

# Conversation Contents

## Briefing on Scientists' Letter to Secretary on Sage-grouse

**Matt Holloran <operationalconservation@gmail.com>**

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**From:** Matt Holloran <operationalconservation@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tue Oct 17 2017 14:47:11 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
<BLM\_sagegrouseplanning@blm.gov>, <jkaruzas@blm.gov>, <jperez@blm.gov>, <bclayton@blm.gov>, <gshoop@blm.gov>, <awilhelm@blm.gov>, <tmurphy@blm.gov>,  
**To:** <mmagalet@blm.gov>, <m1todd@blm.gov>, <jccarlso@blm.gov>, <jraby@blm.gov>, <manthony@blm.gov>, <jconnell@blm.gov>, <qfbahr@blm.gov>, <eroberso@blm.gov>, <ehusse@blm.gov>, <mrugwell@blm.gov>  
**CC:** <jruhs@blm.gov>, <kbeneditto@blm.gov>, <cyounger@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Briefing on Scientists' Letter to Secretary on Sage-grouse

Hello -

As I mentioned to all of you in my recent email, we are offering to brief BLM staff and answer your questions on the details of our Oct. 13 letter to Secretary Zinke commenting on the Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353 and the October 11 Notice of Intent to consider amendments to the 2015 sage-grouse plans.

At 10 a.m. Mountain Time on Thursday, Oct. 19, I will be available along with Dr. Jack Connelly to discuss the letter by teleconference. Please join us at 855-857-5720. No PIN is needed to join the conference; just dial and you'll be connected. So you don't have to search for the link to the letter, here it is: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwDRr8ng0LWbcjRyaFINdnFLcck>.

As scientists, we have spent decades studying greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. It is our intent to provide the Secretary and the BLM with constructive scientific advice on how possible changes to the 2015 plans could affect the success of the administration's goals to conserve and protect the sage-grouse and its habitat, consistent with the need to maintain the economic and social strength of human communities in the West.

We welcome the chance to discuss our recommendations with you, and will remain available to provide ongoing consultation about how science can help inform strategies to sustain the conservation of sage-grouse on our federal public lands. Please do not hesitate to contact me at this email address or by phone at 307-399-6885 if you have any questions before the conference call.

Thank you for your time,  
Matt

Matthew J. Holloran, PhD  
Operational Conservation LLC

---

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Tue Oct 17 2017 18:27:44 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Briefing on Scientists' Letter to Secretary on Sage-grouse

Please print all. Thx

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Matt Holloran** <[operationalconservation@gmail.com](mailto:operationalconservation@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Tue, Oct 17, 2017 at 1:47 PM  
**Subject:** Briefing on Scientists' Letter to Secretary on Sage-grouse  
**To:** [BLM\\_sagegrouseplanning@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_sagegrouseplanning@blm.gov), [jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov), [jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov),  
[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov), [gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov), [awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov), [tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov),  
[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov), [m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov), [jcarloso@blm.gov](mailto:jcarloso@blm.gov), [jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov),  
[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov), [jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov), [qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov), [eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov),  
[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov), [mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)  
**Cc:** [jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov), [kbeneditto@blm.gov](mailto:kbeneditto@blm.gov), [cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)

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**Matt Holloran <operationalconservation@gmail.com>**

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**From:** Matt Holloran <operationalconservation@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sat Oct 14 2017 12:15:24 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
<BLM\_sagegrouseplanning@blm.gov>, <jkaruzas@blm.gov>, <jperez@blm.gov>, <bclayton@blm.gov>, <gshoop@blm.gov>, <awilhelm@blm.gov>, <tmurphy@blm.gov>, <mmagalet@blm.gov>, <m1todd@blm.gov>, <jccarlso@blm.gov>, <jraby@blm.gov>, <manthony@blm.gov>, <jconnell@blm.gov>, <qfbahr@blm.gov>, <eroberso@blm.gov>, <ehusse@blm.gov>, <mrugwell@blm.gov>  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Letter to Secretary Zinke on Sage-grouse

Hello -

Today, I and 16 of my colleagues mailed a letter to Secretary Zinke commenting on the Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353 and the October 11 Notice of Intent to consider amendments to the 2015 sage-grouse plans. As scientists, we have spent decades studying greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. It is our intent to provide the Secretary with a constructive scientific analysis of how potential amendments to the land use plans could affect the success of the administration's goals to conserve and protect the sage-grouse and its habitat. Our recommendations are consistent with the need to maintain the economic and social strength of human communities in the West.

We will be submitting this letter as part of the comment period noticed in the Federal Register on Wednesday. But, because you are directly involved in this effort either as a state director or as your state office's primary contact on this issue, we wanted you to be aware of this letter as quickly as possible. You can find the letter here [<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwDRr8ng0LWbcjRyaFINdnFLckk>].

As the letter states, we remain available to provide ongoing consultation about how science can help inform strategies to sustain the conservation of sage-grouse on our federal public lands. While we would prefer to visit each of you, that is not going to be possible. Therefore, on Oct. 19 at 10 a.m. Mountain Time, Dr. John W. Connelly and I will be hosting a conference call expressly for BLM staff. Call details will follow.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at this email address or by phone at 307-399-6885 if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time,  
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Matthew J. Holloran, PhD  
Operational Conservation LLC

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**draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19**

**Attachments:**

/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/1.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517.docx  
/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/2.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517.docx  
/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/3.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx  
/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/4.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx  
/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/6.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx  
/18. draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19/7.1 GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx

**"Kelleher, Karen" <kkelleh@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Kelleher, Karen" <kkelleh@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Sep 15 2017 15:06:35 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell <mrugwell@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, John Carlson <jccariso@blm.gov>, "Husse, Erica" <ehusse@blm.gov>, Bridget Clayton <bclayton@blm.gov>, Quincy Bahr <qfbahr@blm.gov>, Ammon Wilhelm <awilhelm@blm.gov>, Matthew Magaletti <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Molly Anthony <manthony@blm.gov>, Jeremiah Karuzas <jkaruzas@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>  
**To:** Gordon Toevs <gtoevs@blm.gov>, "Bail, Kristin" <kbail@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Gregory Russell <Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov>  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517.docx

Hi,  
attached please find the draft NOI for review. Please provide comments by COB 9/19. One set of comments from each state would be appreciated.

As discussed on the phone today, this is not yet ready for conversation outside of BLM beyond the agreed upon message from last week: "we are looking at expediting the start of plan amendments and do not yet have a firm

timeline." Kathy & Cally are working to accelerate internal review to allow you to talk with state & county governments soon.

A few notes following up on our discussion from last week: we will provide time for SGTF review; we will do 1 NOI with one email & website for submitting comments. We are open to separate POCs for each state, but need to know if there is consensus on this approach and if so, who your POC will be. We've indicated in comment bubbles where we've included text to address your verbal comments/questions from last week.

#### TIMELINE

(comms plan: edits in process; schedule will be similar to below but may be staggered by a few days; we will likely send it to you & the state comms chiefs on Monday for review)

9/15: provide attached NOI to SDs and State coordinators for review at 4pm (FS may also be included)  
9/19: comments due from SDs on NOI  
9/20: revise NOI with SD comments  
9/21: WO 100 & SOL review  
9/22: deliver draft NOI to David Bernhardt for review  
9/25-28: receive David B input & "final draft" NOI & comms materials  
9/29 (NLT): provide draft NOI to SGTF; comments due 10/3 or 4  
10/2 or 3 - schedule call with SGTF  
10/3 or 4 - comments due from SGTF  
10/5: revise NOI with SGTF comments; finalize comms materials  
10/6-10: NOI & comms materials enter final review/surname (WO100, SOL, ASLM, Dept, Exec Sec)  
10/11: NOI sent to FR  
10/16: NOI publishes

--

Karen Kelleher

Deputy Assistant Director - Resources and Planning

Main Interior room 5646

[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)

202-208-4896

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**Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Sep 15 2017 21:03:29 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>, Joanne Maluotoga <jmaluoto@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517.docx

Please print all. Thx!

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Kelleher, Karen" <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>

**Date:** September 15, 2017 at 14:06:35 PDT

**To:** Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, "Husse, Erica" <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Ammon Wilhelm <[awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov)>, Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Molly Anthony <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>

**Cc:** Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov)>

**Subject:** draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

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9/25-28: receive David B input & "final draft" NOI & comms materials  
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10/11: NOI sent to FR  
10/16: NOI publishes

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Karen Kelleher

Deputy Assistant Director - Resources and Planning

Main Interior room 5646

[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)

202-208-4896

## "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>

---

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 18 2017 18:05:25 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx

Hi Marci,

I hope you are well (and I apologize for all the emails today). Attached are a few of my comments on the NOI (mostly just feedback back to Karen regarding some of her questions posed in the Notice). If you are comfortable, I will go ahead and send them back to Karen tomorrow. If not, please let me know.

Thanks for all your help.

Matt

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Kelleher, Karen <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>

**Date:** Fri, Sep 15, 2017 at 2:06 PM

**Subject:** draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

**To:** Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, "Husse, Erica" <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[gfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:gfbahr@blm.gov)>, Ammon Wilhelm <[awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov)>, Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Molly Anthony <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov)>

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Karen Kelleher

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202-208-4896

--

#### **Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

#### **Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 18 2017 19:49:15 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx

Please print all for tomorrow AM. THX

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** September 18, 2017 at 17:05:25 PDT  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
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**Date:** Fri, Sep 15, 2017 at 2:06 PM  
**Subject:** draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**To:** Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, "Husse, Erica" <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Ammon Wilhelm <[awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov)>, Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Molly Anthony <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov)>

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10/16: NOI publishes

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Karen Kelleher

Deputy Assistant Director - Resources and Planning

Main Interior room 5646

[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)

202-208-4896

--

### **Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

## **Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 18 2017 19:49:51 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

Thank you. I've asked Cheri to print for my review tomorrow. M

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 18, 2017, at 17:05, Magaletti, Matthew <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hi Marci,

I hope you are well (and I apologize for all the emails today). Attached are a few of my comments on the NOI (mostly just feedback back to Karen regarding some of her questions posed in the Notice). If you are comfortable, I will go ahead and send them back to Karen tomorrow. If not, please let me know.

Thanks for all your help.

