everett, USFWS
 John O'Keefe, OCA
 Jon Jinings, DLCD
 Judge Steve Grasty, Harney County
 Justin Ferrell, OACD
 Ken Kestner, Lake County
 Ken Mayer, WAFWA
 Lanny Quackenbush, DSL
 Margi Hoffman, Governor's Office
 Mark Nystrom, AOC
 Mark Saelans, OACD
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 Sara O'Brien, Willamette Partnership
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Varner Seaman, Renewable Northwest

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Craig Goodell, BLM

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Darwin Johnson, Lake County

Jimmy Kagan, INR

Brandon McMullen, Harney County

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