



Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

Good morning everyone!

Thank you for your interest in the Sage-grouse Partnership (SGP)!

SGP Newsletter

Most of you attended the SGP meeting in Manyberries on March 4th, 2013. One of the areas of concern we heard from you and we know we need to find a way to solve is routine and regular communication. We have created this newsletter so that we can email to all of you at one time and we hope it will help improve communications. In the coming months as we meet and have news items, we plan to send updates to you through this newsletter. Please tell us about any others who would like to receive this newsletter and if you would prefer to have your name removed from the list – please let us know by emailing Christyann at colson@abwild.ca. If you would like to subscribe to our main AWA newsletter list, please sign up at this [link](#) (*on the right hand menu near the bottom of the page*) and you will receive notices about news and events throughout the province.

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Through the years we have been compiling a history page and important documents archive about Greater Sage-grouse and other endangered species on our website; you might find these materials of interest and you can find the Sage-grouse and Endangered Species sections of our website at this [link](#).

Wild Lands Advocate Magazine

By now many of you will have received the latest copy of the *Wild Lands Advocate*. We hope you will enjoy reading the articles in this issue; as we mentioned in our meeting, some of them are about the great work of ranching and farming stewards in southern Alberta.

Meeting Notes

The notes from our March 4th meeting are posted to our website; you will find them by clicking [here](#). We'll have time at our next meeting to review the notes and make any comments.

Next Meeting

In This Issue:

- SGP Newsletter
- Website
- Wild Lands Advocate
- Meeting Notes
- Next Meeting
- Other Partners

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We are working on plans for our next meeting; there are 11 of you who expressed interest in being part of the next meeting. We will be contacting those of you who signed up to participate in the coming weeks. The next meeting will be near the end of May so that during your busy season with calves and sometimes poor weather we won't be holding a meeting. A notice of the meeting will be sent to all of you through this newsletter so that we can keep in touch and let you know how things are progressing.

Other Partners

These are interesting times for Greater Sage-grouse and endangered species. Since we met we have been discussing our progress and the SGP with others and there is a good deal of interest in the work being done. Some of what we talked about with you and with folks in Saskatchewan is to no one's surprise applicable to both provinces and indeed across the 49th as well. We hope to include the folks from Saskatchewan in the Sage-grouse partnership as we continue to move forward.

As spring takes hold robins, crows and gulls have arrived with their familiar calls and the geese have begun pairing up along the Bow River. Spring has no doubt arrived on the prairies. We look forward to our next visit to Manyberries and meeting with you again.

With best regards,

- *Christyann, Cliff and Sue*

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

Happy Earth Day to our Sage-grouse Colleagues!

I hope all is going well for you these beautiful spring days and that you enjoyed Earth Day. We have been working on the Sage-grouse Partnership, and we are looking forward to meeting with you at the end of May.

Will Saturday May 25th work for those of you who want to continue being part of the meetings? Hopefully your calving season will be safely over and you may be able to spend some time on that Saturday with us. We plan to book the Manyberries Curling Rink for our next meeting. If you know anyone else who would like to receive these newsletters, they can be added to the list by emailing colson@abwild.ca.

Please RSVP for the meeting to colson@abwild so we can plan on lunch for the May 25th meeting, time still to be confirmed.

I wanted to let you know that Sue Michalsky, has accepted a position with AWA as our Sage-grouse Conservation Specialist. In her position she will be responsible to lead our Sage-grouse Partnership initiative forward. I know she is looking forward to working with all of you. Most of you met Sue at our meeting and I have included her bio here as I thought you would like to know a little more about her.