Matt

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kelleher, Karen** <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>

Date: Fri, Sep 15, 2017 at 2:06 PM

Subject: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

To: Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, "Husse, Erica" <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Ammon Wilhelm <[awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov)>, Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Molly Anthony <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>  
Cc: Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov)>

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Karen Kelleher

Deputy Assistant Director - Resources and Planning

Main Interior room 5646

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--

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(775) 861-6472

<GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx>

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Tue Sep 19 2017 14:09:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Magaletti, Matthew** <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
Date: Mon, Sep 18, 2017 at 5:05 PM  
Subject: Fwd: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

To: Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>

Hi Marci,

I hope you are well (and I apologize for all the emails today). Attached are a few of my comments on the NOI (mostly just feedback back to Karen regarding some of her questions posed in the Notice). If you are comfortable, I will go ahead and send them back to Karen tomorrow. If not, please let me know.

Thanks for all your help.

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Subject: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19

To: Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, "Husse, Erica" <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Ammon Wilhelm <[awilhelm@blm.gov](mailto:awilhelm@blm.gov)>, Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Molly Anthony <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>  
Cc: Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:Gregory.Russell@sol.doi.gov)>

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202-208-4896

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Tue Sep 19 2017 14:57:15 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Kelleher, Karen" <kkelleh@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Matthew Magaletti <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: draft NOI for GRSG amendments for your review DD 9/19  
**Attachments:** GRSG Amendment NOI\_PreliminaryInternalOnly\_091517\_NV Comments.docx

Karen,

Attached are Nevada's comments on the draft NOI.

Matt Magaletti will be our POC - his information is as follows:  
Phone #: 775-861-6472  
Address: 1340 Financial Blvd., Reno, NV 89502  
Email: [mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. Please let us know if you have questions. Marci

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office

1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

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Main Interior room 5646

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202-208-4896

# Conversation Contents

## GRSG State Director Call Notes

### Attachments:

/21. GRSG State Director Call Notes/1.1 SD GRSG Update Meeting Notes\_9\_15\_17.docx

## "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>

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**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Sep 15 2017 14:02:32 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** GRSG State Director Call Notes  
**Attachments:** SD GRSG Update Meeting Notes\_9\_15\_17.docx

Hi Marci,

Attached are my quick notes from today's GRSG State Director Call. The items highlighted in yellow are immediate asks of the State Directors and those in blue are immediate asks directed to the State Sage Grouse Leads. The only immediate task for the SDs is to review the draft NOI, which you should be getting sometime today.

We had a lot of NOI process questions addressed by Karen and Kathy during today's call on the NOI (which I thought was helpful).

Hope you have a great weekend and let me know if you would like to discuss more on Monday.

Thanks.

--

**Matthew Magaletti**  
Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

# Conversation Contents

Agenda items, GRSG call tomorrow, 3 ET

"Toevs, Gordon" <gtoevs@blm.gov>

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**From:** "Toevs, Gordon" <gtoevs@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Sep 14 2017 15:19:21 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Abbie Jossie <ajossie@blm.gov>, Angela Falwell <afalwell@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Buddy Green <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Cally Younger <cyounger@blm.gov>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Gregory Russell <gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Howard Cantor <hcantor@blm.gov>, Howard Hedrick <hhedrick@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jamie Harrison <jharriso@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Jessica Camargo <jcamargo@blm.gov>, Joann Perea-Richmann <jperearichmann@blm.gov>, Joanne Maluotoga <jmaluoto@blm.gov>, Johanna Munson <jmunson@blm.gov>, John Carlson <jccarlso@blm.gov>, John Kalish <jkalish@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, Kathy Mondor <kmondor@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Larry Claypool <lclaypoo@blm.gov>, Linda Thurn <lthurn@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell <mrugwell@blm.gov>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <jtague@blm.gov>, Michael Stiewig <mstiewig@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Peter Ditton <pditton@blm.gov>, Quincy Bahr <qfbahr@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Richard Hotaling <rhotalin@blm.gov>, Robert Jolley <rbjolley@blm.gov>, Robin Hawks <rhawks@blm.gov>, Ruthie Jefferson <rjefferson@blm.gov>, Ryan Hathaway <rhathaway@blm.gov>, Sandra Leach <ssleach@blm.gov>, Stephen Small <ssmall@blm.gov>, Steve Tryon <stryon@blm.gov>, Steven Wells <s1wells@blm.gov>, Theresa Hanley <thanley@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Timothy Shannon <tshannon@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Todd Yeager <tyeager@blm.gov>, Valgentina Bolden <vbolden@blm.gov>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, Vicki Herren <vherren@blm.gov>, Yolando Mack-Thompson <ymackthompson@blm.gov>, afournie@blm.gov  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Agenda items, GRSG call tomorrow, 3 ET

**Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5)**

Good Afternoon

Here are some proposed agenda items for tomorrows call:

Update on SO 3353

Tasks/ Next steps

October 10-12 and October 23 and 24

Implementation coordinators working on outreach and state specific issues for plan maintenance and possible plan amendment issues

WO working on issues requiring clarification, guidance, training and new policy leaving room for state specific guidance as necessary

Report on EOC

USGS Science Report

IWJV Web portal

Round Robin on State outreach activities

County outreach

We will check for additional items at the beginning of the call.

Thank you

Gordon

For more information about BLM Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring, see the [AIM Website](#) or [AIM SharePoint](#).

Gordon Toevs, PhD Soil Science

Senior Policy Advisor

Desk--202-208-6952

Cell--202-567-1589

# Conversation Contents

## SEC Meeting Materials

### Attachments:

/23. SEC Meeting Materials/1.1 SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.pdf  
/23. SEC Meeting Materials/1.2 170914\_Staff\_Report\_SO3353.pdf  
/23. SEC Meeting Materials/1.3 Attachment 1 Staff Report.pdf

**Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>**

---

**From:** Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 20:22:34 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
"Allen Biaggi (b) (6) <(b) (6)>  
"Bevan Lister (b) (6) <(b) (6)> "Bill Dunkelberger (wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us)" <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>, Bradley Crowell <bcrowell@dcnr.nv.gov>, "Carolyn Swed (carolyn\_swed@fws.gov)" <carolyn\_swed@fws.gov>, "Chris MacKenzie (cmackenzie@allisonmackenzie.com)" <cmackenzie@allisonmackenzie.com>, Dominique Etchegoyhen <detchegoyhen@dcnr.nv.gov>, "Gerry Emm (Gerry.emm@bia.gov)" <Gerry.emm@bia.gov>, "Grim, Mary" <mary\_grim@fws.gov>, "Jim R. Barbee" <jrbarbee@agri.nv.gov>, Jim Lawrence <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, "JJ Goicoechea (jjgoicoechea@eurekanv.org)" <jjgoicoechea@eurekanv.org>, Jodi Poley <jpoley@dcnr.nv.gov>, "John Ruhs (jruhs@blm.gov)" <jruhs@blm.gov>, Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>, Ray Dotson <ray.dotson@nv.usda.gov>, Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, "Sherm Swanson (sswanson@cabnr.unr.edu)" <sswanson@cabnr.unr.edu>, "Starla Lacy (slacy@nvenergy.com)" <slacy@nvenergy.com>, Steven Boies <(b) (6)> "STOCKTON BRYAN (bstockton@ag.nv.gov)" <bstockton@ag.nv.gov>, "Tina Nappe (b) (6) <(b) (6)> Tony Wasley <twasley@ndow.org>, William Molini <(b) (6)>

**To:**

**Subject:** SEC Meeting Materials

**Attachments:** SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.pdf  
170914\_Staff\_Report\_SO3353.pdf Attachment 1 Staff Report.pdf

Good Evening,

All documents for tomorrow's meeting have been posted to the website at:  
<http://sagebrusheco.nv.gov/Meetings/2017/Meetings/>

They should be available on the website for viewing or downloading by tomorrow morning around 9:00 a.m. Many of them are presentations, of which, you will all have a copy of in your meeting packets for tomorrow. I am attaching a few of the corresponding documents to this email for your review and

preparation of Agenda item 7, S.O. 3353.

Have a pleasant evening,  
Kelly

Mr. Kelly McGowan, CPM  
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program/Technical Team  
*Program Manager*  
201 S. Roop St., Suite 101  
Carson City, NV 89701  
Office: 775-684-8600  
Cell: 775-461-6460  
[kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)

# Conversation Contents

## Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017

### Attachments:

/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/1.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/1.2 BLM-State-USFS Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call Minutes Sept. 8 2017.docx  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/2.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/2.2 SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_8\_17.ppt  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/3.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/4.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/4.2 image002.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/4.3 image003.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/4.4 image004.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/5.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/6.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/6.2 SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.ppt  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/7.1 image001.png  
/24. Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017/7.2 SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.ppt

## "Gabor, Cheva L -FS" <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>

---

**From:** "Gabor, Cheva L -FS" <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 15:57:53 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, "Jim Lawrence (lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov)" <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrushco.nv.gov>, Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "Nelson, Monique L -FS" <moniquenelson@fs.fed.us>, "Boatner, Kristie -FS" <kboatner@fs.fed.us>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>, "Dunkelberger, William A -FS" <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017

**Attachments:** image001.png BLM-State-USFS Sage Grouse Review  
Coordination Call Minutes Sept. 8 2017.docx

Good afternoon,

My notes from our call last Friday are attached. Please let me know if you have corrections, additions, etc. Thanks for your time last week. I am sure the SEC meeting will be productive, and I look forward to our next coordination call.



**Cheva Gabor**  
**Nevada State Liaison**  
**Forest Service**  
**Intermountain Region**  
p: 775-224-2777  
[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)

[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)

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**"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 18:24:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Gabor, Cheva L -FS" <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>  
"Jim Lawrence (lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov)"  
<lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, Kelly McGowan  
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**CC:** "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "Nelson, Monique L -FS"  
<moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us>, "Boatner, Kristie -FS"  
<kboatner@fs.fed.us>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>,  
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**Subject:** Re: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call,  
September 8, 2017  
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discussion on this topic on Thursday. The report is a bit dense, which is why there tends to be a lot of text on some slides. If you have suggestions for a more direct way to communicate the content of the report, I am all ears. Also, if you have any suggested edits, please let me know by COB tomorrow so that I can send Kelly the final version before Wednesday so that he can upload the presentation to the website.

Appreciate all your help.

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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>**

---

**From:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tue Sep 12 2017 18:52:49 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, "Gabor, Cheva L - FS" <[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)>  
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**Subject:** RE: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017

**Attachments:** image001.png

Hi Matt: I think you captured things very well. Thanks for your work on this.

