



Ruckelshaus
INSTITUTE

A DIVISION OF THE
HAUB SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

THUNDER BASIN NATIONAL GRASSLAND COLLABORATION REPORT 2017

Process and Recommendations
Regarding Near-term Prairie Dog Management
and Range Restoration Measures.



Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	4
Participants	6
Process and Results	8
Final Recommendations.....	22
Conclusion.....	26
Appendix A: Cooperative Working Group Interests.....	28
Appendix B: Cooperative Working Group Issues	32
Appendix C: Collaborative Learning Options	37
Appendix D: Cooperative Working Group Options	39
Appendix E: Collaborative Learning Group Suggestions for Option Modifications.....	41

Cover: Thunder Basin National Grassland: Photo courtesy of USFS.

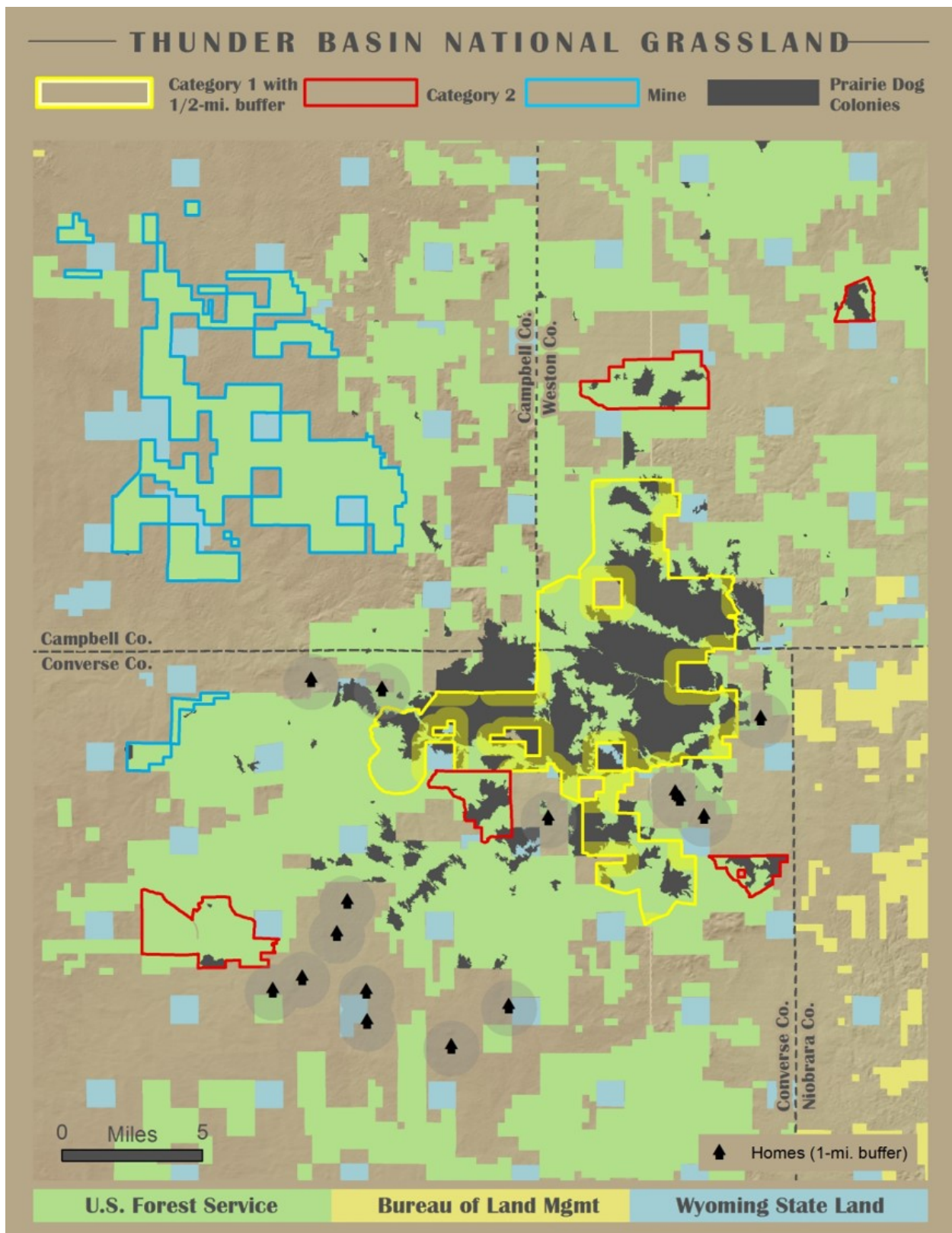


Figure 1: Land Ownership on Thunder Basin National Grassland and Prairie Dog Management designations.

Introduction

In 2015 the Ruckelshaus Institute completed a situation assessment for the United States Forest Service (USFS) to explore the issues surrounding black-tailed prairie dog colony management on the Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG), and to find whether there was enough capacity for a collaborative process. The results showed the issues were very diverse and contentious, and the level of trust among stakeholders was low. Prairie dog management is important to landowners since the vegetative health of the grasslands is important to their economic livelihoods, and therefore important socially to local communities. Prairie dogs were and are an important issue to conservation interests who see them as a key-stone species critical to grassland biodiversity. Thus, if some type of collaborative problem-solving process were not undertaken, diverse stakeholders felt the risk of the issues getting mired in legal proceedings was high. Most stakeholders were willing to engage in a collaborative process and provided information regarding what process could lead to positive results and the stakeholder types who would need to participate.

Based on this information, in 2016 the USFS asked the Ruckelshaus Institute to convene a collaborative process. The Ruckelshaus Institute used a collaborative-learning approach based on the suggestion provided by interviewees in the situation assessment. In cases where conflict is high and the issues are integrated and complex, asking stakeholders to immediately go into a decision-making process may demand too much. The characteristics surrounding prairie dog colony management and related issues fit that description perfectly. The Ruckelshaus Institute therefore designed a learning process wherein participants were able to (re)establish communication lines with complete transparency, share learning and knowledge, and gain insights into each other's interests and values. The process consisted of three workshops in three different locations. The first workshop concentrated on the history of and values participants have in relation to the TBNG. The second workshop concentrated on the present. Presentations focused on research exploring current conditions on the TBNG, and participants focused on gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed. The last workshop focused on the future, asking participants to think ahead and help the USFS understand what desired conditions they envision.

The report on the 2016 Collaborative efforts was published and can be found here: www.uwyo.edu/haub/_files/_docs/ruckelshaus/collaboration/2015-tbng/2016-thunder-basin-collaborative-learning-workshops-report.pdf.

The Ruckelshaus Institute recommended in that report to continue the collaborative learning workshops and also add a second type of meeting. This became the Cooperative Working Group, a group of governmental entities who have federal, state or county authority in relation to prairie dog management and range restoration in the Thunder Basin area. The USFS extended their agreement with the Ruckelshaus Institute to July 2018 to start the Cooperative

Working Group. The Collaborative Learning Workshops took place in April, September, October and December 2017 for half day meetings. The Cooperative Working Group met in February 2017 and in adjoining days to the Collaborative Learning Workshops.

In the course of this process during 2017, the exponential expansion of prairie dog numbers, and the ensuing sylvatic plague that then dramatically decreased them was initially the main topic for both groups. However, the boom and bust cycle that the prairie dog population experienced took a significant toll on range conditions, which in turn affected livestock and wildlife forage when large areas were denuded of vegetation and/or species such as cheat grass and cactus invaded. Hence, the group decided to take on as their main focus for 2017 measures that would address prairie dog management and range restoration in the near future.

