



SAGE SENSE

November 2003

Volume 1, Issue 2

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INTRODUCTION

Dwight Bunnell, Team Coordinator

“Seasons Greetings” to all.

You will notice that issue 2 of our newsletter looks very different from issue 1. Thanks to Celia for her work in gathering information and formatting the newsletter. Our official name “SAGE SENSE” was selected from entries received as a result of our Name This Newsletter contest. Thanks to all who suggested a name for the newsletter. See below for the name of the winner.

The only thing that is constant is change. There have been two recent changes in Team personnel: San Stiver retired from the Nevada Department of Wildlife and has been replaced on the team by Scott Gardner from the California Department of Fish and Game. Subsequent to announcing his retirement in Nevada and his move to live in Prescott, Arizona, San Stiver was selected to fill the Wildlife Coordinator position recently announced by the Team. We welcome Scott to the Team and are very glad to continue working with San.

With the addition of San, we now have 4 experienced biologists working full time on the range-wide conservation assessment: Jack Connelly, Steve Knick, Mike Schroeder and San Stiver. Numerous other individuals are cooperating on specific sections of the assessment. The assessment will play a big part in guiding our future activities. All of us are waiting to see the Fish and Wildlife Service’s 90 Day Finding on the combined Greater Sage Grouse petitions (see Summary of Sage Grouse Petitions... below) However, regardless of the petitions, we all recognize needs and opportunities for sage-grouse and sagebrush conservation. The Team appreciates all the time, effort, blood, sweat and tears that are being expended on behalf of sage grouse planning and conservation and we thank all who have and are contributing.

Here’s wishing us all a “Happy and Successful New Year”.

Dwight

SAGE SENSE

In the September issue of this new sage grouse newsletter we had a contest to name this newsletter. We received a few suggestions and had a vote within the framework team. The name chosen is Sage Sense sent in by Kevin Heaton. Kevin works for the Utah State University Extension Office and is the Garfield & Kane County Extension Agent. Thanks Kevin

FRAMEWORK TEAM HIRES A WILDLIFE COORDINATOR

The Framework team has contracted San Stiver, recently retired from Nevada Department of Wildlife to coordinate and help prepare the Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Assessment for the Framework Team. San brings 23 years of Sage Grouse management experience to the effort. In Nevada, San was the Sage Grouse staff biologist beginning in 1981 until he retired this September.

The wildlife coordinator position will serve as the conservation planning liaison to the states and will provide consultation to any state working on sage-grouse conservation planning. Stiver has significant experience dealing with local working groups and state working groups. Stiver has presented the Nevada Sage Grouse Conservation Planning Model to the Western States Governor's Association.

Stiver's contact information is:

San Stiver
2184 Richard St.
Prescott, AZ 86301
(928)443-5158 office
(928) 899-3732

NEW SAGE GROUSE TEAM MEMBER

National Sage Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team

The National Sage Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team would like to welcome Scott Gardner from the California Department of Fish and Game. Scott received a M.S. from the University of Idaho in Wildlife Resources. His thesis work included reintroduction of Columbian sharp-tailed grouse into southern Idaho. Scott conducted research on sage-grouse off and on during the 1990's for The Idaho Department of Fish and Game. He has worked for the California Department of Fish and Game for the past 6 years, where he is the department's staff biologist for sage-grouse. Scott is leading California's work on conservation planning statewide, as well as their efforts in conducting research on the Mono County population, which has been demonstrated to be genetically unique from other greater sage-grouse populations.

San Stiver
Wildlife Coordinator
Sage Grouse
Conservation Planning
Framework Team

Welcome Scott Gardner
to the National Sage
Grouse Conservation
Planning Framework
Team

“After studying these factors and in response to this decline, a translocation was proposed.”

