

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

201 S. Roop Street, Suite 101

Carson City, Nevada 89701

Telephone (775) 684-8600

Facsimile (775) 684-8604

www.sagebrusheco.nv.gov

BRIAN SANDOVAL

Governor



Tim Rubald, Program Manager
John Copeland, Forestry/Wildland Fire
Melissa Faigeles, State Lands
Kelly McGowan, Agriculture
Lara Niell, Wildlife

STATE OF NEVADA
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
STAFF REPORT
MEETING DATE: July 30, 2013

DATE: July 25, 2013
TO: Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Members
FROM: Melissa Faigeles, Watershed Restoration Specialist, SETT,
Telephone: 775-684-8600, Email: mfaigeles@sagebrusheco.nv.gov
THROUGH: Tim Rubald, Program Manager, SETT,
Telephone: 775-684-8600, Email: timrubald@sagebrusheco.nv.gov
SUBJECT: Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Strategic Detailed Timeline – July 2013 to
September 2015

SUMMARY

This item provides a strategic vision to guide the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) listing decision of the greater sage-grouse in September 2015. It requests the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (Council) to adopt a detailed program timeline (Attachment 1) that will guide staff workload and corresponding Council policy decisions. Though the timeline is through September 2015, the majority of the tasks outlined will need to be accomplished by September 2014, when USFWS begins their 12-month findings process for the listing decision. Also included is a tentative schedule of agenda items for discussion and key decisions to be made at future Council meetings (Attachment 2).

PREVIOUS ACTION

April 22, 2013. Staff presented a general timeline and the Council directed staff to develop a more detailed timeline, which includes specific tasks to be accomplished, interim milestones, and key Council decision points.

BACKGROUND

The Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline, as originally presented at the April Council meeting (Attachment 3) has been developed in greater detail by staff at the request of the Council. Staff proposes five main areas of focus through September 2015:

- Conservation Credit System
- BLM EIS (including revisions to the State Alternative)
- Revision of the State Plan and Development of the Strategic Action Plan

- USGS Habitat Suitability Mapping
- USFWS Data Call/ Develop Projects Database

Conservation Credit System

The Conservation Credit System is the primary regulatory mechanism identified in the State Plan for conservation of sage-grouse in Nevada. It is key to achieve the objective of no net unmitigated loss of sage-grouse habitat due to anthropogenic disturbances. The Council has elected to hire a consultant to develop the Conservation Credit System at the recommendation of staff. It is anticipated that the consultant would start work by February 2014 and the contract would take up to one year to complete. Though the final work products, the fully operational credit system, will not be complete by September 2014, the majority of the work under this contract will be developed by that date, which should provide USFWS with sufficient information to help inform their listing decision process. Major interim milestones and key Council decisions include:

- July 30, 2013: Council approves the RFP Scope of Work (SOW). It is important to note that if the RFP SOW is not approved by this date and if funding is not secured by August 14, 2013, this will affect successive timeline milestones and may cause a delay in the start of the contract. Following approval and securing of funds, State Purchasing will then release the RFP and a consultant will be selected for Council approval.
- November 14, 2013: Council approves consultant contract. It is important to note that if the contract is not approved by this date, this will affect successive timeline milestones and may cause a delay in the start of the contract.
- February 3, 2014: Consultant starts work on developing the Conservation Credit System.
- July 31, 2014: Phase I of contract, development of the metric will be complete.
- January 30, 2015: Phase II of contract, development of a fully operational credit system will be complete.
- February 12, 2015: Council approves the final Conservation Credit System. “Debits” and “credits” can begin to be accepted and on-the-ground projects can begin to be planned and implemented.

BLM EIS/ Revisions to the State’s Alternative

The BLM is well underway in their development process for the Greater Sage-grouse Land Use Plan (LUP) Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM recently completed their Cooperating Agency (CA) review period for the Administrative Draft of the EIS (ADEIS).

