

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership  
**FROM:** Julia Babcock, Oregon Solutions Staff  
**SUBJECT:** August 22, 2014 SageCon Draft Meeting Notes

This memo follows up on the August 22, 2014 meeting of the Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership. The memo includes the following: (1) upcoming meetings calendar and (2) identified action items and (3) brief meeting summary and (4) attendance list.

### Upcoming Meetings

Date	Meeting	Location	Potential Agenda Items
September 8, 2014	Core Team Meetings	Portland	Share updates to align federal and state planning processes
September 10, 2014	Eastern Oregon Counties Sage Grouse Policy Workshop	John Day	To provide input into county and state development review policy coordination
September 18, 2014	Policy Focus Group	Salem	To review policy concepts emerging in the state ALAT Plan.
September 19-20, 2014	ONDA Desert Conference	Bend	<a href="http://onda.org/get-involved/2014-desert-conference-registration-panelists-schedule">http://onda.org/get-involved/2014-desert-conference-registration-panelists-schedule</a>
TBD	SageCon	TBD	To review progress on ALAT Plan and share related federal and state efforts
November 5-7, 2014	BLM Fire Workshop	TBD	Details forthcoming.

### Action Items

Action Item	Who	Date
State working with BLM to sync process timelines for ALAT State Plan and Governor's Consistency Review	Core Team	Ongoing
Test Conservation Efforts Database (CED) with State	All	Ongoing Fall
Draft ALAT Plan available for review	All	September-October

### Meeting materials posted to [Sage Con website](#)

- [Final Draft Agenda](#)
- [GSG Action Plan Overview](#)
- [Overview of the Conservation Efforts Database for OR SageCon](#)
- [CED Screen Captures](#)
- [ODFW Fire Summary](#)

## Brief Meeting Summary

### **Welcome from Conveners**

- NRCS has secured \$2 million dollars in additional funding in Oregon to continue working towards sage grouse conservation goals by supporting work on the ground in partnership with local landowners. NRCS has also put forth a proposal to the Regional Partnership Program with OACD to provide funding for five years under the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP). The decision on whether the proposal gets funding or not is made at the national level.
- The Governor's Office reflected on the progress made over the last four years. Initial discussions around renewable energy siting through the Renewable Energy Eastern Oregon Conservation Partnership. The folks in the room today addressing invasives, fires, habitat issues and looking broadly to provide a solid foundation for public and private landowners to recognize sage grouse as an asset. Recognize that we are all working towards integrating state and federal planning efforts to share with USFWS and regardless of their decision, we've made a lot of progress together.
- BLM, USFS and USFWS recently held a Federal Family meeting in Portland focused on sage grouse efforts across the great basin region which included 5 state directors and all of the planning managers for the RMP process. Reminder that federal and state plans will be measured against the best science and will require literature citation for establishing best management practices and monitoring efforts. The [COT report](#) continues to be stressed as a guide for building the baseline to measure the efficacy of sage grouse conservation around PAC's. Reminded that if we are successful at addressing the threats to sage grouse, we could begin to move the needle the other way on USFWS's previous determination that the species is "warranted but precluded."
- After the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain Basin federal coordination meetings occur, there will be meetings with the states to likewise align planning efforts and flag any disagreements.
- In Oregon, BLM on track to come out with state proposed plan by the end of the year with a concurrent 30 day public review period and a 60 day Governor's consistency review.
- On August 28, 2014 BLM distributed a Draft Instruction Memorandum directing state directors across great basin to form a Fire Invasives and Assessment Team (FIAT) to be completed by January 2015 to quantify conservation actions. (re: FIAT – heard Mike say that the FIAT assessments will look at fuels, habitat recovery and restoration. Will cover fairly large geographies likely in the Vale and Lakeview Districts for Oregon. The lead for these assessments is out of the N. California BLM office.
- Basinwide, BLM is hosting a November 5-7th workshop to review fire and invasives techniques and strategies for addressing threats on the ground and through fire management policy in relation to the sagebrush ecosystem.
- Announced August 19, 2014 the [Arctic Grayling no longer requires federal protection under the ESA](#). This is a success story for collaboration to implement conservation on private lands. Jeff Everett was instrumental in developing the CCAA's for the Arctic Grayling and we are fortunate to have him in Oregon working with private landowners to develop conservation agreements towards sage grouse protection for our state. Jeff shared that the CCAA's were developed over 10 years, leveraging about 1 million dollars on average per year and that the landowners did the heavy lifting on implementation to improve the habitat and health of the species.
- Bobby Brunoe of Warm Springs expressed the need to engage tribal entities in both the BLM and Oregon State Plan. Both BLM and Oregon committed to following up to schedule these discussions to involve tribal interests. USFWS expressed interest in being supportive and responsive to answer questions and help tribes move forward on their lands about sage grouse conservation.