**Pam Robinson**  
Policy Director  
Governor Brian Sandoval

**From:** Magaletti, Matthew [mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 11, 2017 5:25 PM  
**To:** Gabor, Cheva L -FS <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>  
**Cc:** Jim Lawrence <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>; Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrushco.nv.gov>; Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>; Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>; m1todd@blm.gov; Nelson, Monique L -FS <moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us>; Boatner, Kristie -FS <kboatner@fs.fed.us>; Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>; Dunkelberger, William A -FS <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>  
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**Nevada State Liaison**

**Forest Service**  
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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**"Dunkelberger, William A -FS" <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>**

---

**From:** "Dunkelberger, William A -FS" <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 13:54:49 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, "Gabor, Cheva L - FS" <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>  
"Jim Lawrence (lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov)" <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrushhco.nv.gov>, Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "Nelson, Monique L -FS" <moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us>, "Boatner, Kristie -FS" <kboatner@fs.fed.us>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** RE: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017  
**Attachments:** image001.png image002.png image003.png image004.png

Matt – This is really well done. Thanks!



**Bill Dunkelberger**  
**Forest Supervisor**  
**Forest Service**  
**Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest**

p: 775-355-5310  
c: 775-720-9963  
f: 775-355-5398  
[wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us](mailto:wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us)

1200 Franklin Way  
Sparks, NV 89431  
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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>**

---

**From:** Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 14:16:45 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, "Gabor, Cheva L -FS" <chevalgabor@fs.fed.us>  
**CC:** Jim Lawrence <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "Nelson, Monique L -FS" <moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us>, "Boatner, Kristie -FS" <kboatner@fs.fed.us>, "Dunkelberger, William A -FS" <wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us>  
**Subject:** RE: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017  
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Kelly

Mr. Kelly McGowan, CPM  
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program/Technical Team  
*Program Manager*  
201 S. Roop St., Suite 101  
Carson City, NV 89701  
Office: 775-684-8600  
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**Cc:** Jim Lawrence; Kelly McGowan; Sheila Kay Anderson; Raul Morales; m1todd@blm.gov; Nelson, Monique L -FS; Boatner, Kristie -FS; Dunkelberger, William A -FS  
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Policy Director  
Governor Brian Sandoval

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**Sent:** Monday, September 11, 2017 5:25 PM

**To:** Gabor, Cheva L -FS <[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)>  
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Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>; Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>;  
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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office

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**"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>**

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**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 16:49:42 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Kelly McGowan <kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>  
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**CC:**  
**Subject:** Re: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017  
**Attachments:** image001.png SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.ppt

Hi Kelly,

Attached is the final version of the presentation for the SEC meeting. I appreciate all the valuable feedback and I think this segment of the meeting will run smoothly.

As you will see in the presentation, during our discussion we will pause to ask the council members for their feedback. I know there are note-takers during these meetings, but can we make sure they focus on capturing the feedback we receive back from the council members?

Thanks and we look forward to seeing you all tomorrow.

Matt

On Wed, Sep 13, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Kelly McGowan <[kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)> wrote:

Thank you for the effort that went into this Matt. I'll look forward to receiving the final version today for printing and posting.

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**Intermountain Region**  
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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
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**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

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**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 17:35:44 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017  
**Attachments:** image001.png SEC Presentation on SO 3353\_9\_14\_17.ppt

Mike,

Attached below is Matt's SEC presentation for tomorrow. M

Marci L. Todd  
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1340 Financial Blvd.  
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**From:** **Magaletti, Matthew** <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Wed, Sep 13, 2017 at 3:49 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017  
**To:** Kelly McGowan <[kmcgowan@sagebrushhco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrushhco.nv.gov)>  
**Cc:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>, "Gabor, Cheva L -FS" <[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)>, Jim Lawrence <[lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov](mailto:lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov)>, Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, "[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, "Nelson, Monique L -FS" <[moniquenelson@fs.fed.us](mailto:moniquenelson@fs.fed.us)>, "Boatner, Kristie -FS" <[kboatner@fs.fed.us](mailto:kboatner@fs.fed.us)>, "Dunkelberger, William A -FS" <[wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us](mailto:wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us)>

Hi Kelly,

Attached is the final version of the presentation for the SEC meeting. I appreciate all the valuable feedback and I think this segment of the meeting will run smoothly.

As you will see in the presentation, during our discussion we will pause to ask the council members for their feedback. I know there are note-takers during these meetings, but can we make sure they focus on capturing the feedback we receive back from the council members?

Thanks and we look forward to seeing you all tomorrow.

Matt

On Wed, Sep 13, 2017 at 1:16 PM, Kelly McGowan <[kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)> wrote:

Thank you for the effort that went into this Matt. I'll look forward to receiving the final version today for printing and posting.

Kelly

Mr. Kelly McGowan, CPM  
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program/Technical Team  
*Program Manager*  
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Cell: 775-461-6460  
[kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)

---

**From:** Pam Robinson  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 12, 2017 5:53 PM  
**To:** Magaletti, Matthew; Gabor, Cheva L -FS  
**Cc:** Jim Lawrence; Kelly McGowan; Sheila Kay Anderson; Raul Morales; [m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov); Nelson, Monique L -FS; Boatner, Kristie -FS; Dunkelberger, William A -FS  
**Subject:** RE: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017

Hi Matt: I think you captured things very well. Thanks for your work on this.

**Pam Robinson**  
Policy Director  
Governor Brian Sandoval

**From:** Magaletti, Matthew [<mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 11, 2017 5:25 PM  
**To:** Gabor, Cheva L -FS <[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)>  
**Cc:** Jim Lawrence <[lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov](mailto:lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov)>; Kelly McGowan <[kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)>; Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>; Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>; [m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov); Nelson, Monique L -FS <[moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us](mailto:moniquelnelson@fs.fed.us)>; Boatner, Kristie -FS <[kboatner@fs.fed.us](mailto:kboatner@fs.fed.us)>; Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>; Dunkelberger, William A -FS <[wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us](mailto:wadunkelberger@fs.fed.us)>  
**Subject:** Re: Notes from Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call, September 8, 2017

Thank you, Cheva.

All-

Attached for your review is the draft PowerPoint Presentation that I hope will guide our discussion on this topic on Thursday. The report is a bit dense, which is why there tends to be a lot of text on some slides. If you have suggestions for a more direct way to communicate the content of the report, I am all ears. Also, if you have any suggested edits, please let me know by COB tomorrow so that I can send

Kelly the final version before Wednesday so that he can upload the presentation to the website.

Appreciate all your help.

Matt

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 2:57 PM, Gabor, Cheva L -FS <[chevalgabor@fs.fed.us](mailto:chevalgabor@fs.fed.us)> wrote:

Good afternoon,

My notes from our call last Friday are attached. Please let me know if you have corrections, additions, etc. Thanks for your time last week. I am sure the SEC meeting will be productive, and I look forward to our next coordination call.

Forest  
Service  
Shield

**Cheva Gabor**  
**Nevada State Liaison**  
**Forest Service**  
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# Conversation Contents

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Lakewood, Colorado

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Phone Number:

3037165737

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more logistics will be coming next week.

When Tue Oct 10 11am – Thu Oct 12, 2017 10am Mountain Time

Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

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## "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>

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**From:** "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 13:56:43 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Joanne Maluotoga <[jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov)>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <[cvoelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvoelka@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

FYI

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Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

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**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 14:23:12 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
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**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

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Raul Morales  
Deputy State Director Resources, Lands and Planning  
775-861-6767

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Group Name:  
Bureau of Land Management  
Group Code:  
GOV  
Check-in:  
09-OCT-2017  
Check-out:  
13-OCT-2017  
Hotel Name:  
Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood  
Hotel Address:  
139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228  
Phone Number:  
3037165737

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Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

Video call [https://plus.google.com/hangouts/\\_/doi.gov/kkelleh](https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/doi.gov/kkelleh)

Who

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## "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>

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**From:** "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 14:30:01 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Morales, Raul" <rmorales@blm.gov>  
"Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, John Carlson <jccarls@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, Stephen Small <ssmall@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Steven Wells <s1wells@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Melvin Tague <jtague@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Theresa M Hanley <thanley@blm.gov>, Molly Galbraith <manthony@blm.gov>, Gordon Toevs <gtoevs@blm.gov>, Cally Younger <cyounger@blm.gov>, Quincy Bahr <qfbahr@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Brent Ralston <bralston@blm.gov>, "D'Aversa, Mary" <mdaversa@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, "Belger, Rodney (Rick)" <rbelger@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, tshannon@blm.gov, Mary Jo Rugwell <mruqwell@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Gregory Russell <gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov>, Abbie Jossie <ajossie@blm.gov>, "Claypool, Larry" <lclaypoo@blm.gov>, "Green, Buddy" <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Vicki Herren <vherren@blm.gov>, Bridget Clayton <bclayton@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, "Ditton, Peter" <pditton@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Erica Husse <ehusse@blm.gov>, Jared Reese <jreese@blm.gov>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Sandra Brooks <ssleach@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

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Group Name:

Bureau of Land Management

Group Code:

GOV

Check-in:

09-OCT-2017

Check-out:

13-OCT-2017

Hotel Name:

Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood

Hotel Address:

139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228

Phone Number:

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Who

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## **Johanna**

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The time is always right to do what is right.  
Martin Luther King

**"Armstrong, Valori (Lori)" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>**

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**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 14:33:35 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>  
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**Lori Armstrong**  
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Group Name:  
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Who

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- [aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)
- [pditton@blm.gov](mailto:pditton@blm.gov)
- [cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)
- [qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)
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--

**Johanna**

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The time is always right to do what is right.  
Martin Luther King

## "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 14:37:57 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Joanne Maluotoga <jmaluoto@blm.gov>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

Please note the start and end times for the meeting. These reservations can be made once we hear back from Paul on the PA trip; however, I don't think I'll be doing the PA trip. I'm wondering if John might want to make a quick trip from WDC for it - we'll ask him. . . M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
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Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Armstrong, Valori (Lori)** <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 1:33 PM  
**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE  
**To:** "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Morales, Raul" <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlso@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlso@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, Stephen Small <[ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)>, Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Melvin Tague <[jtague@blm.gov](mailto:jtague@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Theresa M Hanley <[thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)>, Molly Galbraith <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, Cally Younger <[cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Jolie Pollet <[jpollet@blm.gov](mailto:jpollet@blm.gov)>, Brent Ralston <[bralston@blm.gov](mailto:bralston@blm.gov)>, "D'Aversa, Mary" <[mdaversa@blm.gov](mailto:mdaversa@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Belger, Rodney (Rick)" <[rbelger@blm.gov](mailto:rbelger@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, "Shannon, Timothy" <[tshannon@blm.gov](mailto:tshannon@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov)>, Abbie Jossie <[ajossie@blm.gov](mailto:ajossie@blm.gov)>, "Claypool, Larry" <[lclaypoo@blm.gov](mailto:lclaypoo@blm.gov)>, "Green, Buddy" <[bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)>, Vicki Herren <[vherren@blm.gov](mailto:vherren@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Karen Kelleher

<[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>, "Ditton, Peter" <[pditton@blm.gov](mailto:pditton@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Michael Herder <[mherder@blm.gov](mailto:mherder@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Erica Husse <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Jared Reese <[jreese@blm.gov](mailto:jreese@blm.gov)>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Sandra Brooks <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, Kristin Bail <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, Anita Bilbao <[abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov)>

That is my understanding also

**Lori Armstrong**

Sage Grouse Coordinator  
Rocky Mountain Region  
2465 S. Townsend Ave.  
Montrose, CO. 81401  
(970) 240-5336

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 2:30 PM, Munson, Johanna <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)> wrote:

My understanding is the meeting starts at 1 pm, for a half day on front end, and closes at noon on 3rd day, for another 1/2 day

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 2:23 PM, Morales, Raul <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)> wrote:

Does anyone know if the meeting is starting at 0800 on the 10/10 or in the afternoon?