Sue Michalsky was born and raised near Lundbreck in southwestern Alberta, the daughter of rancher, big game outfitter and Alberta Wilderness Association founding member, Bill Michalsky. Sue gained BSc and MSc degrees from the Agriculture and Forestry Faculty of the University of Alberta. She has worked in all four western provinces and in northern Ontario as a conservation practitioner. Her experience centres on range management, conservation planning, agri-environmental policy and the use of incentives and market-based instruments in conservation. Sue has worked with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, World Wildlife Fund,

In This Issue:

Next Meeting May 25, 2013

Sue Michalsky - Sage-grouse Conservation Specialist

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Parks Canada, Environment Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and other organizations primarily on grassland conservation policy and programming in the northern Great Plains. In 2000, Sue moved from Alberta to southwest Saskatchewan where she operates a cow-calf ranch with her husband. She has been a member of the board of the Canadian Land Trust Alliance since 2010. She is a co-founder and director of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering ranchers with the ability to manage grasslands in a sustainable and profitable manner that provides environmental benefits to all of society. The current focus of Sue's work is to engage ranch stewards in species at risk recovery through the development and implementation of incentive programming that helps ensure ranch profitability.

Sue is away this week, but her email is smichalsky@abwild.ca if you would like to write to her. She will be working from her home in Eastend.

Best wishes
- Christyann, Cliff and Sue

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

This newsletter is coming to remind you our next meeting is going to be held on June 26th at the Manyberries Curling Rink. We have deferred the date from tomorrow based on your advice about branding and other farm and ranch priorities. The meeting will begin with a buffet supper at 5:30 p.m.

Sue has given the eleven of you that indicated you would like to be part of the Sage-grouse Partnership Committee in the weeks and months to come a phone call.

This newsletter also goes to all those who participated in our original meeting and we want you to know everyone is welcome at the meetings, even if you do not plan to be part of the ongoing committee.

The favour of a reply to smichalsky@abwild.ca to let us know how much food to have prepared would be greatly appreciated.

In the next week or so we will send another newsletter with an idea of items that we will plan to discuss. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or suggestions for the meeting.

What follows in this newsletter is a review of an AWA presentation made to the federal government's Standing Committee for the Environment and Sustainable Development on Habitat Conservation. AWA was invited to participate in the process earlier this month.

We are looking forward to seeing you on the 26th of June,
Christyann Olson, Cliff Wallis and Sue Michalsky

In This Issue:

Next meeting June 26, 2013

Presentation to Federal Standing Committee

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Standing Committee Presentation - Habitat Conservation

On May 7, AWA was invited to give a presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The committee is undertaking a study on habitat conservation in Canada to find ways in which the National Conservation Plan can complement and enhance current habitat conservation efforts. It was in recognition of AWA's longstanding

productive work on the ground in this part of the country that our input and advice was sought.

AWA Vice President Cliff Wallis travelled to Ottawa to help provide that perspective from Palliser country. During his presentation he spoke of Canada's commitments to "important conventions on biological diversity, migratory birds, and wetlands (e.g.: RAMSAR)" but also of the ways in which Canada both is and is not following up on those commitments.

He highlighted how while the establishment of parks and wildlife areas was one important component of that follow-up, so too is federal support for farmers, ranchers and other landowners to help them manage their lands in ways that sustains biodiversity. He pointed out that while nearly \$2.5 billion dollars went to farmers in 2011, "an insignificant amount of money goes into subsidies for conserving biodiversity either on private land or on leased public lands," or to "ranchers who steward large areas of native grassland that support a rich biodiversity and some of the largest populations of species at risk in Canada."

One way of addressing this need would be to focus some subsidies on ecological goods and services, especially those delivered by prairie landowners that promote healthy grasslands and biodiversity.

Cliff concluded by referencing a number of initiatives taking place in Alberta, including the Sage-grouse Partnership. He stated AWA's position that working with local ranching communities is an essential component of promoting healthy landscapes, and conveyed an 8-point list of AWA recommendations. These recommendations include payments for ecosystem services, as well as the provision of "education and extension services that enable private land managers to manage their land and businesses in ways that are profitable and sustainable and that continue to provide a full range of ecosystem services and their associated economic benefits."