### **Land Use Policy Coordination**

The State plan is focused on 30% of the land base where sage grouse are present (as 70% of the land under review is owned by BLM). The COT report outlines major threats for Oregon as fire and invasives. In regards to land use

and disturbance questions, partners are working with the state to narrow down and define potential development threats. Counties have an excellent report on the historic trends of development, showing the state's land use system and its administration at the local level has been successful at limiting sprawl and development. Residential development likewise has been contained within the UGB's and there is not a significant threat for large residential development. Ranching/rangeland issues being addressed through CCAA's in place through the partnerships with BLM, DSL, OACD, Harney County, NRCS, OCA and local landowners. Working through what the remaining land uses are that need to be addressed to document protection for sage grouse to USFWS.

The Policy Focus Group has formed to work through land use policy and implementation questions with representation from private landowners, Oregon Farm Bureau, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, AOC, renewable energy developers, county planners, state agencies, etc. We'd also like to include tribal representatives in future discussions. Shifting focus from "disturbance cap" to what is the development threshold we need to set for monitoring purposes to ensure we are not impacting the bird with major development. In addition there is a need to build a monitoring system that tracks cumulative impacts from a variety of uses. Need to leave open economic future for eastern Oregon and meet sage grouse conservation needs.

- Concern about the timing and application of ODFW (sage grouse? Or other maps?) maps to set policy, need to be clear about mapping protocol if building standards are determined by ODFW maps.
- The Nature Conservancy is developing soil maps to show potential areas for ag conversion, working with county extension offices to access best available data.

### **State ALAT Plan Outline Update**

Holly Michael is leading the development of the state's GSG Action Plan to document conservation efforts moving forward through partnerships. The outline has been updated to reflect alignment with the [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#) (adopted by the Oregon Fish and Game Commission in 2006 and approved by the USFWS), as well as the need to tell the story of working landscapes. See [GSG Action Plan Overview](#) presentation for more information.

### **Overview and Demo of the Conservation Efforts Database**

Kathy Hollar, USFWS and Justin Welty, USGS presented a walkthrough of the purpose and process for gaining access to the Conservation Efforts Database to upload data for projects that document conservation actions across the range through a map-based system for USFWS review. USFWS is working through how to buffer landowner data to protect private information. For details, see Kathy's [Overview of the CED](#) presentation and Justin's CED presentation.

### **Wildfire Discussion**

- Fire is a major threat not only in Oregon but across the Great Basin. In 2014, we had 18 large fires covering approximately 432,227 acres, 148,000 acres of which were in core areas. For more data information for 2014 Oregon fires, see Jackie Cupples [Fire Summary presentation](#).
- Despite the numbers, most fire starts are suppressed. Need to recognize all the positive efforts in suppressing fires at a small size, not only the large fires that got away. We will continue to talk through ongoing efforts to improve suppression, strategic response and jurisdictional coordination/liability issues to reduce fire threats in relation to sage grouse and the communities in Eastern Oregon.
- BLM's Director Neal Kornze recognizing Oregon's unique Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA) as a model that other states can learn from to coordinate across federal and nonfederal lands and utilize local knowledge to fight fires on the ground.
- Unprotected lands important issue in the 2014 fire season. 2004 there was a work group to discuss these issues but still some unresolved protocol questions. There remain 3 million acres of unprotected private land with no jurisdictional agency determined to provide fire protection. One discussion point concerns funding for range fire protection – all landowners presently do not pay into a fund for these services. Many provide in-kind efforts and oftentimes equipment and fuel. . Need to consider having more secure funding

for RPAs to firefight the same way ODF does for protected forest lands. RFPA's authorized under Board of Forestry, looking to amplify funding resources available to RFPA's.

