

Executive Committee Meeting Notes
April 7-8, 2010

Due to road conditions, the agenda and tour was adjusted to accommodate a late start and those who were unable to travel. A conference call was set up. Cheryl Chatham, Brian Kelly, Daniel Blake, Genevieve Skora, Pat Deibert and Jason Fearneyhough participated via conference call.

Round Robin

Frank D'Erchia – A few USGS personnel and Renee and Justin from the Coordination Team met with USGS directors in Washington DC. They highlighted the WLCI program and the need for additional funding to support the science needs in the WLCI area. Frank would like agencies and partners to send letters of support for WLCI to USGS officials.

John Emmerich for Steve Ferrell – Steve will serve on the steering committee for the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC). WLCI is within the Great Northern LCC and has been identified as an example on how this large LCC could operate. WLCI could use the LCC as a tool and possible source to leverage funds. The Forest Service has funds available for landscape restoration. John will be attending the Collaborative Landscape Restoration Project meeting on May 12th in Laramie.

Don Simpson – Expressed concerns that the large size and lack of coordination between agencies will hinder the effectiveness of the LCC. He thinks that WLCI could be a template for the LCC and that there would be supplemental funds from the LCC for sage-grouse projects. He asked if WLCI had a relationship with the local sage-grouse working groups and thought they would be a good source for project information if funds were to become available. The Coordination Team responded that there is a working relationship with the working groups and when possible a member of the Coordination Team attends their meetings.

Cheryl Chatham – Cheryl will be representing the Forest Service on the Executive Committee. She is new to her position and looks forward to learning more about WLCI. She stated that there will be two FS supervisors retiring in May and those positions will be filled as soon as possible.

Mary Thoman – The Sweetwater Co. Conservation District is continuing to work through the issues with the Bitter Creek Pierotto Ditch project. She participated in a call with Pat Anderson on the WLCI Conservation Plan. She wanted to make sure the conservation plan is a ground-up plan and that it does not have a single species focus and that science is used in the process. Mary informed us that Lincoln County received money from the stewardship program for a project in the Upper Hams Fork. She also mentioned that Mr. and Mrs. Tratnik have great interest and knowledge about sage-grouse and would be a good resource for activities concerning sage-grouse.

John Linn – County budgets have been drastically cut, which will be difficult for some counties. He would like to point out the contributions the Sublette County agriculture industry has made to the success in the area's habitat viability. He considers predators to be the cause of many problems with grouse and suspects that the listing of the sage-grouse will have many socio-economic effects. He is supportive of the use of short-term leases as a way to conserve habitat and believes it will allow monies to be spread further, and will enable the land managers to control land use more effectively. He is uncertain of the usefulness of conservation easements and the efficacy of land management with easements. There was some disagreement on this point which led to the question of who could hold leases and what are the technical/administrative issues associated with them. The Executive Committee would like a presentation on this issue at a later date.

Brian Kelly – The sage-grouse finding was issued as ‘warranted but precluded’. The agenda LCC update item will be given on Thursday morning at the continuation of the Executive Committee meeting. He did note that FWS has funding for the LCC’s and is committed to making the program work. Strategic conservation is embedded in LCC’s and it will be complementary to the work of WLCI.

Jason Fearnelyhough could not attend as he was stuck in road closures.

John Emmerich gave a state of the state update.

There is a hiring freeze for all state agencies until 2012. Budgets are flat however; the state legislature approved the new aquatic species invasive program. This program targets quagga and zebra mussels. These invasives are not currently found in the state but are in neighboring states. The program will place a fee on boats to help fund inspections and education. Aquatic invasive species are fast growing and can completely change an aquatic system.

RC&D LiDAR

Approximately 850 square miles will be surveyed in south Lincoln County in a priority 1 area. This area was picked due to the soil surveys being done in the area. The resolution is approximately two feet. The flight will be done as soon as the snow cover is gone and before the trees leaf. There is still time to make add-ons if other agencies would like to fund the difference of the add-ons. This survey data will be used for elevation and land form models. The data end product will be usable and available to the public this fall. The Sublette County NRCS office will hold the data. The question of whether post processing will include other useful data was uncertain. This started as an RC&D project but is no longer so.

Catalog of Projects

All previous comments and suggestions were included in this version. The Executive Committee approved this version but asked to have a date or version number included to make sure they could be assured of the correct version when they printed it out for their outreach use. They agreed with having the state BLM office provide input into the layout but want to make sure the catalog can be printed easily and revisions could be made as needed in the future.

Year-end Report

Because of different fiscal years the 2009 reports are slowly trickling in, when all the reports are available the comprehensive report will be made.

Team Reports

Monitoring Team – The team has compiled the monitoring data. It has been sent to STAC for review. They are continuing the work on frequently asked or project related questions. This document, when complete, will refer to applicable BMPs or lessons learned. Members of the LPDTs will be the primary customers for the data but it will be available to the public. This information will be made available through the WLCI web page. John Emmerich asked to have WLCI science documents sent to him to use at an upcoming LCC meeting. This will be coordinated with Pat Anderson.

Coordination Team – The quarterly accomplishments were in the handouts. The budget allocations were also in the handouts. This handout reflected BLM dollars and did not include FWS Partner or USGS Science dollars. The use of USGS funds will be reported in the USGS annual report. The Executive Committee would like a report that includes FWS Partner funded projects.