[Click here to read the full presentation.](#)

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

Since we last wrote there have been even more developments in grasslands conservation and sage-grouse recovery to let you know about. This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on sage-grouse numbers in Alberta and changes that are planned for the Onefour Research Farm. We have also included our notice of a Sage-grouse Partnership (SGP) meeting on June 25th in Manyberries. We are pleased to announce Beverly Yee from AESRD will attend that meeting. Making the best of everyone's time, our SGP meeting will be followed by an Environment Canada Sage-grouse Recovery Strategy Consultation Session. We look forward to seeing you at our meeting and the consultation session.

- *Cliff Wallis, Christyann Olson and Sue Michalsky*

In This Issue:

Sage-grouse Numbers
Onefour Research Farm
SGP Meeting June 25,
2013

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Update on Sage Grouse Numbers in Alberta

Alberta Environment, Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) staff let us know last week that there were 14 males counted this spring in comparison to 13 last year. As well, two of the hens translocated from Montana hatched nests this spring. However, in 1012 there were five active leks and this spring only four of the leks are active. The sage grouse population in Alberta is estimated at about 50 individuals. Everything we can do to help them hold the line and begin to recover is vital and will make a difference.

Onefour Research Farm Closing

Many of you have already heard that Agriculture and AgriFood Canada has decided to close the OneFour Research Farm. The schedule for closure is uncertain at this time, but could occur as quickly as next year. AWA has sent out an Action Alert supported by letters to the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Alberta urging the federal and provincial governments to afford formal protection to the lands. The letters and details of the Action Alert can be found on [AWA's website](#).

Next Sage Grouse Partnership Meeting

The next meeting of the Sage Grouse Partnership will be held in the Manyberries Curling Rink on June 25th at 3:00 PM. The date and time has been selected to coincide with a consultation session on the updated Canadian Recovery Strategy for Sage Grouse to be held that evening. We

hope to facilitate attendance at both meetings by scheduling them on the same day.

We are pleased to announce that Beverly Yee, ADM, AESRD, Integrated Resource Management Planning Division will be in attendance at the meeting. She will bring us up to date on the South Saskatchewan River Basin Plan and explore potential synergies between the SSRBP and the Sage Grouse Partnership. ***Please RSVP to colson@abwild so we will have enough food for all.***

A preliminary agenda is presented below:

June 25, 2013

3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Agenda - Add Items/Approve
3. Special Guest: Bev Yee, ADM, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Integrated Resource Management Planning Division with opening remarks on South Saskatchewan River Basin Plan
4. Terms of Reference - Review and Adopt
5. Choose Co-Chairs for the Sage-grouse Partnership Committee
6. Work plan for 2013-2014 - Identify major areas and next steps for committee
7. Next Meeting Dates
8. Adjourn meeting for 5:30 p.m. dinner served for Sage Grouse Partnership

6:30 p.m. Doors open for Environment Canada Recovery Strategy session

7:00 p.m. Environment Canada Recovery Strategy Consultation Session
(Environment Canada, Mark Wayland, Canadian Wildlife Service)

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

Thanks for your continuing interest in the Sage-grouse Partnership. As you know we will send these newsletters from time-to-time to keep you updated on our progress and other news we think you will be interested in.

David Heydlauff and Cliff Wallis P. Biol.
Co-chairs, Sage-grouse Partnership

In This Issue:

SGP Newsletter

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Meeting Notes Posted

Our last meeting was July 24 in Manyberries. The meeting went well and lots of useful information was shared. We were pleased to have Dr. David Naugle Professor and NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative Science Advisor, Wildlife Biology Program, University of Montana make a presentation at that meeting. You will find meeting notes on AWA's website. The web page is an archive of meeting notes and articles you may be interested in. [Click here to read more](#)



Next Steps

We will be preparing a list of work plan topics for review by the working committee during August which will then be presented to the larger partnership meeting in September. We are planning the SGP meeting for Wednesday September 25 so if you would like to attend, please **save the date!** We will send another notice with confirmation of date and time.

Government and industry are being invited to attend.