- Greatest value of RFPA is in the initial attack, BLM also valuable in initial attack. Whoever gets their first puts fire start out. Need protocols when fires get dangerous between federal and state resources. Oregon MOU between BLM and RFPA states that incident management teams can be integrated. In reality, there may not be a lot of issues around fire response between Oregon BLM districts and local folks. It's the firefighters from other areas that have difficulty coordinating with RFPA's because of the lack of understanding of Oregon's RFPA protection system.
- Review of Buzzard Fire with Vale District manager – fire was on 50% BLM, 30% private, 20% DSL. Coordination went well. If threat to RFPA protected lands, the RFPAs can be actively engaged in suppressing the fire.
- DSL lands are members of all RFPA's and pay dues accordingly. Suppression contract with BLM and they send us a bill on a regular basis for those services.
- In SE corner of state, unprotected land are isolated – it's difficult to imagine how we'll cover that geography when it could take up to 2 hours to reach that area with inadequate roads and lack of infrastructure to service them.
- Prevention an issue that should continue to be part of the investment discussion. Fire breaks and weed management control. Counties have strong weed control boards that can provide data to BLM for their FIAT assessment. Counties also have Wildfire protection Plans that should be considered.
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs had over 7,000 acres burns this year on the reservation where 3 endangered species have habitat. Requested a Type 1 fire team but was sent a Type 2 fire team and told that there were structures and sage grouse habitat at risk that was taking up the Type 1 fire team capacity. Wanted to bring this to the attention of the group, sage grouse is already a priority even though its listing status is "warranted but precluded."
- Governor's plan developing for fire suppression expands ODF strategy across forestland and rangeland. Want to meet with legislative leaders to understand where investments could be made considering the limited pot of resources available now.

## **Partnership Updates**

### **CCAA's**

- Harney SWCD has drafted the first site specific plan which is currently in internal review; seven additional plans are in development and should be completed very soon.
- An EA will soon be posted on the federal register for a programmatic CCAA for the rest of the eastern Oregon Counties
- The DSL CCAA is nearing completion for approximately 614,000 acres of state grazing allotments, and an EA is in development for that project as well.
- Project partners are working hard to complete both processes by the end of this calendar year.

### **Bird Seed Tax**

- Reminder there is still interest in developing a revenue stream for bird conservation that could provide some allocation of funds to sage grouse. For the bird seed tax to be viable, need to move proposal forward for legislative consideration.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### Conveners

Mike Haske, BLM

Ron Alvarado, NRCS

Participants

Andrew Shields, Roaring Springs Ranch  
Ann Beier, Crook County  
Bobby Brunoe, Warm Springs  
Bob Sallinger, Audobon  
Bob Skinner, OCA  
Brett Brownscombe, Governor's Natural Resource Office  
Brandon McMullen, Harney County  
Bruce Taylor, Defenders of Wildlife  
Cathy Macdonald, TNC  
Chip Dale, ODFW  
Dan Hilburn, ODA  
Dan Morse, ONDA  
Dawn Davis, USFWS  
Darwin Johnson, Lake County  
Dede Steele, USFS  
Gordon Foster, ODF  
Isaac Sanders, DOGAMI  
Jackie Cupples, ODFW  
Jay Kerby, TNC  
Jeff Everett, USFWS  
John O'Keefe, OCA  
Jon Jinings, DLCD  
Judge Steve Grasty, Harney County  
Kyle Williams, ODF  
Lanny Quackenbush, DSL  
Lynn Sharp, Renewable Northwest  
Mark Nystrom, AOC  
Mark Saelans, OACD  
Marvin Vetter, ODF  
Meta Looftsgaarden, OWEB  
Mia Shepphard, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Mike Freese, OFB  
Paul Henson, USFWS  
Robert Welch, Wild Sheep Foundation  
Sara O'Brien, Willamette Partnership  
Stacey Davies, OCA (Roaring Springs Ranch)  
Shauna Ginger, USFWS  
Tim Barnes, BLM  
Travis Medema, ODF

By Phone

Brian Fritz, Pacificorp  
Christian Jilek, ODOT  
Glenn Frederick, BLM  
Megan Decker, Renewable Northwest  
Sandra Ackley, BPA  
Zola Ryan, Harney SWCD

### Staff

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