Raul Morales  
Deputy State Director Resources, Lands and Planning  
775-861-6767

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 9:38 AM, <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hotel Information:

Your group page has been approved and has been published to the web.

Your web page address is: [http://homewoodsuites.hilton.com/en/hw/groups/personalized/D/DENLDHW-GOV-20171009/index.jhtml?WT.mc\\_id=POG](http://homewoodsuites.hilton.com/en/hw/groups/personalized/D/DENLDHW-GOV-20171009/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG)

Group Name:  
Bureau of Land Management  
Group Code:  
GOV  
Check-in:  
09-OCT-2017  
Check-out:  
13-OCT-2017  
Hotel Name:  
Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood  
Hotel Address:  
139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228  
Phone Number:

## SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

Please add/subtract for your organization as you wish or if i've missed anyone. I have aimed to include SDs, SGIG, national, regional, state coordinators, and a few others who have been actively engaged. will aim to start the afternoon of the 10th so everyone can travel in the am and finish by the morning of the 12th so everyone can travel out in the pm. as the date gets closer and we develop an agenda we will look for opportunities to shorten.

more logistics will be coming next week.

When Tue Oct 10 11am – Thu Oct 12, 2017 10am Mountain Time

Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

Video call [https://plus.google.com/hangouts/\\_/doi.gov/kkelleh](https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/doi.gov/kkelleh)

Who

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## Johanna

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 Email: [jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)

The time is always right to do what is right.  
 Martin Luther King

## **Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>**

---

**From:** Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 14:59:14 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Morales, Raul" <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>  
 "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccarlo@blm.gov](mailto:jccarlo@blm.gov)>, "kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov" <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, Stephen Small <[ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)>, Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Melvin Tague <[jtague@blm.gov](mailto:jtague@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Theresa M Hanley <[thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)>, Molly Galbraith <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "cyounger@blm.gov" <[cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Jolie Pollet <[jpollet@blm.gov](mailto:jpollet@blm.gov)>, Brent Ralston <[bralston@blm.gov](mailto:bralston@blm.gov)>, "D'Aversa, Mary" <[mdaversa@blm.gov](mailto:mdaversa@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Belger, Rodney (Rick)" <[rbelger@blm.gov](mailto:rbelger@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi

**CC:** <dchi@blm.gov>, "tshannon@blm.gov" <tshannon@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Gregory Russell <gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov>, Abbie Jossie <ajossie@blm.gov>, Johanna Munson <jmunson@blm.gov>, "Claypool, Larry" <lclaypoo@blm.gov>, "Green, Buddy" <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Vicki Herren <vherren@blm.gov>, Bridget Clayton <bclayton@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, "Ditton, Peter" <pditton@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Erica Husse <ehusse@blm.gov>, "jreese@blm.gov" <jreese@blm.gov>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Sandra Brooks <ssleach@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>

**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

I believe it is starting at noon.

Mary Jo Rugwell  
State Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
Wyoming State Office  
5353 Yellowstone Road  
Cheyenne, WY 82009  
Office: (307) 775-6001  
Cell: (307) 214-9434  
Fax: (307) 775-6003

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 11, 2017, at 2:23 PM, Morales, Raul <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)> wrote:

Does anyone know if the meeting is starting at 0800 on the 10/10 or in the afternoon?

Raul Morales  
Deputy State Director Resources, Lands and Planning  
775-861-6767

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Hotel Information:

Your group page has been approved and has been published to the web.

Your web page address is: [http://homewoodsuites.hilton.com/en/hw/groups/personalized/D/DENLDHW-GOV-20171009/index.jhtml?WT.mc\\_id=POG](http://homewoodsuites.hilton.com/en/hw/groups/personalized/D/DENLDHW-GOV-20171009/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG)

Group Name:  
Bureau of Land Management  
Group Code:  
GOV

Check-in:  
09-OCT-2017  
Check-out:  
13-OCT-2017  
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Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood  
Hotel Address:  
139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228  
Phone Number:  
3037165737

### SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

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When Tue Oct 10 11am – Thu Oct 12, 2017 10am Mountain Time

Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

Video call [https://plus.google.com/hangouts/\\_/doi.gov/kkelleh](https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/doi.gov/kkelleh)

Who

- [kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov) - organizer
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- [dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)
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- [ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)
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- [mherder@blm.gov](mailto:mherder@blm.gov)
- [bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)
- [rbelger@blm.gov](mailto:rbelger@blm.gov)
- [mdaversa@blm.gov](mailto:mdaversa@blm.gov)
- [aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)
- [pditton@blm.gov](mailto:pditton@blm.gov)
- [cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)
- [qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)
- [mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)
- [j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)
- [bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)
- [thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)
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## **Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 17:07:31 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Armstrong, Valori (Lori)" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>  
 "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>, "Morales, Raul" <rmorales@blm.gov>, John Carlson <jccarls@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, Stephen Small <:ssmall@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Steven Wells <s1wells@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Melvin Tague <jtague@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Theresa M Hanley <thanley@blm.gov>, Molly Galbraith <manthony@blm.gov>, Gordon Toevs <gtoevs@blm.gov>, Cally Younger <cyounger@blm.gov>, Quincy Bahr <qfbahr@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Brent Ralston <bralston@blm.gov>, "D'Aversa, Mary" <mdaversa@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, "Belger, Rodney (Rick)" <rbelger@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, "Shannon, Timothy" <tshannon@blm.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell <mrugwell@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Gregory Russell <gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov>, Abbie Jossie <ajossie@blm.gov>, "Claypool, Larry" <lclaypoo@blm.gov>, "Green, Buddy" <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Vicki Herren <vherren@blm.gov>, Bridget

**CC:**

Clayton <bclayton@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, "Ditton, Peter" <pditton@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Erica Husse <ehusse@blm.gov>, Jared Reese <jreese@blm.gov>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Sandra Brooks <ssleach@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>

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Rocky Mountain Region

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Group Name:  
Bureau of Land Management  
Group Code:  
GOV  
Check-in:  
09-OCT-2017  
Check-out:  
13-OCT-2017  
Hotel Name:  
Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood  
Hotel Address:  
139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228  
Phone Number:  
3037165737

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When Tue Oct 10 11am – Thu Oct 12, 2017 10am Mountain Time

Where SLC or Denver ([map](#))

Video call [https://plus.google.com/hangouts/\\_/doi.gov/kkelleh](https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/doi.gov/kkelleh)

Who

- [kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov) - organizer
- [jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)
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- [ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)
- [tshannon@blm.gov](mailto:tshannon@blm.gov)
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- [thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)
- [vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)

--

## **Johanna**

Johanna Munson  
Great Basin Regional GRSG Implementation Coordinator  
Idaho State Office  
1387 South Vinnell Way  
Boise, Idaho 83709-1657

Office: (208) 373-3834  
Email: [jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)

The time is always right to do what is right.  
Martin Luther King

## Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Sep 11 2017 17:21:39 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

More info on Denver. M

Sent from my iPhone

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**Cc:** "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, "Morales, Raul" <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, John Carlson <[jccariso@blm.gov](mailto:jccariso@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, Stephen Small <[ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)>, Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Melvin Tague <[jtague@blm.gov](mailto:jtague@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Theresa M Hanley <[thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)>, Molly Galbraith <[manthony@blm.gov](mailto:manthony@blm.gov)>, Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, Cally Younger <[cyounger@blm.gov](mailto:cyounger@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Jolie Pollet <[jpollet@blm.gov](mailto:jpollet@blm.gov)>, Brent Ralston <[bralston@blm.gov](mailto:bralston@blm.gov)>, "D'Aversa, Mary" <[mdaversa@blm.gov](mailto:mdaversa@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Belger, Rodney (Rick)" <[rbelger@blm.gov](mailto:rbelger@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, "Shannon, Timothy" <[tshannon@blm.gov](mailto:tshannon@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov)>, Abbie Jossie <[ajossie@blm.gov](mailto:ajossie@blm.gov)>, "Claypool, Larry" <[lclaypoo@blm.gov](mailto:lclaypoo@blm.gov)>, "Green, Buddy" <[bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)>, Vicki Herren <[vherren@blm.gov](mailto:vherren@blm.gov)>, Bridget Clayton <[bclayton@blm.gov](mailto:bclayton@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, "Ditton, Peter" <[pditton@blm.gov](mailto:pditton@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Michael Herder <[mherder@blm.gov](mailto:mherder@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Erica Husse <[ehusse@blm.gov](mailto:ehusse@blm.gov)>, Jared Reese <[jreese@blm.gov](mailto:jreese@blm.gov)>, "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Sandra Brooks <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, Kristin Bail <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, Anita Bilbao <[abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov)>  
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Group Name:  
Bureau of Land Management  
Group Code:  
GOV  
Check-in:  
09-OCT-2017  
Check-out:  
13-OCT-2017  
Hotel Name:  
Homewood Suites by Hilton Denver West - Lakewood  
Hotel Address:  
139 Union Blvd.

