

**Washington State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Meeting  
November 7, 2024**

**-- STAC Wildlife Subcommittee Update --**

**Peter McBride – NRCS State Wildlife Biologist (Co-chair of Subcommittee)**

On November 6 the Wildlife Subcommittee met via Teams, to discuss two technical issues and share other updates following a lengthy period since last meeting (Feb 2022). First the subcommittee welcomed two new members, replacing as needed either the primary or alternate representative for their organization on the committee. Next we briefed the subcommittee on the plan to develop by spring a basic charter to clarify and document the subcommittee's operating procedures, both internally and in relation to the STAC. We were also able to briefly introduce Erik Lewis, recently hired as Pheasants Forever (PF)'s new WA Wildlife Operations Manager, who will be overseeing five new PF partner biologists who will be key to implementing a range of wildlife-related NRCS work across the state.

The two technical issues and their presenters were:

Scott Scroggie (NRCS-WA Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Coordinator) together with Kim Veverka (USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife Biologist) presented a proposal to update our SGI Priority Areas, which have been updated periodically since 2012 on the basis of evolving population status and habitat conditions. Following the completion of WSRRI's Sage Grouse Priorities areas mapping last spring, Scott, Kim and other conservation partners recognized it as the most current/best information basis to again update our SGI priority areas. They shared maps and history of earlier Priority Areas updates with subcommittee, as well as information about WSRRI Sage Grouse Priorities areas as the basis for current update proposal. The group discussed considerations around more/less extensive Priority Areas, including potential effects for co-occurring species/habitats, staffing requirements, and funding levels. Scott and Kim provided maps and information to the subcommittee, and asked them to provide feedback on the proposed updating approach within 2 weeks. Depending on feedback received, further revision or review may be needed; the goal is to finalize an update proposal recommended by the subcommittee, which would subsequently be presented to the STAC for their support.

Richard Fleener briefed the subcommittee on newly-available payment scenarios for virtual fence. These Nationally-developed scenarios provide NRCS a means to fund virtual fencing:

- In year 1, via Fence (CPS 382)
- In years 2-5, via Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528)

Richard discussed potential applications for this technology - what resource concerns they may address, "leakiness" and limitations of effectiveness in some terrain or cell-service coverage; and what equipment and herd sizes/types the different payment scenarios may cover.

Last, we discussed potential topics for future meetings - principally conservation of pollinators, including butterfly species, among which a USFWS range-wide listing determination for monarchs is anticipated next month.