

Thunder Basin National Grassland Collaborative Learning Group Meeting, 12-7-17

Introduction to new Forest Supervisor of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland, Russ Bacon.

- Will USFS encourage private landowners to reintroduce ferrets?
 - Managing the grassland as a landscape
 - WGFD is the lead for ferret recovery and won't push ferrets on anyone, public or private
- Would like to make progress on land exchange that's been in the process for 15 years
- The big picture is healthy grasslands
- Feels the group has made forward motion in the last year or two. Hope USFS understands that consistent personnel is helpful.
- Sees this as a window of opportunity to get things done
- Ranchers are paying for land that doesn't have any grass on it
- Thinks it's time for action, no need for more meetings
- Would like to set timeline for reevaluating ferret reintroduction
- TBGBEA hope to distribute prairie dog maps shortly, with as much plague data as possible (available in about a month)
- Last estimate was 37,000 acres of plague this season
- Is the plague still active?
 - Appears to have slowed down, but activity varies and is patchy
- What will be done with the prairie dog mapping data?
 - Look at maximum extent of expansion (have or had prairie dogs), total acres, that is, historical occupancy.

List of planned and completed projects is being compiled. Most recent version is on the Ruckelshaus website: <https://www.uwyo.edu/haub/ruckelshaus-institute/collaborative-solutions/thunder-basin/>

The next collaborative meeting for both the Collaborative Learning Group and the Cooperative Working Group will be on February 9, 2018 in Douglas.

Next steps the group identified were:

- Continue ongoing projects on the ground and build on them to learn what works.
- Response from USFS re. approaches to implementing Recommendations.
- Have a collaborative discussion regarding the Strategy to see if a Plan Amendment is required (this is reflected in the Recommendations.)
- Information is needed from Douglas Ranger District regarding the number and location of acres of plague to finalize the map TBGBEA is working on, which in turn will inform upcoming projects.