

Lincoln/Uinta LPDT Meeting
Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Project Updates, Funding Requests, Funds Needed By:

- Replace Pole Top - Carl Bezanson (BLM): The project needs FY14 funds by whenever. Last year they couldn't find any pole tops. The project would like \$10,000, but would be able to use \$5,000.
- Coal Creek Stabilization - Floyd Roadifer (WGFD): Planned to do EA in December, but that didn't work out. Might move some dirt this fall, but that may be optimistic. Once the EA is out, can get it approved, then can round up the money to get stuff done. They have enough money left over from last year to get 2 or 3 sites done. For FY14, the project needs \$20,000. They are hoping to buy some of the materials this fall; however, they probably won't be doing on-the-ground work until spring of FY15 through the following fall.
- Cottonwood Creek – Dave Kimble (FWS): not at meeting
- Fossil Butte Invasives – Arvid Aase (NPS): Last year (FY13), the intern did not start work until late, so they were not able to treat the cheatgrass. However, the intern plus one week of work from a traveling invasive plant team accomplished a lot of work. They treated Russian thistle, knapweed, (missed the rest of this, lots of numbers). For FY14, the project will need \$5,000. They need to funds as soon as possible as they need prior to SCA advertising for the intern.
- Greys River Weeds - Don DeLong (FS): not at meeting
- Lincoln/Uinta County Noxious Weed Management - Carl Bezanson (BLM): For FY14, the project can use \$4,000, they need it by this spring in order to treat the weeds. Question regarding who the funding assistance agreement goes through - Lincoln/Uinta Weed & Pest. Carl offered to fill out the assistance agreement and forward to WLCI.
- Muddy Creek and Black Fork Tamarix Removal - Chris Aimone (Uinta Co W&P): Chris was unable to attend; however she left a message with Jim. In FY13, they treated 31 acres within the Black's Fork Drainage. For FY14, the project could use the \$30,000 that was requested. Carl B. mentioned that the project is fairly labor intensive. They are taking out tamarix by mechanical and chemical means, while trying not to damage surrounding willows. Suggested a tour of the site.
- Raymond Mountain Invasives - Jerry Dayton (Lincoln County Weed and Pest District): Carl B. spoke about this project. This project involves a lot of helicopter work, which is expensive. In FY13, they got some of the area treated, but they are finding invasives on more rugged areas. They tried to get some backpack sprayers in there, but still nice to have helicopter. For FY14, the project requested \$30,000 and can use the entire request.
- Seibert Lease – Justin Caudill (WDA): This project was approved by WLCI EC in 2012. Since then, seven wetland developments have been put in place with assistance from the FWS Partners Program at a cost of \$59,885 from the Fish & Wildlife Partners Program and the landowner. NRCS supported the wetland developments through a 30-year habitat lease agreement on 406 acres. There are at least two other wetland developments planned. During 2013, the landowner left 160 acres of sainfoin (a legume) un-harvested for wildlife forage on his pivot. A reservoir improvement project has been approved for WLCI funding. WLCI is working with Uinta County Conservation District on an assistanceship agreement and a grants.gov application providing WLCI funding for the

habitat improvements and protections associated with this project. Once the assistance agreement is set up, WLCI 2014 funding (approximately \$30,000) will occur making this the first year of funding by WLCI. For FY14, they are looking at improving and deepening a reservoir and installing bird perches. They would like to have Eric Norelius (BLM) help with the reservoir and pastures. This project is a unique opportunity for WLCI, where we can show improvement for mule deer wintering activities and other wildlife. Monitoring sites have been established, monitoring will begin spring of 2014 using a multi-agency team.

- Star Valley Front – Ben Bannister (FS) not at meeting – The NEPA process is holding work up. He has sufficient carry over funds for work this year.
- Wyoming Range Mule Deer Habitat - Rusty Keiser (BLM): Joe Randal spoke on this project. Project is mostly in Sublette County, but some work will occur in Lincoln County. They are currently working through the NEPA process. Once NEPA is complete (scheduled to be completed during 2014), they are requesting \$50,000 per year for 5 years.

