

**U.S. Bureau of Land Management:
2022 Greater Sage-grouse Planning
Virtual Public Scoping Meeting Transcript
January 11, 2022, 1:00-2:30pm Mountain Time**

00:00:37.350 --> 00:00:45.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hello everyone. I'd like to welcome you all to the Bureau of Land Management's virtual public meeting for greater sage-grouse planning.

00:00:46.110 --> 00:00:53.490

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We are going to give folks a few minutes here to join the meeting, and then we will begin the PowerPoint presentation shortly, so please stay tuned.

00:00:54.060 --> 00:01:08.100

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by selecting the closed caption icon located at the bottom of your zoom screen, if you are using the zoom web portal or zoom app on your computer. Thank you.

00:02:13.050 --> 00:02:23.760

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again I'd like to welcome everyone to today's meeting, we are going to give folks just a few more minutes to join the meeting today, so please stay tuned and we will start the presentation shortly.

00:02:24.330 --> 00:02:39.510

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, I do want to note that closed captioning is available by selecting the closed caption icon located at the bottom of your zoom screen, if you are using the zoom web portal or zoom application on your computer today, thank you.

00:04:20.280 --> 00:04:29.940

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hello everyone, we are going to go ahead and get started with our meeting today. I would like to thank you all for joining us, we appreciate your time and participation.

00:04:30.480 --> 00:04:39.990

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: My name is Amanda Biedermann with Environmental Management and Planning Solutions, a contractor for the BLM and I'm going to be one of your meeting facilitators today.

00:04:40.800 --> 00:04:46.650

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Additionally, I have several members of the BLM with me on the meeting today who will be introduced in a moment.

00:04:47.550 --> 00:04:55.200

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: On the screen is our expected agenda for the meeting today. I will first go over some brief ground rules for today's meeting.

00:04:55.800 --> 00:05:05.430

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: The BLM will then provide some brief introductions of their team, and then a PowerPoint presentation on the planning effort, which will last approximately 20 minutes.

00:05:06.120 --> 00:05:15.000

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Then the BLM will be available to answer any questions you may have about the current planning effort for about one hour in a question-and-answer session.

00:05:18.120 --> 00:05:30.030

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Oh, and I forgot to note that actually before we move into our question-and-answer session, we are going to do a quick ePlanning walkthrough showing you exactly how you can submit your written comments.

00:05:33.150 --> 00:05:38.820

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So before we get started with the presentation today, I'm going to go over some brief ground rules for the meeting.

00:05:39.690 --> 00:05:49.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: First, this meeting is being recorded as part of the project record. Second, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the meeting today.

00:05:50.490 --> 00:06:03.060

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So you will only be unmuted if and when I unmute you during the question-and-answer session if you are a phone caller. All other questions will be accepted electronically using the zoom chat feature.

00:06:05.100 --> 00:06:10.650

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again questions will be addressed during the question-and-answer session after the PowerPoint presentation.

00:06:11.280 --> 00:06:18.000

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We will do our best to address the questions in the order they come in to allow everyone an opportunity to voice their questions today.

00:06:18.840 --> 00:06:27.660

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We will explain how to submit substantive questions after the presentation again using that chat feature if you're submitting your questions electronically.

00:06:28.140 --> 00:06:37.470

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I do want to note that you may have seen on the first slide of the presentation if you're having any urgent technical questions related to your zoom features today,

00:06:37.830 --> 00:06:48.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: such as accessing your computer audio, please send a chat message to Megan Stone and she will try and help you troubleshoot any zoom technical issues that you might be having today.

00:06:51.240 --> 00:06:59.550

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So at this time, I am now going to turn it over to Pat Deibert with the BLM to walk us through BLM presentation today, thank you.

00:07:14.370 --> 00:07:18.540

BLM - Pat Deibert: Hello everybody, and thank you so much for attending our presentation today.

00:07:19.920 --> 00:07:28.860

BLM - Pat Deibert: I appreciate particularly given our challenges in this virtual world your attendance here and your willingness to take a look at the information that we're going to present to you.

00:07:29.520 --> 00:07:38.220

BLM - Pat Deibert: My presentation here is just a quick overview all the information that is contained in our notice of intent and so there's additional content in that notice as well.

00:07:38.760 --> 00:07:43.770

BLM - Pat Deibert: I want to assure folks that we've not made any decisions, that we are truly in a scoping situation.

00:07:44.640 --> 00:07:52.770

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're hoping to get your feedback on the information we're presenting today, hopefully in writing so that we can consider your concerns

00:07:53.610 --> 00:08:00.090

BLM - Pat Deibert: and your suggestions as we move through developing alternatives for our, for our final planning effort.

00:08:00.990 --> 00:08:13.380

BLM - Pat Deibert: Amanda also mentioned at the end that she will demonstrate how to submit those comments via the ePlanning web page. There's also an option to submit them in writing in a letter format, address to me in our office in Salt Lake City.

00:08:15.210 --> 00:08:22.560

BLM - Pat Deibert: Amanda next slide please. Let me start with a little bit of a background on how we got to where we are today.

00:08:23.070 --> 00:08:30.870

BLM - Pat Deibert: As most of you know, in 2015 the BLM amended their plans to consider conservation of greater sage-grouse.

00:08:31.260 --> 00:08:39.390

BLM - Pat Deibert: As part of a decision or part of working with US Fish and Wildlife Service is providing some regulatory assurances to their listing decision effort.

00:08:40.020 --> 00:08:50.820

BLM - Pat Deibert: Those plan amendments affected the states listed there - California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North and South Dakota, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming, and

00:08:52.470 --> 00:08:54.060

BLM - Pat Deibert: those plans were amended

00:08:55.380 --> 00:09:04.560

BLM - Pat Deibert: to become more consistent with the state planning efforts and to look at balancing some of our more, our land use efforts within the BLM itself.

00:09:05.880 --> 00:09:12.750

BLM - Pat Deibert: Only the States listed there chose to have their plans amended. Montana, and the Dakotas were content with the

00:09:13.920 --> 00:09:15.330

BLM - Pat Deibert: sage-grouse planning amendment.

00:09:16.560 --> 00:09:20.220

BLM - Pat Deibert: Soon after doing the sage-grouse plan amendments,

00:09:21.420 --> 00:09:39.240

BLM - Pat Deibert: litigation ensued and the courts, then enjoined the BLM from implementing the amendments, asking us to go back to 2015 amendments until we could resolve some of the issues that the plaintiffs addressed in their initial complaint.

00:09:40.530 --> 00:09:40.950

BLM - Pat Deibert: Amanda.

00:09:43.890 --> 00:09:52.200

BLM - Pat Deibert: So our 2022 effort is looking at some of those issues, those issues or concerns, but it also is recognizing the BLM management

00:09:52.710 --> 00:09:58.560

BLM - Pat Deibert: that we have potential inconsistencies in our 2000, in our previous efforts with the new science

00:09:59.220 --> 00:10:06.510

BLM - Pat Deibert: and also recognition of rapid changes affecting the BLM's ability to manage public lands, including the effects of climate change.

00:10:06.840 --> 00:10:15.300

BLM - Pat Deibert: There's been a lot of new information that has been issued even in this past year and the BLM wants to make sure we're being very thorough, including science in our decision process.

00:10:16.770 --> 00:10:17.370

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next slide.

00:10:19.650 --> 00:10:31.770

BLM - Pat Deibert: This is our planning area and it encompasses all the states, including those states who chose not to participate in the 2019 decision or amendments, so it covers all the states that we have previously identified.

00:10:34.110 --> 00:10:34.620

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next.

00:10:37.770 --> 00:10:45.870

BLM - Pat Deibert: So these are some of the preliminary issues and I'm not going to spend a great deal of time going into detail on these issues because that information is provided in our notice of intent.

00:10:46.440 --> 00:10:55.260

BLM - Pat Deibert: But we would like some feedback on these issues, as we start to think about how to formulate our new alternatives to this 2022 process, or planning process.

00:10:56.850 --> 00:11:08.610

BLM - Pat Deibert: So they include the identification, management, and conservation of these important greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat, also known as sagebrush focal areas, that were identified in 2015.

00:11:09.000 --> 00:11:15.510

BLM - Pat Deibert: And went into a planning effort with BLM in 2016 and that was to withdraw mineral entry from those areas.

00:11:17.640 --> 00:11:25.920

BLM - Pat Deibert: They also include how we are going to be deal greater sage-grouse habitat management areas. So many of these management areas because of the new science has come out

00:11:26.310 --> 00:11:40.530

BLM - Pat Deibert: have changed from where they were originally delineated. We want to know how we can work within those management areas, how we can adapt as those areas continue to evolve as the size emerges, and how we can address non-habitat that are included in some of those things.

00:11:42.810 --> 00:11:54.090

BLM - Pat Deibert: We also want to look at habitat objectives for the greater sage-grouse including how those objectives might be altered, then the consideration of climate change effects, especially when you think about things like drought.

00:11:55.770 --> 00:11:56.400

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next, please.

00:11:59.550 --> 00:12:09.720

BLM - Pat Deibert: We will be looking at the application, the mitigation hierarchy, that is, avoid, minimize, and mitigate

necessary, so we will be including consideration of compensatory mitigation.

00:12:11.790 --> 00:12:24.030

BLM - Pat Deibert: We will be looking at approaches to minimize disturbance to greater sage-grouse and to the sagebrush habitats which will also include a review of disturbance and density caps and the buffers have been included in previous planning efforts.

00:12:26.130 --> 00:12:33.060

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're going to be looking at leasing and development of mineral resources within greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush habitats.

00:12:35.040 --> 00:12:35.580

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next, please.

00:12:38.400 --> 00:12:47.760

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're also going to be looking at the leasing and development of renewable energy resources in greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats, including the associated transmission lines.

00:12:50.910 --> 00:13:02.880

BLM - Pat Deibert: Management of livestock grazing and wild horse and burro populations is also going to be important to this planning effort. We want to look at the potential impact of that management on greater sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats.

00:13:04.290 --> 00:13:20.760

BLM - Pat Deibert: And then we also want to look at strategies for greater sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat restoration, but we also want to avoid any unintended consequences to other species, we don't want to do conservation for one species, only to result in a negative situation for another species.

00:13:23.010 --> 00:13:23.580

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next please.

