Landowners Support Research Efforts on Diamond Mountain

By Lorien Belton, Utah State University

Student taking vegetation measurements on Diamond Mountain. Photo courtesey of Josh Kaze.

Local landowners have played a crucial role in some important new sage-grouse research being conducted on Diamond Mountain. Several students from Brigham Young University are involved in research collaring and tracking sage-grouse. Local landowners and ranchers Mitch Hacking and Brad Horrocks stepped up to the plate, graciously offering to allow the students to stay in their hunting lodge, "2 Dog Huntin," in the area. In addition to reducing project costs for housing the students, being able to stay at the lodge significantly reduced fuel costs for the students, who would otherwise have needed to drive back down the mountain every night.

According to Josh Kaze, one of the BYU students, these same landowners were also extremely helpful when it came to contacting other landowners on Diamond Mountain. "Mitch and Brad acted as advocates for the sage-grouse project and opened many doors, or gates, for us, without which we may never had been able to attain permission" to access the land. The students expressed their thanks to the many ranchers who gave them permission to conduct their research on their land. Access can be critical, and a major challenge, when students are tracking radio-collared grouse. Because so many different landowners in the area have been supportive, the research has been very successful to date.

The students have captured and radio-collared 30 sage-grouse in the area, and are tracking them to better understand how the grouse use the landscape. They have also taken vegetation measurements and are keeping track of sage-grouse breeding activity, such as nest success. The results of their research will contribute substantially to our understanding of sage-grouse on Diamond Mountain.

Josh Kaze has learned something about the ranchers, too. "From our experience," says Kaze, "the ranchers on Diamond Mountain understand the sensitive ecological relationships on the sage brush steppe and are willing to work together on managing the land for multiple uses in a healthy way." The UBARM group is delighted to be able to celebrate this combination of positive relationships and good science. The ranchers and researchers were commended during the field tour in September for the great job they are doing.

Student taking vegetation measurements on Diamond Mountain research project. Photo courtesey of Josh Kaze.