

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership  
**FROM:** Julia Babcock, Oregon Solutions Staff  
**SUBJECT:** December 12, 2014 SageCon Draft Meeting Notes

This memo follows up on the December 12, 2014 meeting of the Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership. The memo includes the following: (1) upcoming meetings calendar and (2) brief meeting summary and (3) attendance list.

**Upcoming 2015 Meetings**

Date	Meeting	Location	Potential Agenda Items
January-July Every two weeks starting January 12	Core Team Meetings	Portland	Share updates to align federal and state planning processes
January 22-23, 2015	LCDC Meeting	Portland	To initiate state rulemaking process
January 27-28th	OWEB Board Meeting	Astoria	To provide update on SageCon Partnership and express interest in aligning state plan with Focused Investment Partnership. Opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback on suggestions during public comment. More information here: <a href="http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP_Priorities.aspx">http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP_Priorities.aspx</a>
January TBD	SageCon Partnership	TBD	State plan review process.

**\*\*\*Reminder a calendar will be posted and up to date on the Oregon Explorer SageCon Website here:**  
<http://oregonexplorer.info/SageConCalendar>

Meeting materials posted to Sage Con website

- [Final Draft Agenda](#)
- [Department of Corrections-Prison Locations](#)
- [Initial DRAFT ALAT Section 1](#)
- [Initial DRAFT ALAT Section 5 \(Fire and Invasives\)](#)
- [Initial DRAFT ALAT Section 6 \(Mitigation\)](#)

## Action Items

Action Item	Who	Date
Send out second draft of plan with timeline and protocol for contributing comments.	Governor's Office	January 2015
Develop more detailed timeline and meeting schedule.	Jamie	January 2015
Form Communication Team to develop clear talking points and messaging around the Partnership's planning and implementation efforts.	Core Team	January 2015
Initiate rulemaking process through LCDC and FWC.	Governor's Office	January 2015

## Brief Meeting Summary

### *Welcome from Conveners*

- Thank you from Mike Haske and Richard Whitman for all the work being put forth by folks around the room. It has been a tremendous effort getting to this point with a lot of work to be done in 2015. Full steam ahead.
- Ron Alvarado was out sick, Jeremy Maestas and Zola Ryan were in attendance to answer questions and provide updates as appropriate.
- Brett Brownscombe announced that he will be serving in an interim Deputy Director position for ODFW. More information here: <http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2014/11/24/fish-wildlife-gets-new-interim-deputy-director/70053468/>

### *Federal Planning Update*

#### **BLM-Mike Haske**

- Working to provide USFWS strongest package by being regionally coordinated. Ten issues working through on a high level across BLM including mitigation, adaptive management and monitoring as well as how to maintain populations that cross state lines.
- The Resource Management Plans are delayed, partially because of the work to stay regionally coordinated. Proposed RMP revisions should be available Spring 2015 with the Record of Decision (ROD) expected late Spring/Summer 2015.

## **USFWS-Jeff Everett**

The Continuing Resolution passed by Congress on December 11, 2014 contains a Sage Grouse Rider which prohibits the use of USFWS funds to list sage grouse in 2015. It will not prevent the analysis (CED, Species Report, etc.) USFWS conducts leading up to a listing decision but does prohibit funding to publish conclusion. The Committee has recognized unprecedented collaboration for sage grouse work and wanted to provide more time for on-the-ground conservation and monitoring activities. The provision is not intended to impede current conservation efforts. BLM was allocated \$15 million dollars out of appropriated funding for implementation work. Oregon's share around 1.2 million which will be allocated out to districts. BLM moving forward with plan amendments. *These are not official Department of Interior talking points, more information to come when the official language is released.*

- (Post meeting note) Article in Capital Press December 16, 2014 on [Sage Grouse initiatives protected from Congressional spending block](#)
- [Statement by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell on the Sage-Grouse Rider in the FY15 Omnibus Bill](#)

State and Federal partners in Oregon maintain the message that we aren't slowing down our efforts. Senator Merkley's Office working to bring in additional dollars to support this work for hazardous fuels funding.

Note: Paul Henson is on a short-term detail in Hawaii through Mid-January.

## ***Governor's Budget***

Context: The State's general fund for natural resource agencies has been on the decline over the last 15 years. Within the last few years its reached below 1% of state general funds. With this biennium the Governor's Office started to change that trend to allocate more funding for natural resource issues. July 2015, series of proposed investments by Governor with three major areas of new investment; working farms and forests, clean water partnership and integrated water management. Working Farms and Forest, continues work on drysde forests. Specifically for sage grouse conservation work, there is a set of proposed investments just under 4.5 million dollars. This represents a significant amount of money for general fund dollars (which are highly competitive). The Governor's request is symbolically significant to show state investment in new and existing partnerships with BLM, OWEB, NRCS, and others to leverage resources for sage grouse conservation. Understand there is a need much higher than the amount of money that state can provide including longterm strategies for fire and invasives.