Lakewood, Colorado

80228

Phone Number:

3037165737

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Who

- [kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov) - organizer
- [iconnell@blm.gov](mailto:iconnell@blm.gov)
- [jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)
- [ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)
- [tshannon@blm.gov](mailto:tshannon@blm.gov)
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- [bralston@blm.gov](mailto:bralston@blm.gov)
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- [thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)
- [vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)

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## Johanna

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## "Vocelka, Cheryl (Cheri)" <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>

**From:** "Vocelka, Cheryl (Cheri)" <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tue Sep 12 2017 10:49:36 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

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Cheri Vocelka  
Executive Assistant to the Associate State Director  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6586  
FAX: 775-861-6601

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**From:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wed Sep 13 2017 10:15:04 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Vocelka, Cheryl (Cheri)" <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE

That's fine. Thanks, M

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FAX: 775-861-6601

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 4:21 PM, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)> wrote:  
More info on Denver. M

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Karen Kelleher <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** September 11, 2017 at 16:07:31 PDT  
**To:** "Armstrong, Valori (Lori)" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>

**Subject: Re: [Update] SO 3353 Coordination Hold the DATE**

Our plan is to start at 1pm on Tuesday Oct 10 and finish at noon on Thursday oct 12. With Monday the 10th being a holiday we wanted to give enough time for just about everybody to travel on Tuesday am.

We do not have an agenda yet as our path forward is still evolving but we will definitely talk about all things that are less than plans in as much detail as possible so to the extent everyone can bring:

Draft policy changes

Training needs

Draft maintenance actions on plans

That would be great

I am sure we will also discuss plan amendment process

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 11, 2017, at 2:33 PM, Armstrong, Valori (Lori) <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)> wrote:

That is my understanding also

**Lori Armstrong**  
Sage Grouse Coordinator  
Rocky Mountain Region  
2465 S. Townsend Ave.  
Montrose, CO. 81401  
(970) 240-5336

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 2:30 PM, Munson, Johanna <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)> wrote:

My understanding is the meeting starts at 1 pm, for a half day on front end, and closes at noon on 3rd day, for another 1/2 day

On Mon, Sep 11, 2017 at 2:23 PM, Morales, Raul <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)> wrote:

Does anyone know if the meeting is starting at 0800 on the 10/10 or in the afternoon?

Raul Morales  
Deputy State Director Resources, Lands and Planning  
775-861-6767



## Conversation Contents

### SO 3353 Materials

#### Attachments:

/36. SO 3353 Materials/1.1 Nevada\_GRSG\_Topics\_20170630\_FINAL.docx  
/36. SO 3353 Materials/1.2 SO 3353 Recommendation Report\_8\_4\_17.pdf  
/36. SO 3353 Materials/1.3 Memorandum from Zinke to Deputy\_8\_4\_17.pdf  
/36. SO 3353 Materials/3.1 Nevada\_GRSG\_Topics\_20170630\_FINAL.docx  
/36. SO 3353 Materials/3.2 SO 3353 Recommendation Report\_8\_4\_17.pdf  
/36. SO 3353 Materials/3.3 Memorandum from Zinke to Deputy\_8\_4\_17.pdf

### "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Tue Aug 22 2017 18:45:35 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>  
**CC:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>  
**Subject:** SO 3353 Materials  
Nevada\_GRSG\_Topics\_20170630\_FINAL.docx SO 3353  
**Attachments:** Recommendation Report\_8\_4\_17.pdf Memorandum from Zinke to Deputy\_8\_4\_17.pdf

Hi Sheila,

Attached is the Nevada topics document that we worked on in June, as well as PDFs of the recommendation report and memo from Secretary Zinke.

Thanks and safe travels this week!

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

### "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 19:16:09 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Pam Robinson <probinson@gov.nv.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: SO 3353 Materials

Thank you, Matt!

Sheila,

Do you know whether these materials will also be sent to the USFS and USFWS (SEC ad hoc members) when they go to the official SEC members? Bill Dunkelberger contacted me regarding next steps and comment opportunities on the Secretary's Report. I mentioned that we would be discussing those and stakeholder engagement at the September 14th SEC meeting. M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Tue, Aug 22, 2017 at 5:45 PM, Magaletti, Matthew <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sheila,

Attached is the Nevada topics document that we worked on in June, as well as PDFs of the recommendation report and memo from Secretary Zinke.

Thanks and safe travels this week!

--

**Matthew Magaletti**  
Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

## **"Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 19:16:45 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: SO 3353 Materials  
Nevada\_GRSG\_Topics\_20170630\_FINAL.docx SO 3353  
**Attachments:** Recommendation Report\_8\_4\_17.pdf Memorandum from Zinke to Deputy\_8\_4\_17.pdf

Cheri,

Please print all for the September 14, SEC meeting. Thanks, M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Magaletti, Matthew** <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>

Date: Tue, Aug 22, 2017 at 5:45 PM

Subject: SO 3353 Materials

To: Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>

Cc: Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>

Hi Sheila,

Attached is the Nevada topics document that we worked on in June, as well as PDFs of the recommendation report and memo from Secretary Zinke.

Thanks and safe travels this week!

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

---

**Pam Robinson** <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>

**From:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 30 2017 18:28:04 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: SO 3353 Materials

I'm sorry Marci. I just saw Sheila's ask that I respond to you. I'll check with JJ, but it seems like our federal partners should see the email as well.

**Pam Robinson**

Policy Director  
Governor Brian Sandoval

---

**From:** Sheila Kay Anderson  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 24, 2017 8:33 AM  
**To:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: SO 3353 Materials

Hi Pam, could you please respond to Marci? I think we intend to send the memo to all SEC members, but not sure about sending all three docs. Thank you!

Sent from my Verizon 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>

Date: 8/23/17 6:16 PM (GMT-08:00)

To: "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>

Cc: Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
Subject: Re: SO 3353 Materials

Thank you, Matt!

Sheila,

Do you know whether these materials will also be sent to the USFS and USFWS (SEC ad hoc members) when they go to the official SEC members? Bill Dunkelberger contacted me regarding next steps and comment opportunities on the Secretary's Report. I mentioned that we would be discussing those and stakeholder engagement at the September 14th SEC meeting.  
M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Tue, Aug 22, 2017 at 5:45 PM, Magaletti, Matthew <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sheila,

Attached is the Nevada topics document that we worked on in June, as well as PDFs of the recommendation report and memo from Secretary Zinke.

Thanks and safe travels this week!

--

**Matthew Magaletti**  
Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 30 2017 19:16:29 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
**CC:** Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: SO 3353 Materials

I would agree. Let me know if you need us to do anything. Thanks, Marci

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 30, 2017, at 17:38, Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)> wrote:

I'm sorry Marci. I just saw Sheila's ask that I respond to you. I'll check with JJ, but it seems like our federal partners should see the email as well.

**Pam Robinson**  
Policy Director  
Governor Brian Sandoval

---

**From:** Sheila Kay Anderson  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 24, 2017 8:33 AM  
**To:** Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: SO 3353 Materials

Hi Pam, could you please respond to Marci? I think we intend to send the memo to all SEC members, but not sure about sending all three docs. Thank you!

Sent from my Verizon 4G LTE smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
Date: 8/23/17 6:16 PM (GMT-08:00)  
To: "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
Cc: Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Pam Robinson <[probinson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:probinson@gov.nv.gov)>  
Subject: Re: SO 3353 Materials

Thank you, Matt!

Sheila,

Do you know whether these materials will also be sent to the USFS and USFWS (SEC ad hoc members) when they go to the official SEC members? Bill Dunkelberger contacted me regarding next steps and comment opportunities on the Secretary's Report. I mentioned that we would be discussing those and stakeholder engagement at the September 14th SEC meeting. M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Tue, Aug 22, 2017 at 5:45 PM, Magaletti, Matthew <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sheila,

Attached is the Nevada topics document that we worked on in June, as well as PDFs of the recommendation report and memo from Secretary Zinke.

Thanks and safe travels this week!

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

# Conversation Contents

## Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada

### Attachments:

/40. Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada/1.1 2017-8-24 Nevada Oil and Gas Leasing Pause Letter.pdf

/40. Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada/2.1 2017-8-24 Nevada Oil and Gas Leasing Pause Letter.pdf

**Jeremy Nichols <jnichols@wildearthguardians.org>**

---

**From:** Jeremy Nichols <jnichols@wildearthguardians.org>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 13:02:07 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** <mnedd@blm.gov>, <m1todd@blm.gov>, <nvsoweb@blm.gov>, <tspisak@blm.gov>, <director@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Rebecca Fischer <rfischer@wildearthguardians.org>  
**Subject:** Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-24 Nevada Oil and Gas Leasing Pause Letter.pdf

Dear Acting Director Nedd and Acting State Director Todd:

With oil and gas industry representatives raising concerns that disreputable companies may be driving BLM's oil and gas leasing program in Nevada, going to far as to say "Something weird is going on in Nevada," we are hereby calling on the agency to take steps to address what appears to be a major lapse in integrity and credibility around the management of public lands and resources in this state.

Attached, please find a letter requesting that the BLM institute a pause on new leasing and review the appropriateness of future leasing in the state.

With the Bureau of Land Management spending taxpayer dollars and agency resources on processing what appear to be sham expressions of interest, the agency cannot justify inaction around this issue. We request the agency take immediate steps to get to the bottom of this problem. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Nichols



## Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 25 2017 14:36:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** bamme@blm.gov  
**CC:** Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Michael Nedd <mnedd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada  
**Attachments:** 2017-8-24 Nevada Oil and Gas Leasing Pause Letter.pdf

FYI. Action/response needed. Please coordinate with the WO on drafting a response. Thx, M

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jeremy Nichols <jnichols@wildearthguardians.org>  
**To:** "mnedd@blm.gov" <mnedd@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "nvsoweb@blm.gov" <nvsoweb@blm.gov>, "tspisak@blm.gov" <tspisak@blm.gov>, "director@blm.gov" <director@blm.gov>  
**Cc:** Rebecca Fischer <rfischer@wildearthguardians.org>  
**Subject:** **Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada**

Dear Acting Director Nedd and Acting State Director Todd:

With oil and gas industry representatives raising concerns that disreputable companies may be driving BLM's oil and gas leasing program in Nevada, going to far as to say "Something weird is going on in Nevada," we are hereby calling on the agency to take steps to address what appears to be a major lapse in integrity and credibility around the management of public lands and resources in this state.

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With the Bureau of Land Management spending taxpayer dollars and agency resources on processing what appear to be sham expressions of interest, the agency cannot justify inaction around this issue. We request the agency take immediate steps to get to the bottom of this problem. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Nichols



---

**"Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>**

**From:** "Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 25 2017 15:03:21 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Michael Nedd <mnedd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada

Will do. We will coordinate with WO300 on the response.

