

Sage-grouse Partnership Meeting  
Manyberries Curling Rink  
Meeting Notes

March 11, 2014  
6:30 p.m.

**Attendees:**

David Heydlauff  
Ralph Heydlauff  
Mack Murray  
Darcy Wills  
Gary Armstrong  
Kevin Redden – MH Gas  
Jim Gordon - LGX

Sue Michalsky  
Cliff Wallis  
Christyann Olson  
Rhonda Reesor  
Keith Reesor  
Travis Reesor  
Kerri Kusler

Terry Hood - ESRD  
Barry Adams – ESRD  
Darwin Jans  
Kathleen Hancock  
Mabel Johnson

In all 55 individuals attended, many had not attended a partnership meeting previously and did not sign in so they are unable to be identified.

1. Call to Order -David Heydlauff
2. Agenda – reviewed by Cliff Wallis with a summary and reminder of specific SGP Terms of Reference:

**Vision of the Sage-grouse Partnership**

To identify habitat and recover Canada's Sage-grouse populations while also benefitting other prairie wildlife through positive working relationships between environmental non-government organizations, ranchers, industry and government agencies.

**Principles**

The Sage-grouse Partnership is founded on the following principles:

We recognize that the remaining Sage-grouse habitat exists because this natural grassland provides economic benefits and significant ecosystem services when responsibly grazed by livestock producers.

We agree to honour existing rights and commitments associated with property and land use.

3. **Public Lands Grazing Management in Southeastern Alberta – Barry Adams and Terry Hood - ESRD Staff Presentation**

Barry reviewed historical record keeping and decision making methods for adaptive stewardship. Through the years, it has been learned that each natural region requires different management



rates. Guides have been developed based on long term record keeping by ranchers related to forage productivity.

Dry mixed grass zone stocking rates depend on the site, it is taking between 25% - 40% of production long term.

Stocking rates and the current on the ground process as explained by Barry Adams and Terry Hood seemed reassuring about what ranchers are doing and could expect in the coming months. "We are already at a stocking rate that is favorable to Sage-grouse." There are other things that could be tinkered with. It is well known that we need some heavily grazed areas and we need to tweak to get it right.

Sage brush needs to be healthy enough to provide residual cover to conceal nests. In the spring hens and young need insects and succulent forbs when the insects run out.

There was discussion about grazing levels and the ability to improve sage-brush. Fire was discussed and it was noted that regrowth can be good if the fire is not too hot.

Barry Adams stated that, although the Alberta Government will cooperate as much as they can with the Emergency Order, questions about the Emergency Order should be directed to the Federal Government.

The presentation was cut short as some attendees were unwilling to listen. Unfortunately, one individual behaved in an abusive manner towards our guest speakers, while others took control of the meeting initially and did not recognize the chairs. Many others contributed in a positive way even though they may have been opposed to the Emergency Order and listened with interest to the guests until the meeting was disrupted.

4. Agenda was interrupted by Keith Reesor who took the floor to state that he no longer would be associated with the partnership. Ronda Reesor also took the floor and based on a statement she had prepared, said she and others would no longer be part of the partnership. While it was not clearly understood the action appeared to be based in the Emergency Order and AWA's involvement with Ecojustice in the court case that forced the Minister of the Environment to issue the Emergency Protection Order for Great Sage-grouse in Canada. She invited those supporting her to leave the partnership meeting and convene at the community hall for a meeting of the ranchers. As Ronda and her family left a handful of others, unknown to the partnership also left with them. Ronda provided copies of her statement.

*The list of names identified in her statement included people unknown to the partnership and it is unclear of her source for names. At least one rancher who stayed in the partnership meeting noted that one and perhaps more of the individuals named had not been contacted by Rhonda for permission to include them in her statement.*

The disruptive attendees were asked to leave the meeting.





5. **Discussion of Emergency Protection Order and Implications for Ranching in 42 townships** – general discussion and debate was lively and filled with concern over what the order means to individuals.

The letter sent on behalf of the partnership to the Federal Minister of Environment by the chairs, David Heydlauff and Cliff Wallis, outlining some concerns from the partnership was discussed. It was noted that this was circulated to the partnership for comment but no response to the letter has been received and it was sent to the Minister for Environment Canada on February 10.

The uncertainty about what it means for stocking rates was cleared up by the presentation of the ESRD staff and additional questions.

The economic impacts and socio economic issues are not clear but were briefly discussed.

Jim Gordon from LGX emphasized that the order would shut their business down.

Kevin Redden from Medicine Hat Oil and Gas provided a review of what they had been working towards these past few months, that with only 30 days to respond to the EO, their only option was to file with the courts requesting a JR. Attempts to meet with the ministers federally and provincially have not been successful. At this point MH O&G believes they cannot even carry out the restoration, abandoned structure removal plans they have and they may be shut down as well.

Industry was asked to provide input on their specific concerns so that the partnership could address these. Cliff Wallis noted that industry, ranchers and NGOs had agreed at the Calgary Zoo workshop in January to pursue a joint meeting with government. There was no follow through from industry other than the filing of their legal action.

There was general discussion about the partnership's ability to work together and support a request to the Federal Minister to tweak aspects of the EO.

The unfortunate actions by the Reesor family and the need to include the broader ranching community in the partnership were discussed.

It was indicated that we need to find common ground regarding the EPO if we are to move forward with partnership work.

A history of the legal action by NGOs was provided. As the AWA was specifically excluded in the Provincial Recovery Strategy process despite a Chinook Energy, and no comprehensive well resourced action was forthcoming, NGOs pursued legal action. Cliff Wallis asks that AWA be judged by what they have done, not by misrepresentations.

Despite agreement on potential issues that affect sage grouse, some arguments resurfaced about what is causing declines, including predator (Swift Fox, Ferruginous Hawk reintroduction/enhancement) from 30 years ago and maybe not oil and gas development).

6. **Calgary Zoo Workshop January 2014 report** – David Heydlauff, Kevin Redden, Sue Michalsky and Cliff Wallis - an overview of the workshop given by the attendees. Overall the outcome of the zoo





workshop emphasized the need for habitat recovery and protection in order as well as a comprehensive well-resourced collaborative effort between Saskatchewan, Alberta and Montana, for the birds to survive. \$4.2 million committed by the federal and provincial government to the Calgary Zoo captive breeding program will focus on keeping the genetic strain of the greater sage-grouse secure. Captive breeding for release is not part of the program at this time.

7. Ranch Plans – The intent is that we will move forward and do a couple of ranch plans as agreed to in our action plan produced in November 2013. We want to see what can be done to tweak ranching operations. It was emphasized that ranchers are not the problem and are integral to the solution. SGP will move forward with these plans, commitment for financial support from Enbridge and CEPA has been received.
8. Next Meeting –in April for the SGP working committee. David and Cliff to write to the working committee to determine level of commitment and plan an agenda for late April. If there is sufficient interest, the SGP will move forward. It does not prevent other groups for forming. It is important not to mischaracterize intent to work on things, The SGP is here to help everyone understand, be treated fairly and make a difference for Sage Grouse and other endangered species.
9. Adjourned at 9:45