The SETT reviewed the ADEIS focusing on the representation of the State’s Alternative. The SETT compiled comments provided by all State CAs (DCNR, NDOW, and NDOT) and submitted a unified set of comments from the state of Nevada. The BLM is conducting a reanalysis of the State’s Alternative at the request of the SETT. Meetings between the SETT and BLM indicated that a lack of specificity in sections of the State’s Alternative has made it difficult for the BLM to analyze the environmental effects as required under the NEPA process. The SETT has been working on making the necessary changes and will bring revisions to the State’s Alternative to the Council as they are developed. The BLM has requested that the State submit changes to the State’s Alternative during the public review of the DEIS (September 30, 2013 to December 31, 2013). Major interim milestones and key Council decisions include:

- September 30, 2013: DEIS becomes available for a 90-day public review period.

- October 10, 2013: Council initial discussion on DEIS. Council approves final revised State Alternative for submission to the BLM. Interim section revisions will be brought to the Council for approval before the final.
- November 14, 2013: Council approves DEIS comment letter to BLM.
- March 31, 2014: BLM releases Final EIS for public review.
- April 10, 2014: Council initial discussion on Final EIS.
- May 8, 2014: Council approves Final EIS comment letter to BLM.
- September 30, 2014: BLM Record of Decision signed.

Revision of the State Plan/ Development of the Strategic Action Plan

After the sections needed for the State Alternative are completed, the SETT will continue to work on revisions to the State Plan that are less time sensitive for inclusion in the BLM's EIS. Revisions to the State Plan are anticipated to be completed by September 2014, for consideration during the USFWS' 12-month findings process for the listing decision.

In addition, the SETT will begin work on developing a Strategic Action Plan. This is a new concept that was not presented in the original general timeline. This will be a separate document from, and in addition to, the State Plan. The State Plan provides broad goals, objectives, and management actions. The Strategic Action Plan will go into much greater detail and identify areas to target mitigation efforts as part of the Conservation Credit System. The Strategic Action Plan will identify key sage-grouse habitat for conservation where the primary threats to sage-grouse habitat are located spatially, and provide specific guidance on how to ameliorate these threats based on local area conditions. The Strategic Action Plan will guide and help prioritize where mitigation efforts will be targeted in Nevada in order to achieve landscape-scale conservation of sage-grouse habitat.

The revisions to the State Plan and the development of the Strategic Action Plan will be informed by the Science Work Group. The Science Work Group, will be a collaborative working group of scientists and resource managers that will advise the SETT on best available science and how it can be applied to the management of the sagebrush ecosystem. The Science Work Group is anticipated to meet monthly over the next year.

The Strategic Action Plan is anticipated to become the primary focus of the SETT. The SETT will bring interim work products to the Council as they become available. Major interim milestones and key Council decisions include:

- June 12, 2014: Council adoption of the Final Strategic Action Plan. Interim work products will be brought to the Council for approval before the final.
- September 11, 2014: Council adoption of the Final State Plan. Interim work products will be brought to the Council for approval before the final.

USGS Habitat Suitability Mapping

The Council hired the USGS to develop a state-wide sage-grouse habitat suitability map, led by Dr. Peter Coates. The SETT has worked over the past few months to obtain funding from several sources and navigate a difficult and circuitous contracting process. Work by the USGS is currently underway. Work will be accomplished in two phases. It is anticipated that the final habitat suitability map will be completed by January 2015. Though the final map will not be complete by September 2014, the start of the 12-month findings process, a draft habitat suitability map will be available to the USFWS for consideration during their listing decision. Major interim milestones and key Council decisions include:

- October 10, 2013: USGS project “kick-off” presentation to the Council.
- January 15, 2014: Draft habitat suitability map complete.
- February 13, 2014: Council reviews draft habitat suitability map and discusses how to use the final map product, habitat categories, and SGMAs.
- December 31, 2014: Final habitat suitability map complete.
- January 9, 2015: Council adopts final habitat suitability map.

USFWS Data Call/ Projects Database

The SETT is already well underway in the process of compiling a list of planned and completed projects since the March 2010 listing decision for USFWS’ consideration for the September 2015 listing decision. The SETT will concentrate on developing the projects list through May 2014. At that point the SETT will begin the process of analyzing the data and writing a report to put the projects into context as requested by the USFWS for the 2014 data call. The SETT also envisions developing a database website with a GIS-based platform to house the project information that will be made available to the public. The SETT is currently working with NDOW staff to collaborate on a database that is already underway as part of the Nevada Partners in Conservation and Development Program. This will be a secondary priority for the SETT as the development of the projects lists and report for the USFWS data call is more pressing and time sensitive. Major interim milestones and key Council decisions include:

- June 2, 2014: SETT begins data analysis and report on projects list for USFWS.
- September 11, 2014: Council approves report for submission to USFWS.
- June 1, 2015: Database website becomes available to the public.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council adopts the Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Strategic Detailed Timeline.