00:13:26.760 --> 00:13:38.190

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're going to look at a process of how to adapt management of greater sage-grouse habitats and sagebrush habitats in response to the habitat loss and the ongoing populations declines that we are now seeing.

00:13:40.080 --> 00:13:49.530

BLM - Pat Deibert: And perhaps the biggest issue that we're going to be struggling with here is to take a look at the role of wildland fire and invasive species management and greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats.

00:13:49.890 --> 00:13:57.240

BLM - Pat Deibert: And how planning can, or perhaps may not be very useful, in addressing that issue, but we will be discussing it through our planning efforts.

00:13:59.250 --> 00:14:05.460

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're also going to be looking at strategies for short and long-term monitoring of greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habits.

00:14:07.380 --> 00:14:07.980

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next please.

00:14:11.070 --> 00:14:21.780

BLM - Pat Deibert: Again, as I said, we want to look at how the new and relevant scientific information affects greater sage-grouse and, more importantly, sagebrush habitat management that we can address in our planning effort.

00:14:23.160 --> 00:14:35.190

BLM - Pat Deibert: We will be reconsidering alternatives for 2015 or 2019 plan amendments to see whether or not they should move that forward into our 2022 planning effort and lastly,

00:14:36.270 --> 00:14:43.950

BLM - Pat Deibert: we will be looking at whether or not areas of critical environmental concern should be nominated for greater sage-grouse or sagebrush conservation

00:14:44.220 --> 00:14:55.890

BLM - Pat Deibert: or other recommendations that may lead to the conservation of these areas. I will note that we have not identified any ACECs at this point in time, that is simply a topic for discussion.

00:14:57.990 --> 00:14:58.650

BLM - Pat Deibert: Next, please.

00:15:01.500 --> 00:15:07.740

BLM - Pat Deibert: So how do you submit comments? We have two different ways to submit comments as I previously mentioned.

00:15:08.580 --> 00:15:23.220

BLM - Pat Deibert: Through the planning web page which Amanda is going to show you how to do that, you can also send them on a letter to me at the Utah state office in Salt Lake City, Utah, at the address here, and we will continue to provide this information to you throughout this meeting.

00:15:24.330 --> 00:15:27.720

BLM - Pat Deibert: We ask that comments be received by February 8 of this year.

00:15:29.040 --> 00:15:43.650

BLM - Pat Deibert: We really do appreciate comments that are in writing, it gives us a really good reference to go back and make sure that we have addressed your comments and your concerns, as we continue to move forward in our planning process and developing alternatives.

00:15:45.120 --> 00:15:51.780

BLM - Pat Deibert: With that I will turn it back to Amanda so that she could show you how to submit comments to the planning process.

00:15:54.570 --> 00:15:59.970

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Pat. I'll go ahead and put you on mute and turn off your video here.

00:16:07.470 --> 00:16:17.580

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so as Pat just said I'm now going to do a quick website walkthrough showing you how you can submit written comments via the ePlanning site.

00:16:18.360 --> 00:16:29.790

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So, to submit written comments via ePlanning, go to the project website that you can see on the screen here, we will also send it out using the zoom chat feature here shortly.

00:16:30.150 --> 00:16:53.760

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I'll read it aloud also for any phone callers, so it is <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/510>.

00:16:54.870 --> 00:17:04.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You can then navigate to the participate now tab located on the left-hand side of the planning page and click on the participate now tab.

00:17:08.100 --> 00:17:19.200

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You will then be taken to the participate now web page. Once you're on this page scroll to the far-right hand side of the page and click on the green participate now button.

00:17:24.660 --> 00:17:39.000

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Clicking on this button will take you to the commenting web page where you can type your written comment into the box at the top of the page. You can also upload any attachments associated with your written comment in the upload files section.

00:17:45.000 --> 00:17:54.900

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Once you're finished writing your comment and uploading your associated attachments, you can scroll to the bottom of the page and fill out any personal information you would like.

00:17:55.500 --> 00:18:04.680

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Please note that providing personal information is optional. Additionally, you can select whether you want to provide any additional contact information.

00:18:06.060 --> 00:18:23.070

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Selecting this option will allow you to fill out additional information such as street address, email address, whether you represent an organization or group and, if so, which organization. You can also choose to be added to the project mailing list right here.

00:18:24.180 --> 00:18:28.950

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If you provide a physical mailing address or email address above.

00:18:31.680 --> 00:18:39.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Lastly, you can submit any additional commenters or submitters at the bottom of the page by clicking this button here.

00:18:46.950 --> 00:18:54.150

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So then, once you have filled out all that information and I'll give everyone a second here to look over all the different options that you can provide,

00:18:55.560 --> 00:18:56.280

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You can then

00:18:58.140 --> 00:19:07.020

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: click on this preview button located at the bottom of the page. I do want to note again that providing any personal information is optional.

00:19:07.410 --> 00:19:15.960

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: However, by providing at least your name and address, whether email address or physical mailing address, the BLM can contact you if

00:19:16.260 --> 00:19:22.740

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: you wish with updates on this project, and you can create a record of your participation in this project.

00:19:23.190 --> 00:19:30.210

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Your documented participation helps to demonstrate standing in future administrative remedy or appeal proceedings.

00:19:30.780 --> 00:19:42.600

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So again, once you have finished providing your written comment and whatever optional information you choose to fill in, again click on this preview button located at the very bottom of the page on the right-hand side.

00:19:45.990 --> 00:19:56.400

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: On the next screen, you can then review your comment text and any information you have provided before clicking on the submit button in the bottom right-hand side of the screen.

00:19:57.600 --> 00:20:06.150

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, please note that before providing your address phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment,

00:20:06.660 --> 00:20:11.370

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information,

00:20:11.760 --> 00:20:19.950

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review

00:20:20.370 --> 00:20:27.210

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: by selecting the no option located here on the screen, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

00:20:28.080 --> 00:20:35.880

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If you have made an error in your comment text or see any information that you would like to change on the review page, you can hit this button here,

00:20:36.390 --> 00:20:45.510

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: this edit button and go back and edit your comment text and then to cancel your comment entirely if you'd like to do so, you can hit this cancel button here.

00:20:46.530 --> 00:20:52.260

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, I do want to remind everyone that comments must be received by February 8, 2022.

00:20:53.430 --> 00:21:06.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So we have now walked you through how to submit your written comments via the planning page, if you have any additional questions regarding how to submit your written comments you can submit them during our q&a session that we are going to have here shortly.

00:21:12.450 --> 00:21:17.460

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And at this time, we are going to go ahead and get started with our question-and-answer session today.

00:21:20.070 --> 00:21:33.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So again, this portion of the meeting will last approximately one hour and the intent of this question-and-answer session is to answer any substantive questions you have for BLM staff regarding the greater sage-grouse planning effort.

00:21:36.150 --> 00:21:44.370

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So I will first go over instructions for how to submit a question using the chat function if you are using the zoom web platform or zoom app today.

00:21:45.180 --> 00:21:52.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: After we have gone through questions, a few questions submitted via the zoom chat feature, we will see if any of our phone callers

00:21:53.220 --> 00:22:01.380

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: have a question that they would like to ask, so please stay tuned for those instructions, but if you are using the zoom web platform or zoom app,

00:22:01.800 --> 00:22:10.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Either on your phone or computer today, again, we ask that you submit your questions electronically. So to do that, you can go to the

00:22:11.040 --> 00:22:19.680

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: bottom of your zoom screen and click on the chat icon, if you hover your mouse over the bottom of your zoom screen that chat icon should appear for you.

00:22:20.310 --> 00:22:32.220

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You may need to exit out of your full screen view in zoom to see the chat icon, and I have included a graphic on the screen showing you what that icon looks like and kind of where you can find it on your zoom screen.

00:22:33.150 --> 00:22:51.540

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You can then type your question into the chat box and please send it to the co-host, Clayton McGee. I know we have several co-hosts on our meeting today, as well as me Amanda Biedermann, the host of the meeting; however, we do ask that you send all of your questions over to Clayton McGee.

00:22:52.650 --> 00:22:59.670

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I will then read the question aloud for all participants to hear and a BLM staff member will respond to your question aloud.

00:23:00.450 --> 00:23:11.010

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, we will try to answer your questions in the order that they are received, but please note there may be a

pause between asking your question and a BLM staff member responding to your question.

00:23:11.970 --> 00:23:19.320

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Also, please note that, due to the high volume of participants today, we have about 250 participants on our meeting today,

00:23:19.860 --> 00:23:24.330

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: we are going to do our absolute best to get through as many questions as we can today.

00:23:24.870 --> 00:23:34.620

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So please be mindful of the number of questions you submit and the length of your questions, so that everyone who wants to ask a question today, hopefully, has the opportunity to do so.

00:23:35.550 --> 00:23:44.910

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So at this time, I'll pause to see if we have received any questions via the zoom chat feature again, you can go to the bottom of your zoom screen and then click on

00:23:45.270 --> 00:23:57.570

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: there's kind of a little drop-down menu where you can decide who to send your chat message to, and please send any questions you have over to Clayton McGee, he is one of the co-hosts of the meeting.

00:24:17.520 --> 00:24:34.320

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we have our first question from the public and at this time I am actually going to turn on Pat Deibert's video and Quincy Bahr's video, because they are going to be responding to your questions today, so let me just get them set up here shortly.

00:24:43.020 --> 00:24:46.140

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, there we go so both their videos are now on.

00:24:46.860 --> 00:25:07.260

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And let's see, we do have our first question from our participants, which is just confirming that the comment deadline really is February 8 since BLM 12-21-21 press release

states February 7 and let's see I will go ahead and go to Pat to respond to that question.

00:25:13.980 --> 00:25:31.260

BLM – Pat Deibert: Thank you, Amanda, and before I answer that question, I will stop here just a second, I apologize for not doing introductions earlier, I am the BLM's acting sage-grouse coordinator and Quincy Bahr is a project manager for this planning process, so back to the question.

00:25:32.790 --> 00:25:49.380

BLM – Pat Deibert: The caller is correct that we did say February 7 in a press release; however, we do, we close our comment period 15 days following our last public meeting which began to move us to February 8 and so, in fact, comments will close on February 8.

00:25:51.420 --> 00:26:00.060

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Pat, for that clarification. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and we will move on to question number two from participants.

00:26:00.510 --> 00:26:11.190

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Which is what process will be used for local governments to participate in this effort as a cooperating agency, and I will go to Quincy Bahr to respond to that question.

