

Public Lands Coordination Commission

January 31, 2012

PLCC Commissioners present: Frank Green, Zane Odell, Dennis Atwater, Drew Gordanier, Matt Clark and Travis Greenlee.

Montezuma County Commissioners present: None

Citizens Present: One

Federal Agency Representatives:

Forest Service; Derek Padilla, Debbie Kill **BLM**; Connie Clementson.

7:00 PM Meeting was called to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

First item of business was approval of agenda & minutes. Minutes were approved.

Introductions were made. Derek Padilla introduced himself as the new Forest Service District Ranger for the San Juan Public Lands Office. Derek was also presented a letter for support regarding the Tenderfoot Grazing allotment renewal.

Derek assured everyone that his office door is always open for communication and that he would always be happy to visit with anyone regarding their concerns.

The Sage Grouse Conservation measures were discussed. There is a lot of concern out in the community over the sage grouse. Dennis Atwater noted that it is in the Federal Registry and that it will be listed. Dennis noted that there were three petitions to list the Sage Grouse that all came from environmental groups. Dennis noted also that the habitat issue was the biggest bone of contention. Dennis gave an overview of the Sagebrush and its role in the environment. Dennis noted that management efforts were usually focused on maintaining existing sagebrush. Many threats to the species were identified including wildfire. Wildfire frequencies are expected to increase over the next 30 years. Sage brush restoration is generally ineffective. Drew Gordanier noted that predator control would need to be a component of recovery. Dennis pointed out that the main areas where Sage Grouse Habitat is located is within the major areas of energy development. Discussion then focused around the identified habitat and the accuracy of that analysis. Since it is impossible to go back in time to arrive at a baseline it is difficult to say for sure where the habitat existed.

Matt Clark asked about current conservation strategies. Connie Clementson noted that the Greater Sage Grouse is not in our area. Gunnison's Sage Grouse is what we have here. Travis Greenlee asked if the habitat in our area was potential habitat for the Greater Sage Grouse as well. Connie Clementson noted that the Gunnison's Sage Grouse is going to be listed as well shortly after the Greater. At this point the listing appears to be imminent. Connie reported that they have already been notified that the listing will happen. Connie noted that the Gunnison's Sage Grouse has such a small habitat range that there would not likely be any way to avoid a listing. Connie also noted

that it would take a while after it was proposed for listing. She noted that it would possibly take several years after the proposal until the actual listing.

Dennis noted that it appears that it will be an accelerated process. Connie furthered that the process has been court ordered so it will be accelerated. Dennis noted that the big red flag for us was that the energy production was directly faulted for habitat degradation even when mitigations measures were implemented. Dennis noted that the write up ends by saying that is where they will go to protect habitat...after the energy development areas. Dennis asked... If the grouse only occupy 50% of the area they did when the Mayflower landed what contributed to the losses? One of the major contributors has been wildfire. The scientific analysis on that is lacking. Wildfire kills sage and there is nothing to bring it back. It appears that many of the actions taking place are creating greater potential for wildfire...road less areas, grazing if that is reduced, fire mitigation work, less access to fight fires. I see it as a big hit on our energy industry here. The thing that concerns me is that I am concerned that they will become extinct. But the pattern of the last centuries has been of declining population. Even conversion to farmland destroys habitat. It makes you wonder if this is a fight that can be won. Can the natural progression be overcome? Or not?

Debbie Kill noted that they may have focused more the things that they can influence rather than what is out of their control like wildfire. We still need to keep an eye on the fire risks.

Debbie also noted that the NEPA process will be handled differently even prior to the listing. It is called a candidate species in the NEPA analysis. Debbie noted that it is important to work with the BLM and State Wildlife folks to create maps over the most critical habitat areas. Connie noted that this was not the normal procedure but because of the court order issuing the critical habitat maps with the proposal is the way it will happen. There should be a time to comment on those maps.

Dennis noted that the decline in Sage Grouse has been going on for over 50 years but it is just now being recognized. Is this now just an attempt to reduce access to public lands, by energy development, grazing or whatever? More than it is for saving the bird...is the bird just a pawn? The endangered species act also includes private lands.

Wolf reintroduction was also discussed briefly. It was noted that these sort of protection and recovery efforts are not so bad in and of themselves but they can be counter productive to the other efforts. Unintended consequences are always a risk.

It was decided to have a general set of comments in front of the BOCC and sent in by the deadline date.

It was pointed out that many stakeholders working together cooperatively before a listing happens could help to delay the listing for a long time by showing good faith efforts. Small successes could extend that time.

Debbie Kill then gave an update on the Motorized Game retrieval. Currently the details governing the program are being worked out. Debbie provided a list of some of the things being worked out. The Lawsuit over the Rico /West Dolores has slowed the process down. Public education outreach and enforcement was discussed. Discussion also surrounded outreach during the summer months when resource damage is really

occurring. The long range measurement of success or failure is still a topic of discussion surrounding monitoring. No one means of measurement will be used there will have to be many different factors considered.

Zane Odell gave a report on the Rangeland Stewardship Committee meeting. The meeting focused on CANM lands. The agency and the Stewardship committee got together to try and set up some guidelines that they would consider. It was a positive meeting and probably the first real step at creating that in the whole history of the Stewardship committee. It seems like the new leadership for CANM is a moving in the right direction and it looks like something positive will come out of it.

The Southwest Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was discussed. Connie Clementson reported that there were several opening and that the BLM was hoping to have some applications from the local community to fill those openings.

Debbie Kill reported that the new SOPA has been released. The PLCC was asked to review the SOPA for projects that may be of interest.

An update was given on the Rico West Dolores TMP. Debbie Kill noted that the process would not begin until the Glade Boggy TMP is completed. Debbie assured the group that there would be ample opportunity for the PLCC & the BOCC to get involved early in the process. Debbie noted that there would be a lot of pre-proposal discussions taking place.

Dennis Atwater asked why the BOCC would be holding a public hearing to adopt an updated county road map. It was reported that the road map is updated annually to account for new subdivision roads or other changes to the map. Dennis asked if it would include the roads in the Monument? He reported that they did research on the roads out there and found that over 90 percent were county jurisdiction.

The next meeting was set for Feb. 28th

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.