POSSIBLE MOTION

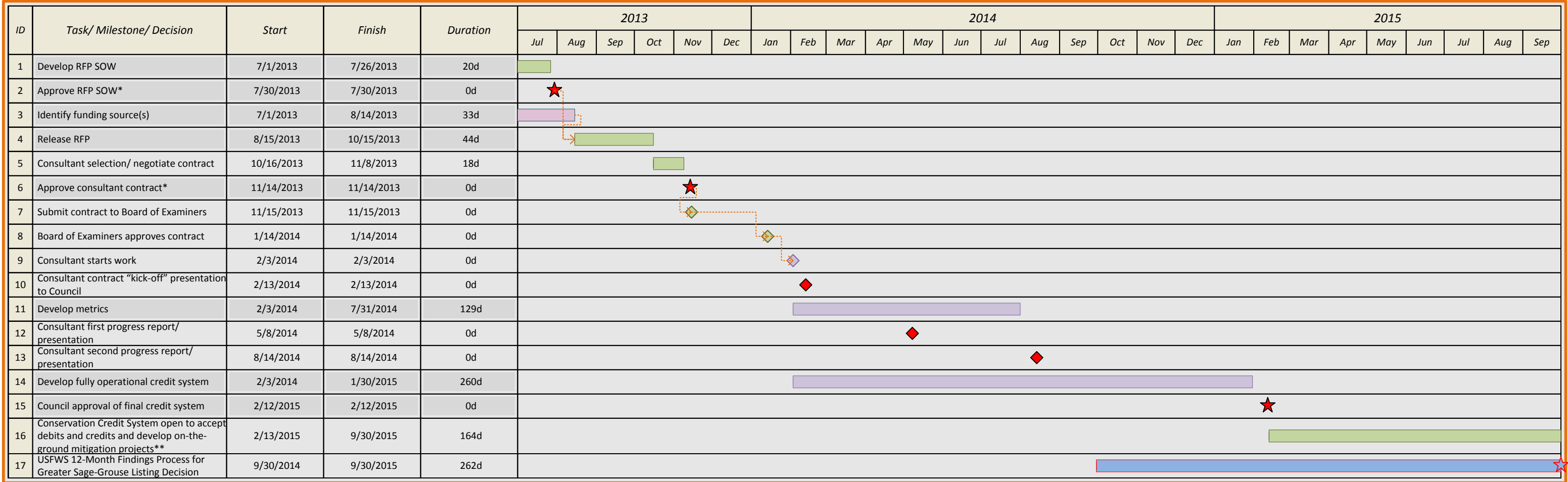
Should the Council agree with the staff recommendation, a possible motion would be, “Motion to adopt the Sagebrush Ecosystem Strategic Detailed Timeline.”

Attachments:

- 1:** The Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Strategic Detailed Timeline
- 2:** Tentative Agenda Items for Future SEC Meeting
- 3:** General Timeline as presented at the April 22, 2013 meeting

mf:TR

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline: Conservation Credit System



- *Decision on this date effects successive timeline items
- **Task continues indefinitely
- Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Task
- Governor’s Office Task
- Selected Consultant Task
- USFWS Task
- Task/milestone/ decision dependent on previous decision/ task/ milestone
- ★

 Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Decision
- ★


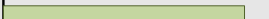




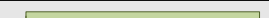




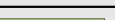






 USFWS Decision
- ◆

 Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Milestone
- ◆

 Selected Consultant Milestone



Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline: BLM Environmental Impact Statement

