

WAFWA
Western Bird Conservation Committee Minutes
July 11, 2007
Flagstaff, Arizona

1. Introductions –
 - a. The third WBCC meeting was called to order by Chairman, Kenneth Mayer, Director Nevada Department of Wildlife at 8:05 am.
 - b. Approximately 35 people attended the third summer WBCC meeting.

2. Status of Bald Eagle Delisting and Post-delisting monitoring plan
 - a. No one was available to specifically discuss the status of the proposal; however, a number of members of the audience provide insight into the timing of the proposal, requirements for management and listing. Considerable discussion was generated about monitoring protocols in different geographical locations.

3. Intermountain Joint Venture - Dave Smith presented an informational program discussing the current status and future direction of the Intermountain West Joint Venture.

4. Sonoran Joint Venture – Robert Mesta provided a powerpoint presentation on the Bi-national Sonoran Joint Venture. Robert demonstrated the significant links between bird populations in the US and Mexico that each nation shares and the critical importance of habitat on both sides of the border. He further explained how management in Mexico was different and more difficult than efforts in the US. Robert concluded his program with an appeal for biologists north of the Mexican border to consider and engage conservation issues for birds that both countries share. Robert’s presentation generated considerable interest and comments from the audience.

5. Sage & Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Workshop – Jack Connelly filled in for Scott Gardner, chair of the technical committee, to provide and update on activities associated with the technical committee and workshop. The WAFWA directors established the committee in 1954 to address conservation issues and management techniques across the west. Since that assignment the committee has hosted workshops every two years or more often to compare and inform biologists and the public about sage and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The most recent meeting in Spearfish, South Dakota, 2006 was attended by 150 people. The next workshop will be held in California during the summer 2008. The committee addressed three items during a meeting on 7 July 2007. First, the committee endorsed the attendance of biologist at a meeting to be held by the Society of Range Management, NRCS and WGA in Park City. Second, the committee suggested some changes in the Interagency MOU that would

streamline the Management Zone concept for sage-grouse management in the Comprehensive Strategy. Finally, the committee addressed a timeline for completing the population monitoring protocol.

6. Interagency Sage-grouse MOU – San Stiver presented background on the Comprehensive Sage-grouse Strategy that was approved by the Directors in January 2007. Linked to the implementation of the strategy is the revision of the Interagency MOU. The MOU was drafted and sent to a number of partners including the Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, NRCS, Farm Service Agency, and US Geological Survey for comment. Comments received back indicated widespread support for the MOU. The technical committee did suggest some changes to the membership of the Range-wide Interagency Sage-grouse Conservation Team and the Executive Oversight Committee. These suggested changes should be reviewed by the partnership before the MOU is finalized. Stiver suggested that we extend the current MOU until these changes can be vetted by the partner agencies.
7. WAFWA Representation on Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative – San Stiver – Stiver discussed the CSI effort and the request for membership on their partnership council. CSI is forming their council and has membership open for two representatives from WAFWA. Stiver reported that he serves as an interim director on their partnership council and would like to continue on the board if that is the desire of the Directors. Ken Mayer indicated that he would look for WAFWA members that desired sitting on the partnership council.
8. Sage-grouse LWG Coordination and Projects NV/OR/ID – WAFWA Grantee – Robin Powell was not able to make the meeting. San Stiver explained that Nevada and Oregon Audubon have applied for a grant to coordinate projects in Nevada, Oregon and Idaho among and between the state and federal agencies and the sage-grouse local workings in that area. The grant requires several states or fish and wildlife association to be the grantee. The request is for WAFWA to be the grantee for this application.
9. Local Working Conference – Dennis Phillippi, President Society of Range Management. This agenda item title changed in the week before the WAFWA meeting. Dennis described the plans for a workshop to be held in Park City, Utah in late October that will discuss State/transition modeling and NRCS ecological site descriptions as they relate to sagebrush rangelands. This workshop will help bring wildlife agency sage-grouse and sagebrush managers together with range management people to discuss techniques in the sage/steppe. Jack Connelly commented that the sage-grouse technical folks endorse the meeting, but warned that the fall is a very busy time of the year for WAFWA managers. A roundtable discussion explored the various attributes of the meeting and generally concluded that the wildlife and range people need to get together to discuss common issues.