RESEARCH PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Strawberry Valley Sage-Grouse Recovery Project

In 1937, Lynn Griner estimated the sage-grouse population in the Strawberry Valley to be 3,500 birds. Currently, we estimate the number to be 100-120 birds. Our study was initiated in 1998 and the variables studied during the first 5 years of the project include: seasonal habitat selection, migration, nesting, brood rearing, mortality, predator impacts, genetic work, and invasive species. After studying these factors and in response to this decline, a translocation was proposed. That proposal was accepted by the respective committees, agencies, and special interest groups involved. During the first week of April 2003, 38 female sage-grouse were trapped via the spotlight method on Parker Mtn. in Wayne County of south central Utah. Necklace style radio transmitters were placed on each bird. They were then placed into individual cardboard boxes and transported directly, during the night, to the Strawberry Valley. They were released near (<100 m) the active lek <12 hours after their capture. Since the release, more than 7 months ago, only 11 of the initial 38 have died. Although we did not expect it, at least 7 hens nested, with 5 rearing a brood. Those 5 hens recruited 11 juveniles into the fall population. Dispersal distances and locations have not been uncharacteristic of resident hen movements from the release date to now. The flocking of translocated birds with resident birds has been common. Monitoring of movements, migrations, mortality, and winter habitat use will continue throughout the winter.

If you are interested in learning more, please attend the National Society for Range Management meetings in Salt Lake City in February where Rick will present more detailed results and further research or contact either of us at the addresses listed below.

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801-368-1968

Jerran Flinders PhD
Professor--Brigham Young University
jerran_flinders@byu.edu
801-422-2322

**Sage Grouse
Conservation Planning
Framework Team**

Tony Apa
Colorado Division of Wildlife
Joe Bohne
Wyoming Game & Fish
Jack Connelly
Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game
Terry Crawford
Director Nevada Dept. of
Wildlife
Pat Deibert
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services
Scott Gardner
California Dept. of Fish &
Wildlife
Mark Hilliard
USDI, BLM
Clint McCarthy
U.S. Forest Service
Dwight Bunnell
Team Coordinator

RECENT LITERATURE AND PUBLICATIONS

Below is a list of new literature that is currently available.

Connelly, J.W., K.P. Reese, E.O. Garton, and M.L. Commons-Kemner. 2003. Response of greater sage-grouse *Centrocercus urophasianus* populations to different levels of exploitation in Idaho, USA. *Wildlife Biology* 9:255-260.

Connelly, J.W., K.P. Reese, and M.A. Schroeder. 2003. Monitoring of greater sage-grouse habitats and populations. *College of Natural Resources Experiment Station Bulletin* 80. Moscow, ID. 50 pp.

Braun, Clait E., Oedekoven, Olin O., Aldridge, Cameron. 2003 Oil and Gas Development in Western North America: Effects on Sagebrush Steppe Avifauna with Particular Emphasis on Sage Grouse. *Transaction of the 67th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference*. pp. 337 - 349

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Western Association of Fish And Wildlife Agencies Winter Meeting
January 3 – 5 2004
San Diego, California

The 69th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
March 16 – 20 2004
Spokane, Washington

The Western Agencies Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Conference
June 29 – July 1 2004
Wenatchee, Washington

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies 2004 Summer Meeting
July 24 – July 29 2004
Sun Valley, Idaho

Summary of Sage Grouse Petitions Submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)¹
(as of December 5, 2003)