ID	Task/ Milestone/ Decision	Start	Finish	Duration	2013						2014												2015										
					Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		
1	SETT submit combined State Cooperating Agencies comments on ADEIS to BLM	7/1/2013	7/1/2013	0d																													
2	SETT revise State’s EIS Alternative for inclusion in the Final EIS*	7/1/2013	10/4/2013	70d																													
3	Approval of revised goals and objectives section of State Alternative/ Plan	7/30/2013	7/30/2013	0d																													
4	Approval of design features and mitigation policies in State Alternative/ Plan	9/12/2013	9/12/2013	0d																													
5	Approval of final revised State Alternative for submission to BLM	10/10/2013	10/10/2013	0d																													
6	DEIS becomes available for 90-day public review	9/30/2013	9/30/2013	0d																													
7	SETT review of DEIS	9/30/2013	12/31/2013	67d																													
8	SETT’s presentation on BLM’s preferred alternative to Council and initial discussion	10/10/2013	10/10/2013	0d																													
9	Council approve DEIS comment letter to BLM drafted by SETT	11/14/2013	11/14/2013	0d																													
10	Submit final combined State Cooperating Agencies comments to BLM	12/31/2013	12/31/2013	0d																													
11	Final EIS becomes available to public for 45-day review period	3/31/2014	3/31/2014	0d																													
12	SETT review Final EIS	3/31/2014	5/15/2014	34d																													
13	Council discussion on Final EIS	4/10/2014	4/10/2014	0d																													
14	Council approves Final EIS comment letter to BLM drafted by SETT	5/8/2014	5/8/2014	0d																													
15	BLM Record of Decision (ROD) signed	9/30/2014	9/30/2014	0d																													
16	Presentation and discussion on BLM ROD and “next steps”	10/9/2014	10/9/2014	0d																													
17	USFWS 12-Month Findings Process for Greater Sage-Grouse Listing Decision	9/30/2014	9/30/2015	262d	 																												

*Task ongoing since May 2012

- Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Task
- USFWS Task
- ★

 Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Decision
- ★

 BLM Decision
- ★

 USFWS Decision
- ◆

 Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Milestone
- ◆

 Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Milestone
- ◆

 BLM Milestone



Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline: Revision of The State Plan/Development of Strategic Action Plan - Science Work Group

ID	Task/ Milestone/ Decision	Start	Finish	Duration	2013						2014												2015										
					Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		
1	SETT revise and update components of State Plan needed for BLM’s analysis of State’s EIS Alternative*	7/1/2013	10/4/2013	70d	<div><div></div></div>																												
2	Approval of revised goals and objectives section of State Plan/ EIS Alternative	7/30/2013	7/30/2013	0d	★																												
3	Approval of design features and mitigation policies in State Plan/ EIS Alternative	9/12/2013	9/12/2013	0d	★																												
4	Approval of final changes to State Plan for inclusion in EIS Alternative	10/10/2013	10/10/2013	0d	★																												
5	First meeting of Cheatgrass Action Team**	7/31/2013	7/31/2013	0d	◆																												
6	First meeting of Science Work Group (SWG)	8/20/2013	8/20/2013	0d	◆																												
7	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision and development of Strategic Action Plan for Pinyon- Juniper Encroachment	8/20/2013	11/8/2013	59d	<div><div></div></div>																												
8	Approval of PJ State Plan revision and proposed Strategic Action Plan	11/14/2013	11/14/2013	0d	★																												
9	SETT lead SWG input on identifying key sage-grouse habitat areas to prioritize conservation for Strategic Action Plan	8/20/2013	1/3/2014	99d	<div><div></div></div>																												
10	Approval of key sage-grouse areas to prioritize conservation	1/9/2014	1/9/2014	0d	★																												
11	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision and development of Strategic Action Plan for Fire and Invasive Species	10/15/2013	3/7/2014	104d	<div><div></div></div>																												
12	Approval of Fire and Invasive Species State Plan revision and proposed Strategic Action Plan	3/14/2014	3/14/2014	0d	★																												
13	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision and development of Strategic Action Plan for Predation	3/10/2014	5/2/2014	40d	<div><div></div></div>																												
14	Approval of Predation State Plan revision and proposed Strategic Action Plan	5/8/2014	5/8/2014	0d	★																												
15	Adoption of Final Strategic Action Plan for submission to USFWS for 12-Month Findings Process	6/12/2014	6/12/2014	0d	★																												
16	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision for Wild Horse and Burro Management	5/5/2014	6/6/2014	25d	<div><div></div></div>																												
17	Approval of Wild Horse and Burro Management State Plan revision	6/12/2014	6/12/2014	0d	★																												
18	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision for Livestock Grazing	6/9/2014	7/4/2014	20d	<div><div></div></div>																												
19	Approval of Livestock Grazing State Plan revision	7/10/2014	7/10/2014	0d	★																												
20	SETT lead SWG input on State Plan revision for OHVs and Monitoring and Adaptive Management	7/7/2014	8/8/2014	25d	<div><div></div></div>																												
21	Approval of OHVs and Monitoring and Adaptive Management State Plan revision	8/14/2014	8/14/2014	0d	★																												
22	Adoption of Final State Plan for submission to USFWS for 12-Month Findings Process	9/11/2014	9/11/2014	0d	★																												
23	USFWS 12-Month Findings Process for Greater Sage-Grouse Listing Decision	9/30/2014	9/30/2015	262d	<div><div></div></div> ★																												