This report focuses on the input provided by the Collaborative Learning Workshops to the Cooperative Working Group, and the steps the Cooperative Working Group took to identify consensus recommendations. This report outlines:

1. The participants involved in both sets of meetings.
2. The process and how the Collaborative Learning Workshops provided meaningful information to the Cooperative Working Group.
3. The results of the Working Group's efforts, culminating in 12 full consensus recommendations to the USFS and other land managers.
4. Recommendations for next steps from the Ruckelshaus Institute.
5. Appendices demonstrating the results from the meetings leading to the creation of 12 recommendations.

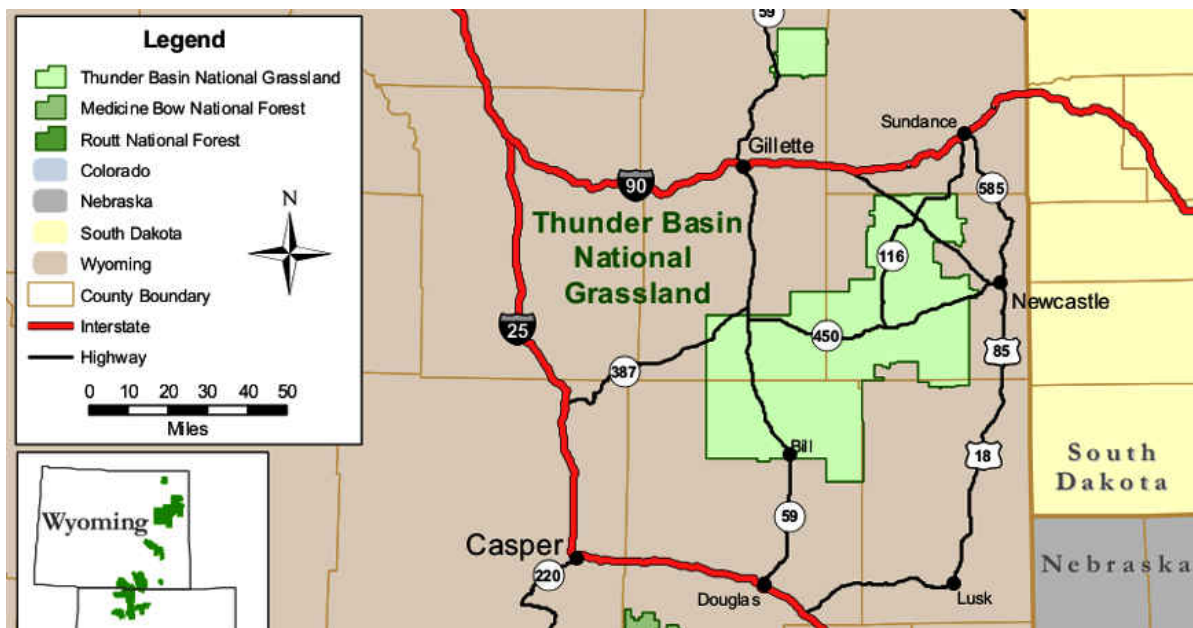


Figure 2: Location of Thunder Basin National Grassland in Wyoming

The Participants

Table 1: Participants in the Collaborative Learning Workshops

Participants in the Thunder Basin National Grassland Collaborative Learning Workshops	
Aaron Voos	Lindsey Sterling Krank
Amanda Withroder	Marline Geier
Barbara Crow	Marty Ertman
Bill Lambert	Matt Avery
Brad Rogers	Megan Taylor
Carolyn & Vern Johnson	Melanie Gerger
Carolyn Upton	Michelle Huntington
Chamois Anderson	Mike Foster
Cheryl Jacobsen	Nancy McFarland
Cheryl Schwartzkopf	Oaklee Anderson
Christi Haswell	Quade Schmelzle
Dave Pellatz	Randy Oleson
DeAnna Kay	Riata Little
Debra Hepp	Robert Harshbarger
Denise Langley	Robert Maul
Donley Darnell	Rusty Bell
Dru Bower	Scott Sewell
Erika Peckham	Shane Walker
Frank Eathorne	Tammy Hooper
George Ewins	Todd Bennington
Greg Stark	Todd Caltrider
Hale Redding	Tom Reed
Hans Hunt	Tom Wright
Heather Herr	Tracy Pinter
Holly Kennedy	Travis McNiven
Jackie Ott	Ty Checklitt
Jaime Jakes	Virginia Moore
Jake Hogan	Wanda Burget
Jay Francis	Will Schilt
Jean Harshbarger	Willow Steen
Jennifer Hinkhouse	Marty Ertman
Jewell Reed	Matt Avery
Jim Darlington	Megan Taylor
Justin Proffer	Melanie Gerger
Justin Rogers	Michelle Huntington
Kristy Bly	Mike Foster
Lauren Porensky	Nancy McFarland

Table 2: Primary and Alternate Members of the Cooperative Working Group

Thunder Basin National Grassland			
Cooperative Working Group			
Level	Organization	Primary	Alternate
County	Campbell County Commission	Matt Avery	Rusty Bell
County	Campbell County Conservation District	Jennifer Hinkhouse	Jay Quintanilla
County	Campbell County Weed and Pest	Quade Schmelzle	
County	Converse County Commission	Tony Lehner	Rick Grant
County	Converse County Conservation District	Michelle Huntingdon	Stan Mitchem
County	Converse County Weed and Pest	Cheryl Schwartzkopf	Jesse Butler
County	Crook County Natural Resource District	Raesha Sell	Sarah Anderson
County	Crook County Weed and Pest	Andrew Litzel	
County	Niobrara County Commission	Patrick Wade	
County	Niobrara County Conservation District	Matt Dockery	Lisa Shaw
County	Niobrara County Weed and Pest	Gail Mahnke	
County	Weston County Commission	Marty Ertman	Tony Barton
County	Weston County Commission	Bill Lambert	
County	Weston County Natural Resource District	Lacey Sloan	David Tysdal
County	Weston County Weed and Pest	Hale Redding	
Federal	Bureau of Land Management	Michael Valle	Rick Miller
Federal	Natural Resources Conservation Service	Clayton Schmitz	John Hartung
Federal	Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service	Mike Foster	Paul Kokes
Federal	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Brad Rogers	Tyler Abbott
Federal	US Forest Service	Russ Bacon	TBD
State	Governor's Office	Jessica Crowder	Matthew Fry
State	Office of State Lands	Ben Bump	William Rose
State	State Department of Agriculture	Joe Budd	Chris Wichmann
State	State Weed and Pest	Slade Franklin	
State	Wyoming Game and Fish: Habitat	Amanda Withroder	
State	Wyoming Game and Fish: Non-game	Zack Walker	Nichole Bjornlie
Staff	USFS	Aaron Voos	
Staff	USFS	Sandy Underhill	
Staff	Ruckelshaus Institute	Jessica Western	

THE PROCESS



Figure 3: Process for the Collaborative Learning Workshops

The Collaborative Working Groups (CLW's) are a form of unbounded process where anyone can attend and participate. The Cooperative Working Group is a bounded process where the stakeholder groups have been identified by the convener, in this case all government agencies for reasons outlined below. The government agencies themselves identified who would be their primary and alternate representatives. Normally there is a charter that describes how a bounded process will function, what its ground rules are, who the members will be, and what the decision making method will be. However, due to USFS reservations about the charter, changing membership and lack of time, the group was not able to finalize this step. Instead both groups used ground rules and had decided on a decision making method.

The first Collaborative Learning Workshop of 2017 took place on April 12. The first Cooperative Working Group (CWG) took place on February 27, 2017, which was a day long. The next CWG meetings took place the day after each CLW meeting. In September the Working Group decided they would prefer if the CLW met as often as the Working Group, and that they wanted the Collaborative Learning efforts to take place on the morning, to inform the Working Group deliberations in the afternoon.

