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WYOMING LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING BLM RAWLINS FIELD OFFICE, RAWLINS, WYOMING APRIL 30, 2018

Attendees

Executive Committee Members

Clayton Schmitz, NRCS
Dave Whittekiend, USFS
Doug Miyamoto, WDA
John Kilpatrick, USGS (via conference call)
Kent Connelly, County Commissions
Larry Claypool, BLM
Mary Thoman, Conservation Districts
Scott Smith, WGFD
Stacia Berry, WDA
Tyler Abbott, USFWS, Chairman
Zach Bowen, USGS

Coordination Team Members

Brad Rogers, USFWS
Erica Husse, BLM
Heather McPherron, USFWS
Jim Wasseen, WGFD
Justin Caudill, WDA
Pat Anderson, USGS
Rox Hicks, USFWS
Steve Germaine, USGS

Others

Adam George, BLM
Justin Rogers, Senator Enzi's Office
Renee Dana, WLCI Associate Member
Tim Wakefield, BLM

Welcome, Introductions

Tyler Abbott, USFWS, opened the meeting with introductions and logistics.

Executive Committee Roundtable Updates

- USGS - John Kilpatrick, USGS appears like it will escape the DOI reorganization proposed by Secretary Zinke; USGS is moving forward with its internal reorganization structure. This should not have any implications regarding WLCI.
 - Zach Bowen said the USGS Landscape Science Program Coordinator in Reston, VA, is being relocated to the FORT Science Center in Fort Collins. This is beneficial to USGS WLCI since USGS WLCI Funding is associated with the Landscape Science Program.
- USFS - Dave Whittekiend, the Ashley National Forest continues to work on their Forest Plan. The Forest Service is developing Timber and Fuels Pods, the Ashley and Wasatch Cache forests will be combined with other forests in Utah; while the Bridger-Teton NF

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will be combined with several forests in Southern Idaho. These pods will timber sales and fuel treatments to reduce forest fire threats and remove dead and dying timber.

- NRCS - Clayton Schmitz, the EQUIP application period has closed and NRCS is working to get the funds obligated. The NRCS has received two agreements, one state and one federal under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and they are continuing to work on them. The WY NRCS is under a hiring freeze, although they are allowed to hire three additional personnel. The Two Chiefs Initiative (USFS and NRCS Chiefs) will be funding Cheatgrass control in Sublette County.
 - Mary Thoman inquired about the Sage Grouse Initiative.
 - Clayton responded that to date NRCS has only received two applications within Sweetwater County.
 - A brief discussion was had on how to improve the NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative, and have more landowners sign up for assistance.
- WDA - Doug Miyamoto, At the last Board of Agriculture meeting two programs managed by Justin Caudill were discussed with the 2019-20 fiscal biennium funding remaining constant, Rangeland Health Assessment Program and the Water Quality Grant program. The department is working on Sage Grouse and Forest Plan revisions; along with Bighorn and domestic sheep issues. The department fared relatively well within the latest legislative session; they are able to work with their current programs.
- WGFD - Scott Smith, The department has some laws that came through legislation that they are working on through public engagement. Financially speaking the department is in good shape; last year the legislature allowed the department to increase license fees to offset additional costs the department took over that were funded by legislature. Although the department increased license fees, non-resident demand for elk tags was still high. The department is working on a Strategic Plan that will set the direction of the department for the next five to ten years. The public was heavily involved with this effort. The department will propose a grizzly bear hunt at the next Commission meeting. The department is participating in Wyoming Outdoor Expo - this is an opportunity for school kids, and the public to come and learn various outdoor, hunting, and fishing skills. The department along with several non-government and other state agencies participate. The Expo is scheduled for May 17-19 at the Casper Events Center.
- County Commissions - Kent Connelly, Kent reached out to Esther Wagoner of the Petroleum Institute to discuss ways they can become involved in WLCI. The Moxa Arch was mentioned as a potential area to look for involvement with WLCI. The counties' concerns continue to be the Sage grouse plans; county roads and access; and the reorganization of DOI. Kent stated that he hoped to see continued or improved consistency, internally and between Federal Agencies as an outcome of the DOI reorganization.

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- Conservation Districts - Mary Thoman, Mary stated the CDs will be participating in the upcoming WLCI LPDT meetings, and encouraged the EC members to attend. The CDs are participating in the Sage grouse plans, RMP, Forest Plans, and Wilderness Study Areas within the six counties represented within the WLCI area.
- BLM - Larry Claypool, [A.K.A. Larry Jo] introduced Erica Husse, the BLM's Coordination Team member. The BLM expects to have their budget finalized about Memorial Day - no clue on how the budget will fare. BLM understands the strain this will put on their conservation partners as well as their staff. DOI Reorganization - the BLM Wyoming State Office will host a listening session for all DOI employees.
- USFWS - Tyler Abbott, Tyler stated their budget looks ok, they had planned for much more drastic cuts, but all in all it was pretty good. Sage grouse, working with partners on all the various plan amendments, RMPs, Forest Plans, Sage grouse Initiatives, etc.
 - Heather McPherron provided updates on the WAFWA led 2020 Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and noted that it will not be a formal status review.
 - The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is expected to release its RFP for Sagebrush Landscape Program in the very near future.
 - Sweetwater Conservation Bank is now Pathfinder Ranches. They have had a few mitigation purchases. Others looking to sell credits.
 - Rox Hicks provided an update on the NFWF grant Southwestern Wyoming Sagebrush Habitat Restoration Collaborative, submitted by Larry Hicks, Little Snake River Conservation District, and several partners.