Funding efforts target:

- Rural Fire Protection Association for technical training and equipment to increase their capacity. Oregon's RFPA's serve as a leading model for other states, working to help close gaps and expand efforts.
- Strategic approach to fire in coordination with BLM and NRCS to achieve the most impact on the ground. Includes fire ecologists and wildlife biologists working together to address fire cycle and identify pre and post fire work as well as suppression.
- OR invasives council to focus on invasive and noxious weeds in sagebrush habitat.
- ODFW and DLCD positions to administer program and maintaining central database.
- Eastern Oregon counties to support local program efforts.

Reminder, the Governor is proposing this budget but the legislature makes the final decision. It will be a 5-6 month period working with the legislature and we will need support from all partners at the table.

In addition the Governor's Office is working to support several concurrent funding efforts:

- OWEB has funding available through the Focused Investment Partnership Program. The State is looking for support from SageCon from diverse partners to move goals in sagebrush habitat forward through this multiyear, multipartner opportunity.
- Wild Bird Seed Tax to advance bird conservation and include % for sage grouse could be moving forward. Would require more than 50% majority for new revenue tax bill—will need bipartisan support. Concerted effort to create new revenue source for bird conservation.

- At the OCA Meeting 12/5-6 OCA passed a resolution to move forward with a legislative concept similar to the bird seed tax on salt and mineral tax with a target to raise around \$400,000. Working through the details with membership.

### ***Recent Meetings Debrief***

- **11/14 LCDC Meeting** Discussed with Commission what rulemaking process might look like, informed them on process and answered questions. Had presentations from Jon Jinings (DLCD), Brett Brownscombe (GNRO), Theresa Burcsu (INR), Jon O’Keefe (OCA), Megan Decker (Renewable Northwest), Jamie Damon (INR) and Eric Rickerson (ODFW). Next meeting will be January 22, 2015 LCDC meeting to start rulemaking and hoping for Partnership presentation from BLM, USFWS, NRCS and GNRO. Between then and now putting together rule advisory committee with representation from each county as well as other SageCon Partners. Contact Jon Jinings if you are interested. Staff report available here: [http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/meetings/lcdc/111314/Item\\_13\\_Sage\\_Grouse\\_Final.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/docs/meetings/lcdc/111314/Item_13_Sage_Grouse_Final.pdf)
- **11/21 AOC County Meeting**-Had attendance from every sage grouse county (plus Representative Bentz) including counties with historic range and even spotted owl counties interested in the issues. Jerry Perez from BLM was there and Paul Henson from USFWS to answer questions as well as all AOC Officers. Several hours, talked through county concerns and holding a follow up meeting today to discuss path forward for rulemaking and local county processes. Continue to show (as documented in county land use report) that the counties have done well to this point to limit development in sage grouse habitat, working with them to provide assurance for future development. Remaining questions including historic range factors to be addressed.
- **12/1 Policy Focus Group**-Discussion focused around stakeholder engagement and planning for the upcoming 12/12 SageCon meeting.
- **12/5 Fish and Wildlife Commission**-Discussed existing Conservation Strategy and anticipated changes to align with state plan and broader mitigation efforts.
- **12/5 Western Governor’s Association Meeting**-Two resolutions moving forward one on public grazing and the second on wild horses (only partially related to sage grouse). Secretary Jewell spoke about how sage grouse issues have bipartisan benefits for rural economies and communities. She also spoke highly of visit to Oregon including visit to John O’Keefe’s ranch and Beatty’s Butte example. Oregon part of national discussion at secretary level being noticed. *Working to get audio copy.* There will be a WGA CHAT, Compass and habitat connectivity meeting in Bend on mapping tools. Follow up info to SageCon Partnership.
- **12/6 Oregon Cattlemens Association Meeting**-Shared personal stories around signing up for CCAA’s . Public Lands Committee passed resolution for surcharge/tax mechanism, similar support in membership meeting (not unanimous). Difficult to tax folks who will be taxed for an issue not within 100 miles of their land. Cautiously optimistic moving forward.
- **Comment:** Working through Bird Seed Tax has had many setbacks, believe with OCA on board will be more likely to build political traction.
- **12/10 Conservation-Focused Meeting**- Wide representation from hunting/sportsman to environmental ngo’s. Impressed with representation, first time engaged that group of stakeholders. Waited to bring together this group, because waiting for firmer concepts to discuss and also we’ve had conservation representatives at the table all along at different levels. Hunter groups talked about dollars and how to work with the partnership to define their role in LIT’s and how to utilize their funding to help with sage grouse conservation. OHA chapters all over the state and looing to partner. ONDA asking about how connectivity being addressed for habitat and genetic diversity. Heard still working through that issue in plan. All waiting to review details, will continue to engage this group. **Reminder,** *USFWS Director Ashe sent BLM Director Kornze letter outlining particularly important areas across range for conservation. Would like to see state plan and BLM address those important areas.*
- **12/11 Energy/Utility Meeting**-Had good representation of energy and utility companies to discuss questions and comments. Staying informed and engaged, especially around mitigation.