This process consists of two types of meetings to allow the collaborative process and its outcomes to be in line with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) when a federal agency is the convener. There are four ways a collaborative process can stay in line with FACA: (1) create a Federal Advisory Committee in accordance with the FACA and other applicable regulations; (2) convene open meetings where no collective advice or recommendations are offered by a group (individuals advice or recommendations are possible); (3) limit participation of a group to government entities only; or (4) have a non-federal organization convene and administer the consensus seeking group, with the federal agency participating as a fellow stakeholder in a technical resource capacity while retaining their federal decision-making capacity. In regards to the Thunder Basin collaborative process, the USFS uses options 2 and 3 to enable governmental and non-governmental entities to work together in the Collaborative Learning workshops, informing any recommendations made by the governmental entities in the Working Group. Figure 3 shows the learning process of the first, and Figure 4 illustrates the consensus-building process in the Working Group.

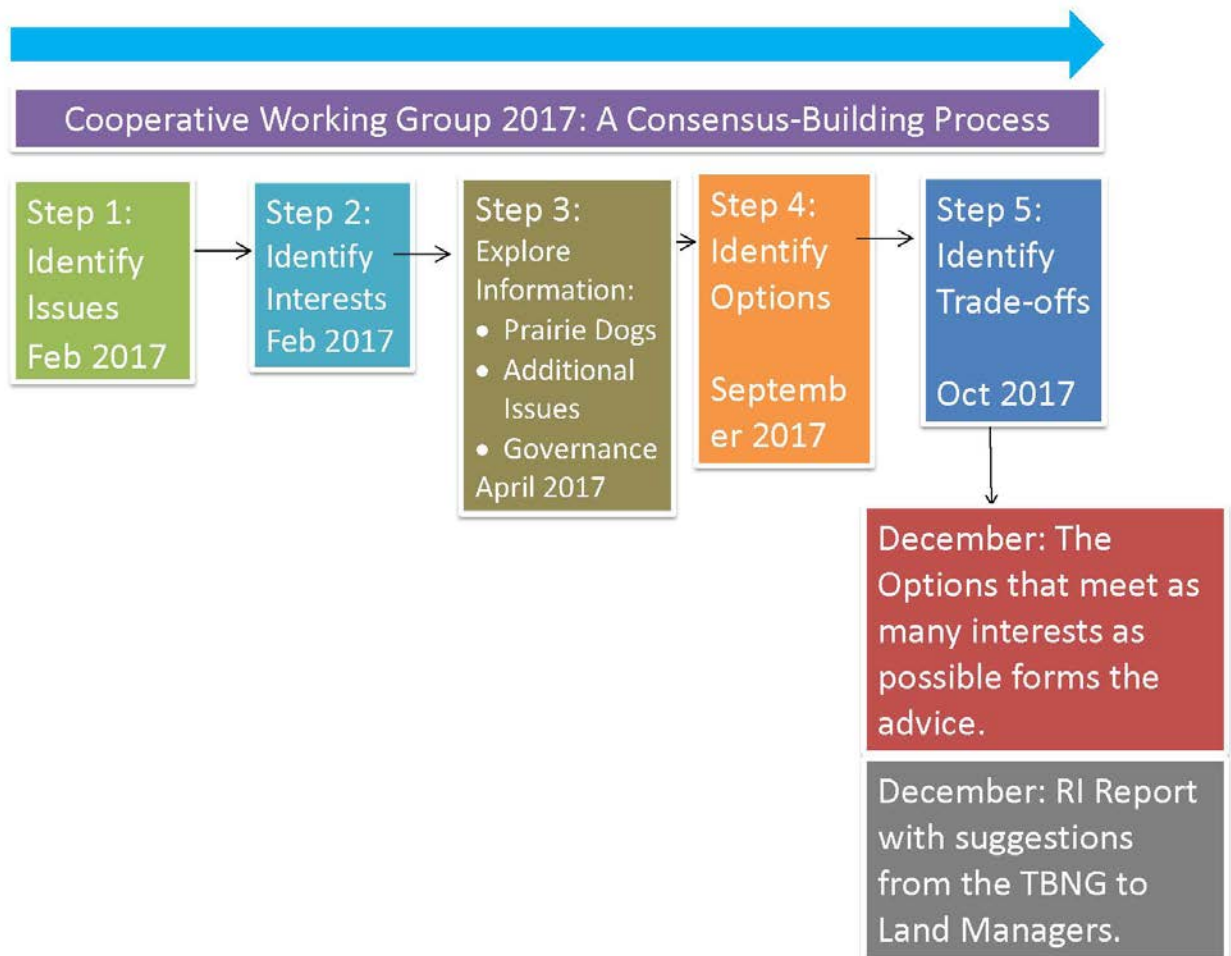


Figure 4: Cooperative Working Group process

Procedural Tools:

1. Using the Problems, Interests, Options and Trade-offs Process to explore issues, interests, possible options and create recommendations that meet as many interests as possible in the Working Group based on the work of Fisher, Ury and Patton in “Getting to Yes” (2011).
2. Ensuring immediate input of Collaborative Learning Workshop to the Working Group.
3. A consensus-based decision protocol that uses ‘gradations of consensus’.
4. Ground rules and decision-making methods were identified and agreed on by all.

Step 1. Problem/Issue identification

Members identified the issues they wished to address regarding prairie dog management and range restoration in the Thunder Basin.

There were 122 issue statements that members of the Cooperative Working Group generated in breakout groups (see the 2016 report for Collaborative Learning issues). The Ruckelshaus Institute found seven categories of issues:

1. Ecosystem Functioning
2. Ferrets
3. Full and Transparent Communications
4. Governance
5. Prairie Dog Management
6. Process
7. Socio-economic Factors.

Step 2. Interest identification of the stakeholders in the collaborative

Members deliberated the reasons why the Thunder Basin was important to them and agreed on the following interest statements:

- 1. Management is important to learn what works and what does not through clear communication of information and actions.**

2. Management is important if done in a collaborative manner to implement solutions.
3. Management is important to protect environmental integrity of the Grasslands and its wildlife populations.
4. Management is important to balance all interests and to ensure efficient and effective governing.
5. Management is important to maintain multiple use on the TBNG.
6. Management is important to ensure no listing of prairie dogs or associated species as a threatened or endangered species.
7. Management is important to control prairie dogs where so desired.
8. Management is important to protect private property rights and property values.
9. Management is important to ensure the long term sustainability of ranching livelihoods and culture.

Step 3. Option generation

Collaborative Learning participants and CWG members identified possible options for recommendations to address the above problems and to meet the above interests. The full lists can be found in the Appendices. The Ruckelshaus Institute analyzed all the options for duplicate suggestions which resulted in the following list:

CWG Issue

Options for Solutions

* = consensus option

Ferrets

Regardless of where Plan is amended, update Strategy that is tied to State plans

- Bring all federal agencies together to coordinate ferret reintroduction Statewide
- Explore whether private landowners are interested in black-footed ferret (re)introduction on their land

Ferrets

Need a definitive answer on ferret reintroduction (would like WGFD to say no)

- Eliminate 3.63

Full and Transparent Communications	Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include TBGPEA and USFS data • Include range conditions, ground cover • Include private landowner data
Full and Transparent Communications	Monitoring and inventory of erosion
Governance	Long-term funding
Governance	Money manager to coordinate projects
Governance	Maintenance (“MOU with counties” or who?) of plan
Governance	USFS Plan amendment?
Governance	Dedicated resources
Governance	*Create clear management goals and implementations of the current plan (consistency of management for the long-term, administration to administration)
Governance	Goal: Prairie dog management to a level that supports landowners during drought, while supporting associated species
Governance	Commitment to follow through on management decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow USFS (your) plans • Any new plans must be fiscally responsible 2012 FS planning regulations
Governance	LRMP revision is long overdue
Governance	Are there missing pieces? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure for grazing management (water, fencing, rotations) • Incentives • Long-term: grazing associations have been beneficial Consistent funding (access to some funding is increasing, like NFWF)
Governance	The long-term goals need to be examined. What path are we on? Is it correct? What can we do under current FS plan?
Governance	Clarification of prairie dog as pest or sensitive species

Prairie Dogs Density management: do strips throughout towns to keep numbers down, break up large complexes, continue to allow shooting (multiple benefits: active control, economy stimulator, allows multiple avenues for control, and recreation), add more rodenticide options

Step 4. Criteria

Stakeholder interests were used as criteria against which to measure the strength of the options for recommendations.