If you know of anyone who would like to receive these newsletters, there is a

sign-up form under construction and it should be on the main website by late August. In the meantime, please send an email to colson@abwild.ca to have someone added to the list.

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

The SGP *Terms of Reference*, developed by the working committee and set for approval in September are now posted on the AWA website under the [Sage-grouse Archive](#).

We are also writing to confirm that the SGP meeting will be at the Curling Rink in Manyberries on **Wednesday September 25** and to invite you for dinner at 5pm, followed by our meeting at 6pm.

Please contact Christyann at colson@abwild.ca and let us know if you will attend, or if you would like to include someone else as well.

David Heydlauff and Cliff Wallis P. Biol.
Co-chairs, Sage-grouse Partnership

In This Issue:

SGP Terms of Reference
SGP September Meeting
Condolences for Ray Pearson Family
Artemisia cana silver sagebrush
Message from Dr. D. Naugle

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Ray Pearson

AWA extends our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Ray Pearson. Ray passed away on August 6th. Ray will be remembered as a fine gentleman who knew and loved the land. His caring concern made a difference and he will be missed by all who knew him.



Ralph Heydlauff sent in this photo of an impressive *Artemisia cana* silver sagebrush on a healthy prairie landscape. Standing behind the bush, Ralph gives context to the size of this healthy and vibrant plant that Greater Sage-grouse

are dependent on. The photo was taken by David Heydlauff.

Message from Dr. David Naugle

I spoke with the Partnership about new science coming out on the combined effects of energy development and disease on sage grouse just south of you in Montana and Wyoming. Today this work was published in PLoS One. PLoS One journal is open access and can be viewed or downloaded free @ <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0071256>.

Thanks, Dave Naugle

Combined Effects of Energy Development and Disease on Greater Sage-Grouse
Rebecca L. Taylor, Jason D. Tack, David E. Naugle and L. Scott Mills

PLoS ONE 8:e71256.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0071256

Abstract.--Species of conservation concern are increasingly threatened by multiple, anthropogenic stressors which are outside their evolutionary experience. Greater sage-grouse are highly susceptible to the impacts of two such stressors: oil and gas (energy) development and West Nile virus (WNV). However, the combined effects of these stressors and their potential interactions have not been quantified. We used lek (breeding ground) counts across a landscape encompassing extensive local and regional variation in the intensity of energy development to quantify the effects of energy development on lek counts, in years with widespread WNV outbreaks and in years without widespread outbreaks. We then predicted the effects of well density and WNV outbreak years on sage-grouse in northeast Wyoming. Absent an outbreak year, drilling an undeveloped landscape to a high permitting level (3.1 wells/km²) resulted in a 61% reduction in the total number of males counted in northeast Wyoming (total count). This was similar in magnitude to the 55% total count reduction that resulted from an outbreak year alone. However, energy-associated reductions in the total count resulted from a decrease in the mean count at active leks, whereas outbreak-associated reductions resulted from a near doubling of the lek inactivity rate (proportion of leks with a last count = 0). Lek inactivity quadrupled when 3.1 wells/km² was combined with an outbreak year, compared to no energy development and no outbreak. Conservation measures should maintain sagebrush landscapes large and intact enough so that leks are not chronically reduced in size due to energy development, and therefore vulnerable to becoming inactive due to additional stressors.

Dave Naugle-Professor & NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative Science Advisor
Wildlife Biology Program, University of Montana

Follow the partnership at: www.sagegrouseinitiative.com

The article is also posted in the Sage-grouse Archive on AWA website at:
<http://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/sage-grouse/archive>

The PowerPoint of Dr. Naugle's presentation to the SGP Steering Committee is also posted in the same archive.

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

This is a short newsletter to remind you a meeting of the full Sage-grouse Partnership is set for September 25th and to provide you with a link to the DRAFT Action Summary prepared by the SGP Working Committee.

Please join us for dinner at 5pm, followed by our meeting at 6pm. The favour of a reply (colson@abwild.ca) to let us know you will attend is appreciated.