00:26:14.010 --> 00:26:20.550

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Thank you, so good question, wanted to ensure folks, as we start this process,

00:26:21.720 --> 00:26:29.550

BLM – Quincy Bahr: As I said, everything's on the table, we're looking at planning and, as we say in the

00:26:30.870 --> 00:26:31.860

BLM – Quincy Bahr: notice of intent,

00:26:33.510 --> 00:26:52.230

BLM – Quincy Bahr: whether we do that on a rangewide basis or a regional basis or statewide basis that's still on the table, we are looking for input during the scoping process as far as to help guide framing the process. As far as cooperating agencies, we are sending out invitations.

00:26:53.340 --> 00:27:01.590

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Hopefully folks are getting those already and following those invitations as folks will be formalizing those with memorandums of understanding.

00:27:02.490 --> 00:27:17.760

BLM – Quincy Bahr: As far as the actual functionality, we will plan on meeting obviously with those cooperating agencies to make use of the expertise they have, jurisdiction that they have in understanding some of those local situations.

00:27:19.050 --> 00:27:27.690

BLM – Quincy Bahr: The sage-grouse, as we're looking at the issues, there are issues of multi-scales and we want to make sure that we're addressing

00:27:28.290 --> 00:27:37.800

BLM – Quincy Bahr: and meeting those needs across the scale so whether that means regular meetings, definitely at the state level, whether it means regular meetings and

00:27:38.550 --> 00:27:46.590

BLM – Quincy Bahr: updates, as well as reviews of draft documents that still to be identified and flushed out in those memorandums of understanding.

00:27:47.190 --> 00:27:57.810

BLM – Quincy Bahr: The end goal, though, is to make use of those expertise that those agencies, local governments, county governments, state governments, other federal agencies, tribal governments,

00:27:58.230 --> 00:28:03.600

BLM – Quincy Bahr: that they can bring to this effort. We want to make sure that we're capturing the right information available to make an informed decision.

00:28:06.870 --> 00:28:10.230

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Right. Thank you, Quincy, for that response. I'll go ahead and put you on mute.

00:28:10.770 --> 00:28:21.240

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Oh sorry about that I accidentally turned on our closed captioning and alright, so we will move on to question number three from our participants, which is

00:28:21.540 --> 00:28:31.890

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: will you have another meeting of sage-grouse experts, similar to the national technical team, to synthesize and incorporate the new and relevant science and the

00:28:32.340 --> 00:28:45.030

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: questioner notes that the original NTT report was helpful in consolidating the pertinent new science into management guidelines and I will go back to Pat to respond to that question.

00:28:49.500 --> 00:28:50.610

BLM - Pat Deibert: Thank you, Amanda.

00:28:52.410 --> 00:28:57.390

BLM - Pat Deibert: Excuse me, at this point in time, they have no intention of pulling together an NTT-like group.

00:28:57.660 --> 00:29:05.850

BLM - Pat Deibert: However, we are already working very closely with the scientific experts in the sagebrush ecosystem of the sage-grouse experts to look at what the new science is.

00:29:06.450 --> 00:29:15.960

BLM - Pat Deibert: To look at how that can be influential on our planning process, it's a very active engagement with those individuals.

00:29:16.470 --> 00:29:23.550

BLM - Pat Deibert: We're also looking forward to the completion of the conservation assessment that the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

00:29:24.060 --> 00:29:37.050

BLM - Pat Deibert: has been completing for the US fish and wildlife service. That assessment does include an update of all the current science for a greater sage-grouse and identification of all the management tools that are available

00:29:37.920 --> 00:29:47.880

BLM - Pat Deibert: for the greater sage-grouse that have happened since 2015. So while there is no intent at this point in time to pull together a new NTT-like report or team,

00:29:48.480 --> 00:29:56.820

BLM – Pat Deibert: I can guarantee you that our interaction with the scientific experts has been very intense, and we intend to continue that as we move through the planning process.

00:30:00.810 --> 00:30:09.810

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Pat, for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and we will move on to our next question received from our participants.

00:30:13.380 --> 00:30:28.740

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Which is question number four and the question is the planning area map indicates that the state of Washington sage-grouse population is included in the current planning effort. Is that correct, and I will go back to you Pat to respond to that question.

00:30:31.980 --> 00:30:32.280

BLM – Pat Deibert: That,

00:30:33.480 --> 00:30:35.190

BLM – Pat Deibert: We are, we're doing a planning effort for the entire range of greater

00:30:37.980 --> 00:30:55.980

BLM – Pat Deibert: sage-grouse. However there's very little BLM-managed lands where sage-grouse occur in the state of Washington, so it is unlikely we'll have an intensive management effort for that part of the species range, solely because most of those birds appear on private or DOD lands.

00:30:58.740 --> 00:31:06.060

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Pat, for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute now, so we can move on to our additional questions received

00:31:06.390 --> 00:31:16.350

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: via that chat feature. Again, I think we have about 15 questions total and counting, or I believe 16 questions total, so we are working our way through those.

00:31:17.130 --> 00:31:28.290

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: But again, if you have a question you would like to submit, please use the chat feature, and then, I know it says everyone on the screen here, but please select Clayton McGee and send your question over to him.

00:31:31.410 --> 00:31:35.940

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So we will wait for additional questions received via that zoom chat feature here.

00:31:56.850 --> 00:32:00.480

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, we will move on to question number five from participants.

00:32:01.350 --> 00:32:15.690

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Which is the presentation referenced quote new science, can you briefly summarize the new science and explain where we can review this new information while preparing our scoping comments, and I will go back to you Pat to respond to that question.

00:32:17.610 --> 00:32:22.980

BLM - Pat Deibert: That's a great question, and there has been so much new science, it's kind of hard to sort through some of it.

00:32:23.580 --> 00:32:31.410

BLM - Pat Deibert: We are tracking a lot of these new publications, peer-reviewed publications very closely to make sure we don't miss anything. Some of the key things that folks

00:32:32.340 --> 00:32:41.910

BLM - Pat Deibert: may be interested in or may be aware of is we are looking at the report that was released from the USGS on population declines

00:32:42.390 --> 00:32:51.420

BLM - Pat Deibert: and their targeted annual warning system and how that helps us understand where we may be having potential concerns with local populations of greater sage-grouse.

00:32:52.170 --> 00:32:59.070

BLM - Pat Deibert: BLM has released its five-year monitoring strategy that looks at habitat condition over the previous five years.

00:32:59.400 --> 00:33:10.170

BLM - Pat Deibert: And that has provided some excellent information to us about where we've had issues with habitat loss and what the causes of those losses may be, in fact, most of that has been due to wildfire.

00:33:11.850 --> 00:33:23.880

BLM – Pat Deibert: USGS has released a new report or a new paper on wild horses and burros and how the management of wild horses and burros affects the greater sage-grouse and the associated sagebrush habitats.

00:33:24.720 --> 00:33:32.490

BLM – Pat Deibert: There is also some new information that is currently in preparation regarding genetics, of the greater sage-grouse.

00:33:32.970 --> 00:33:45.180

BLM – Pat Deibert: And how the birds are moving across the landscape as a result of that, and that will be influential in our discussions regarding habitat management areas and how we update that to make sure that they're maintaining conductivity.

00:33:45.900 --> 00:33:51.750

BLM – Pat Deibert: There are many, many, many new issues many new science tools for management of sage-grouse.

00:33:53.040 --> 00:34:00.660

BLM – Pat Deibert: I'm happy to talk about more of those in detail, but I could take up the rest of the question-and-answer period talking about the new science.

00:34:01.020 --> 00:34:09.570

BLM – Pat Deibert: But I do want to assure you that we are talking almost daily with the scientists and these different organizations to make sure we're not missing any that information.

00:34:11.490 --> 00:34:18.780

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Pat, for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on you as we move on to question number six from participants.

00:34:19.230 --> 00:34:33.600

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Which is how does one submit areas of high mineral potential for critical and strategic minerals? Some areas of high potential have been missed in previous assessments, and I will go to Quincy Bahr to respond to this question.

00:34:36.030 --> 00:34:43.050

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Thank you, this, two things on this, one, first off this is exactly the kind of information we're looking for, if you have, if there's information

00:34:43.440 --> 00:34:52.200

BLM – Quincy Bahr: that needs to be considered as part of this process, please, that is the kind of information that can be submitted, it can be submitted as an attachment on the

00:34:53.490 --> 00:34:59.760

BLM – Quincy Bahr: ePlanning site. If it ends up being too large, can be submitted via a CD or something like that,

00:35:00.270 --> 00:35:20.160

BLM – Quincy Bahr: via the physical address. I do want to make sure in this, the other piece is to clarify there's a secondary sage-grouse consideration that's the most critical mineral maps will be considered during the withdrawal the 2016 SFA withdrawal EIS.

00:35:21.330 --> 00:35:39.120

BLM – Quincy Bahr: which has been, we've been initiated that process again due to court order and are gathering information about critical minerals in relation to potential withdrawal of those SFAs coming out of the 2015 amendment process. That is a separate process than this one.

00:35:40.200 --> 00:35:43.230

BLM – Quincy Bahr: We're not looking specifically at withdrawing,

00:35:44.490 --> 00:35:53.730

BLM – Quincy Bahr: we are looking at, as Pat mentioned, SFAs potential management of SFAs, but the withdrawal action is a separate EIS.

00:35:54.450 --> 00:36:07.770

BLM – Quincy Bahr: That is, we're working with USGS to gather information that again if there is, though information related to critical minerals that needs to be taken into account for this effort, please submit that via the planning site or one of those other avenues that I mentioned.

00:36:10.260 --> 00:36:23.580

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you Quincy and I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted here for question number seven which is has the BLM appealed the decision enjoining the greater sage-grouse plans and if not, why not?

00:36:26.040 --> 00:36:33.000

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So short answer no we haven't and, as far as the, why not, I'll fall back on the

00:36:34.290 --> 00:36:36.990

BLM – Quincy Bahr: we don't comment on ongoing litigation.

00:36:39.150 --> 00:36:40.440

BLM – Quincy Bahr: That being said,

00:36:42.150 --> 00:36:44.760

BLM – Quincy Bahr: There are merits of the

00:36:46.080 --> 00:36:54.150

BLM – Quincy Bahr: court case that we are looking at in relation to how those would affect the analysis and the decisions that we're evaluating for this effort.