Step 5. Trade-Offs

Collaborative Learning participants and Working Group members deliberated the final options in order to resolve problems and meet as many interests as possible. These discussions lead to the crafting of final recommendations, and exploration of levels of agreement in the Working Group for each recommendation (see below). During the October and December meetings the options were discussed and modifications were suggested by the Collaborative Learning Group. The Cooperative Working Group took those suggestions (below in the second column) and created the final recommendations.

In December the Collaborative Learning Group looked at the original language and their level of comfort with the language was polled using clickers. Participants clicked on numbers 1 – 5 indicating:

1. Participant likes it.
2. Minor Point of Contention – Basically, participant likes it.
3. Reservations – But participant can live with it.
4. Major reservations – Disagreement, but will not block the proposal/provision.
5. Disagreement – Participant will not support the proposal.

After which the Cooperative Working Group used the Collaborative Learning Group's suggestions to modify the final recommendation language and this time clickers were used to identify the member's level of agreement based on the above.

1. Original Language

Regardless of whether the Forest Plan is amended, update Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy in 2018 so it is tied to State plans to not reintroduce Black-footed Ferrets in the short run. Create clear management goals and implementations of the current plan. Include issues raised in Option 2 and 3 to the extent possible without a Plan Amendment.

2. **Address Density Management in Strategy in 2018:** Do strips throughout towns to keep numbers down, break up large complexes, continue to allow shooting, add more rodenticide options, make a decision of acceptable density/acres, create a set of

Collaborative Learning Group Comments

- There's nothing to tie statewide plan to at this point in time
- Would like to take out language regarding short-term reintroduction
- Strategy doesn't differentiate between short and long-term ferret plans
- Would support change in strategy but not plan amendment
- Change language to introduction (not reintroduction)
- Rewrite to state that strategy should follow state plans
- Remove second part of first sentence about ferrets (after "plans")
- Like leaving ferret language in to make sure folks understand there will be no reintroduction in the short-term
- It's not clear what folks are voting on. Bullets appear contradictory.
- What does "short-term" mean? Would be good to define this.

- Wildlife and associated spp need a spot without density control, okay to have density control in some areas, density is hard to measure
- There is a lot in here: need to talk about specific bullets and come up with agreed upon protocol

Final Recommendation Modified and Supported by the Cooperative Working Group

Revise the Current Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy

- 1) Create clear management goals and implementation strategies within the current Plan and Strategy.
- 2) Determine whether there needs to be an update to the Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy in 2018.
- 3) Determine whether the Plan needs to be amended.
- 4) Recognize that there are no plans to reintroduce black-footed ferrets in the short run.
- 5) Include the issues raised in Options 2 and 3 to the extent possible without a Plan Amendment.

Address density management in 2018.

Ideas for density monitoring include:

Make a recommendation of acceptable level of density; Use the same definition of "density" across all lands;

protocols – use same standards across all lands, need definitions for complexes vs. colonies, use the same definition of “density/acre” across all lands, associated species counts – measure the same inside and outside categories”.

- Other species are managed for density, prairie dogs should be too
- Possible to measure density but resource intensive, hard to do at full scale
- ~4-5 days on 4,400 acres to measure density on CCAA (1% of each colony for UWFWS standards, transects on ATV, count active and inactive mounds, active burrow density used to infer prairie dogs per acre)
- Would like to see density studies in other areas as well
- Manage for rangeland health as an indicator (rather than focusing just on density)

Create a standard set of protocols to be used across all lands;
Conduct associated species counts consistently inside and outside categories.

Ideas for density control include:

“Do strips” throughout towns to keep numbers down;
Break up large complexes;
Continue to allow shooting;
Add more rodenticide options.

3. Location of Prairie Dog

Towns: Under 2018 Strategy revision, new prairie dog core areas based on impacted land. If categories are being revisited, look at bottom-up approach.

Where we want prairie dogs: areas that are already impacted because we can't afford restoring them.

Where we don't want prairie dogs: preserve healthy lands and not accept prairie dogs.

- What is the option actually saying? (Core areas vs categories)
- Prairie dogs recolonize naturally without our help
- Change to “reestablish/determine category areas”, take out the word “new”
- Add language regarding buffer zones. Look at lethal and non-lethal tools for establishing buffers.
- Are these new areas within or outside the category?
- Change language to “complex”, no need to redetermine category designations
- Determine complexes within categories
- What is the definition of a complex versus a colony?
- USFWS has definitions the group can use

Under a 2018 Strategy review, determine whether the current category designations are appropriate. If not, adjust prairie dog category areas based on a combination of scientific evidence and social support. If categories are being revisited, use a collaborative approach.

4 **Balanced forage management for livestock and wildlife**

- Balance forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife through Leniency and flexibility for innovative approaches to vegetation treatments and
- *Continued prairie dog control
- *Invasive species control incl. cheat grass
- *Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones)
- Reduce erosion through prairie dog management
- Remove cactus, three-awn, cheat-grass, and mounds
- Reseed

- Every colony is different, so methods can't be applied uniformly across all areas
- Cactus takes several years to disappear after being sprayed
- Specific projects will be determined on smaller scales. Option is a general statement about what the group conceptually agrees or does not agree upon.
- Sagebrush restoration is a lengthy process

Balance forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife through cooperation and flexibility.

Use innovative approaches to restoration and vegetation management, including:

- Continued prairie dog control;
- Invasive species control, including for cheatgrass;
- Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones);
- Reduce erosion through prairie dog management;
- Remove cactus, three-awn, cheatgrass, and mounds
- Reseeding.
- Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover

5 **Sagebrush Ecosystems**

- Keep the sagebrush we have and not allow them to transition to riparian or mesic communities. Do this by doing the following:
- Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community
- Identify areas of erosion concern
- Control cheat grass
- Remove all prairie dogs within sage grouse core area

- Remove "remove all prairie dogs from sage grouse core area"
- There's no science to show that there shouldn't be prairie dogs in sage grouse core areas
- Conflicting management in core sage grouse areas. The standard for sage grouse is 7 inches of stubble height. Prairie dogs can decrease stubble height.
- Sage grouse take precedence over prairie dogs because of listing potential
- Some think all prairie dogs should be eliminated in core areas, others don't
- Prairie dogs and sage grouse can coexist outside of core areas
- Perhaps both species can

Healthy Ecosystems

Maintain healthy sagebrush, riparian, and mesic communities. Do not allow prairie dogs to transition into these communities.