*Task ongoing since May 2012

**TBD how this group will fit into this process



Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Task



USFWS Task



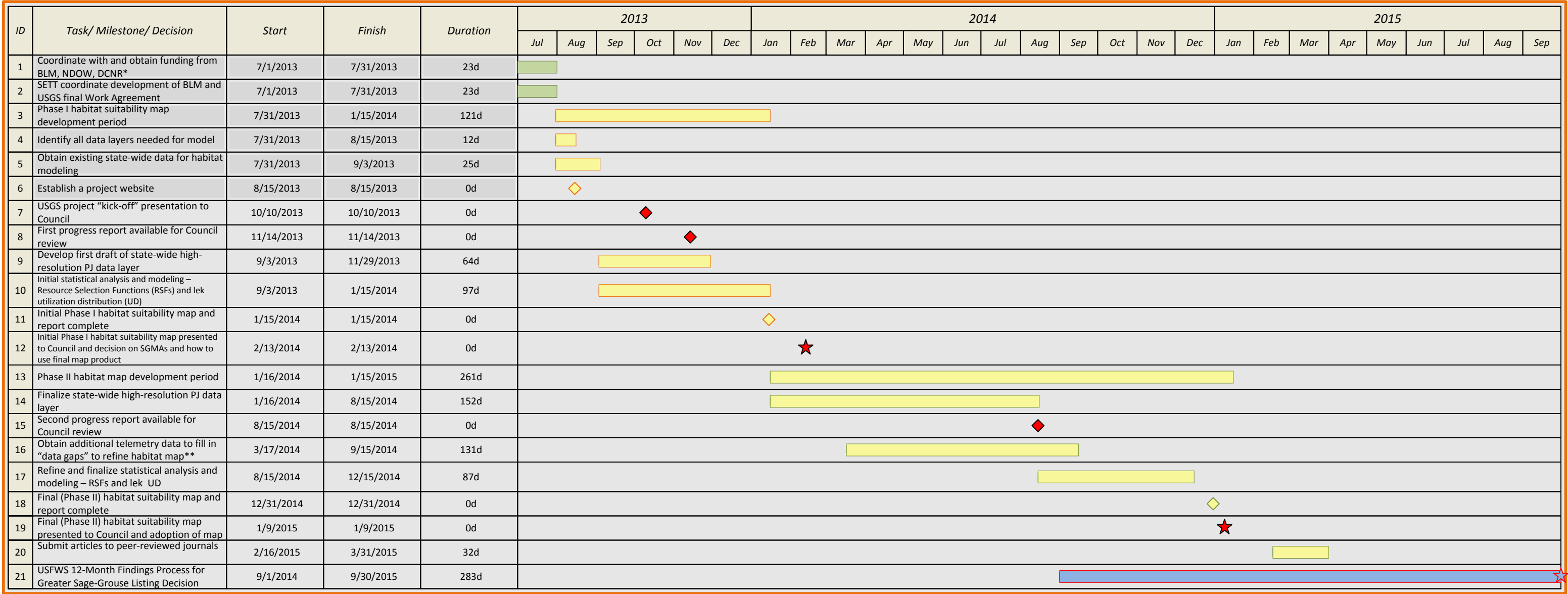
Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Decision