00:36:55.140 --> 00:37:02.850

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Some of the things that were raised by the court are things that are only able to be adjusted through an amendment, which is what we're looking at right here.

00:37:05.640 --> 00:37:14.100

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for those back-to-back responses. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and we will wait for additional questions to come in

00:37:14.460 --> 00:37:26.460

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: via the zoom chat feature. Again, I know that we do have a few phone callers on the line here. We're going to continue to work our way through our questions received via the zoom chat feature, because we have received quite a few

00:37:26.850 --> 00:37:36.270

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: and then I will move on and explain how to submit a question if you are calling in through the phone today, but for now we're going to move on to our questions.

00:37:38.160 --> 00:37:47.280

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, which is question number eight, which is when does the BLM expect to publish the draft land use plans, and I will go back to Quincy to respond to that.

00:37:49.200 --> 00:37:53.730

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So in this one, we have a process, we have to follow,

00:37:54.690 --> 00:38:02.970

BLM – Quincy Bahr: we have some timelines that are identified in the NEPA regulations and we're hoping to move through those processes within those timelines as efficiently as possible.

00:38:03.360 --> 00:38:10.230

BLM – Quincy Bahr: The one thing we want to make sure as we move forward is that we don't lose sight that planning is important in the long term.

00:38:10.740 --> 00:38:22.800

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Some of those implementation actions are important for the grouse now, and so we want to keep our eye on that ball of improving, while also providing the long-term framework, regulatory framework

00:38:24.150 --> 00:38:32.670

BLM – Quincy Bahr: as efficiently as possible. Right now, our schedule is looking towards a draft late this year, this calendar year.

00:38:34.620 --> 00:38:40.050

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Quincy, and I'm going to go ahead and again keep you unmuted for question number nine

00:38:41.130 --> 00:38:47.730

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: which is, amongst the preliminary issues presented which are of interest to BLM in this scoping effort,

00:38:48.060 --> 00:39:05.790

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: sagebrush focal areas was referenced. So the question is, please help us understand this in relation to a separate NEPA effort already underway to evaluate the proposed withdrawal of public lands and sagebrush focal areas from mineral location and entry.

00:39:07.320 --> 00:39:14.070

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So the SFA is coming out of the 2015 included management recommending withdrawal.

00:39:15.030 --> 00:39:21.300

BLM – Quincy Bahr: The BLM started that effort in 2016, terminated it, subsequently was instructed by the courts,

00:39:21.720 --> 00:39:29.370

BLM – Quincy Bahr: and that was an incorrect termination, and so we are reinitiating that effort to consider the recommended withdrawal from the 2015.

00:39:30.090 --> 00:39:45.240

BLM – Quincy Bahr: What we're looking at as part of this effort as SFAs, as, and I want to make sure, the way they word it right, the most important sage-grouse habitat, sagebrush habitat. So we're looking at as part of this effort,

00:39:47.250 --> 00:39:56.250

BLM – Quincy Bahr: what are those most important habitats and what management is associated, needs should be associated with protecting those most important habitats.

00:39:56.640 --> 00:40:07.140

BLM – Quincy Bahr: That's what we're looking at here, what those shapes would look like and what management is necessary to maintain those, as separate from, should we withdraw the SFAS as depicted in 2015.

00:40:11.970 --> 00:40:18.540

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for those responses. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we wait for additional questions here.

00:40:24.300 --> 00:40:36.660

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we will move on to question number 10, which is where do we find updated maps for greater sage-grouse habitat areas, including focal areas, and can you provide the links to that.

00:40:37.920 --> 00:40:42.960

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: So I will go to Pat and see if she has any input on this question.

00:40:45.120 --> 00:40:55.140

BLM – Pat Deibert: Thanks Amanda, we don't have any updated maps at this point in time, because we need to consider how we want to change those areas moving toward. However, you can look at our 2015

00:40:55.950 --> 00:41:10.890

BLM – Pat Deibert: efforts which could be habitat management areas with the SFAs, and also the 2019 efforts. I will put a link in the chat so that folks can take a look at where those maps might be, and get those, have the opportunity to take a look at those.

00:41:15.450 --> 00:41:24.180

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response, so I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and yes, so we will use that chat feature to chat that out to everyone here shortly.

00:41:27.000 --> 00:41:31.110

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: In the meantime we're going to go ahead and move on to our next question here.

00:41:34.440 --> 00:41:52.500

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Let's see which is question number 11, which is, how does the BLM plan to address the number one issue with greater sage-grouse population decline, which is predation by ravens, red fox, raccoons, skunks, raptors, etc., and I will go back to Pat to respond to that question.

00:41:55.560 --> 00:42:00.300

BLM – Pat Deibert: So the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing habitat and not the wildlife species.

00:42:01.020 --> 00:42:07.650

BLM – Pat Deibert: Although, what we do to manage habitat is important there, but the predators that were mentioned are typically managed by our state, either

00:42:08.250 --> 00:42:24.630

BLM – Pat Deibert: wildlife agencies or state agricultural agencies. What we can do to address the issue of predation for sage-grouse? Sage-grouse are prey. They do not die from old age, but if we can improve their habitat, that is their best defense to avoiding

00:42:26.220 --> 00:42:43.290

BLM – Pat Deibert: early demise by predation. So the BLM will be focusing on improving habitat quality and making sure that we're providing as best habitat as we can for the greater sage-grouse to respond to the increased numbers of predators and diversity of predators on the landscape.

00:42:48.060 --> 00:42:54.330

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to additional questions here.

00:43:07.560 --> 00:43:19.530

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright we'll move on to question number 12 here, which is, will the BLM review the role of prescribed fire and shrub removal, fuel breaks, on sage-grouse populations and habitat?

00:43:20.670 --> 00:43:27.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And let's see I will go back, let's see, first to Quincy to respond to this question, and then see if Pat has any additional follow up.

00:43:29.190 --> 00:43:38.940

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So in this regard, it too comes down to the level of decision making at an RMP level, identifying some of the tools that are available but not identifying specific areas of treatments.

00:43:39.840 --> 00:43:46.470

BLM - Quincy Bahr: We recognize that, in some instances and some locations and some habitat situations, these treatments are important.

00:43:47.160 --> 00:44:01.380

BLM - Quincy Bahr: But as far as defining where those are and as a result, the specific impacts, that's an implementation level action that would be analyzed, associated with a proposed action on the ground, so again, generally the concept but not specific treatments.

00:44:04.380 --> 00:44:08.190

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy and we'll see if Pat has any additional input to that.

00:44:10.020 --> 00:44:11.310

BLM - Pat Deibert: I do not, thank you very much though.

00:44:12.270 --> 00:44:19.290

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, great, thank you for that response, Quincy. I'll go ahead and put you both back on mute and move on to our additional questions.

00:44:19.560 --> 00:44:32.460

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, we have received about 34 questions at this point, we're about to move on to question number 13. We are

trying to work, our way through those questions as quickly and efficiently as we can, oh we're up to 42.

00:44:33.330 --> 00:44:41.580

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So it might be possible that we might put a pause on the chat feature here shortly, just so we can catch up to the questions that are currently

00:44:41.940 --> 00:44:49.650

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: lined up next. We'll let you know if we do that though, right now we're just going to kind of keep moving through our questions. Again let's see, we have

00:44:49.950 --> 00:44:58.680

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: about 45 minutes here remaining in our question-and-answer session so we're going to keep moving forward with just taking each question as we get them.

00:45:20.730 --> 00:45:28.050

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, you can send your questions over to Clayton McGee. We're just waiting here to receive our additional questions.

00:46:21.960 --> 00:46:30.420

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we have our next question here, which is question number 14, which is what is the status of BLM's

00:46:31.770 --> 00:46:39.000

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment, and I will go to Quincy Bahr to respond to that question.

00:46:40.800 --> 00:46:41.130

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So the 2020

00:46:42.270 --> 00:46:45.600

BLM - Quincy Bahr: amendment was a supplement to the 2019.

00:46:47.310 --> 00:46:54.030

BLM - Quincy Bahr: It was a supplemental EIS, it didn't change any of the decisions from the 2019, and so we're stuck with a similar

00:46:55.950 --> 00:47:02.550

BLM - Quincy Bahr: court action related to the 2019 plan, in that we're, as directed by the courts, still implementing 2015.

00:47:07.080 --> 00:47:14.220

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Quincy, for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to our next questions received here.

00:47:42.780 --> 00:47:51.510

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we have question number 16 from our participants. I think we're to 16 now, because actually a few that were submitted were duplicates

00:47:51.840 --> 00:47:59.790

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: of earlier ones, we received two duplicates, so technically we are now on question number 16, apologies for any confusion here.

00:48:00.420 --> 00:48:15.810

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So that question is, since wildfire is a big player in the loss of greater sage-grouse habitat, has the BLM moved forward to fund and implement fuel and fire breaks after the recent programmatic EIS for fuel breaks was completed?

00:48:16.890 --> 00:48:19.920

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And I will go back to Quincy to respond to that question.

00:48:21.900 --> 00:48:33.510

BLM - Quincy Bahr: Sure, so between 2013 and 2020, BLM has invested more than 380 million dollars in habitat improvements, treating nearly 4 million acres

00:48:34.050 --> 00:48:46.320

BLM - Quincy Bahr: in relation to conservation and restoration of either affected lands or protecting or restoring habitats, sagebrush habitats. Approximately 40 million went into the habitat treatments and seed strategy in fiscal 21.

00:48:47.400 --> 00:49:04.140

BLM - Quincy Bahr: As far as moving forward, it's a little bit more difficult to estimate exactly because habitat is constantly being affected by fire and etc., so what we are doing is continuing to work with our partners, and continuing to fund

00:49:05.280 --> 00:49:08.460

BLM – Quincy Bahr: projects to help improve sage-grouse habitat and sagebrush.

00:49:12.780 --> 00:49:19.680

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to our next question received.

00:49:20.100 --> 00:49:24.240

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: At this point we have received, I think, close to 42 or 45 questions.

00:49:24.480 --> 00:49:34.140

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: So I did go ahead and turn off that chat feature, just for now, because we are going to try and work our way through those questions first. Again, as I said at the beginning of the meeting

00:49:34.470 --> 00:49:44.820

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: we're going to try and work our way through the questions in the order that they are received, and I do want to save some time here shortly for our phone callers. So right now, I have turned off that chat feature.

00:49:45.390 --> 00:49:50.250

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: But we're going to try and catch up to all of the questions that are currently in line to get answered.