Ruby Updates:

- Dr. Conover – studying winter ecology and summer movements of ravens. 30 ravens have been radio collared; they are using about 4 roosts. Somewhere around 1200 ravens using roosts in Kemmerer and Lyman and the gas plants. Wildlife services has been baiting ravens at the dump with dog food laced with DRC 1339. They haven't had a great deal of success. Of the 30 radio collared ravens, 2 have been killed. Haven't seen much of a drop off on the roosts. Last year (FY13), they followed radio-collared ravens to see where they spent summer. Most of them stayed within 60 miles. Removing ravens at the roost site seems to be a great way to remove some of the problems that ranchers have been having and also reduce sage-grouse predation. The EC approved continued funding of this project for FY14.
- Pygmy rabbits – Steve Germain (USGS) – Eric Norelius (BLM) spoke on this project. The goal is to figure out the best way to map pygmy rabbit habitat. Trying to get a better model. Steve has been out with seasonal crew last year and is scheduled to be out again in May (FY14). The EC has approved continued funding of this project for FY14.
- Springs, seeps, and reservoirs – Eric Norelius (BLM): In FY13, they had a Chicago Botanical Garden intern. The intern was able to map the entire Twin Creek – 43k acres, also spent some time in the Kemmerer/Uinta allotment, Slate Creek, and Smiths Fork allotments. Smiths Fork Allotment has grazing issues. Slate Creek Allotment is the core of the Slate sage-grouse Core area. EC approved funds to continue this work and to hire another intern for FY14.
- Riparian Enclosure project – EC has approved funds for FY14. The goal of this project is to protect these riparian areas through fencing. Improved offsite watering troughs will be installed to provide water to livestock and wildlife, while protecting the springs. Additionally, this will protect sage-grouse brood rearing habitats. The project is working through the NEPA, Jeremy has written some Categorical exclusion documents, but the cultural analysis needs to be completed. The EC has approved funding of this project for FY14.
- Low Stress Livestock Handling – This project is moving forward. Met with Eva – SRM – State is providing Rangeland monitoring courses, they are looking at holding one in

Kemmerer in June. The goal is to get nationally renowned experts at this workshop to provide education, and on-the-ground instruction for a couple of days. Ruby funds will be used to provide the instruction. From this they would develop resources to share with the Conservation Districts. Additionally, the plan is to have the experts come back for continued education and monitoring the successes over the next few years. An outcome of the workshop is to provide easier and more efficient ways to handle livestock depending on sage-grouse needs and brood rearing habitat. They are looking for a diverse attendance at the meetings. This project was originally proposed as a 5 year project; however, they are looking at requesting funding for only 3 years. There is a new Rangeland Management Specialist in this position; he is from this area and it seems like he will be able to stay here. He is working with Ag Extension from U Wyo and will have budget available at the May LPDT meeting. Funding for this project in FY14 was approved by the EC.

Proposed Projects for Ruby Funding:

- Mary Thoman presented information on two projects. The projects would be to fix two springs on Elk Mountain. Mary has been looking for funding elsewhere; however, has not received any funding at this point. She will be applying for EQIP money. These projects will benefit cattle and sheep; exclosures need to be rebuilt. The Cumberland allotment is in need of water. They hope NRCS will provide the engineering work. Budget is \$29,000 each to use steel jack fencing. However, they need to make it sheep proof. If they don't use steel jack; estimating \$15,000 needed for each. Elk Mountain is on State land. This one would require pipe, trough, and fencing; estimating \$20,000. Need to redo spring. One project is on State land, the other is on private – Elk Mountain spring (spans the fence – on BLM and private lands). The side that needs to be improved is more on private side. Both projects are within core Ruby area. This is on a north-facing slope. Eric N. suggests a buck and rail fence, dropping the rails down lower to keep sheep out. There are very few springs up in that pasture. Mary is not sure if they can get NRCS' engineers out this year – physical access is tough until June.

Proposed 2015 Projects:

- Larry Ashton (BLM) – Bench Allotment (10 miles south of Mountain View) is in need of an overhaul. The permittees want to spike the north and south pastures of the allotment. Additionally, they would like to develop a spring in the south pasture and fence it, and repair a reservoir in the north pasture. The plan is to spike one pasture in 2016 and let it rest; in 2018 – spike the other pasture and let it rest. By 2020, both pastures would be usable. Additionally, the aspen stands are infected with cytospora. The permittees want to protect the stands with steel jack fencing. The fence around the allotment is maintained, but not wildlife friendly. This would be a multi-year project and they would be able to start once funded and NEPA is completed. The spike treatments are to increase forage. The sagebrush in this allotment is 60% and 50% cover in the north and south pastures, respectively. The expectation is to bring the sagebrush cover down to 35-40%. The south pasture is elk and moose crucial winter range. Mule deer and elk are present most times the pastures have been visited.