The next round of LPDT meeting will be to discuss and prioritize 2011 proposed projects. The ranking criterion was adjusted to help eliminate the multiple ranking ties of 2010. The Executive Committee was asked to review the criteria and provide comments by April 21, 2010. The Coordination Team was asked to do a sample run from the 2010 projects to make sure the changes in the criteria will be effective.

Conservation Plan

Due to the late start time, a more in-depth discussion on this topic was postponed to a later date. The Table of Contents will be available for the next Executive Committee meeting. The purpose of the plan is to serve as a road map on the what, where, how and when for the initiative. It will help to strategically focus the work for the next 5 years.

Stream Gage

Dave Mott gave a powerpoint presentation on background and organization of the USGS stream gage program. This is an on-going, long-term program. The information is used to manage water, biological, energy and mineral resources. The Wyoming Water Science Center website has information on the work that is being performed and includes a WLCI tab that highlights their work in the area.

Wind Energy Presentation

The main focus is the effects of wind energy on sage-grouse. Very little research has been done on the impacts of wind energy. The studies that are available show that other species, such as prairie chickens, demonstrate some level of avoidance and/or lower productivity but others show no avoidance. Bottom line is quality research is needed to determine impacts of wind energy on sage grouse in particular as well as other species of wildlife. A research collaborative made up of agency, industry, NGO and academics has been initiated to direct replicated sage grouse research on 3 or 4 sites across multiple states using pooled resources. The WGFD spent two years researching, drafting, accepting public comment and finalizing a set of wildlife protection recommendations for wind development in Wyoming. The recommendations will be considered for adoption by the WGFC at their April 23 Commission meeting..

Thursday, April 8, 2010 – Continuation of meeting

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC) Presentation

Brian Kelly provided an overview of the LCC Program. It is a nationwide program to focus on landscape conservation. LCCs operate at a very large scale, with the purpose of providing additional science capacity and coordinated conservation. The Great Northern LCC was funded this year. It is moving forward and will have growing pains as they coordinate and make necessary adjustments in the program. The LCC boundaries are based on ecosystems, but selection of exact boundaries of the LCCs was not explained. However, there is some intent to have work across those boundaries. The first GNLCC steering committee meeting will be April 21, 2010 and question or comments on the GNLCC should be directed to Yvette_converse@fws.gov or Stephen_Zylastra@fws.gov. The Executive Committee would like to have somebody from the GNLCC attend an Executive Committee meeting and provide additional information.

LiDAR Update

Steve Germaine gave a brief update on the status of his LiDAR work. After the discussion from the January meeting, Steve figured a cost breakdown. Acquisition was \$150,000 for 500 square miles or \$300 per square mile or \$ 0.47 per acre. Post processing is being done in-house by Wes Newton for \$30,000 saving about 50% of the post processing costs. Field work costs are \$33,000, making a grand total cost of \$460 per square mile or \$0.66 per acre. Post processing should be done by the end of April

and ground validation should begin in June. Funds for the 2010 work are available through internal USGS sources. No WLCI money has been used thus far. Funds for the 2011 field season are needed.

Website Update

Natalie Latysh showed the group some of the changes to the WLCI website. This will be an on-going process. DIMT would like to include more data in the ScienceBase program. The initial data was collected with a shotgun approach and they now see the need for specific data to be included. A request for a contact name from each of the agencies was given with the reminder that data can be restricted as needed. The website improvements have been made as comments are provided. Please continue to provide these comments for continued improvements.

Science Update

The annual report is in its final draft form and will go out for review next week. A presentation on how the information from the Integrated Assessment could be used.

BLM Wyoming Management Leadership Meeting

Mary Thoman, John Linn, Jason Fearneyhough and Dan Blake (representing Brian Kelly) as well as Steve Jester from the Nature Conservancy will be on a board for a panel discussion for this meeting held on April 22, 2010 in Rock Springs.

Hydro Geomorphology Presentation

This presentation was given by Mickey Hietmeyer who will be doing the hydro geomorphology for Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of hydro geomorphology is to identify the historic conditions and ecological process, evaluate changes from historic conditions and identify restoration and management options and ecological attributes needed to restore and manage specific habitats.

Annual Change of Chair and Election of 2nd Vice Chair

The chairmanship was passed from John Linn to Brian Kelly. John was thanked for his year of service. Steve Ferrell was moved to 1st Vice Chair and Mary Thoman was elected to 2nd Vice Chair.

Next Meeting

July 8-9th – Lyman - Brian would like to continue with the field trips as part of the meetings. The field trip will be on July 8th and meeting portion on July 9th.

Next meeting – October 13-14, 2010 suggested venue-Saratoga

Tour

A much abbreviated tour took place to show the cottonwood projects that are taking place on Seedskaadee NWR and Weeping Rocks Campground to highlight the stream gage and youth conservation work being done.

Action Items

- Prepare information about conservation leases, permanent vs term including information about who can hold a permanent or term lease and other issues or concerns associated with them. Have a presentation on this during a future meeting. This process will be addressed as part of the conservation planning. *Coordination Team*
- Prepare document on WLCI science needs and provide to John Emmerich for LCC meetings. *Pat Anderson*
- Prepare a budget report of BLM and FWS Partner funding. *Coordination Team*

- Provide comments on ranking criteria by April 21st. *Executive Committee*
- Conduct an assessment of the revised point system of the ranking criteria to determine its effectiveness to provide separation of final scores. *Coordination Team*
- Invite GNLCC coordinator to an Executive Committee meeting and to give a presentation. *Brian Kelly/Dan Blake*
- Supply a contact name for agency data collections to DIMT. *Executive Committee and STAC*