

Bjornsen, Alan

From: Bob Budd [bbudd@state.wy.us]
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 11:54 PM
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Subject: Fwd: meeting summary
Attachments: SGIT SUMMARY 05032010.docx

FYI

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>>> Bob Budd 5/4/2010 9:53 PM >>>
Good Evening,

I have attached my synopsis of the meeting on Monday. Please advise if I have missed any major items, and thank you for your diligence, passion, and dedication to the process.

We had a very good meeting with the Big Horn Basin LWG today. It was a hard meeting, but quite good. They have a final set of maps, which you will need to act on at the next meeting (There will be others as well).

Thanks again, and please let me know if you have comments or questions.

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Exemptions 6
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SAGE GROUSE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Meeting Summary

Monday, 03 May 2010

Chairman Bob Budd called the meeting to order at 10:00 am at the Wyoming Contractors Association in Casper, with all team members present except Ryan Lance and Jason Fearneyhough. Rene Braud was represented by Karyn Coppinger. Brian Rutledge was represented by Dan Heilig. Approximately 40 members of the public were in attendance. All in attendance introduced themselves.

MAPPING: Tom Christiansen and Budd reported on the five Local Working Group (LWG) efforts to refine core area mapping. The SGIT commented on each iteration of local map refinement, with the following recommendations:

1. Wind River LWG:

- i. Request the group to reconsider the addition of a large area of the Lander Front, much of which may not be suitable habitat – consider removing the City of Lander, associated agricultural areas, and development on the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie River, and retain habitat on Table Mountain.
- ii. Request the LWG review the area near Waltman where the core adjustment did not follow federal units for oil and gas.
- iii. Request the LWG make sure that core area boundaries are fitted to actual habitat.

2. Bates Hole LWG:

- i. Request the LWG review and explain coal mining and surface disturbance SE of Hanna, and clarify the intent of adjustments to the SE corner of the Foote Creek core area.
- ii. Request the LWG provide rationale and analysis for inclusion of the Hat Six lek, and associated leks.
- iii. Request the LWG make sure that core area boundaries are fitted to actual habitat.

3. Big Horn Basin LWG:

- i. Request the LWG review the bifurcation of the core area in the Polecat Bench area near Powell, and either create two areas, or one complete area – eliminate in/out shapes.

- ii. Request the LWG review the dissection of the federal unit in Grass Creek and recommend solution.
- iii. Request the LWG clarify the intent of the small core area west of Thermopolis in/out?
- iv. Request the LWG review the addition of oil and gas area in the core area in SE BHB.
- v. Request the LWG review and recommend adjustments to the core area near Greybull, especially relative to bentonite mining in the SW corner of the core area.
- vi. Request the LWG consider addition of a core area on the Montana state line in the Little Mountain area.

4. Pinedale LWG:

- i. Request the LWG review the Ryegrass adjustment and explain further.
- ii. Request the LWG discuss the area (A3) west of Boulder with industry representatives present to clarify impacts on the status of permitted activities.
- iii. Request the LWG discuss adjustments east of Jonah with industry representatives present to reconcile recommendations of core area in/out.
- iv. Request the LWG offer recommendations for wintering habitat area west of Jonah. The SGIT was not willing to add the area to core at this time, but would consider solutions from the north, or other potential protections for that habitat.

5. Jackson Hole LWG:

- i. Accepted recommendations from the LWG.

PROCESS: Mary Flanderka outlined the recommended process for permitting that was developed by the 5% committee. The SGIT discussed several points in the process document and asked that it be returned in a completed form prior to the next meeting. Mary will work with Bob Budd to make those clarifications, and the revision will be sent out as soon as possible.

STIPULATIONS: Carol Bilbrough presented the draft recommendations for stipulations from the 5% committee. The SGIT discussed several concerns in the document and asked that it be returned in a completed form prior to the next meeting. Mary will work with Bob Budd to make those clarifications, and the revision will be sent out as soon as possible.

There is a need to define several terms, including "permitted" activities, "suitable" and "unsuitable" habitat, and "functional" habitat.

There is a need to address the large wintering area near Pinedale.

There is a need to define a strategy for "connectivity" areas between the Buffalo core area and the Montana state line.

CLOSING COMMENTS:

Paul Ulrich reiterated the need for lessening of restrictions outside core areas.

Dan Heilig asked for definition of the wintering area near Pinedale. He felt there was a strong need to provide protection for that area in some fashion from the SGIT level.

Penny Bellah asked for help in defining the issue of connectivity.

Carol Bilbrough suggested that mining was not being given equal treatment with oil and gas.

Brian Kelly reported that Oregon was adopting the Wyoming model to conserve sage grouse, and that it was a "sound, logical approach" to resolution of the issue.

The meeting concluded at 5:10 pm.

outlined the ground rules for the meeting, noting that comments from the public would be taken as time allowed. This group does not have regulatory authority, nor is it covered by Administrative Procedures requirements. However, Budd said the standard practice would be to operate the meeting as a public meeting.

Ryan Lance reiterated the key points in the Governor's charge to the team, that the areas of concern continue to be centered on 1) mapping refinement, 2) stipulations that should be applied to maintain the integrity of the concern relative to regulatory authority, 3) connectivity, and 4) research, inventory, funding, and other needs for conservation.

The issue of transmission for wind energy has been resolved with the federal corridors and state efforts to identify other corridors. That effort is being done independently of the SGIT.

The SGIT has reviewed the proposals relative to transmission and has endorsed the recommendations presented.

Budd outlined the results of the Wind River Local Working Group effort to refine core area recommendations. In general, the group did a great job of evaluating the original core areas, and Budd presented their recommendations. Discussion followed.

Wind energy issues were discussed. There is some confusion relative to population goals, and how boundary adjustments will be allowed. Wind energy representatives said there is a need for areas to test the effects of wind energy on sage grouse, and suggested that such sites should be carved out of core to achieve that goal. There were no decisions made relative to that request.

Brian Kelly led a discussion about the statewide CCAA program. The programmatic CCAA is in process at this time, and will only address agricultural (mainly grazing) issues due to the scope of all other potential participants. The goal is a one-time CCAA that will allow landowners to sign up for approval with FWS under an umbrella agreement, rather than each agreement requiring full process by FWS.

The issue of 4.0 and 5.3 mile buffers was discussed. The 4.0 mile buffer is the standard for evaluation.

Mary Flanderka outlined the progress of the discussions relative to the 5% analysis. The group discussed the issue, and will wait for the next report in May.

Connectivity was discussed in the context of four areas of interest. Those are 1) the area north of the PRB Core Area east of Buffalo, leading into Montana core areas, 2) connections between small core areas in eastern Wyoming, 3) connectivity between the Big Horn Basin and populations in Fremont and Natrona counties, and 4) linkages to Colorado. The Colorado issue is generally addressed by the location of core areas in both states.

The SGIT recommended that 1) connectivity is not an issue in large core areas, 2) the issue of connectivity was not acceptable as a means to expand core areas, 3) key areas for connectivity should focus on physical attributes of corridors (width, habitat structure, evidence of use), and 4) local working groups should develop recommendations for connectivity and return those to the SGIT.

Budd asked for closing comments from the team and the audience. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.