On Fri, Aug 25, 2017 at 1:36 PM, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov> wrote:

FYI. Action/response needed. Please coordinate with the WO on drafting a response. Thx, M

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jeremy Nichols <jnichols@wildearthguardians.org>  
**To:** "mnedd@blm.gov" <mnedd@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "nvsoweb@blm.gov" <nvsoweb@blm.gov>, "tspisak@blm.gov" <tspisak@blm.gov>, "director@blm.gov" <director@blm.gov>  
**Cc:** Rebecca Fischer <rfischer@wildearthguardians.org>  
**Subject:** **Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada**

Dear Acting Director Nedd and Acting State Director Todd:

With oil and gas industry representatives raising concerns that disreputable companies may be driving BLM's oil and gas leasing program in Nevada, going to far as to say "Something weird is going on in Nevada," we are hereby calling on the agency to take steps to address what appears to be a major lapse in integrity and credibility around the management of public lands and resources in this state.

Attached, please find a letter requesting that the BLM institute a pause on new leasing and review the appropriateness of future leasing in the state.

With the Bureau of Land Management spending taxpayer dollars and agency resources on processing what appear to be sham expressions of interest, the agency cannot justify inaction around this issue. We request the agency take immediate steps to get to the bottom of this problem. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Nichols



--

Brian C. Amme  
Deputy State Director, Minerals Management  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502

Office: 775-861-6585  
Cell: 775-750-6552  
e-mail: [bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)

Don't try to solve problems with the same thinking that created them - wise person.

Kampora! Bizirik Jarraituko!  
(Stay Out! Stay Alive!)

**Confidentiality Notice:** This electronic communication is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to which it is addressed and may contain information that is privileged, confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you have received this communication in error, please do not distribute, delete the original message, and notify the sender.

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Sep 01 2017 11:50:02 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Maluotoga, Joanne" <jmaluoto@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada

Is this in a surnaming folder? M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Fri, Sep 1, 2017 at 8:35 AM, Maluotoga, Joanne <[jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov)> wrote:

Marci, attached is draft letter that I edited. I printed hard copies of both Steve's and my draft for your review.

On Fri, Sep 1, 2017 at 6:29 AM, Clutter, Stephen <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)> wrote:  
Thank you!

On Fri, Sep 1, 2017 at 6:24 AM, Maluotoga, Joanne <[jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov)> wrote:  
ok - done

On Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 7:16 PM, Clutter, Stephen <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)> wrote:  
Joanne or Cheri, I've also attached the letter Wild Earth Guardians sent to Marci and Mike Nedd. Please print this out with draft response so that Marci can review/edit via hard copy. Thank you!

Steve

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Stephen Clutter** <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)>  
Date: Thu, Aug 31, 2017 at 4:57 PM  
Subject: Fwd: Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada  
To: Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
Cc: Cheryl Vocelka <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>, [jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov), Christopher Rose <[crose@blm.gov](mailto:crose@blm.gov)>, Paul Petersen <[ppeterse@blm.gov](mailto:ppeterse@blm.gov)>, Brian Amme <[bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)>, Kemba Anderson <[kembaand@blm.gov](mailto:kembaand@blm.gov)>

Marci, attached is a proposed response to Wild Earth Guardians for your review before it goes to the WO.

Steve

**From:** "Clutter, Stephen" <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** August 29, 2017 at 11:32:33 AM PDT  
**To:** "Anderson, Kemba" <[kembaand@blm.gov](mailto:kembaand@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Brian Amme <[bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)>, Christopher Rose <[crose@blm.gov](mailto:crose@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Concerns Over Oil and Gas Leasing in Nevada

Kemba, I edited it slightly for tone, per Marci, but please check to be sure this is still accurate.

Steve

On Tue, Aug 29, 2017 at 9:41 AM, Anderson, Kemba  
<[kembaand@blm.gov](mailto:kembaand@blm.gov)> wrote:

Brian and Steve,

Attached is 920 prepared response to WildEarth's letter to Mike and Marci. 300 wanted NV to take the lead in the response.

--



Kemba K. Anderson-Artis, MBA  
Branch Chief Fluid Minerals  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
775-861-6566 phone  
775-335-9015 cell  
775-861-6711 Fax  
[kembaand@blm.gov](mailto:kembaand@blm.gov)

--

Stephen Clutter  
Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-525-4736  
[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)

Follow BLM Nevada on Social Media

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)

--

Stephen Clutter  
Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-525-4736  
[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)

Follow BLM Nevada on Social Media

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)

--

Joanne Maluotoga

Executive Assistant to the State Director  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
1340 Financial Blvd  
Reno NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Fax: 775-861-6601  
Email: [jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov)

--

Stephen Clutter  
Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-525-4736  
[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)

Follow BLM Nevada on Social Media

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)

--

Joanne Maluotoga  
Executive Assistant to the State Director  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
1340 Financial Blvd  
Reno NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Fax: 775-861-6601  
Email: [jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov)

## Conversation Contents

### Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes

#### Attachments:

/41. Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes/1.1 E2018-006 Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regar....pdf  
/41. Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes/2.1 E2018-006 Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regar....pdf

### Skip Canfield <scanfield@lands.nv.gov>

---

**From:** Skip Canfield <scanfield@lands.nv.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 15:56:08 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
"Moses-Nedd, Cynthia" <cnedd@blm.gov>, Fariba Hamedani <fhamedani@blm.gov>, "stryon@blm.gov" <stryon@blm.gov>, Leah Baker <lbaker@blm.gov>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <m1todd@blm.gov>, "jruhs@blm.gov" <jruhs@blm.gov>, "Cook, Christopher" <cjcook@blm.gov>, NvACD President <president@nvacd.org>, (b) (6) <(b) (6)>, Jake Tibbitts <jtibbitts@eurekacountynv.gov>, Charlie Donohue <cdonohue@lands.nv.gov>, Jonathan Shuffield <JShuffield@naco.org>, Sheila Kay Anderson <skanderson@gov.nv.gov>, Demar Dahl <demar@demardahl.com>, Jim French <(b) (6)>, Jerrie Tipton <(b) (6)>, Skip Canfield <scanfield@lands.nv.gov>, Jeffrey Fontaine <jfontaine@nvnaco.org>, Dagny <dstapleton@nvnaco.org>, Amanda Evans <aevans@nvnaco.org>, celeste <celeste@uacnet.org>, Teresa Baker <tbaker@idcounties.org>, Gregory Cowan <gcowan@wyo-wcca.org>, Dominique Etchegoyhen <detchegoyhen@dcnr.nv.gov>, Bradley Crowell <bcrowell@dcnr.nv.gov>, Jim Lawrence <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes  
**Attachments:** E2018-006 Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regar....pdf

Mr. Nedd and Mr. Tryon:

After discussions with my colleagues at Governor Brian Sandoval's office and the Nevada Association of Counties, we all agreed that it would be most helpful to you if I submitted an official consolidated package (attached) of our comments and suggestions as you move forward with your process to streamline BLM's NEPA and Resource Management Planning processes.

Thank you in advance for accepting this official response and carefully considering this feedback, generated with much effort, care and transparency from many dedicated individuals.

I know I can speak for all my colleagues in expressing our appreciation for your commitment to matters important to many Nevadans.

-Skip

Skip Canfield  
**Nevada State Clearinghouse**  
**State Land Use Planning Agency**

*Nevada Division of State Lands*  
*Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*  
*901 South Stewart Street, Suite 5003*  
*Carson City, NV 89701*  
*775-684-2723*  
<http://clearinghouse.nv.gov>  
[www.lands.nv.gov](http://www.lands.nv.gov)

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 16:18:34 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes  
**Attachments:** E2018-006 Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regar....pdf

Cheri,

I would like to have this printed but it's 88 pages. Would you see if there's something smaller by amount that would make sense to print, such as an executive summary. Thanks, M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Skip Canfield <[scanfield@lands.nv.gov](mailto:scanfield@lands.nv.gov)>  
**Date:** Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 2:56 PM  
**Subject:** Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes  
**To:** "Moses-Nedd, Cynthia" <[cnedd@blm.gov](mailto:cnedd@blm.gov)>, Fariba Hamedani <[fhamedani@blm.gov](mailto:fhamedani@blm.gov)>, "[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)" <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Leah Baker <[lbaker@blm.gov](mailto:lbaker@blm.gov)>, "[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, "[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)" <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Cook, Christopher" <[cjcook@blm.gov](mailto:cjcook@blm.gov)>, NvACD President <[president@nvacd.org](mailto:president@nvacd.org)>, "(b) (6)"

<(b) (6)> Jake Tibbitts <[jtibbitts@eurekacountynev.gov](mailto:jtibbitts@eurekacountynev.gov)>, Charlie Donohue <[cdonohue@lands.nv.gov](mailto:cdonohue@lands.nv.gov)>, Jonathan Shuffield <[JShuffield@naco.org](mailto:JShuffield@naco.org)>, Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>, Demar Dahl <[demar@demardahl.com](mailto:demar@demardahl.com)>, Jim French <(b) (6)> Jerrie Tipton <(b) (6)> Skip Canfield <[scanfield@lands.nv.gov](mailto:scanfield@lands.nv.gov)>, Jeffrey Fontaine <[jfontaine@nvnaco.org](mailto:jfontaine@nvnaco.org)>, Dagny <[dstapleton@nvnaco.org](mailto:dstapleton@nvnaco.org)>, Amanda Evans <[aevans@nvnaco.org](mailto:aevans@nvnaco.org)>, celeste <[celeste@uacnet.org](mailto:celeste@uacnet.org)>, Teresa Baker <[tbaker@idcounties.org](mailto:tbaker@idcounties.org)>, Gregory Cowan <[gcowan@wyo-wcca.org](mailto:gcowan@wyo-wcca.org)>, Dominique Etchegoyhen <[detchegoyhen@dcnr.nv.gov](mailto:detchegoyhen@dcnr.nv.gov)>, Bradley Crowell <[bcrowell@dcnr.nv.gov](mailto:bcrowell@dcnr.nv.gov)>, Jim Lawrence <[laurance@dcnr.nv.gov](mailto:laurance@dcnr.nv.gov)>

Mr. Nedd and Mr. Tryon:

After discussions with my colleagues at Governor Brian Sandoval's office and the Nevada Association of Counties, we all agreed that it would be most helpful to you if I submitted an official consolidated package (attached) of our comments and suggestions as you move forward with your process to streamline BLM's NEPA and Resource Management Planning processes.

Thank you in advance for accepting this official response and carefully considering this feedback, generated with much effort, care and transparency from many dedicated individuals.

I know I can speak for all my colleagues in expressing our appreciation for your commitment to matters important to many Nevadans.