Co-chairs David Heydlauff and Cliff Wallis

In This Issue:

- Meeting Reminder
- DRAFT Action Summary

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DRAFT Action Summary

Please find the draft list of actions that has been put together with the help of the Working Committee [at this link](#). We have both gone over these and feel they are comprehensive and ready for discussion at the full partnership's September 25th meeting in at the curling rink in Manyberries.

Remember these are not necessarily actions that the Sage-grouse Partnership endorses, only ones that have been suggested by various plans or by the Sage-grouse Partnership members. The partnership will decide which ones we think are most important and that we can make work through the partnership.

We have several headings by which we have sorted the various actions (Policy/Legal Tools, Education, On-the Ground Action, Research).

Even though we are discussing these at the meeting, feel free to send any further comments/requests for clarification directly to our attention at deercroft@shaw.ca and heydlaufe@xplornet.ca.

We look forward to seeing you in Manyberries on September 25th.

David Heydlauff and Cliff Wallis P.Biol., Co-Chairs
Sage-grouse Partnership

PS. We have asked for the current recovery plan for Alberta and have been informed that it may be available to us before the meeting. If so, we will make that available/bring that along to the meeting.

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

Please find below the agenda for our meeting tomorrow, the 25th of September in Manyberries. We look forward to seeing you there.

Cliff Wallis and David Heydlauff (Co-Chairs)

In This Issue:

- Meeting Agenda

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Sage-grouse Partnership Meeting

Manyberries Curling Rink

Manyberries, Alberta

September 25, 2013

5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (including dinner)



Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Agenda - Add Items/Approve
3. Working Committee Membership (15 minutes)
4. Emergency Protection Order
—implications for Sage-grouse Partnership (15 minutes)
5. Work plan for 2013-2014 - Discussion, prioritization
(including actions and geographic focus), and next steps (3 hours)
Note: future of Onefour will be part of this discussion
6. Next Meeting Dates
7. Adjourn

Sage-grouse Partnership Participants

(Working Committee Members are listed in **bold** highlight)

Wonnita Andrus

Bayot Britschgi

Aaron Brower

Carolyn Campbell

Medea Curteanu

Ian Davidson

Marty Drut

Barrie Gilbert

Phil Gogolinski

Laura Good

Jim Gordon

James Hargrave

Byron Haugan

Henry Haugan

Travis Haugan

Graham Heidinger

Nevin Heidinger

Rodger Heidinger

David Heydlauff (Co-Chair)

Ralph Heydlauff

VaLinda Ivanics

Tanya Jangula

Darwin Jans

Colin Kusler

Kerrie Kusler

Gerald Maser

Sue Michalsky

Wayne Murray

Mack Murray

David Naugle

Bill Newton

Sean Nichols

Joel Nicholson

Christyann Olson

Bonnie Pearson

Keith Reesor

Ronda Reesor

Travis Reesor

Philippe Reicher

Jason Rogers

Darren Ross

Phil Rowland

Larry Sears

Greg Seefried

Clint Stromsmoe

Nyle Stromsmoe

Vicki Stromsmoe

Suzanne Vuch

Ian Walker

Cliff Wallis (Co-chair)

Norm Ward

Mark Wayland

Paul Weeks

Robert Weeks

Troy Wellicome

Darcy Wills

Maxine Yeast

Clayton Yeast

Beverly Yee

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

As we approach the Thanksgiving weekend I want to send my very best to all of you, giving thanks for the harvest, our fine landscapes and crisp clear air on these frosty mornings.

Thanks too, for all of you who participate in the Sage-grouse Partnership (SGP). Your commitment to recovering Sage-grouse is making a difference. The last SGP meeting was on the 25th of September. Meeting notes are now posted [here](#).

This afternoon the provincial government will be releasing the Draft South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and we will be looking for a commitment from the government for protection of native grasslands, silver sagebrush and sage-grouse critical habitat in the draft plan. The land use framework process gives everyone an opportunity to participate in developing not only the objectives for landscapes in Alberta, but also the tools that will make it possible to achieve objectives. The Sage-grouse Partnership has a significant role to play in this process and our work to date has laid a solid basis to helping define how we can make conservation work in critical Sage-grouse habitat.

