SAGE GROUSE SURVEY REPORT
PROPOSED SITE FOR THE
EAGLE ROCK ENRICHMENT FACILITY
BONNEVILLE, IDAHO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section No.		Page No.
1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	METHODS	3
3.0	RESULTS	3

FIGURES

Figure No.	Description	Page No.
1	Location of Lek Survey Sites	7

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A biologist surveyed the proposed Eagle Rock Enrichment Facility site and surrounding areas to determine if greater sage grouse leks were in the vicinity of the site.

2.0 METHODS

The survey was conducted the week of May 5, 2008. A road census method was used. A biologist would travel to points (sites) between 0.6 and 1.2 km (0.5 and 1.0 mi) apart (Figure 1). The biologist would listen for greater sage grouse 5 to 15 minutes at each point; and note vegetation in the area and any other wildlife.

3.0 RESULTS

The proposed site and surrounding area is a mixture of sagebrush, seeded crested wheatgrass, and crop land. One greater sage grouse was observed at one location north of site property on BLM lands (site #3). A sage grouse was heard and feathers were found at another location on BLM land north of proposed site location (site #5). No sage grouse or sage grouse sign were observed on the proposed property. The following summary describes the findings at each site.

Monday May 5, 2008

Arrived on-site at ~1700

- Drove two-tracks north of property boundary as these appeared to be the best potential sage grouse habitat near the proposed project area based on aerial imagery and previous site visits by other MWH personnel
- Checked mileage and times to and from gates/intersections to prepare for road surveys the next two days

Departed site at ~ 1915

Tuesday May 6, 2008 – Morning Survey

Arrive on-site at ~0620
Weather: partly cloudy skies, calm, 37° F

Site #1

- Arrived 0634
- Located just north (30m) of property boundary on BLM land
- Low sagebrush habitat, fairly dense
- Lots of songbird chatter/calls: meadowlarks, horned larks, killdeer, several sparrow species
- Coyote howls off at a distance to the north
- No grouse observed or heard
- 3 photos taken: N, W, S
- Departed 0644

Site #2

- Arrived 0650
- Low sagebrush habitat, fairly dense (similar habitat to Site #1)
- No grouse observed or heard
- Again, many bird species audible
- 2 deer observed >150 meters to the west
- 2 photos taken: NW, SW
- Departed 0658

Site #3

- Arrived 0709
- Sagebrush habitat
- Located at intersection of 2 two-tracks on BLM land approximately 1.3 miles north of property boundary
- 1 female grouse spotted immediately upon exiting vehicle, near NW corner of road intersection, just off two-track to the north
- Watched grouse walk/wander nervously for approximately 90 seconds and attempted photos from approximately 25-30 meters
- Grouse then flushed and flew over ridge to northwest
- No other grouse observed or heard
- Photos: three attempted of grouse on ground and in flight; habitat: N, NW (toward flush spot), W, S, SE
- Departed 0727

Site #4

- Arrived 0757
- Sagebrush habitat
- Site located along Mud Creek Road north of NW corner of property boundary
- Pushed (flushed) what appeared to be a grouse from ~1/4 mile while driving north on road. Flush occurred from sagebrush on east side of road.
- Stopped vehicle just up the road. Prior to getting out of the truck, heard what I believe to be a male grouse “popping” repeatedly for approximately 10-15 seconds. I waited approximately one minute more before exiting the vehicle to look and listen.
- No further grouse were heard or observed.
- Photos: E, N, W
- Departed: 0806

Site #5

- Arrived 0814
- Sagebrush habitat
- No grouse observed or heard.
- A prevalence of bird calls, including meadowlarks and horned larks, though the bird chatter seemed to be decreasing compared with the cacophonous calling of sunrise.
- No photos taken, though grouse feathers were found and photos of these were taken just north of this site, approximately 150 meters.
- Depart: 0827

Morning survey complete
Weather at departure: Sunny, slightly overcast, calm wind (<5 mph); 39° F.

Tuesday May 6, 2008 – Evening Survey

Arrive on-site at 1815
Weather: partly cloudy, virga with scattered showers reaching the ground, breezy with gusts; 64°F

Note: Wind was likely blowing too hard for effective survey, but used the opportunity to see more of the property and plan for the Wednesday morning survey. Most of the sites visited this evening were revisited the following morning.

Site #6

- Arrived 1903
- Sagebrush habitat
- Site located in low sagebrush (1-2 ft tall) in NW corner of property
- No grouse observed or heard.
- A few meadowlarks calling
- Photos: N, E, S, W
- Departed 0914
- Rabbit fur and pronghorn track (photos) found just south of Site 6

Site #7

- Arrived 1925
- Wind becoming more steady and moderate
- Sagebrush to west of road and fenceline has slightly taller, more complex (heterogeneous) structure
- No grouse observed or heard.
- More meadowlarks, chipping sparrows, horned larks
- Photos: N,E,S,W
- Depart: 1933

Site #8

- Arrive 1942
- Low stature sagebrush community
- No grouse observed or heard.
- Lots of cows
- Depart 1949

Site #9

- Arrive 2000
- Upon driving up to this site, characterized by disturbed and reseeded ground to the south of road and low stature sage to the north, a larger bird was flushed (possibly, but not likely grouse) was flushed from the north side of road and flew south to sagebrush vegetation beyond (south of) the disturbed and reseeded area adjacent to road.
- No grouse observed or heard.
- Glasses area and listened for 5-6 minutes
- Depart 2011

Evening survey complete.
Weather at departure: partly cloudy, winds diminishing though still breezy, light fading, 59° F.

Northern Harrier seen flying towards the west above pasture ½ mile NW of spud sheds while driving south on farm road south toward highway.