- Rock Top Aspen Project – Larry Ashton (BLM) – 140 acres of aspen – infected with cytospora. They would like to fence off the aspen for 2 years. They are looking for funding for FY15 and would be able to start once NEPA is completed.
- Justin mentioned the Muley Fanatics have a contract with a pipe company; he is going to see if this contract could be expanded to use within Lincoln/Uinta County projects.
- Slate Aspen Project – Eric Norelius (BLM) – looking at going into Slate Creek Allotment and treating the aspen stands. These stands have been hit hard by elk and mule deer, also infected with cytospora. There are several stands and they will need to do chunks at a time. This project meshes well with and intersects with the WY Range Mule Deer Project on the southern end.
- Dale Woolwine and Matt Halloran – Geophagy study – dirt eating. They were out looking for sage-grouse fence collisions and found areas that were packed down with sage-grouse tracks and pecking at snow. They were wondering why this behavior was occurring. Was it related to winter concentration areas? This year looking at towards the end of Nov. they found 16 different locations. Other thoughts are considering if this behavior is tied to mineral content of the soils or to buffer tannins when sage-grouse switch their diet from forbs to sagebrush. This project would be for 5 years. They propose to collar sage-grouse (although it has been suggested that they may be able to use already collared birds). Soils will also be analyzed.
- KFO Conifer Encroachment Project. This is a larger subset of the WY Range Mule Deer Project. It would be cutting out conifers. They are looking at writing the NEPA to cover the entire field office. Cutting would be done with a lop and leave or scatter method. If larger piles, would stack and burn on-site in Jan/Feb. Largest areas to target in core areas. Critical – have most birds. The goal is to provide as much nesting habitat as possible. Conifers choke out forbs. This project would be targeting conifers growing within the sagebrush. Conifers species include pinyon, juniper, and sub-alpine fir. The Bridger area has more junipers, but up along rock creek ridge and boulder ridge it is sub-alpine fir.
- KFO Cheatgrass Project – This project would be targeting cheatgrass in sage-grouse core areas first. The plan is to treat bigger areas first; especially some of the old wildfires – Sweetwater Fire, Sheep Trails 1 & 2, and the Fourth of July Fire. They would also treat infested roadsides – Plan to hire a seasonal. Pat asked if there will there be preliminary assessments to prioritize. They are looking at old fire scars first – three occur in sage-grouse core. They want to reduce the potential for large fires and minimize any habitat conversions.
- Lusha Tronstad (Wyoming Natural Diversity Database) submitted a proposal to the Ruby Focus Group. This project is designed to help model the distribution of insects within sage-grouse brood rearing habitat. They are looking for funding in FY15. However, they are able to start as soon as possible. The Ruby Focus Group will evaluate this project for future funding. If approved it will be submitted to the WLCI Executive Committee (EC) for final approval. The Next time the EC is scheduled to meet is in June.
- Mary – question on the Ruby funds – Has the Ruby Focus Group determined how much allocated funds goes toward research projects vs on-the-ground projects? The answer was no, that hasn't been looked at, but it has been suggested that they do it. The Executive Committee would like to have a greater proportion of the remaining funds tie closer to on-the-ground projects.

