



State of Utah

SPENCER J. COX
Governor

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
Lieutenant Governor

Department of Natural Resources

Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office

REDGE B. JOHNSON
Executive Director

January 12, 2023

Submitted via electronically: comments-intermtn-dixie-powell@usda.gov

Christopher Wehrli
District Ranger
Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest
225 E. Center Street
Panguitch, UT 84759

Subject: Showalter Range Water Improvement Supplemental Comments
RDCC Project No. 85163

Dear Mr. Wehrli:

The state of Utah (State) through the Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office (PLPCO) submitted comments on January 4, 2023. The State, in collaboration with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR), provides the following supplemental comments for your consideration.

The project aligns with DWR's resource goals and objectives by *maintaining existing wildlife habitats and increasing the quality of critical habitats*. The proposed water development and distribution will benefit many wildlife species, especially pronghorn. Lack of water can have negative effects on pronghorn fawn production. To maximize the benefit for wildlife, the DWR recommends water be made available in the troughs starting May 1. This early distribution of water would benefit pronghorn during fawning. DWR or the Forest Service will work cooperatively with the permittee to initiate water availability for pronghorns if the permittee is not utilizing the allotment by May 1. This recommendation in no way obligates the permittee to provide water without consent.

The project is within 0.27 miles of the Berry Springs lek and just over a mile from the John L. Swale lek in the Parker Mountain-Emery Sage-grouse Management Area. Utah's Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse provides information and recommendations for

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avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to eliminate, reduce and offset potential disturbances to sage-grouse. The plan recommends projects avoid activities (construction, vehicle noise, etc.) that disturb nesting or brood-rearing from April 1 - August 15. As proposed, the project will avoid construction during lek attendance and breeding from February 15 - May 15. If project activities cannot avoid these time frames, please coordinate with the local DWR biologist for time and distance determinations based on site-specific conditions.

In addition to the proposed pre-construction surveys to determine Utah prairie dog (UPD) occupancy within the project footprint, the DWR recommends preconstruction UPD training for employees working within active UPD colonies to further minimize impacts. DWR UPD biologists are available to help coordinate and facilitate training if needed.

If you have questions, contact the DWR's Impact Analysis Biologist in our Cedar City office, Jessica Kinross, at jessicavan@utah.gov or 435-691-2372.

The State appreciates the opportunity to review the EA and submit supplemental comments. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Redge B. Johnson".

Redge B. Johnson
Executive Director

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