USFWS Decision

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline:

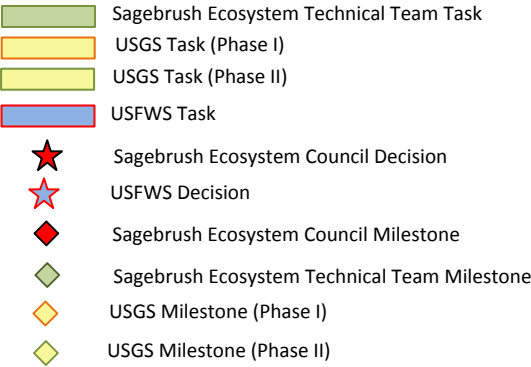
USGS Habitat Suitability Mapping



*Work ongoing since April 2013

**Field work contingent upon obtaining additional funding as presented in the draft budget at the 3/27/2013 meeting

Note: SETT and technical modeling experts will be working closely with USGS to during entire mapping process



Sagebrush Ecosystem Program Timeline:

USFWS Data Call/ Project Database

ID	Task/ Milestone/ Decision	Start	Finish	Duration	2013						2014												2015										
					Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		
1	Compile list of projects from agencies/ landowners*	7/1/2013	5/30/2014	240d	<div></div>																												
2	SETT update to Council on project list development	12/12/2013	12/12/2013	0d	<div></div>																												
3	Analyze data to put projects into context/ Write report for USFWS Data Call	6/2/2014	9/5/2014	70d	<div></div>																												
4	Approve report and submit to USFWS for data call	9/11/2014	9/11/2014	0d	<div></div>																												
5	Continually update project list**	6/2/2014	9/30/2015	348d	<div></div>																												
6	Establish database with partner agencies	9/2/2013	5/29/2015	455d	<div></div>																												
7	SETT update to Council on database development and possible website demo	6/12/2014	6/12/2014	0d	<div></div>																												
8	Database becomes available to public	6/1/2015	6/1/2015	0d	<div></div>																												
9	Long-term maintenance of database**	6/1/2015	9/30/2015	88d	<div></div>																												
10	SETT presentation to Council on public launch of database and website demo	6/11/2015	6/11/2015	0d	<div></div>																												
11	USFWS 12-Month Findings Process for Greater Sage-Grouse Listing Decision	9/30/2014	9/30/2015	262d	<div></div>																												

*Work ongoing since March 2013

**Task continues indefinitely

- Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Task
- USFWS Task
- ★

Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Decision
- ★

USFWS Decision
- ◆

Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team Milestone
- ◆

Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Milestone



Tentative Agenda Items for SEC Meetings

2013						2014		
July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Approve Conservation Credit System RFP SOW	DOA invasive species programs presentation	Approval of design features (minimize) and conservation credit system policies (mitigate) to submit to BLM for consideration in the Final EIS*	Approval of final revised State EIS Alt to submit to BLM for inclusion in the Final EIS*	Approve consultant contract for Conservation Credit System	Update on project list development		Conservation Credit System "kick-off" presentation to Council	Approval of Fire and Invasive Species State Plan revision and Strategic Action Plan
Approval of revisions to Sec 3.0 Goals and Objectives to clarify and further develop the "avoid, minimize, mitigate" policy to submit to BLM for consideration in the Final EIS*			SETT presentation on BLM's preferred DEIS alternative and initial discussions	Approve DEIS comment letter to BLM			Initial Phase I habitat suitability map presented to Council	
			USGS project "kick-off" presentation to Council on habitat suitability mapping project	Approval of PJ State Plan revision and Strategic Action Plan			Decision on habitat categories, SGMAs, and how to use final map product	
				USGS first progress report for review and discussion				

*Agenda item also part of State Plan Update

- Blue= Conservation Credit System
- Red = EIS
- Orange = State Plan/ Strategic Action Plan
- Purple = USGS
- Green = Database
- Black = Other