Do this by doing the following:

- Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community;
- Identify areas of erosion concern;
 - Control cheatgrass;
 - Remove prairie dogs within sage grouse core areas.

	coexist if prairie dogs are maintained at low densities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three ongoing research projects regarding this topic 	
6	<p>Improve and develop more consistent communication and distribution between meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will this effort continue in 2018? • This is up to the group • Jess is contracted for one more year • USFS is looking for input on next steps • USFS committed to a collaborative process • Should the CWG continue? • Process has been slow, but starting to see results • Made a mistake switching to 1-day meetings • Not adequate conservation representation on CWG (can format/structure be changed to address this?) • Need better representation of constituents on CWG • Need to understand that USFS has final decision-making ability • Permittees and landowners should have a voice at the table • Suggestion: have an open meeting, but members of CWG are allowed to “vote” at those open meetings while public is not • Another (non-federal agency) group can convene so that they can have an open group • USFS can create MOUs that speak to their ability to commit to recommendations, etc. • USFS can’t funnel money to other organizations to convene (but USFS can check on this) • Could several organizations 	<p>Improve and develop consistent communication and information distribution between meetings. Explore other convening options to enhance participation from all interested stakeholders.</p>

		contribute money to convene these meetings?	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to see county commissioners convene 	
7	<p>Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include TBGPEA, private landowner and USFS data • Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include UW. • It's important to share data, and it should be provided at each meeting • Take into consideration legalities of sharing private landowner data 	<p>Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs. Include TBGPEA, private landowner, University of Wyoming, USFS, and other relevant data.</p>
8	<p>Work with partners to find and manage a point person to find long-term and consistent funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More comfortable with everyone working together to find funding, rather than having just one person • Language is regarding one person to coordinate the money, not just to find the money • Look at Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative model for securing funds • Transparency regarding where money comes from • This would allow the group to have matching funds • What are funds being gathered for? Implementing the plan? 	<p>Consider options for long-term and consistent project funding such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creating a full-time position for a "Prairie Dog Manager"; - creating a group to do this; - working with a bridge Organization; - using the Wyoming Land Conservation Initiative model.
9	<p>Prairie dog management to a level that supports healthy landscape and permittees, while supporting associated species through personal relationships and a respect for all goals and viewpoints.</p>	None.	Deleted
10	<p>Role of the USFS in Prairie Dog Management Request that the USFS commits to following</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes the part about following through on plans, especially those that were made collaborative 	<p>USFS accountability in Prairie Dog Management The USFS will follow through on management commitments</p>

through on management and regulatory obligations including:

- Following USFS plans
- Any new plans must be fiscally responsible 2012 FS planning regulations
- LRMP revision is long overdue
- Providing an answer regarding whether there will be a USFS Plan amendment.
- Allowing ground-ready projects to move forward and provide reasons when they cannot.
- Adhere to the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960
- Reduce impairment of productivity of the land as per the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1937.

- Add: “Making decisions in a timely manner and notifying parties in advance of implementation”
- Need clarification on who’s the lead on issues and concerns
- Have equal representation of viewpoints on field trips
- Squeamish about LRMP revision; work backwards through strategy and then take it back to plan to see what’s needed
- USFS revisit regulations
- Stick to LRMP revision 15-year schedule
- Amendment process pulls resources from on-the-ground efforts
- Want to assurances that strategy will be fully implemented
- Identify what has and hasn’t been implemented in current strategy
- USFS perspective: plan revision not on table, amendment possible

and regulatory obligations and will collaborate on an improved Strategy that includes definitive triggers and associated actions. A Land Resource Management Plan revision is long overdue. Additional requests include:

- Provide updates and rationale for implementations (or lack thereof) of the Plan and the Prairie Dog Strategy;
- Ensure that any new plans are fiscally responsible;
- Provide an answer regarding whether there will be a USFS Plan amendment;
- Allow ground-ready projects to move forward and provide reasons when they cannot;
- Have equal representation of viewpoints on field trips;
- Make decisions in a timely manner and notify parties in advance of implementation.

11 Seek clarification of prairie dog as pest or sensitive species at state and federal levels and comply with State Weed and Pest laws (i.e., prairie dog is a pest) accordingly.

- Need to avoid additional federal listings
- USDA Wildlife Services not a regulatory agency: does prairie dog removals and plague mitigation
- WGFD designates p dogs as Species of Greatest? Conservation Need, State considers a pest
- No Rozol per Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)
- Others want Rozol
- Thinks we can find solutions despite conflicting designations

Recognize in a revised strategy the conflicting classifications of prairie dogs. Acknowledge that prairie dogs are considered a pest by some people.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss or allow the use of burrow fumigants in control efforts • Break option into two parts. Have a separate statement about using most effective method to control prairie dogs. Move this to Option 13 • 	
12	Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague	None	Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague.
13	<p>Prairie Dog Boundary Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage 3.63 area's boundaries • Eliminations of prairie dogs outside the boundary • Prevent prairie dogs establishing outside the boundary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement should be about Category 1, not 3.63 • Want boundaries managed, but not eliminating p dogs outside of boundary • Better management of boundaries to minimize the number of p dogs outside of boundary • Would like to incorporate density into this statement. Need density control within boundary • Get rid of 3.63 so we can manage p dogs everywhere • Need to maintain two complexes with no control, can do experiments with density control in other areas of category one (southeast portion: Lone Crow) • Want to see some management within Category 1 • Possibly move lessee to a different pasture or compensate; consider the landowner • There could be economic incentives for these landowners (conservation groups working on this) • Focus on healthy rangelands, diversity of animals, look at ecosystem 	<p>Prairie Dog Boundary Management - Manage boundaries in conflict areas. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminating prairie dogs outside the boundary; - Preventing prairie dogs from establishing outside the boundary - Conduct density control within the colony using best available science; - Allow lethal control within Category 1 and its boundaries, regardless of acreage, or change acreage objective

level

- | | | | |
|----|---|--|---|
| 14 | Permanently drop no shooting ban starting Fall 2017. Recreational shooting should remain everywhere (compare lead versus steel bullets) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Change “steel” to “non-toxic”•No shooting within Category 1 areas (this would be consistent with the current plan)•Ban shooting in Category 1 if/when it becomes possible to reintroduce ferrets•Don’t require or ban specific tools, be flexible and adapt management tools•There is some “bycatch” of associated species in areas that allow shooting•Shooting is especially attractive if there are lots of prairie dogs•Shooting is one form of recreation use on the grassland•Want triggers put in place regarding when and where shooting is and isn’t allowed•How many p dogs do recreational shooters kill each year? Is there any harm in shooting if there are ferrets (since they’re nocturnal)?•On 4W, one shooter shot 450 p dogs in a day | As long as black-footed ferrets are not being reintroduced on the TBNG, drop the shooting ban in Category 3.63. |
|----|---|--|---|

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Consensus Recommendations

The following are full consensus recommendations to all agencies from the Thunder Basin Cooperative Working Group December 7, 2017. The language of these recommendations is specific and was crafted and agreed to by all present.

Recommendation 1: Revise the Current Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy

1. Create clear management goals and implementation strategies within the current Plan and Strategy.
2. Determine whether there needs to be an update to the Black-tailed Prairie Dog Strategy in 2018.
3. Determine whether the Plan needs to be amended
4. Recognize that there are no plans to reintroduce black-footed ferrets in the short run.
5. Include the issues raised in Options 2 and 3 to the extent possible without a Plan Amendment

Recommendation 2

Under a 2018 Strategy review, determine whether the current category designations are appropriate. If not, adjust prairie dog category areas based on a combination of scientific evidence and social support. If categories are being revisited, use a collaborative approach.

Recommendation 3

Balance forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife through cooperation and flexibility. Use innovative approaches to restoration and vegetation management, including:

- Continued prairie dog control;
- Invasive species control, including for cheatgrass;
- Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones);
- Reduce erosion through prairie dog management;
- Remove cactus, three-awn, cheatgrass, and mound;
- Reseeding.
- Monitor and inventory range conditions, ground cover

Recommendation 4: Healthy Ecosystems

Maintain healthy sagebrush, riparian, and mesic communities. Do not allow prairie dogs to transition into these communities. Do this by doing the following:

- Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community;
- Identify areas of erosion concern;
- Control cheatgrass;
- Remove prairie dogs within sage grouse core areas.

Recommendation 5

Improve and develop consistent communication and information distribution between meetings. Explore other convening options to enhance participation from all interested stakeholders.

