

Sweetwater LPDT Meeting

Friday, February 7, 2014

Project Updates:

Gooseberry Creek Headcut Structures – Nick Walrath (Trout Unlimited): Project was completed in June 2013. The goal was to fix two large headcuts on a tributary to Gooseberry Creek. They were repaired with rock structures. Muley Fanatics Foundation donated fencing materials and the Ramsey's helped build fencing. The Green River High School class planted willows.

Russian Olive/Tamarisk Project – Kevin Spence (WGFD): They treated Russian olive and tamarisk from Seedskadee to I-80 and then some south of I-80. Approximately 30 acres were treated (20 miles). The Rocket Miner and the Green River newspaper both printed articles about this project. Kevin mentioned that the city of Green River has re-treated 5 miles of the Green Belt. They are doing native tree and shrub plantings. Also, Alan (City of Green River) thinks that there is another grant they can get to provide funding to plant more trees. They can use funding any time before the freeze; mid-year would be good.

7-Mile Gulch: Approximately 7 acres were fenced. The local sage-grouse working group paid for the fencing to a flowing well.

The Muley Fanatics provided fencing for two other projects – Black Butte Spring and Gooseberry Creek.

Russian Olive/Tamarisk: Treated from Fontanelle Dam down to the inflow area of Flaming Gorge Dam. Field Services and Weed Control LLC were hired to complete this work.

Green River Task Force (Carolyn Liedtke): The Task Force is looking at a pathway. They believe this will help alleviate the dumping in the area. Additionally, they are conducting a bird survey and have a biologist on-board who will be completing a plant survey of the area.

18-Mile Well – Justin Caudill (WY Department of Agriculture): The fence around the water source was completed in 2011. Fencing around an area of about 25-26 acres has been started. A crew has set posts for the fence. A crew will finish up with the cross-beams once additional pipe material is available. Also, Justin noted that when he was at the site last October, he saw 6 trumpeter swans on the water.

Bitter Creek Restoration – Mary Thoman (Conservation Districts): The County is very involved with Anadarko on this project. Sweetwater County is exploring their options. They are looking at either buying or leasing the land around the Bitter Creek headcut. They will have a new application submitted for the May meeting.

Threat Assessment for the Red Desert to Hoback (RD2H) Mule Deer Migration – Bill Rudd (UW): Matt Zornes (WGFD) spoke about this project. The project tracking spreadsheet incorrectly showed that they would not be allocated any money for FY14. The WLCI EC approved up to \$9,000. The final amount is dependent on ranked position and available funds. The spreadsheet will be updated. This project has been tracking GPS-collared mule deer for 2

years. They are looking at the migration route from Superior over to South of Jackson (Snake River). It is a narrow migration corridor. The deer go up to South Pass, then cross the highway. From there, they walk up the side of the highway to Granite Creek. Highway 28 is a big hindrance to the migration. Eventually, they are looking at putting an over- or underpass on Highway 28. Bill Rudd is retired WGFD, now works for U of Wyo and West Ecosystems.

New Project Proposals:

Mary Thoman (Conservation Districts): Mary stated that we should look at Little Mountain. The Conservation District has applied for funding for some projects on Little Mountain. Unfortunately, the project has not received funding at this time.

Joshua Coursey (Muley Fanatics Foundation): They are pursuing working with a University of Wyoming Co-op Unit on a PhD project involving research on deer and elk ecology. The project would look at how deer and elk are using the area and the movement of the animals across the state lines. Mary Thoman suggested that this project be presented to Sweetwater County for a grant.

Joshua also mentioned that the MFF has a contract with R&M Welding for steel-jack fencing. If anyone needed assistance with fencing, please contact Joshua.

Nick Walrath (Trout Unlimited): Trout Unlimited has several projects that they are working on.

- There is a section of river on state land that is a complete barrier to Colorado cutthroat trout. They are working with John (BLM). They want to replace the existing structure with a bottomless arch culvert. The area has been washed out several times. Existing structure is perched (inside the enclosure there was a badly incised area). There are also several issues downstream of there that will need to be worked on sequentially. It was suggested to check with WyDOT to see if they had a bridge or other structure that had been removed and marked for disposal.
- The local chapter of TU is working with Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge and WGFD on the entrainment of the Hampt 2 Ditch. The ditch is just south of the headquarters. They have rescued and put back in the river over 2000 fish that have been entrained here. They want to install a fish screen with a self-cleaning debris boom. TU is currently looking at several designs.
- Trout Unlimited has been working with the Ramsey Ranch for several years. They are looking at installing a structure that would allow the Ramsey's to irrigate out of Trout Creek and stabilize a headcut. Some ditch improvements would also be required. An agreement would be put into place detailing the water use. The Ramsey Ranch would like to re-establish a hay meadow. There was a fire in 2000 and the meadow has not been irrigated since then. Invasives have established in the field. They may need assistance from Sweetwater Weed and Pest for invasive and rodent control. Re-establishing the hay meadow will provide additional habitat for wildlife. Additionally, a series of rock structure diversions would be installed at the existing diversion points.