In preparation for our meeting next week, David, Cliff and Sue have reviewed our comments and list of actions to prepare a draft list of potential actions for the SGP. The draft follows in this newsletter.

Please be reminded of our meeting next Wednesday the 16th of October at the Manyberries Curling Rink.

Happy thanksgiving,
Christyann Olson
AWA Executive Director

In This Issue:

- Sage-grouse Partnership Meeting Notes
- SSRP Draft Expected today
- Next Meeting October 16, 2013

Happy Thanksgiving

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Draft Priorities for Sage Grouse Partnership

At our last meeting, Sue, David and Cliff were tasked with summarizing priorities that we could work on. From the meeting notes and the potential list of actions, they identified the potential priorities for the Sage Grouse Partnership (SGP) to be the following:

Policy

Access controls

Monitor developments and respond to SSRP once released Onefour Research Farm (Sue and David developing options)—strong interest in keeping this with a research focus and using tame pasture and formerly cultivated homestead lands as trial area for restoring to native grassland and enhancing silver sagebrush cover

Education

Support MRWC in development of educational materials (\$ or expertise or both)

Research

No priorities from our end but SGP should ask Government how it can assist with research

On-the-Ground Action

Access restriction implementation.

Structure removal.

Sustainable grazing management (tweaking grazing management for sage-grouse, including ecological goods and services payments).

Fence-marking.

Ranch Plans (incorporating sustainable grazing management, fence marking and structure removal).

Need for an oil and gas work group to monitor oil and gas implementation and develop relationships that could be mutually beneficial.

Predator control will be left with Alberta Government and SGP will ask what, if any, action they can assist with.

West Nile—while this is a priority, there is not much as a SGP that we can do with our resourcing and expertise

Addressing a gap in silver sagebrush seed source; e.g. need for locally collected seed etc.—this is one area that has potential to cooperate with oil and gas on and also to undertake research at Onefour.

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Dear Sage-grouse Partner,

On this frosty winter's day, we are writing to say thank you to all those who have participated in the Sage-grouse Partnership. It has been a good year and we have made good progress and have an Action Plan for the coming year. Sage-grouse numbers remain critically low, the number of males in Alberta stands at 14 (up one from 2012 numbers).

We were pleased to learn at our recent working committee meeting that a flock of 15 birds was flushed recently in the Manyberries area. There is incomplete information on the Saskatchewan birds but no birds appear to exist outside of Grasslands National Park (GNP) anymore; and the birds inside GNP appear to be in decline as of the last good numbers available (17 males in 2012 – which showed a 50% decline from the previous year). The numbers continue to emphasize the need for the work of the Sage-grouse Partnership. The partnership provides us ways to discuss creative solutions and to minimize any impacts that may be felt by people who live and work in the area.

We would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families the very best of the holiday season and a very Merry Christmas. We look forward to your ongoing help with the partnership in 2014.

Cliff Wallis and David Heydlauff, SGP Co-chairs

In This Issue:

- Sage-grouse Numbers
- Meeting notes
- Emergency Protection Order
- SSRP
- Removal of abandoned structures

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Season's Greetings

May winter sunshine warm your home & heart
as you enjoy nature's gifts this season.

Christyann *Burton D. Wood* *Alan White*
Diane *Dee Light*
Lauryn Langfield

Alberta Wilderness Association



SGP working Committee Meeting Notes

On the 28th of November we held another successful SGP working committee meeting in Manyberries and the notes are posted on the [website at this link](#). We will be meeting again in March, date to be determined. In the meantime, we are focusing our efforts on raising additional resources and on the ground actions, including ranch planning.