00:49:50.580 --> 00:49:58.440

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: If we work our way through all of those, we'll open that chat feature back up so that we can continue working our way through new questions.

00:49:58.920 --> 00:50:12.120

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: But for now, we'll just continue working our way through questions that have currently been received by Clayton, so thank you everyone for your understanding and hopefully we can work our way through all of these so that we can move on to new questions.

00:50:15.180 --> 00:50:23.310

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, let's see, so we are now moving to question number 17, I believe, again, we had a couple duplicates so technically we're on 17.

00:50:23.760 --> 00:50:35.190

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Which is, will government agencies that were cooperating agencies in 2015 be invited again to be cooperating agencies? And I will go back to Quincy to respond to that question.

00:50:38.130 --> 00:50:48.990

BLM - Quincy Bahr: Thank you, so cooperating agency invitations are in the process of being sent out, so currently, and still being sent out. If you haven't received an invitation

00:50:49.800 --> 00:51:06.900

BLM - Quincy Bahr: and you were a cooperating agency in the 2015 effort, please let us know, and we'll investigate. Cooperating agency invites, especially as we start looking into something of this scale, there's a lot of them, and I'm going to say having been part of the process, both in 2015 and 2019,

00:51:08.160 --> 00:51:19.560

BLM - Quincy Bahr: I don't claim to be infallible, so we are sending them out to everyone that we are aware of. If we missed, please reach out to your local state office sage-grouse implementation lead.

00:51:21.240 --> 00:51:35.190

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great. Thank you, Quincy, and I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted for question number 18 here, which is, is the BLM proposal for a mineral withdrawal in focus areas a separate process, part of this current comment period, or both?

00:51:36.090 --> 00:51:45.150

BLM - Quincy Bahr: To be clear separate, separate, separate, separate, so that is, we're working on a separate EIS

00:51:45.570 --> 00:51:57.450

BLM - Quincy Bahr: that will be made available to the public for a comment period, and review of those, of that analysis. This one is again, looking at identifying, not the withdrawal piece

00:51:58.110 --> 00:52:10.050

BLM - Quincy Bahr: which only the Secretary has authority to do. We're looking at what the BLM has authority to do, in relation to identifying and management of potential high priority areas, in 2015, called SFAs.

00:52:11.070 --> 00:52:18.360

BLM – Quincy Bahr: The concept here being those most important areas, and how they should be managed. That's what we're discussing as far as this, in this effort.

00:52:20.370 --> 00:52:27.330

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thanks Quincy for that clarification, and I'll just keep you unmuted as we move on to question number 19, which is,

00:52:27.690 --> 00:52:41.730

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: why is this planning process not included on the fall unified regulatory agenda, with comments submitted through regulations.gov, let's see, it's a long comment, um, let's see, which allows searching of comments submitted?

00:52:42.720 --> 00:52:53.790

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So a couple things, first off this is a planning process, not a rulemaking process, that's a bit of a wonky distinction, but nonetheless

00:52:54.300 --> 00:53:09.960

BLM – Quincy Bahr: it is, we're following our planning regulations the BLM's 1600 planning regulations and the handbook associated with that. With that, and with NEPA, this is a public process, those comments are available, but the tool that we're using, ePlanning.

00:53:11.100 --> 00:53:19.620

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Those can be, as we, in fact we've regularly done this, they are, they can be available to the public. Right now as we're gathering them

00:53:20.220 --> 00:53:34.740

BLM – Quincy Bahr: that, I don't believe, that feature, that ePlanning tool allows everyone to see everyone's comments at the same time as they're submitted. That would have to be something that is made available later on in the process, which we will do through a scoping report.

00:53:37.830 --> 00:53:47.910

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for all those responses. I'll put you back on mute and we will move on to question number 20, which is, will the Forest Service be involved,

00:53:48.450 --> 00:53:57.990

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: let's see, in this planning effort like was done during past sage-grouse planning, which also led to forest plan revisions? And I will go to Pat to respond to that one.

00:53:59.910 --> 00:54:06.810

BLM - Pat Deibert: Thanks Amanda. We have been discussing with the Forest Service what our intent is through this planning process.

00:54:07.860 --> 00:54:17.430

BLM - Pat Deibert: We can't, we expect them to be a cooperating agency, but, quite frankly, we cannot speak to their intent and what they plan to do as the BLM amends our planning.

00:54:19.350 --> 00:54:21.330

BLM - Pat Deibert: We are talking to them, frequently.

00:54:24.870 --> 00:54:31.530

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute here, as we move on to our next questions.

00:55:04.320 --> 00:55:11.670

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, we're going to move on, we're getting a couple of duplicate questions so we're just trying to sort those out here quickly, all right let's see, so I think 21

00:55:12.390 --> 00:55:25.530

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: was a dupe, so we're going to move on to question number 22 which is, who do we contact to request cooperating agency status, our local BLM office or someone else? And I'll go back to Quincy to respond to that.

00:55:27.180 --> 00:55:36.210

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So for that one, work with your local BLM state offices, specifically the implementation coordinator, hopefully you're aware who that is and they've been working with you.

00:55:36.930 --> 00:55:49.680

BLM - Quincy Bahr: But that would be, again trying to roll this up from the local level moving on up, the main point of contact for the local areas will be the implementation coordinators at the BLM state offices.

00:55:51.750 --> 00:55:55.530

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response, I'll go ahead and put you back on mute.

00:56:00.270 --> 00:56:13.290

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Oh, and we're actually going to go back, there's kind of part of a duplicate question that we're going to respond to, so that's technically question number 21, which Quincy will respond to which is, has the BLM considered putting this

00:56:13.770 --> 00:56:19.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: SFA and greater sage-grouse planning, all in one EIS instead of two separate ones?

00:56:20.130 --> 00:56:32.940

BLM - Quincy Bahr: Ah yeah, yes considered, but the problem becomes the level of decision making, one is an implementation, that is the decision to withdraw, again the authority for that is the Secretary,

00:56:33.360 --> 00:56:38.820

BLM - Quincy Bahr: and the other is the BLM planning effort. You're dealing with two separate regulations and so

00:56:39.630 --> 00:56:54.780

BLM - Quincy Bahr: two different purposes. The withdraw action is in response to a court order, this one is in response to those changed conditions, and so, because of that, the purpose and need are different, and so we're keeping those as two separate efforts.

00:56:57.030 --> 00:57:03.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for going back and responding to a part of that question, we'll move on to question number 23,

00:57:04.260 --> 00:57:11.520

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: which is, since new science is showing the negative impacts of excessive wild horse populations on sage-grouse habitat,

00:57:11.820 --> 00:57:25.980

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: is the BLM doing anything to bring wild horse populations back to the appropriate management levels in herd management areas that overlay sage-grouse habitat? And let's see, I will go to Pat to respond to this question.

00:57:29.430 --> 00:57:41.970

BLM – Pat Deibert: I'd like to point folks to our recent press releases about the efforts we're making with our wild horse and burro program. We are having more roundups, we're taking more horses in those roundups and treating more horses, with um,

00:57:44.160 --> 00:57:52.980

BLM – Pat Deibert: fertility treatments, as we do those roundups. So we are working with our wild horse and burro program with the tools that we have

00:57:53.430 --> 00:57:58.080

BLM – Pat Deibert: to try to reduce the numbers of horses on the landscape and bring them back down to AML.

00:57:58.890 --> 00:58:07.170

BLM – Pat Deibert: We welcome any suggestions that you may want to submit to us through our scoping process and other options that we can use within the range of tools that we currently have

00:58:07.770 --> 00:58:15.120

BLM – Pat Deibert: to address this horse issue because we recognize the concern, and the potential impacts or the actual impacts, on the greater sage-grouse and their habitats.

00:58:18.000 --> 00:58:24.180

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted for, let's see, question number

00:58:25.380 --> 00:58:37.410

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: 24, which is, will the BLM be using the USDA NRCS sage-grouse initiative as a source of new and relevant sage-grouse science?

00:58:38.250 --> 00:58:51.240

BLM – Pat Deibert: Absolutely, we will embrace all the science being brought forth through the NRCS and their efforts which have been impressive, as well as all the other science out there, so you bet, we coordinate regularly with those folks.

00:58:53.310 --> 00:58:59.760

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for those responses. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to our additional questions here.

00:59:24.450 --> 00:59:35.340

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we're going to move on to our next question here, which is, what are the areas involved in Utah BLM land? And I'll go ahead and unmute Quincy to respond to that.

00:59:37.020 --> 00:59:39.390

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So on a state by state,

00:59:40.860 --> 00:59:53.160

BLM - Quincy Bahr: um, obviously, the starting out process, starting out level, no action alternative, we're looking at both alternatives in relation to 2015 and 2019, so those PHMA areas as you go state to state, whether it be Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, etc.,

00:59:54.000 --> 01:00:00.150

BLM - Quincy Bahr: that those become something that we'll be taking a look at. In addition to that, we'll be looking at the other available science

01:00:00.990 --> 01:00:09.450

BLM - Quincy Bahr: and where it lets us know condition of sagebrush habitat, and how those support those sage-grouse populations.

01:00:09.810 --> 01:00:26.250

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So at this point again, starting off point becomes what we have right now and then, in working in coordination with the state, if there are adjustments that need to be made and looking at the science as far as where, what areas are important for grouse, what's their condition as far as

01:00:27.510 --> 01:00:29.520

BLM - Quincy Bahr: cheatgrass, juniper, etc.

01:00:29.940 --> 01:00:43.650

BLM - Quincy Bahr: Essentially starting point is where we're at, and then looking at what science has shown us, and what modeling and monitoring is informing us as far as where sage-grouse, what's needed for sage-grouse populations, and prioritization of those areas.

01:00:47.340 --> 01:00:57.240

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy. I'll put you back on mute as we move on to our next question here before we will pause and see if we have any questions from phone callers today.

01:00:57.630 --> 01:01:04.380

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So we're going to move on to our next question, though, from our Zoom web platform or Zoom app users, which is,

01:01:04.800 --> 01:01:16.770

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: is the BLM going to revise the sage-grouse management rules that affect how far from a lek or nesting ground oil and gas operations are allowed? And I will go to Pat to respond to that one.