Tentative Agenda Items for SEC Meetings

2014								
April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Council discussion on Final EIS	Conservation Credit System Consultant 1st progress report	Adoption of Final Strategic Action Plan for submission to USFWS	Approval of Livestock Grazing State Plan revision	Conservation Credit System Consultant 2nd progress report	Adoption of Final State Plan for submission to USFWS	Presentation and discussion on BLM EIS ROD and "next steps"		
	Council approves comment letter for Final EIS	Approval of Wild Horse and Burro Management State Plan revision		Approval of OHVs and Monitoring and Adaptive Management State Plan revision	Approve report and project list to send to USFWS for data call			
	Approval of Predation State Plan revision and Strategic Action Plan	Update on database development and possible website demo		USGS second progress report for review and discussion				

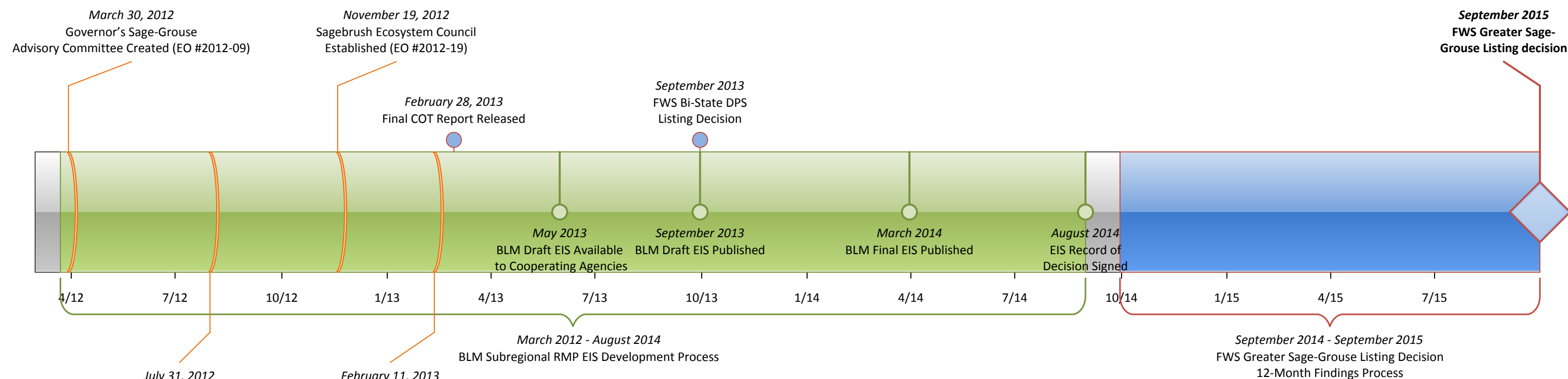
Blue= Conservation
Credit System
Red = EIS
Orange = State Plan/
Strategic Action Plan
Purple = USGS
Green = Database
Black = Other

Tentative Agenda Items for SEC Meetings

2015								
Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
Final habitat suitability map presented to Council and adoption of map	Approve Final Conservation Credit System					Presentation on public launch of database and website demo		

- Blue= Conservation Credit System
- Red = EIS
- Orange = State Plan/ Strategic Action Plan
- Purple = USGS
- Green = Database
- Black = Other

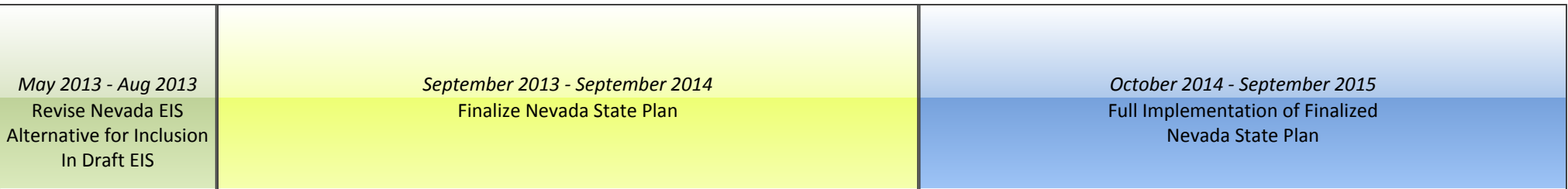
Greater Sage-Grouse Listing Decision Proposed Timeline



Mitigation Bank



Nevada State Plan/ BLM EIS Alternative



Mapping



FWS Data Call