Hillary Walrath (Trout Unlimited): They are working with BLM, WGFD, and NCRS, looking at a fish barrier down by Manilla. The only thing preventing burbot from entering the entire Henrys Fork River is the People's Canal wooden structure. They want to install a permanent

concrete barrier. They will work with the irrigation company. They think there is also bluehead sucker and flannelmouth sucker. They would like to partner with FWS and WWNRT. The structure is on BLM-land. Henrys Fork River was recently designated as a salinity control project.

In 2014, TU is hoping to start two Adopt-a-Trout Programs. TU partners with WGFD and local schools to conduct studies. The studies typically tag a species of interest (about 30 individuals) and track the movement of these individuals throughout the year. This helps to identify fish passage issues. They are hoping to partner with McKinnon School which has about 15 kids, K-5. The kids would participate in a field day. They would watch a fish survey; learn about the species and its ecology. Additionally, TU will present several times throughout the year to the kids. The study costs include the tags, which cost about \$60/tag. Total costs for the project would be \$5,000. They would be asking for \$1,500-2,000 from WLCI. TU will be applying for youth grants for both of these programs.

Rob Keith (G&F) wants to tag some burbot by the gorge and see if they move into the area at all. Also want to tag some Brown Trout and examine the interactions.

Kevin Spence (WGFD): They are looking at 42 structures on the Little Big Sandy, downstream of Farson. They want to do work on 21 structures that are on the State land reach. Seedskadee has committed the use of their equipment for two weeks. They will need to purchase some rock. Typically they do this from the South Pass area. They have applied for a WWNRT grant. They are not sure if they will need any additional funding. There are some cultural issues that need to be cleared up as the Oregon Trail is in the area.

Prioritization Process: Prioritization of FY15 projects will be done at the May LPDT meeting. In the past: The LPDT elected to follow past procedures of allowing each agency one vote and prioritizing projects sequentially, with one being the highest priority.

The CT stated that Michele Windsor, the BLM WLCI Coordinator, has taken a position with the Forest Service in Oregon. The BLM has received authorization to advertise the position on USAjobs. Additionally, Erica Cressall, the WLCI Clerk, was laid off. Eric Decker, the JIO/PAPO Coordinator, will be the Acting BLM WLCI Coordinator until the position is filled.

The CT reported that the BLM State Office has indicated that WLCI will be receiving approximately \$700,000 funding for FY14. These numbers aren't final yet. When WLCI was first formed, WLCI was a line item in the budget. Now it is funded through the Healthy Lands program. Therefore, we need to make sure that what WLCI reports back to the BLM State Office is showing what WLCI has accomplished and tells the WLCI story well.

WLCI encourages opportunities to partner with other groups/organizations for additional funds. If you have a continuing project or other landscape-scale project in the area, Justin asked that project proponents be prepared, if called upon, to talk about their projects, goals and WLCI if the opportunity to interact with a private funding source for WLCI became available.

CAP: The CAP will be out for review to all the LPDTs soon. The CAP is made up of three parts – first is large landscape level priorities; second is local team objectives; and third is a real detailed story showing what you are doing, what the LPDTs’ priorities are, and what the LPDTs are planning to do. Pat will send out directions with the CAP. Pat asked everyone to focus on examining if the priority areas fit, do the boundaries make sense (not too big/too small), and do the maps appropriately depict your project area. WLCI wants to tell the story of how the past projects, current projects, and proposed projects tie together to work towards combined conservation objectives on a landscape-scale. The CAP writers have had to make some assumptions as sometimes this information is not clear in project write-ups/annual reports/etc. LPDTs will be given a 3-week period to review the CAP. The CAP team is also looking for suggestions on how to make the report more attractive. The CAP is a road map of WLCI’s actions over the next five years. However, the report will also be used to tell WLCI’s story to Agencies and to hand out to industry proponents who may be looking for opportunities to assist in on-the-ground projects. The CAP team would like to have the CAP finalized by the June EC Meeting.

Science Workshop: The STAC is working on preparations for the next WLCI Science Workshop (2015). They are exploring options of possibly holding the workshop with another organization. The STAC has discussed this option with the Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society. The Wildlife Society will be electing a new president soon. They are considering our idea, but do not want to vote on it until the new president is elected. Typically, The Wildlife Society holds their annual meeting the first week of December. We may need to move the date of our workshop (typically held in May), if we would like to co-locate the meeting. It was noted that The Wildlife Society holds their meeting in December in order to miss hunting season and field season.

Suggestions for the EC Meeting and Tour: The CT is looking for field tour opportunities for either the June or September Executive Committee (EC) Meeting. It was noted that the EC has seen Cumberland and Bitter Creek. Suggestions were for Little Mountain: the riparian projects, elk/deer/aspen projects. Mary mentioned wanting the EC to have a group session with less cell phone distractions. Spring Creek was suggested.

Reminder: FY15 project applications are due on **Monday, April 14th**. The CT will compile and send out prior to the May LPDT meeting. If you have a proposed FY15 project, it is suggested that you have a presentation ready, either paper or PowerPoint presentation.

The next Sweetwater LPDT meeting was scheduled for **Friday, May 2, 2014** at 9 am at the Green River WGF Office.