01:01:21.270 --> 01:01:24.750

BLM - Pat Deibert: Yeah, thank you for the question we are,

01:01:26.430 --> 01:01:32.100

BLM - Pat Deibert: we are, in scoping right now so we're discussing everything on the table. As we mentioned in our NOI,

01:01:32.700 --> 01:01:42.480

BLM - Pat Deibert: we will be looking at particular new science and information, how buffers are effective, and what density of disturbance caps are effective and how we want to address those as we move forward.

01:01:45.330 --> 01:01:49.020

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute.

01:01:49.440 --> 01:01:55.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And, as I just said we'll pause here, to see if we have any phone callers who might have a question that they want to ask.

01:01:56.130 --> 01:02:10.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So if you're calling in through the phone today, I see that we have just a handful, and you would like to ask a question, you can let us know by accessing the raise hand feature, and you can do that by pressing star nine on your phone keypad.

01:02:11.850 --> 01:02:17.640

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: That'll let us know that you've accessed that raise hand feature, and we can then unmute you directly and

01:02:18.060 --> 01:02:29.190

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: you can ask your question. Again, please submit any comments you have via any of those avenues that we provided

earlier. Right now we are still just doing our question-and-answer session.

01:02:29.730 --> 01:02:39.390

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: But we do want to give an opportunity for phone callers to ask their questions, so again you can press star nine on your phone keypad to access that raise hand feature.

01:02:39.900 --> 01:02:51.480

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Once we see you raised your hand, we'll unmute you, and you may need to press star six on your end in order to unmute yourself. So I'll pause here to see if we have any raised hands.

01:03:04.140 --> 01:03:09.690

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, I don't see any raised hands at the moment, so, in the meantime we're just going to continue

01:03:10.050 --> 01:03:18.420

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: to work our way through our list of questions. Again, I think we did reach about 42 or so before we turned off the chat feature.

01:03:18.720 --> 01:03:26.220

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: and we are on now, technically, question number 31. I know it's been a little confusing with all the duplicate questions submitted.

01:03:26.520 --> 01:03:33.390

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: But we are, I think, working our way through that list, again we have about 30 minutes remaining in our question-and-answer session here.

01:03:33.870 --> 01:03:48.510

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So, I'll move on to question number 31, which is, how does the BLM plan to ensure that any plan amendments are consistent with state greater sage-grouse plans, and state or county resource management plans and policies,

01:03:48.930 --> 01:03:55.710

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: to the greatest degree possible, as required by FLPMA? And I will go back to Quincy to respond to this.

01:03:57.630 --> 01:04:07.590

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Great question, obviously the, our FLPMA requirements, as well as some NEPA requirements, require us to be as consistent as possible, and

01:04:08.070 --> 01:04:20.820

BLM – Quincy Bahr: as we've been working closely with our state and local our partners and tribal partners now since 2013, almost a decade, and beyond. I mean that's just on the major planning efforts, that doesn't count all the things well back into the 90s.

01:04:21.870 --> 01:04:30.750

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So, so that, those relationships are critical, and as we work again, we have the habitat, the birds managed by the States and so

01:04:31.320 --> 01:04:42.750

BLM – Quincy Bahr: working with them through those cooperating agency relationships is going to be important as we move forward. Obviously, the regulatory process is that, as we work into the final EIS,

01:04:43.410 --> 01:04:55.920

BLM – Quincy Bahr: we evaluate those plans, that, those plans being state and county plans, and identify inconsistencies if there are any, and disclose those to the state, and then the state governor has the opportunity to

01:04:57.090 --> 01:05:11.730

BLM – Quincy Bahr: perform their own consistency review, and so that, that's the standard process. We're hoping to achieve alignment through those communications during the process of developing the alternatives, the analysis, the EISs.

01:05:14.040 --> 01:05:21.750

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute. We will move on, let's see, to question number 32,

01:05:22.110 --> 01:05:35.220

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: which is, do you have an anticipated timeline for this scoping process, and when slash if a further action or an amendment would be initiated? And I will go to Pat to respond to that question.

01:05:37.410 --> 01:05:42.120

BLM – Pat Deibert: Our scoping process, or scoping period, will close on February eighth,

01:05:42.750 --> 01:05:50.040

BLM – Pat Deibert: after which, we will take that information, we will sit down to address all of it look at all the new information and data given to us,

01:05:50.310 --> 01:05:55.860

BLM – Pat Deibert: and then we'll start developing alternatives, which will then be released in a draft EIS later this year.

01:05:56.370 --> 01:06:05.970

BLM – Pat Deibert: So, we will be continuing this effort throughout the year with other opportunities for the public to participate. The scoping does close on February eighth, and we'd love to get your written feedback by that time.

01:06:07.530 --> 01:06:19.500

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat. I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted for our next question here, which is, who are the organizations, groups, scientists, etc., providing updated, quote, science.

01:06:20.700 --> 01:06:29.130

BLM – Pat Deibert: So we don't, anyone who is able to publish scientific peer reviewed literature, we'd consider all. There is not an exclusive group that we use there.

01:06:29.550 --> 01:06:42.630

BLM – Pat Deibert: However, we are coordinating very closely with USGS. We're looking at university researchers. We're looking at independent researchers, for a variety of different groups. We look at the folks who are working with NRCS through sage-grouse initiative.

01:06:43.710 --> 01:06:52.320

BLM – Pat Deibert: But if it's a scientifically peer reviewed published article, it's information that we are at least going to review for its relevance to our planning efforts.

01:06:55.260 --> 01:07:02.790

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response, I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to our next question, let's see,

01:07:03.240 --> 01:07:18.900

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: 35 which is, can you expand on how the BLM may consider the use of a ACECs for important habitats? Does this include the potential protection of PHMAs as ACECs? And I will go to Quincy to respond to that one.

01:07:20.280 --> 01:07:30.960

BLM - Quincy Bahr: It's a good question, and it's something that has been raised in previous planning efforts, and in this one is part of our NOI. We did invite the public to identify and nominate ACECs.

01:07:31.620 --> 01:07:36.930

BLM - Quincy Bahr: ACECs are something that Congress has specifically directed the BLM to prioritize

01:07:37.500 --> 01:07:49.500

BLM - Quincy Bahr: specifically, and with that direction of, there is a regulatory process and policy that would need to be followed. And that would be both the nominations, as well as us evaluating.

01:07:50.190 --> 01:07:59.550

BLM - Quincy Bahr: And for an ACEC to be designated, it must meet various criteria. These are identified in regulation: relevance, importance, and

01:07:59.880 --> 01:08:15.300

BLM - Quincy Bahr: those areas must need special management. So how those all fit in, we'll follow the process, we'll follow direction given to us by Congress and implement it per our regulations and policies. As far as what would that look like, it's going to have to go through the process to determine

01:08:17.280 --> 01:08:25.110

BLM - Quincy Bahr: it. Any nomination would need to be found to be relevant, important, and then through analysis, we need to determine that it would need special management.

01:08:26.490 --> 01:08:34.020

BLM - Quincy Bahr: Again, that will be determined through the process, there's no set answer right now of how we want this to look in the end.

01:08:37.470 --> 01:08:43.350

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll keep you unmuted here as we move on to our next question,

01:08:43.830 --> 01:08:51.630

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: which is, the first primary issue listed in the notice of intent is focused on sagebrush focal areas, including their identification.

01:08:52.200 --> 01:09:01.410

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Does this mean that the boundaries of SFAs are being considered in this planning effort, versus the other planning effort focused specifically on mineral withdrawals?

01:09:03.090 --> 01:09:15.240

BLM - Quincy Bahr: And short answer yes, there is, there is a bit of duplication in this regard, but what we're looking at in this effort, again, as I mentioned earlier, the other effort is in response to a court

01:09:16.170 --> 01:09:25.620

BLM - Quincy Bahr: remand specific to those 2015 boundaries. In this effort, we are looking at whether those boundaries identified in 2015,

01:09:26.490 --> 01:09:35.490

BLM - Quincy Bahr: based on what we've learned in the last five years, and what we've seen through monitoring, are those the right areas, and is the management associated with them from 2015, the right management.

01:09:35.880 --> 01:09:48.420

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So that's what's on the table, that's what we're asking for here, as far as input from the public, and from our, from our, partners and states, is, are changes needed in that regard.

01:09:52.380 --> 01:10:03.420

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for those responses. I'll put you back on mute, and before we move on to our next question here, I just want to let everyone know I did see that we had a few participants join here.

01:10:04.020 --> 01:10:13.230

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So just wanted to update everyone, we are still in our question-and-answer session, we have about 20 minutes left, we're almost caught up to the questions that were submitted

01:10:14.010 --> 01:10:23.850

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: before we turned off that chat feature, so right now the chat feature is turned off, but we are working our way through that list of questions that has been submitted already.

01:10:24.240 --> 01:10:31.170

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I did just read through phone caller instructions, but for any new phone callers who might have joined, if you have a question you want to ask

01:10:31.470 --> 01:10:40.410

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: you can press star nine on your phone keypad to access that raise hand feature to let us know you have a question that you would like to ask verbally.

01:10:41.160 --> 01:10:49.650

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: I don't see any raised hands at the moment, so we'll just keep on moving through our list of questions that were submitted before we did turn off that chat feature.

01:10:49.980 --> 01:11:00.960

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If we are able to work through all of them, which hopefully we can, we will try and save some time to turn back on that chat feature, but just want to remind everyone if we don't get to your question today,

01:11:01.530 --> 01:11:09.330

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: we do have an additional meeting on January 24th, and we will share some further information on that before we end today's meeting.

01:11:09.870 --> 01:11:14.400

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: For now, we're just going to keep on moving through our questions that have been submitted so far.

01:11:15.030 --> 01:11:25.110

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So, let's see, we're going to move on to question number, let's see, 37 on our list which is, first, will the NRCS working lands for wildlife

01:11:25.800 --> 01:11:39.300

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: be considered during the science review, and second, can the science being considered during this BLM review be

uploaded and made public through the ePlanning page? And I will go to Pat to respond to those two questions.

01:11:40.590 --> 01:11:45.690

BLM – Pat Deibert: Absolutely, we will consider the science that was generated through the NRCS working lands for wildlife program.

01:11:46.320 --> 01:11:50.640

BLM – Pat Deibert: They've been great partners and they're generating some good work, and we'll absolutely consider that.

01:11:51.180 --> 01:11:58.410

BLM – Pat Deibert: As for all the science that we'll be considering and developing alternatives, that will all be part of our draft EIS when it's released.