Recommendation 6

Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs. Include TBGPEA, private landowner, University of Wyoming, USFS, and other relevant data sources.

Recommendation 7

Consider options for long-term and consistent project funding such as:

- creating a full-time position for a “Prairie Dog Manager”;
- creating a group to do this;
- working with a bridge organization;
- using the Wyoming Land Conservation Initiative model.

Recommendation 8: USFS accountability in Prairie Dog Management

The USFS will follow through on management commitments and regulatory obligations and will collaborate on an improved Strategy that includes definitive triggers and associated actions. A Land Resource Management Plan revision is long overdue.

Additional requests include:

- Provide updates and rationale for implementations (or lack thereof) of the Plan and the Prairie Dog Strategy;
- Ensure that any new plans are fiscally responsible;
- Provide an answer regarding whether there will be a USFS Plan amendment;
- Allow ground-ready projects to move forward and provide reasons when they cannot;
- Have equal representation of viewpoints on field trips;
- Make decisions in a timely manner and notify parties in advance of implementation.

Recommendation 9

Recognize in a revised strategy the conflicting classifications of prairie dogs. Acknowledge that prairie dogs are considered a pest by some people.

Recommendation 10

Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague.

Recommendation 11

Prairie Dog Boundary Management - Manage boundaries in conflict areas. This may include:

- Eliminating prairie dogs outside the boundary;
- Preventing prairie dogs from establishing outside the boundary
- Conduct density control within the colony using best available science;
- Allow lethal control within Category 1 and its boundaries, regardless of acreage, or change acreage objective.

Recommendation 12

As long as black-footed ferrets are not being reintroduced on the TBNG, drop the shooting ban in Category 3.63.

Consensus Recommendations with Major Reservations

Recommendation 2: Address density management in 2018.

Ideas for density monitoring include:

- Make a recommendation of acceptable level of density;
- Use the same definition of “density” across all lands;
- Create a standard set of protocols to be used across all lands;
- Conduct associated species counts consistently inside and outside categories.

Ideas for density control include:

- Do “strips” throughout towns to keep numbers down;
- Break up large complexes;
- Continue to allow shooting;
- Add more rodenticide options.

Major Reservation: Brad Rogers of US Fish and Wildlife Service: “USFWS doesn’t agree with using anti-coagulants, including Rozol”.

CONCLUSION

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.
- 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.

Regarding the facilitation and leading of this process, the Ruckelshaus Institute has an agreement with the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest that ends July 31, 2018. We suggest using that time to do the following:

1. Review and revise the Strategy as per the Working Group's Recommendation, in turn helping to determine whether a Plan Amendment is required. This would be hard work in six months but the pressure would allow everyone to keep up the momentum to create a collaboratively-derived Strategy. Use the process with two meeting types to stay within FACA as long as the USFS is the convener.
2. Explore convening options for further collaboration. The group discussed on December 7, 2017 the possibility that all partners would provide funds to allow a non-federal organization to act as bridge organization: receive and manage the funds and pay a facilitator of the group's choice. The first half of 2018 could be used to set this up.



See Appendices on the next page.

APPENDIX A: Cooperative Working Group Interests

April 2017

Original Interest Language	Category	Interest Statement
Good neighbor policy: manageable levels of species	Accountability	Management is important to learn what works and what does not through clear communication of information and actions.
Want to see accountability from USFS. Show of effort. Explaining reasoning. Addressing long-standing issues. More 'why' than 'why not.' Progress timeline, with check points. Planned list of management actions. Transparent/public info.	Accountability	
Want to see action	Accountability	
Interested in being engaged in management of TB – don't want unintended consequence from (ex) ESA listing – ripple effects	Collaboration	Management is important if done in a collaborative manner to implement solutions.
Interested in finding solutions, implementing them, and working together. Great success stories already exist with other issues. Before the next plague epidemic	Collaboration	
Short-term and long-term solutions	Collaboration	
Driving management decisions based on local input	Collaboration	
To discontinue loss of big game species and populations	Ecosystem Health	Management is important to protect environmental integrity of the Grasslands and its wildlife populations.
Reduce damage to rangeland	Ecosystem health	
Functioning ecosystem	Ecosystem health	
Protecting environmental integrity of area; protect the intrinsic value while accounting for changing demands, use, and balance	Ecosystem health	

Ecological sustainability – impacts to agency resources on inability to focus on other areas. Impacts to tourism – For example to hunters, because of lack of forage and fewer antelope.	Ecosystem health	
To ensure habitat quality for pdogs and obligates	Ecosystem Health	
Interested in ecosystem sustainability	Ecosystem health	
Interested in maintaining healthy wildlife populations	Ecosystem health	
Aesthetics	Ecosystem health	
Water quality and stream/riparian area protection (impacts of erosion)	Ecosystem health	
Weed control (preventing/mitigating invasion)	Ecosystem health	
Seeing USFS get better management tools	Governance	Management is important to balance all interests and to ensure efficient and effective governing.
State designated pest	Governance	
Balancing local/regional/national interests in social/cultural/legal/ecological/economical governing *	Governance	
Adequate staffing levels at county and USFS levels.	Governance	
Managing work loads	Governance	
Good stewards of tax payer \$	Governance	
No more regulations i.e.: if BFF is re-introduced	Governance	
Governmental relations	Governance	
Constantly dealing with constituents to be better stewards	Governance	
Mandated by WY state law to manage for pdogs	Governance	
Helping county boards implement their statutory obligations	Governance	
How is public funding being spent?	Governance	
Carefully thought out reintroduction (or not) with demonstrated ability of <u>all</u> landowners to manage these issues	Governance	
Would like better information on financial needs and where implementation should occur	Governance	
Protect interests of sportsmen and oil/gas	Multiple Use	Management is important to

		maintain multiple uses on the TBNG.
Economy, Ecology & Culture	Multiple Use	
Maintaining multiple use on TBNG	Multiple Use	
Recreation opportunities (specifically shooting) and advertising recreational shooting	Multiple Use	
Wildlife viewing opportunities	Multiple Use	
Keep pdog and other TES species from being listed	No T&E listing	Management is important to ensure no listing of prairie dogs or associated species as a threatened or endangered species.
To manage appropriately so as to prevent ESA listing *. In no one's interest, obligates listed too – so we can focus on other issues, for once.	No T&E listing	
Avoiding pdogs and associated/dependent species from being federally listed	No T&E listing	
Public perception of health of pdog populations	Pdog management	Management is important to control prairie dogs where so desired.
In relation to other species of importance, such as BFF Would like to know who pays for this	Pdog management	
Learning about most effective control methods for pdogs	Pdog management	
Representative of land owners	Property Rights	Management is important to protect private property rights and property values.
Protection of private property rights	Property Rights	
Short and long term protection of land asset values	Property Rights	
Protection of private property rights	Property Rights	
Land/property values	Property Rights	
Protect historical, cultural, and socio-economic viability of citizens, landowners, and leases of represented group	Socio-economic	Management is important to ensure the long term sustainability of ranching livelihoods and culture.
Physical health and well-being of citizens	Socio-economic	

Economic impacts – too many user groups and neighbors	Socio-economic	
Related impacts to livelihood, culture, and communities	Socio-economic	
Long term sustainability – including the ranching livelihood and culture	Socio-economic	
Managed since time of homesteading – cultural/historic value	Socio-economic	
Have to deal with public frustration	Socio-economic	
Inequity – some people being responsible and other not. Leads to inefficiency, lack of productivity, and wasted money	Socio-economic	
Economics and resources are important	Socio-economic	
To reduce forage competition	Socio-economic	
Ranching and grazing are a big part of the state’s economy (that’s impacted by pdog management)	Socio-economic	
Negative public perception/lack of knowledge/education	Socio-economic	
Minimizing potential health impacts to the public	Socio-economic	
Livelihoods of private landowners	Socio-economic	