- Star Valley Conservation District with the Grow-Blaney Allotment – The creek has been hit hard by cattle and wildlife. They would like to put in three water developments. Working with Dept of Ag and FS – NEPA is done and allows for two water developments. The new FS Ranger at the Greys River Ranger District suggested three water developments and thinks that the NEPA should allow for this.
- Spring development and protection. BLM is still interested in the fencing on the boundary allotment – BLM and FS are working together to fix fencing. The plan is to start at Chapel Creek and work both directions – over to the Mayfield allotment; FS is pursuing NEPA on this project currently. They want to start construction this year on Pole Creek. The permittees won't be able to turn out livestock until the fence is fixed. Circle B Ranch; working on cultural. Want to start on the Pole Creek area. There was an offer to provide the BLM with 14k to start procuring materials; materials stacked near Maverick are also available for the project. The goal is to make the fencing as maintenance free as possible.
- Tom Goure Allotment boundary fence. This allotment is crucial habitat. There used to be one permittee, but now it is split into two allotments with two operators. Beb Spring needs to be fenced. There is a unique willow present here that needs to be protected (per botanist). This spring is right along a historic trail. They would like to protect the spring with steel jack fence. Tom Goure and the Underwood allotment. A cattle guard is needed on top, lots of hunting occurs around here and a gate would probably be left open. There is another fence line in North Horse Creek pasture fence on the Rock Creek Allotment. Additionally, they want to protect a burn site in the Gooseberry and Boulder pasture – made two pastures. Permittees are going to build a fence in the Antelope Pasture to split in the two – this is state lands. They want to divide N. Horse Creek Pasture into two pastures. The goal is to have a three-pasture rotation once the fences are put in for each of the two allotments. Forage is coming in well, improving habitat for wildlife. Dempsey Ridge Fence – this fence separates about 6 allotments. It has fallen into disrepair over the years. They have requested funds from the Muley Fanatics and the RMEF, but they might need assistance to purchase supplies.
- Cokeville Meadows and Foothills – there is some private lands fenced in the allotments. Goal is to add two solar wells tanks and other improvements. Partners include the BLM, FWS Partners Program, and WGFD. This project would be beneficial for wildlife and agriculture. It doesn't require NEPA analysis. Justin wants to suggest something similar to – instead of putting in a pond – put in a sinuous pond, plant natives, fence off then take off fence when livestock are not on the allotment. One for FY15, one for FY16 – Teichert (ranches). Sage-grouse are in this area. This area has been suggested to be added to the sage-grouse core areas. It has been proposed that some of the sage-grouse in this area travel between ID, WY, and UT. There is a need to evaluate genetic connections of these sage-grouse.

It was noted that project proposals should keep in mind 65% of WLCI funding is for ongoing projects within existing priority areas and 35% to projects outside the areas. Need to make sure the proposed projects link to these priority areas, if it is applicable.

Prioritization Process – Last year and in previous years, each agency and/or project proponent attending the LPDT meeting have one vote. One person thought it was each individual has a

vote. One of the LPDTs does vote as individuals. Coordination Team doesn't vote. All attendees agreed to keep the process as one vote per agency or project proponent.

CAP Update – Pat Anderson – 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. The Lincoln/Uinta does not have specific projects that are written up yet. 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. The LPDTs will be given a 3-week period to review the CAP. Lincoln/Uinta has six or so priority areas with approximately four sub-priorities. This would be about 30 pages for Lincoln/Uinta to review. 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 Update – Amy Nicholas – The STAC met to discuss the next WLCI Science Workshop, timeline, etc. It was brought up that considering budget/travel cuts, it might be worthwhile to hold the workshop concurrently with another organization. They are exploring trying to co-locate the Science Workshop with The Wildlife Society – Wyoming Chapter's Annual Meeting. This would help with travel, plus also get more on-the-ground managers, universities, etc. to participate in the Science Workshop. STAC met with The Wildlife Society at their business meeting – they are open to exploring this proposal. However, they will be changing leadership shortly. The timeline for the Science Workshop would change to accommodate the schedule of The Wildlife Society. The Workshop would potentially be in the fall; the Science workshop has traditionally been held in May. This is an ongoing process; however, STAC is looking for thoughts and comments. Past workshops have included 150-220 participants. We try to organize these workshops to address science needs important to the local teams. We would like more LPDT project leads to present their projects. Last Science Workshop, we had 70 science presentations and only about 10% of the presentations were related to on-the-ground projects.

Suggestions for the EC Meeting and Tour: The EC was in Kemmerer last June. Eric N. (BLM) provided a tour of the Ruby pipeline and other locations along the route. The Coordination Team is asking for suggestions for tour options. They are looking to hold the tour in June or September.

There is a call for projects for Lincoln Country – rural schools. It does not have to be on the forests, but it needs to be tied to the forests. Funded through rec. Mary asked if it can be used for some of the boundary fences discussed earlier. Yes, as long as it is on or linked to the FS.

Grant is through the Bridger-Teton Resource Advisory Committee . Projects should be in Lincoln or Sublette Counties. Approximately \$100,000 is available.

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.

Next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 14, 2014**, at 10 am at the Kemmerer library. Meeting concluded at 11:20.