01:11:59.010 --> 01:12:12.720

BLM – Pat Deibert: We will tell folks exactly what we used, what we considered, through that process, but I want to encourage people if they have scientific documents they think need to be considered, please submit them through scoping process, so we can be sure to include them.

01:12:15.360 --> 01:12:29.340

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute, and we'll move on to our next question which is, will the BLM examine the proposed impact of the DOD operations in sage-grouse management,

01:12:30.690 --> 01:12:46.980

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: let's see, the DOD plans to expand low level supersonic training and other DOD operations over areas such as Owyhee Canyon and vast areas over Idaho and northern Nevada, and if not, why not? And I will go to Quincy to respond to that question.

01:12:48.360 --> 01:12:56.520

BLM – Quincy Bahr: I do love the wording of this question. As far as the proposed impact of those operations, as with any

01:12:56.880 --> 01:13:02.730

BLM – Quincy Bahr: activity, the BLM will consider impacts both to those things that we authorize as well as

01:13:03.090 --> 01:13:20.400

BLM – Quincy Bahr: other activities out on the ground, whether it be on adjacent lands, or other agencies. In this regard if it is a reasonably foreseeable activity that could affect the resource in question, in this regard sage-grouse and sagebrush, it could be analyzed as a cumulative effect.

01:13:22.440 --> 01:13:38.190

BLM – Quincy Bahr: That said, our plan itself, we don't have the jurisdiction over DOD airspace operations, and so while we could consider it as a cumulative impact, it's not something that we could directly manage as far as in our range of alternatives.

01:13:40.590 --> 01:13:57.300

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted here for our next question, which is, generally speaking, how will this administration's emphasis on renewable energy and electric infrastructure be addressed from a big picture perspective?

01:13:58.770 --> 01:14:04.650

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So, as noted in the NOI, we're looking at energy both from traditional

01:14:05.310 --> 01:14:17.640

BLM – Quincy Bahr: oil and gas, etcetera, traditional sources, carbon sources, as well as from renewable. The big thing in this process to keep in mind is, our purpose and need is tied to sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats,

01:14:18.120 --> 01:14:26.280

BLM – Quincy Bahr: and so this isn't part of a broader effort, but this is taking into account impacts to that sage brush habitat, whether it be from

01:14:26.790 --> 01:14:44.280

BLM – Quincy Bahr: traditional or renewable, and then associated infrastructure with each. So, what we're looking for at this point is what management might be necessary in relation to both of those uses, in managing to protect sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat.

01:14:47.220 --> 01:14:53.220

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for those responses. I'll put you on mute and we'll move on to our next question,

01:14:53.730 --> 01:15:05.400

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: which is, you mentioned burros and horse effects and failed to mention cattle and sheep effects on the land management areas. Will that be included? And I will go to Pat to respond to this question.

01:15:06.840 --> 01:15:08.490

BLM - Pat Deibert: Absolutely, we will include

01:15:09.570 --> 01:15:21.690

BLM - Pat Deibert: all grazing issues, regardless of the species is doing the grazing. It is an issue we identified in our scoping notice, and it is something through our comprehensive review, as we go through our planning efforts, that we will consider.

01:15:24.420 --> 01:15:32.100

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Excellent, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we move on to our additional questions here.

01:15:37.050 --> 01:15:43.710

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Let's see, which is question number 42, I believe, which is, how does the BLM intend to hold the

01:15:44.220 --> 01:15:57.570

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: DOs and FOs accountable that habitat management implementation consistent with the casual factor analysis is being pursued and applied, and let's see I will go to Quincy to respond to this question.

01:15:58.620 --> 01:16:04.290

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So, so a couple things for those on the call DOs and FOs would be district offices and field offices.

01:16:05.100 --> 01:16:10.950

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So that would be the, under the state office, the various subdivisions of BLM management.

01:16:11.460 --> 01:16:19.980

BLM - Quincy Bahr: And then the causal factor analysis, I would assume, is tied to our adaptive management, that's where a lot of those are mentioned, is when we identify a concerning

01:16:20.760 --> 01:16:30.210

BLM – Quincy Bahr: triggers identified in the 2015 plan, when those are hit, the causal factor is conducted to determine why there was those drops.

01:16:30.810 --> 01:16:49.350

BLM – Quincy Bahr: As far as holding them accountable, the BLM planning process includes five-year plan evaluations, similar to the five-year evaluation that was conducted, and it's on the ePlanning site. But as part of those five-year evaluations, the questions are asked,

01:16:50.700 --> 01:17:00.270

BLM – Quincy Bahr: are our management actions identified in our land use plan in this regard tied to sage-grouse, are they what is needed, are they

01:17:00.690 --> 01:17:11.760

BLM – Quincy Bahr: effective in meeting our desired conditions, and if not, what changes are necessary. So that evaluation process is built into the BLM planning process,

01:17:12.360 --> 01:17:17.700

BLM – Quincy Bahr: both planning evaluation and then, as we move forward, whether it be maintenance or amendment. Which is

01:17:18.300 --> 01:17:33.240

BLM – Quincy Bahr: kind of, part of, the reason why we're where we are right here, is in looking at the effectiveness of existing management and at current science and trends, so those, that accountability comes through the processes and following the agency's processes.

01:17:35.910 --> 01:17:45.150

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for those clarifications and that response. I'll put you back on mute so that we can move on to our next question, let's see.

01:17:45.960 --> 01:17:54.720

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: So, the question is, will all resource management plans within greater sage-grouse habitat be amended? And I will go to Pat to respond to this question.

01:17:56.880 --> 01:18:13.110

BLM – Pat Deibert: Currently, all of those areas are within the scope of our notice of intent; however, as our process evolves and we move forward, exploring different options, it may be that not all of them

will be included in a record of decision, some of them may not need those amendments.

01:18:15.120 --> 01:18:16.230

BLM – Pat Deibert: We can't tell at this point, quite honestly.

01:18:20.070 --> 01:18:24.210

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute.

01:18:26.940 --> 01:18:32.100

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: And I believe we are almost caught up to our list of previously asked questions.

01:18:34.590 --> 01:18:39.570

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: We'll wait here to see if we have any of those additional previously asked questions.

01:18:44.910 --> 01:18:56.040

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so the next question is, is there still opportunity for governmental agencies to request cooperator status? And I will go back to Quincy to respond to this question.

01:18:57.540 --> 01:18:58.230

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Yes,

01:18:59.250 --> 01:19:05.430

BLM – Quincy Bahr: short answer, absolutely. If there is special expertise or jurisdiction that you can bring to our effort,

01:19:05.700 --> 01:19:20.040

BLM – Quincy Bahr: and at this point especially, where we are still in the scoping phase, gathering information, framing what this is going to look, like absolutely. So, if you have special expertise or jurisdiction by law, please reach out to those implementation leads.

01:19:22.410 --> 01:19:26.400

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute here.

01:19:32.250 --> 01:19:38.610

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we have worked our way through that list of previously asked questions. I know it's a little confusing

01:19:39.210 --> 01:19:47.730

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: with some of the duplicate questions that were asked across either different participants or to different co-hosts of the meeting. So, we have

01:19:48.600 --> 01:19:54.780

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: at this time, caught up to all of our questions that were submitted before we went ahead and turned off that chat feature.

01:19:55.110 --> 01:20:02.550

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: We do have just a little under 10 minutes remaining here, so at this time, I am going to open back up that chat feature.

01:20:02.940 --> 01:20:11.940

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, please send your questions over to Clayton McGee. We're going to try our best to grab about five more questions out of that chat feature

01:20:12.450 --> 01:20:23.820

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: and respond to those here on the meeting today. Again, we do have an additional meeting that we will provide some further details on here shortly, after we get through any additional questions we may have.

01:20:24.420 --> 01:20:28.560

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: If you're a phone caller, again, you can ask a question verbally today.

01:20:29.070 --> 01:20:45.450

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: You can do that by accessing the raise hand feature on your phone keypad. You can press star nine to access that raise hand feature. We will then unmute you so that you can ask your question verbally, and a BLM staffer will respond to your question verbally.

01:20:51.990 --> 01:21:00.060

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: But in the meantime, I don't see any raised hands at the moment, so we're going to see if we have any additional questions coming in via that chat feature.

01:21:00.300 --> 01:21:14.040

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, we appreciate everyone's patience and understanding with having to shut off that chat feature, so that we could catch up to our currently submitted questions, so that we can now move on to our new questions that are being submitted

01:21:15.180 --> 01:21:15.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: right now.

01:21:22.650 --> 01:21:31.560

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So, we'll just give it a few minutes here as we let people submit those last questions that they have before we move into a short kind of closing remarks slide.

01:21:38.640 --> 01:21:45.960

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, you can send those questions over to Clayton McGee using that chat feature located at the bottom of your zoom screen.

01:22:11.520 --> 01:22:17.190

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: And again, we're kind of sorting through our questions here, because a few that we are receiving are duplicates

01:22:17.640 --> 01:22:32.370

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: of questions that were asked previously during the meeting. Again, this entire meeting is being recorded, so those will be captured in the recording. Right now, we're kind of looking to see if we have any new questions coming in via the chat feature.

01:22:48.930 --> 01:22:55.500

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, we did have a quick question. One of the participants said they are one of the states that participated in the

01:22:56.220 --> 01:23:02.670

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: amendments, and they were asking for some information on the protest items and where those might be located.

01:23:02.970 --> 01:23:12.570

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: So, Quincy, I'll turn it over to you quickly and then we'll try and post some information on those protests in the chat feature here shortly. Quincy, I'll let you take this one.

01:23:14.370 --> 01:23:19.440

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So, and we are looking to get a little bit more information on which state this is from, we want to make sure

01:23:20.850 --> 01:23:23.460

BLM – Quincy Bahr: clarifying that, what the question is, but

01:23:26.070 --> 01:23:33.120

BLM – Quincy Bahr: the protests are available online. All protests associated with all land use plans are available, and we can post the link.

01:23:34.410 --> 01:23:47.190

BLM – Quincy Bahr: I believe that we said that we can post a link in the chat. As far as the protest reports, as far as the case numbers, I don't have that off the top of my head. I'll have to go chase that down, but that would be tied to one of the District Courts in Idaho.

01:23:48.270 --> 01:23:52.860

BLM – Quincy Bahr: And again, we can find out which state it was that was making that comment and chase it down.