Appendix B: Cooperative Working Group Issues

April 2017

Original Issue Language	Issue Category
Range condition: forage loss, competition with cattle, balance with non-monetary values such as wildlife, how to? Land/Asset value.	Ecosystem Functioning
Habitat loss/wildlife: how density of populations affect rangeland, conflicting research/science, quantity vs. quality, inter-related species, owls, plover etc.	Ecosystem Functioning
Water quality/ecosystem function: erosion, topsoil, management objectives and boundary control.	Ecosystem Functioning
Current rangeland conditions on the TB and other ecological conditions – water, air quality (dust)	Ecosystem Functioning
Ecology vs. Biology – where does sage grouse fit in?	Ecosystem Functioning
What is the vision of rangeland health?	Ecosystem functioning
Control efforts should consider ‘weeds’ so as not to spread	Ecosystem functioning
How do we address particularly in drought years?	Ecosystem functioning
Erosion in the watershed	Ecosystem Functioning
Concerns regarding wildlife habitat (mostly big game)	Ecosystem functioning
What is the threshold on habitat amount/quality for different species of wildlife?	Ecosystem functioning
Black footed ferret. Inconsistent messages depending on who you ask	Ferret
BFF re-introduction : private land owners worry that reintroduction will occur without involvement, need to be clear about objectives.	Ferret
Ferrets: what is planned? Process, history, truthfulness, who controls this? Need education, who is responsible, roles?	Ferrets
Emails, add to distribution lists	Full and Transparent Communications
Face to face	Full and Transparent Communications
Commission meetings	Full and Transparent Communications
Web site (need notified)	Full and Transparent Communications
Message board	Full and Transparent Communications
Diversity is a challenge	Full and Transparent Communications
Consistent messaging	Full and Transparent Communications
Keeping lists current	Full and Transparent Communications

No response/blow off	Full and Transparent Communications
Commitment to follow through on management decisions	Governance
Make limited money count via coordination	Governance
Contractor pool that will work with government contracts	Governance
Interest in multi-year contracts (lack of)	Governance
Priority of pdog management to USFS: other issues to prioritize, oil and gas, sage grouse, etc. Where does prairie dog management fit in?	Governance
Competing for staff/resources	Governance
Perception of adequate staffing	Governance
Need education on USFS structure, priorities, and allocation	Governance
Funding (lack of) and how it is being used. How is it being prioritized for management of pdog	Governance
Need a clear plan to primer how money will be spent and coordinating that with other agency efforts	Governance
Status of NEPA and ability to implement management actions	Governance
Is the TB plan a pdog plan or a BF plan?	Governance
Need to develop an actual strategy with identifiable actions	Governance
Forest plan limitations. Amendment?	Governance
Lack of trust on all sides	Governance
Forest plan – inconsistent application of standards, guides, or desired conditions. It is a moving target.	Governance
User conflict and interests in the management of the TB	Governance
Concern that it will take too long to get things done on the ground. We are already behind.	Governance
FS way or highway	Governance
Need better understanding of what FS is managing for, approaches used, etc.	Governance
Lack of funding to control pdogs	Governance
Section 12 Granger Thye Act	Governance
We've been discussing this topic for ages ; why no progress???	Governance
Gets at trust and lack of credibility	Governance
Need assurances that this process is not another example of 'insanity'	Governance
FS and other government agencies	Governance

Where are they similar?	Governance
Where are they different?	Governance
Lack of understanding regarding USFS budget	Governance
Lack of clarification regarding agency roles (USFWS + USFS) regarding BFF	Governance
Lacking understanding of USFS prioritization of resources/efforts	Governance
Threat of lawsuits against the USFS	Governance
Funding: Parameters of agency vs. corporation, Financial burden to private due to expansion boundary control issues, Allocation to pdog management, , Staffing	Governance
Where is money coming from: sources and process.	Governance
Need education on USFS limits	Governance
Cooperation: make it useable, threats against USFS, staffing in pairs, effect on work load?	Governance
Need understanding of history and regulatory frame works of all involved	Governance
Need current prairie dog information: Method of population count and the desire for density count. Who does this? Who coordinates? Accuracy? What data is used and how to use it?	Prairie Dog Management
Ecology of pdogs especially for figuring out best tools	Prairie Dog Management
Information gaps – identify the data that is missing	Prairie Dog Management
Use of data – gather data that is local	Prairie Dog Management
Need to agree on the science and data that will be used to support management decisions. Don't use data from CT in WY	Prairie Dog Management
Boundaries – Cat 1, 2, 3. Data to support management within categories is not current	Prairie Dog Management
Shooting ban: why does it against, data for and against? Wrong spot for signs. Misinformation. Consistency, Rigidity.	Prairie Dog Management
Boundaries: difference in management objectives across boundaries, how to effectively address? Coordinate, optimize limited funds. Lots of boundary, how to prioritize.	Prairie Dog Management
Rodenticide limitations: what is the process for allowable lethal controls? Lack of coordination between managers, time of year to treat, buffers, with residents, what distance? Funding.	Prairie Dog Management
Degradation ok if pdog's doing it	Prairie Dog Management

Conflicting management objectives for different species and across agency boundaries	Prairie Dog management
Risk – spreading plague and cyclic nature of pdog populations	Prairie Dog management
Impacts to private land	Prairie dog management
Buffers – we don't use these effectively	Prairie dog management
(one size fits all) – doesn't work	Prairie dog management
Need more control options	Prairie dog management
Lethal and non-lethal	Prairie dog management
Is there opportunity to identify options for more good neighbor type work?	Prairie dog management
Fear of litigation – don't let it prevent proper management actions	Prairie dog management
Not being good neighbors	Prairie dog management
No buffers – if put, landowners are controlling - need commitment from FS to control on our side	Prairie dog management
Need incentives to reimburse landowners	Prairie dog management
½ of revenue from grazing leases should be used for control	Prairie dog management
Lack of will on part of FS to control pdogs	Prairie dog management
Need to expand control tool box to include Rozol	Prairie dog management
Way FS requires control to be done drives up prices on private lands	Prairie dog management
FS needs to better follow product labels and application timeframes	Prairie dog management
Burning of sagebrush to improve pdog habitat??	Prairie dog management
Need to understand FS management goals for sage grouse and how they interact with pdogs	Prairie dog management
Contradiction for other species management	Prairie dog management
Why are state laws readily ignored? Pdogs are a pest for many	Prairie dog management
Plague and disease: why buffers needed, potential to endanger human life,	Prairie dog management
Erosion from bare ground conditions that pdogs create	Prairie dog management
Misunderstanding on FS part relative to private landowner desires: don't want them gone; want them controlled.	Prairie dog management
Site-specific reclamation needs should be considered	Prairie dog management
Pdog management and ability to treat	Prairie dog management
Over expansion of colonies	Prairie dog management
Density of pdogs and subsequent forage reduction	Prairie dog management