## ***Review of Initial Draft of Plan***

- First, the Governor's Office wants to acknowledge significant work and contributions from people around the table, many of you have authored these sections that are being knit together. Secondly, we want to acknowledge there is a lot yet to be incorporated and finalized. The purpose in getting out an initial draft this week was to provide folks a sense of where we are heading. Next step, we will send out a revised draft with instructions on how to provide feedback/comments.
- Section 5 (formerly Chapter 5) Fire and Invasives section documents the progress Oregon has made to date and sets ecological framework based on resistance and resilience model to show where to prioritize funding and implementation actions to break negative feedback loop between fire and invasives in the future. For example, juniper removal should occur in Phase I and Phase II habitat (below 10% coverage) where sage brush habitat is most likely to recover. More work to do in action development knitted with NRCS and BLM on primary threats. Opportunity to learn from recent fires as well as align with BLM's FIAT process when the analysis is complete.
  - Roberta Angelozzi, Operations Program Manager for Oregon Department of Corrections has been working with the Governor's Office and Judge Grasty to explore opportunities for prison work crews to assist in restoration work such as juniper removal. Roberta shared a map of prison locations overlaid over sage grouse habitat and said ODOC is open to be part of the partnership.
  - Snake River Correctional Institution inmates have been successful in planting in sage brush habitat in partnership with BLM. Related article here: <http://www.doi.gov/employees/news/blm-prison-inmates-help-save-sage-grouse-by-growing-sagebrush-for-bureau-of-land-management-administered-lands.cfm>
- Section 6 has been developed by the Mitigation Technical Team with Sara O'Brien from Willamette Partnership as the lead writer. Intent to build mitigation policy as part of tracking and accounting system across BLM and nonBLM to help advance and manage full implementation of the plan. Work done to date develops strong framework around how existing ODFW policy could be implemented, may require some modification as LCDC and FWC rule evolves. The next big step is forming a quantification tool to assess functional acres.

## Discussion

- Important for funders such as OWEB to see metrics in plan that can be impacted by specific actions. Looks as though state is getting there with fire and invasives to set targets.
- Suggestion from Tony Svejcar to introduce conservation approach including State and Transition Model in Chapter 4 to ensure the plan has continuity in its goals and logic.
- The Nature Conservancy is taking scientific look at practices and how benefits are quantified over time to inform plan. Specifically, working to integrate information into quantification tool for mitigation as well as develop Decision Support System for planning future investments.
- The Next Steppe meeting in Boise (November 2014) and the recent OCA meetings demonstrate interest in working through SageCon to start dialogue around emergency stabilization and rehabilitation planning long term around reseeding and how to move that forward. Noting that short-term emergency work required within 21 days from when incidence occurs for BLM, want to work together to be more strategic.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### Conveners

Mike Haske, BLM  
Richard Whitman, Governor's Natural Resource Office  
Brett Brownscombe, Governor's Natural Resource Office

### Participants

Andrew Shields, Roaring Springs Ranch  
Bill Zelenka, Crook County  
Bob Sallinger, Audobon  
Brandon McMullen, Harney County  
Bruce Taylor, OJHV  
Cathy Macdonald, TNC  
Christian Hagen  
Christina Santana, Harney SWCD  
Clay Penhollow, Warm Springs  
Dan Morse, ONDA  
Dawn Davis, USFWS  
Dede Steele, USFS  
Gordon Foster, ODF  
Isaac Sanders, DOGAMI  
Jackie Cupples, ODFW  
Jeff Everett, USFWS  
Jennifer Siani, USFWS  
Jeremy Maestas, NRCS  
John O'Keefe, OCA  
Jon Jinings, DLCD  
Judge Perry, Wheeler County  
Judge Steve Grasty, Harney County  
Lanny Quackenbush, DSL  
Margi Hoffman, GNRO  
Marty Suter, Harney SWCD  
Meta Looftsgaarden, OWEB  
Mia Shepphard, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Mike Freese, OFB  
Nick Lelack, Deschutes County  
Paul Henson, USFWS  
Phil Chang, Senator Merkley's Office  
Robin Estes, BLM  
Robert Welsh, FNAWS  
Roberta Angelozzi, ODOC  
Sara O'Brien, Willamette Partnership  
Stacey Davies, OCA (Roaring Springs Ranch)  
Shauna Ginger, USFWS  
Stu Garrett, Native Plant Society of Oregon  
Susan Haupt, ODOT  
Tim Barnes, BLM  
Zola Ryan, Harney SWCD

By Phone

Bob Sallinger, Audobon  
Brandon McMullen, Harney County  
Brian Fritz, Pacificorp  
Christian Jilek, ODOT  
Eric Rickerson, ODFW  
Hillary Barbour, Renewable Northwest  
Holly Michael, ODFW  
Isaac Sanders, DOGAMI  
Jason Kesling, Burns Pauite  
Joan Suther, BLM  
Jon Chattell, USFS  
Judith Callens, ODA  
Ken Mayer, WAFWA  
Lynn Sharp, Renewable Northwest  
Ron Cole, Refuge Association  
Sandra Ackley, BPA  
Sara O'Brien, WP  
Todd Corenett, ODOE

Staff

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