Emergency Protection Order

The Government of Canada released the Sage-grouse Emergency Protection Order on December 2, 2013. While the maps included in the order are not the best to extrapolate and draw conclusions from, we have done some calculations and our initial analysis is that the percentage of total (designated and proposed) Critical Habitat protected by the EO is about 39%. It will take some time to go through the Emergency Order and see what stewardship opportunities will be supported. The Sage grouse Partnership initiative we are all part of, is as important, if not more important than ever, so that together, ranchers, farmers, conservationists, industry and government can make a difference on the ground that will reverse the trajectory of sage-grouse decline and help all species dependent on Alberta's silver sagebrush landscape. We have posted some of our maps that we created from the Emergency Order information on our website under the [Sage-grouse Archive](#). There are a number of resources filed in the online archive that you may find helpful reading including the [Emergency Protection Order](#) and Alberta Greater Sage-grouse Recovery Plan 2013 - 2018.

We have learned from an article in the Medicine Hat News that "a public meeting will be hosted by Environment Canada to provide and receive information on the emergency protection order on Dec. 12 starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Manyberries Community Hall".

SSRP Draft – Deadline for Submissions

Another deadline to remember is January 15th, for submitting comments on the SSRP Draft. If you would like a review of comments on the draft plan, AWA has some dedicated web pages you may find helpful. [Link here for those pages.](#)

On-the-ground Action

We have spoken at several meetings about the on-the-ground actions we can become involved with and included them in our Action Plan. At our last meeting when Joel Nicholson and Todd Whiklo updated us on the progress they are making with removing abandoned structures. Todd Whiklo, AESRD Sage-grouse Recovery Biologist, prepared the following update.

Removal of Anthropogenic Structures to Benefit Sage-grouse

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Among the factors affecting sage-grouse in Alberta, high levels of predation has been identified as one element that requires attention. Predation is not commonly considered when looking at historical declines in sage-grouse populations, however, recent evidence from translocations of sage-grouse into Alberta have shown that

predators are having a major impact on recovery efforts. Furthermore, as populations become small, they are less able to deal with predators and are unable to recover. As such, the Alberta Greater Sage-grouse Recovery Plan 2013-2018 has laid out actions to be taken by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) to lessen the impact of predation on the remaining sage-grouse population.

One avenue to reduce the effectiveness of predators in south-eastern Alberta is to remove man made advantages that they might be currently receiving. These “predator subsidies” make it easier for predators to succeed on the landscape, thus there are more of them produced each year. Activities aimed at removing subsidies included the removal of structures from the land. Many unused and abandoned structures are found across the critical habitat of sage-grouse in Alberta. These structures can consist of things like abandoned homesteads, abandoned buildings, trees and hedgerows, old corrals or junk piles. Ongoing research into these structures has shown that regardless of their size or complexity, predators of sage-grouse appear to use them at a greater rate than the surrounding habitat. In essence, these structures provide predators with an advantage that they did not have historically. This can be the advantage of added height to perch upon while hunting, a place to shelter from the elements, a nesting or denning location that would not have otherwise been available or an increase of prey species around the structure as a ready food source. Regardless of the exact advantage being received, studies have shown a change in the predator complex of south-eastern Alberta with significant increases in some species.

AESRD has compiled and prioritized a list of structures found within sage-grouse habitat based on their proximity to critical habitat and leks. Efforts are ongoing to secure permission from landowners, lessees and government agencies to remove these structures from important sage-grouse habitat. Some progress is being made, as two parcels of private land are currently being surveyed and plans are in place to remove multiple structures from each this winter.

Land owners or lessees with land in sage-grouse habitat are encouraged to assist AESRD in sage-grouse recovery by removing any unused debris and/or structures from their lands. In instances where structures are unsafe to be removed by a resident or they lack the means or time to remove these structures; they can contact AESRD to assist them or help facilitate the removal. When removing any structures or debris land owners and lessees are asked to contact AESRD to pass along information on what structures have been removed. The long term benefit of the removal of these structures should help sage-grouse and other species at risk found in south eastern Alberta.

Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action

www.albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/sage-grouse

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