-Skip

Skip Canfield  
**Nevada State Clearinghouse**  
**State Land Use Planning Agency**

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901 South Stewart Street, Suite 5003  
Carson City, NV 89701  
775-684-2723  
<http://clearinghouse.nv.gov>  
[www.lands.nv.gov](http://www.lands.nv.gov)

**Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>**

---

**From:** Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 20:07:52 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Skip Canfield <[scanfield@lands.nv.gov](mailto:scanfield@lands.nv.gov)>  
"Moses-Nedd, Cynthia" <[cnedd@blm.gov](mailto:cnedd@blm.gov)>, Fariba Hamedani <[fhamedani@blm.gov](mailto:fhamedani@blm.gov)>, Leah Baker <[lbaker@blm.gov](mailto:lbaker@blm.gov)>, "m1todd@blm.gov" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, "jruhs@blm.gov" <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Cook, Christopher" <[cjcook@blm.gov](mailto:cjcook@blm.gov)>, NvACD President <[president@nvacd.org](mailto:president@nvacd.org)>, <(b) (6)> <(b) (6)> Jake Tibbitts <[jtibbitts@eurekacountynev.gov](mailto:jtibbitts@eurekacountynev.gov)>, Charlie Donohue <[cdonohue@lands.nv.gov](mailto:cdonohue@lands.nv.gov)>, Jonathan Shuffield <[JShuffield@naco.org](mailto:JShuffield@naco.org)>, Sheila Kay Anderson <[skanderson@gov.nv.gov](mailto:skanderson@gov.nv.gov)>, Demar Dahl <[demar@demardahl.com](mailto:demar@demardahl.com)>, Jim French <(b) (6)> Jerrie Tipton

**CC:**

<(b) (6)> Jeffrey Fontaine <jfontaine@nvnaco.org>, Dagny <dstapleton@nvnaco.org>, Amanda Evans <aevans@nvnaco.org>, celeste <celeste@uacnet.org>, Teresa Baker <tbaker@idcounties.org>, Gregory Cowan <gcowan@wyo-wcca.org>, Dominique Etchegoyhen <detchegoyhen@dcnr.nv.gov>, Bradley Crowell <bcrowell@dcnr.nv.gov>, Jim Lawrence <lawrence@dcnr.nv.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>

**Subject:**

Re: Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regarding BLM'S Directive to Streamline the NEPA and Resource Management Planning Processes

Thank you Skip. We really appreciate the thorough look the state and its counties made in evaluating possible improvements to our planning and NEPA processes.

Steve Tryon  
Deputy Assistant Director

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 23, 2017, at 4:58 PM, Skip Canfield <[scanfield@lands.nv.gov](mailto:scanfield@lands.nv.gov)> wrote:

Mr. Nedd and Mr. Tryon:

After discussions with my colleagues at Governor Brian Sandoval's office and the Nevada Association of Counties, we all agreed that it would be most helpful to you if I submitted an official consolidated package (attached) of our comments and suggestions as you move forward with your process to streamline BLM's NEPA and Resource Management Planning processes.

Thank you in advance for accepting this official response and carefully considering this feedback, generated with much effort, care and transparency from many dedicated individuals.

I know I can speak for all my colleagues in expressing our appreciation for your commitment to matters important to many Nevadans.

-Skip

Skip Canfield  
**Nevada State Clearinghouse**  
**State Land Use Planning Agency**

*Nevada Division of State Lands*  
*Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*  
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<E2018-006 Official Consolidated Statewide Comments and Suggestions Regar....pdf>

# Conversation Contents

**Invitation: NEPA Recommendations @ Wed Sep 6, 2017 1pm - 2pm**  
(m1todd@blm.gov)

**Attachments:**

/44. Invitation: NEPA Recommendations @ Wed Sep 6, 2017 1pm - 2pm  
(m1todd@blm.gov)/1.1 invite.ics

/44. Invitation: NEPA Recommendations @ Wed Sep 6, 2017 1pm - 2pm  
(m1todd@blm.gov)/1.2 invite.ics

## "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 13:35:35 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** m1todd@blm.gov, eguenaga@blm.gov, cjcook@blm.gov, bamme@blm.gov, rmorales@blm.gov  
**Subject:** Invitation: NEPA Recommendations @ Wed Sep 6, 2017 1pm - 2pm (m1todd@blm.gov)  
**Attachments:** invite.ics invite.ics

### NEPA Recommendations

[more details »](#)

Several months ago, prior to the National Office looking for input on streamlining processes, NV920 asked the Nevada Mining Association to canvass their members on suggestions for streamlining permitting processes. We gave them until the end of August. This is the first response back we have received, mostly focused on NEPA and mining EISs. Probably worth discussing among ourselves and then sharing with DMs/FMs as appropriate. Much of it is managing staffing and workload. Might be good for an FMLT assignment to find ways to address what is addressable and come up with potential actions or solutions to be able to report back to the NvMA. Some of it is outside of our control.

When Wed Sep 6, 2017 1pm – 2pm Pacific Time

Where SD Conference Room ([map](#))

Video call [https://plus.google.com/hangouts/\\_/doi.gov/cvocelka](https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/doi.gov/cvocelka)

Calendar m1todd@blm.gov

Who

- cvocelka@blm.gov - organizer, optional
- eguenaga@blm.gov
- m1todd@blm.gov
- cjcook@blm.gov
- bamme@blm.gov
- rmorales@blm.gov

Going? [Yes](#) - [Maybe](#) - [No](#) [more options »](#)

Invitation from [Google Calendar](#)

You are receiving this email at the account m1todd@blm.gov because you are subscribed for invitations on calendar m1todd@blm.gov.

To stop receiving these emails, please log in to <https://www.google.com/calendar/> and change your notification settings for this calendar.

Forwarding this invitation could allow any recipient to modify your RSVP response. [Learn More.](#)



# Conversation Contents

**Fwd: NEPA Recommendations**

**Attachments:**

/45. Fwd: NEPA Recommendations/1.1 BLM\_Recommendations.docx

**"Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 09:28:31 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Christopher Cook <cjcook@blm.gov>  
**CC:** John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: NEPA Recommendations  
**Attachments:** BLM\_Recommendations.docx

Several months ago, prior to the National Office looking for input on streamlining processes, NV920 asked the Nevada Mining Association to canvass their members on suggestions for streamlining permitting processes. We gave them until the end of August. This is the first response back we have received, mostly focused on NEPA and mining EISs. Probably worth discussing among ourselves and then sharing with DMs/FMs as appropriate. Much of it is managing staffing and workload. Might be good for an FMLT assignment to find ways to address what is addressable and come up with potential actions or solutions to be able to report back to the NvMA. Some of it is outside of our control.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Allen Biaggi <(b) (6)>  
**Date:** Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 8:32 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: NEPA Recommendations  
**To:** "Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>  
**Cc:** "dana@nevadamining.org" <dana@nevadamining.org>

Hello Brian. Hope things are going well.

Attached are recommendations from an NvMA member concerning streamlining the NEPA process. It is my understanding that BLM is still accepting input and that you are the appropriate conduit for that information.

If questions or comments arise, please feel free to contact me.

Allen

--

A. Biaggi & Associates, LLC  
775 781-2112

(b) (6)

--

Brian C. Amme  
Deputy State Director, Minerals Management  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502

Office: 775-861-6585  
Cell: 775-750-6552  
e-mail: [bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)

Don't try to solve problems with the same thinking that created them - wise person.

Kampora! Bizirik Jarraituko!  
(Stay Out! Stay Alive!)

**Confidentiality Notice:** This electronic communication is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to which it is addressed and may contain information that is privileged, confidential and exempt from disclosure under applicable law. If you have received this communication in error, please do not distribute, delete the original message, and notify the sender.

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 12:11:16 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Amme, Brian" <bamme@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Christopher Cook <cjcook@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: NEPA Recommendations

Thanks for sharing, Brian. Please schedule some time to discuss. Meeting on this before the NV Mining Association meeting might be helpful. M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Thu, Aug 24, 2017 at 8:28 AM, Amme, Brian <[bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)> wrote:

Several months ago, prior to the National Office looking for input on streamlining processes, NV920 asked the Nevada Mining Association to canvass their members on suggestions for streamlining permitting processes. We gave them until the end of August. This is the first response back we have received, mostly focused on NEPA and mining EISs. Probably worth discussing among ourselves and then sharing with DMs/FMs as appropriate. Much of it is managing staffing and workload. Might be good for an FMLT assignment to find ways to

address what is addressable and come up with potential actions or solutions to be able to report back to the NvMA. Some of it is outside of our control.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Allen Biaggi** <(b) (6)>  
Date: Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 8:32 PM  
Subject: Fwd: NEPA Recommendations  
To: "Amme, Brian" <[bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)>  
Cc: "[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)" <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>

Hello Brian. Hope things are going well.

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If questions or comments arise, please feel free to contact me.

Allen

--

A. Biaggi & Associates, LLC  
775 781-2112  
(b) (6)

--

Brian C. Amme  
Deputy State Director, Minerals Management  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502

Office: 775-861-6585  
Cell: 775-750-6552  
e-mail: [bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)

Don't try to solve problems with the same thinking that created them - wise person.

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# Conversation Contents

Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

**"Joseph (Gene) Seidlitz" <gseidlit@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Joseph (Gene) Seidlitz" <gseidlit@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 24 2017 05:11:02 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>, Stephen Clutter <sclutter@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

"Hold please"

Sent from my iPhone.

Gene Seidlitz  
Senior Advisor ASLM/BLM  
Room 6629  
202-208-4555

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Lassiter, Tracie" <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Date:** August 23, 2017 at 4:14:59 PM EDT  
**To:** "Joseph (Gene) Seidlitz" <gseidlit@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hey Gene:

Do we know the title for Kate's presentation yet? Thanks, T.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>  
**Date:** Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 4:01 PM  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
**To:** "Lassiter, Tracie" <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Lauren Arends ([lauren@nevadaminging.org](mailto:lauren@nevadaminging.org))" <[lauren@nevadaminging.org](mailto:lauren@nevadaminging.org)>, Joseph Riney <[joseph@nevadaminging.org](mailto:joseph@nevadaminging.org)>

Tracie,

Hi there. Have you been able to confirm at title for Ms. MacGregor's presentation? In addition, could I grab a head shot for Ms. MacGregor?

Thanks much.  
Alli

On Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 9:58 AM, Lassiter, Tracie <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Allison:

Thank you! very much and I will be back in touch with name of the presentation for Ms. MacGregor all though I understand the deadline to provide that information was yesterday.