Encroachment onto private and state owned lands	Prairie dog management
USFS is limited in treatment tools and flexibility in existing tools	Prairie dog management
Boundary management	Prairie dog management
Lack of clarity regarding management tools	Prairie dog management
Lack of clarity regarding why USFS is managing for BFF reintroduction	Prairie dog management
Lack of mapping of existing and expanding pdog colonies	Prairie dog management
Control of pdogs for human health and safety	Prairie dog management
Need a discussion of who benefits from management	Prairie dog management
How to tackle short-term (< 2 year) issues for landowners	Prairie dog management
Lack of forage (quantity) on grazing land	Prairie dog management
Could we look at a “conservation cost share”?	Prairie dog management
Who holds the burden of financial responsibility? ... for harm already done by mismanagement?	Prairie dog management
Is it possible to expand the windows during which we can conduct pdog control?	Prairie dog management
Need a plan for exponential growth of colonies	Prairie dog management
When plague hits, we need a plan for adaptive management from that point on (as part of a strategy update?)	Prairie dog management
Short-term vs mid and long-term plans	Prairie dog management
Some short-terms needs addressed before April	Prairie dog management
Implementation of recommendations	Prairie dog management
Have they actually been implemented?	Prairie dog management
How is sage grouse habitat impacted by pdog management?	Prairie dog management
Non-lethal control methods may not address short-term concerns (and its success is difficult to document)	Prairie dog management
Lack of formal advisory committee to provide recommendations. What is the point of this group – it has no teeth. Fear this is just another meeting.	Process
Lack of management perspective	Process
Through meetings; come up with coordination and implement schedule with timely communication	Process
Socio Economic Issues: Cultural impact, historic use, social issues, concern over economic impact, way of living.	Socio-Economic Factors

Appendix C: Collaborative Learning Group Options (for projects to be implemented within the next year)

September 2017

Group 1 (consensus options)

- a. Create clear management goals and implementations of the current plan (consistency of management for the long-term, administration to administration)
- b. Continue monitoring prairie dog towns and plague
- c. Range condition – forage management and competition of livestock and wildlife
 - a. Leniency and flexibility for innovative approaches to vegetation treatments
 - b. Continued prairie dog control
 - c. Invasive species control
 - d. Use the plague situation to control prairie dog colonization and spread (buffer zones)
- d. Personal relationships – respect for all goals and viewpoints

Group 2 (not consensus)

- a. Goal: Prairie dog management to a level that supports landowners during drought, while supporting associated species
- b. Reduce 3.63 area
- c. *Manage 3.63 area's boundaries
 - a. Eliminations of prairie dogs outside the boundary
 - b. Prevention
- d. 5,000 acres
- e. *Improved or more consistent communication and distribution between meetings

Group 3

- a. Need a definitive answer on ferret reintroduction (would like WGFD to say no)
 - a. Eliminate 3.63
- b. Range condition
 - a. Erosion
 - b. Multiple use sustained yield act 1960
 - c. Impairment productivity of the land Bankhead-Jones FTA 1937
- c. Commitment to follow through on management decisions
 - a. Follow USFS (your) plans
 - b. Any new plans must be fiscally responsible 2012 FS planning regulations
- d. Remove all prairie dogs within sage grouse core area
- e. Permanently drop no shooting ban (start this fall)
- f. 1500 – 2000 acres prairie dogs max (see Gary for more details)
 - a. \$20,000 treats 2,300 acres
- g. Reclamation/restoration
 - a. Remove cactus, three-awn, cheatgrass, and mounds
- h. Drop multiple year contracts for prairie dog control
- i. Comply with State Weed and Pest laws (i.e., prairie dog is a pest)
- j. LRMP revision is long overdue

Group 4

- a. Problem statement or window of opportunity: Under current conditions, antelope (and deer to a smaller extent) along with prairie dogs, are at a lower level. Thus, providing an opportunity for better control of prairie dogs and restoration. May not need to look at sagebrush restoration but should strive to keep the sagebrush we have. On the ground projects: cheatgrass control, keep pds from impacting sagebrush, capitalize on low-hanging fruit
- b. Are there missing pieces?
 - a. Infrastructure for grazing management (water, fencing, rotations)
 - b. Incentives
 - c. Long-term: grazing associations have been beneficial
 - d. Consistent funding (access to some funding is increasing, like NFWF)
- c. The long-term goals need to be examined. What path are we on? Is it correct? What can we do under current FS plan?

Appendix D: Cooperative Working Group Options for Implementation

September 2017

Group 1

- a. Improve range conditions to benefit wildlife, health and safety through reseeding, weed management with treatment, and collapsing prairie dog burrows. Start restoration in areas that have had high plague numbers and most beneficial to land and biggest bang. Treatment determined by Weed and Pest, USFS and lease as to where to target. Also consider topography (i.e., where restoration has a good chance of success).
- b. Density management: do strips throughout towns to keep numbers down, break up large complexes, continue to allow shooting (multiple benefits: active control, economy stimulator, allows multiple avenues for control, and recreation), add more rodenticide options
- c. Updates from one authorized point of contact (receive and share)

Group 2

- a. Long-term funding
 - a. Clarification of prairie dog as pest or sensitive species
 - b. Maintenance (“MOU with counties” or who?) of plan
- b. Range restoration
 - a. Depends upon if prairie dogs “plague out”
 - b. Or reduce density
 - c. And restore vegetation, especially in plagued areas
- c. Make a decision of acceptable density/acres
 - a. Set of protocols – same throughout standards
 - b. Use the same definition of “density/acre” across all lands
 - c. Associated species counts – measure the same inside and outside categories
- d. Create data-sharing clearinghouse regarding associated species and prairie dogs
 - a. Include TBGPEA and USFS data
 - b. Include range conditions, ground cover
 - c. Include private landowner data
- e. Regardless of where Plan is amended, update Strategy that is tied to State plans
 - a. Bring all federal agencies together to coordinate ferret reintroduction Statewide
 - b. Explore whether private landowners are interested in black-footed ferret (re)introduction on their land

Group 3

- a. Monitoring and inventory of erosion
- b. Range conditions (cactus treatment, reseeding, cheatgrass)
- c. What is prairie dog objective? Action levels? Triggers?
- d. Allowing ground-ready projects
- e. Project deadlines and transparency why delayed
- f. Get house in order
 - a. Quicker internal decision
 - b. Plan amendment?
- g. Dedicated resources

Group 4

- a. Restoration
 - a. Sage brush areas need help before they can't help self (riparian, mesic)
 - b. Identify species usage to determine areas that will use annual plant community
 - c. Identify area of erosion concerns
 - i. Partner with Conservation Districts who can get water quality/erosion money
 - d. Use oil and gas mitigation dollars
 - e. Determine where there is landowner flexibility
- b. Prairie dog population control
 - a. Identify areas where we want prairie dogs
 - i. * "Category 1"
 - b. Coordinate with private landowners
 - c. Have Weed and Pest coordinate communication
 - d. Recreational shooting should remain everywhere
 - e. Implement lethal (compare lead versus steel bullets)
 - f. More education on lethal for landowners (chemical)
- c. Money manager to coordinate projects
- d. Determine impacted land areas to become new prairie dog core areas
 - a. If categories are being revisited, look at bottom-up approach
 - i. TBGPEA maps
 - ii. Mapping and funding and project ideas
 - iii. Prairie dog extant maps
 - b. Where we want prairie dogs: areas that are already impacted because can't afford restoring them
 - c. Where we don't want prairie dogs: preserve healthy lands and not accept

Appendix E: Collaborative Learning Group Suggestions for Option Modifications

October 2017

- Collectively fundraise/ create a grass bank/ savings fund for offsetting forgone forage in Category 1
- Eliminate all prairie dogs
- Use Centennial Woods (Laramie company) to build prairie dog fences
- Finish documenting group suggestions and related actions/ inactions
- Gather more information on prairie dog population dynamics and behaviors.
- Create ad-hoc group to tackle habitat restoration projects: Dave, Cheryl, Chamois
 - Include timelines, location, methods, spring meeting, summer implementation schedule
- Consider working with UW on grass banking with support from private landowners—create a “model farm”
- Group Goal: Determine how many prairie dogs and acres we need to sustain them, and where this should be? Related questions...
 - Consider prairie dog density per acre
 - Consider differences between white and black-tailed prairie dogs (invite Pam Wanek, prairie dog expert)
 - What is the future of the shooting ban in 2018?
 - Has 2001 Plan ended?