Wednesday May 7, 2008 – Morning Survey

Arrive on-site at 0602
Weather: cool, overcast, light breeze (<5 mph); 36°F.

Site #9a (revisit of Site 9 of last evening)
- Arrive 0617
- Sagebrush to north and east; disturbed and heavily grazed to south and west
- No grouse observed or heard.
- Many actively calling songbirds this morning from both sides of two-track
- Jackrabbit seen
- Depart 0628

Site #7a (revisit of Site 7 of last evening)
- Arrive 0633
- Sagebrush habitat
- No grouse observed or heard
- Depart 0640

Site #6a (revisit of Site 6 of last evening)
- Arrive 0645
- Sun now up over horizon and low cloud bank to the east
- Sagebrush habitat; some disturbed/heavily grazed areas to the east
- No grouse observed or heard.
- Lots of meadowlarks
- Depart 0653

Site #10
- Arrive 0657
- Community dominated by mostly low, unbroken sagebrush
- No grouse observed or heard.
- Tall sage structure with no open areas, low potential for lek sites in the immediate area
- Much songbird chatter
- Depart 0704

Site #11
- Arrive 0707
- Site is a relatively high N-S trending ridge dominated by a low stature sagebrush community.
- No grouse observed or heard
- Depart 0712

Site #12

- Arrive 0721
- This site is located near the transition from center pivot agriculture to the south and east and the low sagebrush community to the west.
- Community characterized by low sagebrush with several openings in the canopy to the SW
- No grouse observed or heard
- Depart 0729

Upon departing from Site #12, I drove to the far-east side of the ranch and drove the N-S road just outside the property line to examine the sagebrush community located on BLM and private lands east of the proposed site. This community appeared disturbed and largely fragmented – poor to moderate sage grouse habitat. No formal sampling locations or listening points were established.

Survey complete; depart site at 0823.

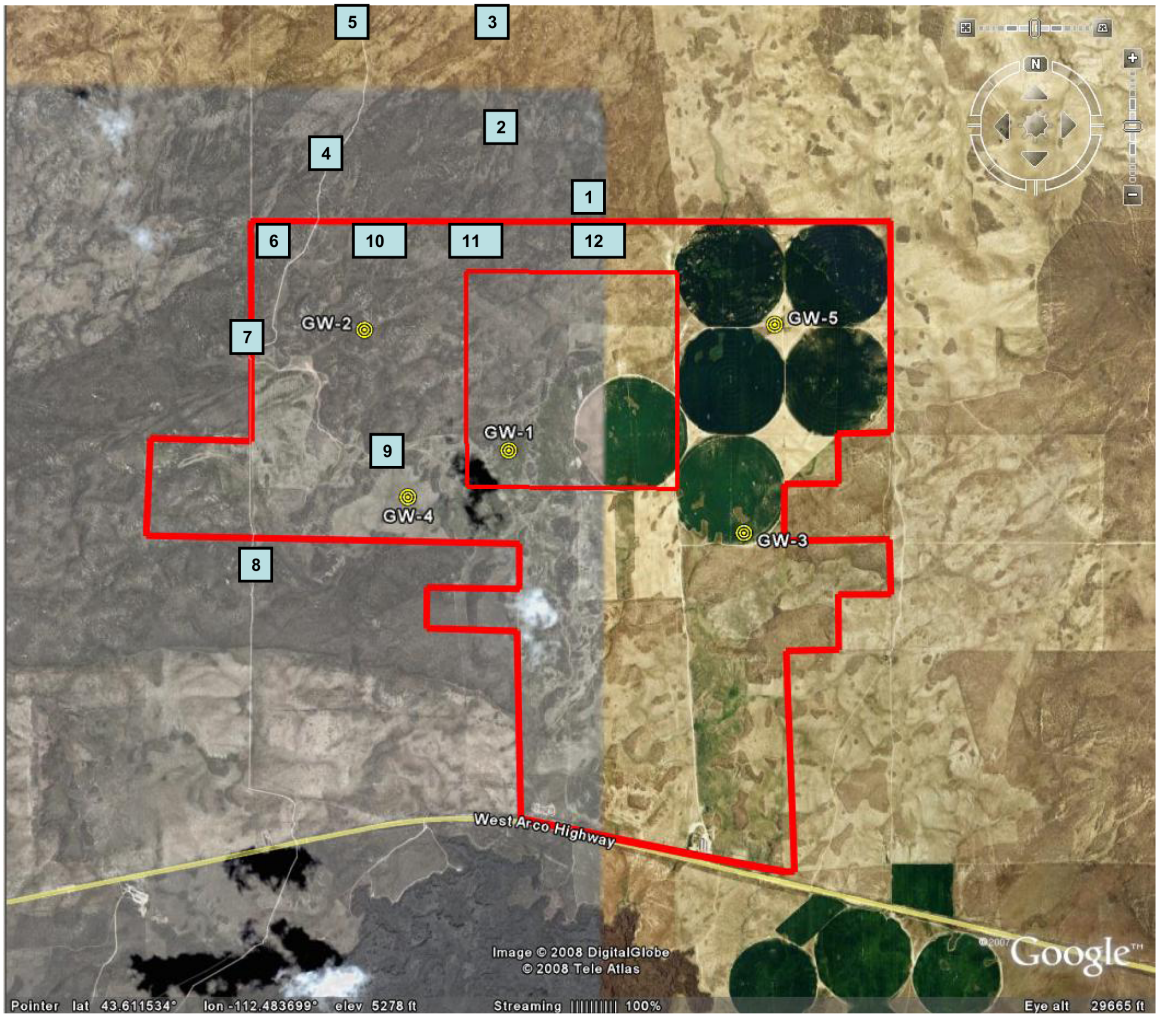

Figure 1. Location of Lek Survey Sites