10. Report Out – Sage-grouse Coordination Meeting – San Stiver – Most items have been covered in previous sections.
11. FY 2009 Federal Budget Priorities – Ken Mayer – Budget priorities were discussed and edited. Attachment A has those actions.
12. NABCI MOU on Bird Monitoring – Kirk Nelson – Kirk informed the group on the status of the bird monitoring MOU. He indicated that the MOU will help coordinate monitoring across the continent and reduce noise and confusion when talking about bird numbers and trends. They see a need to organize and maintain efforts.
13. All Bird Conservation Funding Efforts – Kirk Nelson – Kirk handled this topic with the previous topic and indicated the need for coordination between all of the efforts.
14. Form and Function of the WAFWA Bird Conservation Committee – Ken Mayer – Ken opened the discussion about the need and direction of the committee. The group discussed options from disbanding to serving a significant purpose. The audience used this meeting as an example of a committee that has a function and purpose and suggested that we communicate more and structure the forum. Nearly, all felt it was valuable to have the committee serve as a clearinghouse.
15. Follow-up Assignments and Wrap-up – Ken Mayer—Ken suggested that we continue the discussion of the purpose of the committee to the winter WAFWA meeting and review the membership of the committee.
16. The Meeting was adjourned at 12:00

Motions:

Sage-grouse Implementation MOU:

Motion: The MOU received substantial input from our partner agencies. WAFWA will send a letter to our 2000 MOU Federal partners extending the term of the MOU through January 2008. The new MOU will be re-circulated to the partners for concurrence between August and December and prepared for action at the winter WAFWA meeting.

Motion by Stiver, Second by Doug Hunt. Carried

WAFWA Sponsorship of SRM/NRCS/WGA Workshop

Motion 1: Request that WAFWA Directors support attendance by appropriate sage-grouse/sagebrush representatives to the Society of Range Management/NRCS/WGA workshop in October 2007.

Motion by Connelly second by Eric Gardner AZ motion passed

Motion 2: Request that WAFWA provide funding support as appropriate.

Motion by Connelly second by Hunt passed.

Action Items:

1. Amend the 2000 Interagency MOU for sage-grouse conservation to extend the expiration date to January 31, 2008
2. WAFWA co-sponsorship with SRM/NRCS/WGA for a joint workshop on State and Transition Models and Ecological Site Descriptions. Workshop to be held in Park City Utah in late October 2007. Commitment for staff presentations and attendance.
3. WAFWA to consider contribution to the SRM/NRCS/WGA workshop.
4. Choose two WAFWA members to serve on the Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative – Partnership Council.

Attachment A
FY 2009 Budget Priorities

- **High Priority:** Increase funding within the Interior Department, NRCS, and US Forest Service budgets for multi-state conservation strategies to benefit at-risk species in the Western Grasslands, Shrub-Steppe, Hawaiian Islands, and Sierra Nevada Foothills;
- **High Priority:** Increase funding for state grant programs (i.e. State Wildlife Grant, LIP, etc.) that place priority on implementation of Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies/Wildlife Action Plans, including use of funds for education/outreach;
- **High Priority:** Consistent with the Greater Sage-grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy “short-term” funding strategy, provide sufficient funding within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to support on-going conservation efforts in sagebrush country, including implementation in FY 09 of the Strategy for both Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse.
- Maintain funding for Interior and Agriculture agencies to implement plans directed at avian influenza surveillance, monitoring, and emergency response with provisions for state assistance;
- Provide sufficient funding in the FWS budget to carry-out near-term post-delisting monitoring and separate funding for long-term management and monitoring;
- Maintain funding for LIP;
- Support full funding of the Healthy Landscape Initiative in the FY 09 Budget and seek changes in the Energy Policy Act 2005 for HLC funding;
- Support Farm Bill funding options for avian conservation efforts.
- No budget priorities for FY 08 were rejected during this deliberation, rather they did not have an advocate.