Tyler reviewed the agenda and asked for additions or deletions

- Kent asked where will the EC discuss the outreach to industry partners.
 - Tyler directed Kent's attention to the 1:00 p.m. timeslot "WLCI 10 Year Report"

Review/Approve the December 2017 Meeting Notes

Doug Miyamoto, WDA, made a motion to approve the December 2017 meeting notes. Mary Thoman, SCCD, seconded the motion, motion approved.

Wyoming Mining and Natural Resources Foundation Agreement

Justin Caudill, WDA, led the discussion on the Agreement.

- Justin provided the EC with the draft agreement created by the Attorney General's (AG) office representing the WGFD and WDA. The attorneys urged the agreement to be a Memorandum of Understanding, rather than an Agreement. They also stated, since they do not represent the County Commissioners or Conservation Districts directly, that they should not be signatories to the MOU.
 - Mary and Kent stated there is not an issue with them on the MOU.
 - Discussion on this matter ensued. The EC suggested the Agreement with the Ruby Group serve as an example of how this agreement will operate.

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- Justin also discussed a second document known as the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that will be designated as an appendix to the new MOU. The State’s AG attorneys supported attaching the SOP as an appendix to the MOU and not in the body of the MOU.
 - The EC agreed with this measure.
- Discussion about the need to use the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust to hold funds if WLCI received grants or donations that exceeded \$250,000.
 - WMNRF’s bank can only insure up to \$250,000, hence the reason to work with WWNRT.
 - Working with WMNRF is a great partnership between WLCI and industry. This has potential to open doors that WLCI has not been able to explore.
- Justin stated the expectation is to have the MOU in place by July.
 - Tyler stated the WLCI EC will work through emails and convene an EC meeting to sign the agreement, when it is ready.
 - The Executive Committee was asked to get comments or revisions on the SOP to Justin as soon as possible.

WLCI 10-Year Report

The WLCI CT presented a draft of the 10-Year Report to the EC and asked for their input.

- The CT described the process and team involvement to complete the report. Tyler directed the EC and CT to have comments to Heather by the end of this week (May 4).
- Kent Connelly, CLG, made a motion to accept the WLCI 10-Year Report, with revisions. Scott Smith, WGFD, seconded the motion; motion approved
- Discussion on various outreach measures
 - Kent suggested we make a presentation to the WY Petroleum Association in August 22-23.
 - Pat Anderson, USGS, will work with Kent to see if WLCI can get on the agenda or to provide information on WLCI.
 - Visitation with DOI, USDA headquarter Program Leads: Strategies were discussed to visit DOI and USDA Program leads to provide updates on WLCI accomplishments and to introduce the Initiative to new staff and appointees.
 - Zach Bowen, USGS, suggested that each agency contact their department heads and decide upon a date that would work for a visit to DC. He suggested a small contingent to attend.
 - Mary Thoman and Justin Caudill offered to go and discuss WLCI.
 - The Coordination Team will review venues and times to ascertain the best way to celebrate our 10-Year Anniversary.

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WLCI Annual Report

The WLCI CT presented the WLCI 2017 Annual Report to the EC.

- Jim Wasseen, WGFD, stated this was a Team effort. He thanked the CT and BLM, namely, Emmet Pruss, for his ability to produce a very nice document. Jim directed the EC to the financial portion of the report and reviewed the leveraged funds WLCI received in 2017.
- Erica Husse stated that she had already utilized information within the document to aid in her answering a data call from DC.
- The EC approved of the document.

WLCI 10-Year Science Report

Pat Anderson, USGS, presented the EC with the USGS 10-Year Science Report. He stated the draft document will be out for formal review in a few weeks. The USGS report is organized by science themes, similar to WLCI conservation themes and highlights key findings and products. Once he has all the information compiled, he will add the information to the restructured WLCI website.

- Pat stated that users of the WLCI website, are finding it difficult to locate the many science reports that USGS has on our website, and suggested that we continue to update our website to make it easier for users to navigate to the USGS science documents and conservation projects.

Public Comment

None

Schedule Next Meeting

The EC decided to wait until we have a date to celebrate our 10-Year Anniversary and perhaps set the meeting to coincide with that date.

Meeting Adjourned

Scott Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kent Connelly seconded the motion, motion approved.