Petition Date: May 14, 1999 (74 pages)	Petition Date: January 25, 2000 (254 pages)	Petition Date: December 28, 2001 (493 pages)
Species: Washington population of the Western Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus phaios</i>	Species: Gunnison Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	Species: Mono Basin population of the Greater Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus phaios</i>
Petition Request: List as threatened or endangered	Petition Request: List as endangered or threatened, emergency listing, and designation of critical habitat	Petition Request: Emergency list as endangered
Petitioners: Northwest Ecosystem Alliance and Biodiversity Legal Foundation	Petitioners: Mark Salvo, American Lands Alliance, Dr. Randy Webb, Net Work Associates, Andy Kerr, The Larch Company, Jasper Carlton, Biodiversity Legal Foundation, Susan Ash, Wild Utah Forest Campaign, Rob Edwards, Sinapu	Petitioners: Donald Randy Webb, Institute for Wildlife Protection
Legal Action: No NOI** to date	Legal Action: Court complaint dated September 29, 2000 from the American Lands Alliance et al. In summer 2003 the Court rules in the USFWS's favor. The ruling is that USFWS candidate process and the determination by USFWS that a species should be on the candidate list is equivalent to a 12-month finding.	Legal Action: A court complaint dated July 3, 2002 was received from the Institute for Wildlife Protection. On December 1, 2003 U.S. District Court judge issued an order in favor of the Service and dismissing the plaintiffs case. Another NOI, dated January 9, 2003, was filed by the plaintiffs regarding the merits of the USFWS's 90-day finding itself.
USFWS Determination: Both a 90-day finding (August 24, 2000) and a 12-month finding (May 7, 2001) published in the <u>Federal Register</u> . Outcome was that the petition presents substantial information and listing is warranted but precluded for the Columbia Basin Distinct Population Segment (occurs in WA and n. OR); became a candidate by default under USFWS policy.	USFWS Determination: The species was designated as a candidate by USFWS prior to receipt of the petition. It has a listing priority number of 5.	USFWS Determination: Initial review indicated that the situation does not warrant an emergency listing. A 90-day finding was initiated August 1, 2002. The 90-day finding was published in the <u>Federal Register</u> December 26, 2002 with an outcome that the information presented in the petition is not substantial.
Lead USFWS Office: Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office, Spokane, Washington (509) 891-6839	Lead USFWS Office: Western Colorado Field Office, Grand Junction, Colorado (970) 243-2778	Lead USFWS Office: Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, Reno, Nevada (775) 861-6300
USFWS Contact: Chris Warren	USFWS Contact: Terry Ireland	USFWS Contact: Kevin Kritz

Petition Date: January 24, 2002 (468 pages)	Petition Date: June 18, 2002 (7 pages)	Petition Date: July 3, 2002 (524 pages)
Species: Western subspecies of the Greater Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus phaios</i>	Species: Greater Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	Species: Eastern subspecies of the Greater Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus urophasianus</i>
Petition Request: List the subspecies	Petition Request: List as endangered	Petition Request: List as endangered
Petitioners: Donald Randy Webb, Institute for Wildlife Protection	Petitioners: Craig Dremann	Petitioners: Donald Randy Webb, Institute for Wildlife Protection
Legal Action: NOI dated February 7, 2003 from the Institute for Wildlife Protection regarding the 90-day finding. Court complaint dated June 6, 2003 from the Institute for Wildlife Protection challenging the merits of the 90-day finding.	Legal Action: No NOI** to date	Legal Action: Court complaint dated January 10, 2003 filed in the Western District Court of Washington by the Institute for Wildlife Protection for failure to do a 90-day finding. On October 3, 2003 the District Court judge ordered the USFWS to make a 90-day finding which is due by January 3, 2004.
USFWS Determination: A 90-day finding was initiated October 30, 2002. The 90-day finding was published in the <u>Federal Register</u> on February 7, 2003 with an outcome that the information presented in the petition is not substantial..	USFWS Determination: 90-day finding initiated on October 3, 2003 in conjunction with court order for Eastern subspecies of Greater Sage Grouse.	USFWS Determination: 90-day finding initiated on October 3, 2003 as per court order.
Lead USFWS Office: Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, Portland, Oregon (503) 231-6179	Lead USFWS Office: Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming (307) 772-2374	Lead USFWS Office: Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming (307) 772-2374
USFWS Contact: Jeff Dillon	USFWS Contact: Pat Deibert	USFWS Contact: Pat Deibert

Petition Date: March 19, 2003 (992 pages; combination of previous petitions for Western and Eastern subspecies)
Species: Greater Sage Grouse <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>
Petition Request: List as endangered
Petitioners: Donald Randy Webb, Institute for Wildlife Protection
Legal Action: No legal action to date
USFWS Determination: 90-day finding initiated on October 3, 2003 in conjunction with court order for Eastern subspecies of Greater Sage Grouse.
Lead USFWS Office: Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office, Cheyenne, Wyoming (307) 772-2374
USFWS Contact: Pat Deibert

¹ Table compiled by Kevin Kritz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, 1340 Financial Blvd. Suite #234 , Reno, NV 89502-7147 (775) 861-6300

**** 60-day Notice of Intent to Sue (NOI)**