01:23:55.410 --> 01:24:12.360

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, Thank you Quincy for that short response. Kate Krebs did just post a link to the protest resolution reports by state in the chat feature, so for the person who asked that question, hopefully you can get some further information by clicking on that link.

01:24:16.140 --> 01:24:31.230

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: All right, we'll move on to our next question received, which is, what is the anticipated timing of the EIS evaluating the SFA withdrawals, versus the EIS for the LUPAs? And I will go to Pat to respond to that question.

01:24:37.110 --> 01:24:51.000

BLM – Pat Deibert: We're currently working to gather all that updated information, and so we're hopeful that we'll have the information on the SFAs worked through and the analysis completed early on in our, in the planning effort. Again they're separate issues.

01:24:52.470 --> 01:25:02.850

BLM – Pat Deibert: But right now, I can't give you a firm timeline on how that's going to happen. Hopefully we can get that completed before so that we can then move this into our current planning effort.

01:25:06.000 --> 01:25:12.960

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we wait for any additional

01:25:13.530 --> 01:25:24.870

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: questions coming in from participants. We do have just a few minutes remaining here so, hopefully, those of you who weren't able to ask your questions when the chat feature was turned off can ask those questions now.

01:25:55.740 --> 01:26:00.060

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we'll move on to, let's see, our next question here.

01:26:01.320 --> 01:26:13.140

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Hold on quickly. Okay, so the next question we received is, what is the role of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in this effort? And I will go back to Quincy to respond to that question.

01:26:15.000 --> 01:26:24.750

BLM - Quincy Bahr: The Fish and Wildlife Service as part of this effort as a cooperating agency, similar to the Forest Service and some of our other federal agencies. We're working with them. Obviously, there's some special expertise there

01:26:25.410 --> 01:26:31.260

BLM - Quincy Bahr: in relation to sage-grouse, and so we're working with them in that regard, as far as a sister agency with

01:26:32.520 --> 01:26:39.780

BLM - Quincy Bahr: some of that special expertise, similar relationship in cooperating and coordinating that we have with our other federal agencies and other states.

01:26:43.380 --> 01:26:51.750

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute and let's see, we'll move on to our next question received here.

01:26:55.980 --> 01:27:03.840

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Okay, so the question was, what is the perfect habitat for greater sage? And I will go to Pat to respond to that question.

01:27:06.390 --> 01:27:17.910

BLM – Pat Deibert: That's a great question, and I wish we had a really good technical defined answer for you, but basically, it's habitat that is going to provide your standard habitat components

01:27:18.330 --> 01:27:26.820

BLM – Pat Deibert: of food, cover, water, and the ability to get to them for all the different seasons that sage-grouse use an area. It's super challenging to answer that simply

01:27:27.600 --> 01:27:36.150

BLM – Pat Deibert: because sage-grouse in different parts of the range use different kinds of sage brush. They use different understories, different water resources, etc.

01:27:36.570 --> 01:27:48.990

BLM – Pat Deibert: So, it really depends on where you are, whether or not your sage-grouse populations are migratory in that area, but it's your basic food, cover, water, and ability to obtain them through all their different seasonal habitats, or seasonal use areas.

01:27:51.900 --> 01:28:01.320

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute as we see if we have any additional questions received that we can get to today, so please hold.

01:28:12.030 --> 01:28:28.050

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so let's see, we have a few additional questions. So this question is, will the sage-grouse planning maps being used by the state and federal agencies be standardized so that both agencies use the same map? And I will go back to you Pat to respond to that question.

01:28:29.460 --> 01:28:35.940

BLM – Pat Deibert: We are working with a different state wildlife agencies and federal agencies to try to coordinate our efforts.

01:28:36.840 --> 01:28:46.650

BLM – Pat Deibert: When it comes down to our mapping process or trying to identify habitat management areas for greater sage-grouse, so we're going to continue to work through that process as we move forward in this effort.

01:28:49.290 --> 01:28:57.750

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat, and I'll go ahead and keep you unmuted here for this next question, which is, the 2015 amendments addressed the

01:28:59.100 --> 01:29:10.980

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: US Fish and Wildlife Service lawsuit on whether to add the greater sage-grouse to the endangered species list. So the question is, with the population declines, will listing be a consideration?

01:29:12.690 --> 01:29:22.620

BLM - Pat Deibert: So, we can't speak for our sister agency in DOI, that will be a decision from the US Fish and Wildlife Service depending on any information or requests that they have received.

01:29:23.370 --> 01:29:30.450

BLM - Pat Deibert: However, we will continue to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that we're doing anything we can to conserve the habitat for the species on BLM lands.

01:29:35.670 --> 01:29:39.720

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat for those responses. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute here.

01:29:47.460 --> 01:30:01.740

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Alright let's see, we'll move on to our next question which is, does the BLM plan to avoid one size fits all regulations and allow for adaptive management based on local conditions? And I will go to Quincy to respond to that question.

01:30:03.120 --> 01:30:15.030

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So, this point as I mentioned before, we're not beginning with any end in mind. We're seeking that input from scoping. I will say as we've gone through this for the last decade, in

01:30:16.110 --> 01:30:26.220

BLM - Quincy Bahr: some instances a one size fits all to, so to speak, makes sense. It's not like grouse in Montana love disturbance, whereas grouse in Wyoming don't.

01:30:26.940 --> 01:30:36.240

BLM - Quincy Bahr: So, in some instances, we have science that does show relationships. In other instances, such as habitat objectives, that makes a lot of sense to do

01:30:36.720 --> 01:30:48.210

BLM – Quincy Bahr: local adaptation, instances where grouse in southern Nevada, southern Utah, versus or Colorado, compared to Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, those ecologies are different. So

01:30:48.600 --> 01:31:01.080

BLM – Quincy Bahr: where it makes sense to have those differences, we want to make sure we consider and provide for that. Where there aren't those differences, we want to make sure that we have management that is sufficient to protect the grouse.

01:31:03.810 --> 01:31:16.890

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. I'll go ahead and put you back on mute here. I think we're going to do one last additional question today before we move on to our closing remarks slide that I mentioned earlier.

01:31:18.060 --> 01:31:28.980

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Alright, so we're going to end with this last question, which is, are there any new opportunities, or any opportunities to build in more latitude for the BLM to lift minimum tool restrictions

01:31:29.280 --> 01:31:44.310

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: for wildland firefighting and or the use of nonnative plant species for fire rehabilitation in wilderness designations to better protect and rehabilitate sage-grouse habitat as part of this process?

01:31:45.930 --> 01:31:49.440

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Let's see, and I will go back to Quincy to respond to that question.

01:31:51.990 --> 01:31:55.350

BLM – Quincy Bahr: So, good question and

01:31:56.730 --> 01:32:05.610

BLM – Quincy Bahr: everything's on the table, but it also depends on other laws and regulations that we have to comply with. In this regard, the wilderness act and wilderness policies

01:32:06.720 --> 01:32:16.950

BLM – Quincy Bahr: are something that we can't be changing right now. We're functioning within, and this is in our planning criteria, you

know, we're functioning within the framework of laws and regulations that we have, so

01:32:19.680 --> 01:32:29.520

BLM – Quincy Bahr: implementation level decisions like what kind of seed mixes are generally not something that we are addressing it the planning level. And then also the context of some of those other guiding

01:32:30.330 --> 01:32:38.100

BLM – Quincy Bahr: policies and laws can constrain, so to the degree that we can recommend, but in the end, we have to comply with those other policies.

01:32:41.490 --> 01:32:50.190

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Quincy for that response. So, we did reach the end of our list of questions submitted before I turned the chat feature off

01:32:50.640 --> 01:32:59.130

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: a few minutes ago. Again, we wanted to have the opportunity to respond to the questions that we received in the amount of time that we have today.

01:32:59.640 --> 01:33:06.090

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: We really appreciate again everyone's patience and understanding with allowing us to turn on and off that chat feature.

01:33:06.420 --> 01:33:11.760

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: At this time, we have reached the end of our meeting time. So I'm going to turn it back over to Pat

01:33:12.030 --> 01:33:25.500

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: to kind of explain just some more opportunities for how you can submit any questions that you feel weren't completely responded to today, or that you didn't have the opportunity to ask today. So, Pat at this time I'll turn it back over to you.

01:33:27.180 --> 01:33:29.820

BLM – Pat Deibert: Thank you, Amanda, and I want to express my gratitude to

01:33:29.820 --> 01:33:37.890

BLM – Pat Deibert: all of you who attended this today. Again, it's unfortunate that we're in a virtual situation, so we appreciate your flexibility and your participation in this effort.

01:33:38.400 --> 01:33:46.890

BLM – Pat Deibert: We will be holding an additional scoping meeting on January 24, at 6:30pm mountain time, and want to make sure folks are not restricted by work hours,

01:33:47.250 --> 01:33:56.070

BLM – Pat Deibert: but if you want to submit your comments, or you have any questions or anything else you want us to be aware of, please go to our web page, it's listed here on the slide.

01:33:57.690 --> 01:34:01.170

BLM – Pat Deibert: So, thank you very much for your participation.

01:34:03.900 --> 01:34:09.030

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat, and Quincy, I'll unmute you to see if you have anything additional to add as well.

01:34:09.660 --> 01:34:12.210

BLM – Quincy Bahr: Far be it for me to polish off anything that Pat has

01:34:12.270 --> 01:34:12.930

BLM – Quincy Bahr: said there.

01:34:14.250 --> 01:34:21.480

BLM – Quincy Bahr: We appreciate your input, and look forward to continued comments, and information, and suggestions from y'all.

01:34:24.330 --> 01:34:28.440

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: Great, thank you Pat and Quincy. So, at this time I will leave

01:34:28.920 --> 01:34:36.960

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: this slide up here for about a minute. We did also send that link out in the chat so you can copy and paste that link directly out of your chat.

01:34:37.350 --> 01:34:47.820

EMPSi – Amanda Biedermann: But, again, I want to thank everyone for joining us today and, again, you can register for the January 24 meeting which will begin at 6:30pm mountain time.

01:34:48.150 --> 01:34:56.580

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: Again, if you had any questions that you didn't get to ask today, or if we didn't get the chance to respond to those questions, please do feel free to join that meeting

01:34:57.000 --> 01:35:07.830

EMPSi - Amanda Biedermann: and get those questions submitted there as well. So, at this time, I'm going to go ahead and stop the recording, and then I will shut down the meeting here momentarily. Thanks everyone.