Best, Tracie

On Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 4:27 AM, Allison Isaia <(b) (6)> wrote:  
Tracie,

Hi there. I have confirmed a non-smoking, King, guest room at Harrah's Lake Tahoe for the night of September 8th. That reservation has been confirmed at the government rate of \$91.00 per night. Ms. MacGregor's confirmation number is 4JXLF.

Below is the full address of the hotel:

**Harrah's Lake Tahoe**  
**15 Highway 50**  
**Stateline, NV 89449**  
**Tel: [\(800\) 427-7247](tel:8004277247)**

Thank you for providing Ms. MacGregor's bio. I look forward to receiving her presentation title, next week.

Thanks much.  
Alli

On Wed, Aug 16, 2017 at 10:30 AM, Lassiter, Tracie <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Thanks much Allison per my email can you forward the full address of Harrah's where the convention will take place? Unfortunately, we will not be able to provide the presentation and title until early next week because we do not know the specific details of what she will be presenting and she is currently on travel. I have attached her bio. Thank you!

Tracie

On Wed, Aug 16, 2017 at 11:36 AM, Allison Isaia <(b) (6)> wrote:

My apologies! I thought I had responded! If you could get me both her presentation title and a bio by the end of the day- 7pm PST, that would be wonderful! Let me know if the poses a problem. I should have a confirmation number today for Harrah's. I was able to get the government rate. I'll include the full address in an email to follow. Please let me know if I can help with anything else!

Alli

On Wed, Aug 16, 2017 at 7:04 AM Lassiter, Tracie <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Good morning Isaia:

Following up with you from my previous email asking what is the time deadline today to submit the name of Ms. MacGregor's presentation? Also any luck with securing a room at Harrah's at the government rate? In addition if you could provide the full name and address of the host hotel it would be most appreciated. Look forward to hearing from you as we would like to secure her lodging accommodations as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Tracie

On Mon, Aug 14, 2017 at 2:39 PM, Allison Isaia <(b) (6)> wrote:

Tracie,

Hi there. Unfortunately, I do need to get the title of Ms. MacGregor's presentation to our designer by this Wednesday, August 16th. If you could kindly send it our way by then, I would appreciate it. I will work on securing a guest room for Ms. MacGregor at our host hotel, Harrah's Lake Tahoe. Shall I just secure it for one night, arrival Friday, September 8th, departing Saturday, September 9th? King Non-smoking? Please confirm.

Thanks much.

Allison Isaia

On Mon, Aug 14, 2017 at 9:03 AM, Lassiter, Tracie

<[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Isaia. I do not have the details yet for the title of Ms. MacGregor's presentation/ Can you tell us when the deadline is? Also can we get a room reserved for her at the host hotel at a government rate at Harrah's if not can you provide what would be the cost for a room for one night or hotels close in proximity? Thank you very much and look forward to working with you.

Tracie Lassiter

On Fri, Aug 11, 2017 at 5:31 PM, Allison Isaia <(b) (6)> wrote:

Tracie,

Hi there. Below is our draft schedule for the NvMA Convention, Saturday presentations. As you will see, we have added Ms. MacGregor to the schedule. We'd like to add a title to her presentation/remarks. Please let me know how she would like her talk noted in our program. Would it be helpful to see our full convention schedule? Will Ms. MacGregor be attending beyond Friday and Saturday? Let me know!

7:00am-8:30am **Convention Breakfast**

8:30am- **Opening Remarks, Chairman of the Board, Tim Dyhr, Nevada Copper** (15 min)

8:45am- Katharine MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior (30 min)

9:15am- **Presentation: Bradley Crowell, Director, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, "An Overview of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and its Relationship with Mining"** (30 min)

9:45am- **Presentation: Jeremy Aguero, Applied Analysis, "The State of the Nevada Economy and its Mining Industry"** (45 min)

10:30am- **Presentation: Steve Hill, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, "Building on Success – Next Steps for Nevada"** (30 min)

11am-11:30am **Q&A Morning Speakers**

Thanks much.

Alli

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 10:53 AM, Lassiter, Tracie

<[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Good afternoon Ms. Bennett:

Thanks! very much for your email. Acting Assistant Secretary MacGregor looks forward to speaking to the group on the morning of Sept 9th. Look forward to coordinating with Allison! Thanks again.

Best,

Tracie

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 9:19 AM, Dana Bennett

<[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)> wrote:

Good morning, Tracie!

We're excited that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will be able to attend the annual convention of the Nevada Mining Association! As you know, the event takes place from Wed, Sept. 6 through Sat, Sept 9 at South Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Harrah's serves as our conference hotel.

I'm especially delighted that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will participate in our Saturday morning policy session. I'll ask that she plan to give about 20 minutes of remarks and then participate in a Q&A session with the other speakers. Because this policy session starts early on Saturday morning, she'll want to arrive by Friday, which means that she'll be able to enjoy the Chairman's Reception and Dinner on the shores of Lake Tahoe. On Saturday afternoon, following the policy session, we close out the convention with our Safety Awards Luncheon. We will reserve a seat for her at the head table. Of course, Ms. MacGregor is welcome to attend the entire convention if it fits in her schedule. I would be happy to ensure that she meets many of the mining executives and state regulators who will be in attendance.

Allison will contact you soon about all of the logistics, but please don't hesitate to let me know if I might provide additional assistance. I look forward to meeting Assistant Secretary MacGregor in a few short weeks!

Cheers,

Dana



**Dana R. Bennett, PhD**  
President

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

**From:** Lauren Arends  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM  
**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>  
**Subject:** RE: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Thanks so much Tim, we appreciate your call today.

Tracie: I have copied our President, Dana Bennett, and our event planner, Allison Isaia on this email for planning purposes. We will be in touch very soon.

Thank you!

Lauren



**Lauren Arends**

Office Administrator

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

*Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry*

**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)  
[[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)] **On Behalf Of** SIO,  
Scheduling  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2017 12:03 PM  
**To:** Lauren Arends <[lauren@nevadamining.org](mailto:lauren@nevadamining.org)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hello Lauren. Thanks again for taking the time to speak with

me this afternoon. As we discussed, Kate MacGregor looks forward to joining you at this year's convention. Please coordinate directly with Tracie Lassiter (copied) to work out logistics and details, and please let me know if our office can be of any further assistance. Thank you.

Tim Nigborowicz  
Office of Scheduling and Advance  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
[202-208-7551](tel:202-208-7551)

---

This email has been scanned for spam and viruses by Proofpoint Essentials. Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.

--

Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Office of the Secretary  
Land & Minerals Management  
1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615  
Washington, DC 20240  
(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)  
(f) 202- 208-3619  
[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

--  
Allison Isaia

Conference & Event Specialist  
775.225.7270 cell  
(b) (6)

--

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(b) (6)

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Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

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Washington, DC 20240

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(b) (6)

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U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

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(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

# Conversation Contents

## USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper

### Attachments:

/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/1.1 Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/1.2 Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/1.3 Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/3.1 Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/3.2 Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/3.3 Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/4.1 Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx  
/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/4.2 Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx  
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/47. USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper/5.3 Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx

**"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 17 2017 17:33:49 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper  
Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx  
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Thanks and if you need any additional information, please let me know.

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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

---

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 17 2017 18:28:13 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper

Thanks so much, Matt; I'll take a look but am sure you've done a great job, as usual. M

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

On Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 4:33 PM, Magaletti, Matthew <mmagalet@blm.gov> wrote:

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Attached is the briefing paper that Kathy and John requested yesterday on our quick sage grouse morning call. I attempted to capture the concepts that Kathy and John were looking for in regards to our USFWS coordination commitments outlined in our Nevada Sage Grouse Plan Amendment (SGPA), with a focus on the "unanimous consent" decisions in the SGPA. I also included a real project scenario from BLM Nevada that recently went through our 3% disturbance cap calculation. Per their request, I also added the exact coordination language from our SGPA (attachment 1) and our Draft MOU with the USFWS (attachment 2).

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Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office

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---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 17 2017 18:28:34 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvoelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx

**Attachments:**

Please print all. Thx

Marci L. Todd  
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1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Magaletti, Matthew** <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 4:33 PM  
**Subject:** USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
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Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 18:44:38 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>  
**CC:** Matthew Magaletti <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS.docx Deputy State Director BP\_USFWS GRSG Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx

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[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

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**From:** **Magaletti, Matthew** <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 4:33 PM  
**Subject:** USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Paul Petersen <[ppeterse@blm.gov](mailto:ppeterse@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>

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**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

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**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 18:45:11 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvoelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper  
Attachment 2\_Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and  
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Coordination\_8\_16\_17.docx Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA  
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Please print all. Thx

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Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Todd, Marci** <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Wed, Aug 23, 2017 at 5:44 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper  
**To:** John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Cc:** Matthew Magaletti <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>

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**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
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Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

---

**Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>**

**From:** Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>  
**Sent:** Wed Aug 23 2017 19:02:22 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**CC:** John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Matthew Magaletti <mmagalet@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper

Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 23, 2017, at 7:44 PM, Todd, Marci <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)> wrote:

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Date: Thu, Aug 17, 2017 at 4:33 PM

Subject: USFWS Sage Grouse Coordination Briefing Paper

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Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office

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<Attachment 1\_Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language.docx>

# Conversation Contents

[Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5)

## Attachments:

/51. [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) )/2.1 SO 3353 Preliminary Overview Action List.docx  
/51. [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) )/2.2 GRSG2.0 Implementation - preliminary timeline.xlsx  
/51. [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) )/3.1 SO 3353 Preliminary Overview Action List.docx  
/51. [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) )/3.2 GRSG2.0 Implementation - preliminary timeline.xlsx

**kkelleh@blm.gov**

---

**From:** kkelleh@blm.gov  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 17 2017 10:21:27 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
jccarlso@blm.gov, kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov, rjefferson@blm.gov, jmaluoto@blm.gov, vaarmstrong@blm.gov, ssmall@blm.gov, tmurphy@blm.gov, s1wells@blm.gov, j2stout@blm.gov, ppeterse@blm.gov, aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov, jtague@blm.gov, jkalish@blm.gov, jshoemaker@blm.gov, thanley@blm.gov, afournie@blm.gov, gtoevs@blm.gov, qfbahr@blm.gov, jpollet@blm.gov, tspisak@blm.gov, mstiewig@blm.gov, kstangl@blm.gov, jruhs@blm.gov, rbjolley@blm.gov, dchi@blm.gov, tshannon@blm.gov, jcamargo@blm.gov, sarah.shattuck@sol.doi.gov, mrugwell@blm.gov, m1todd@blm.gov, gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov, hhedrick@blm.gov, ajossie@blm.gov, jmunson@blm.gov, lclaypoo@blm.gov, ymackthompson@blm.gov, rhotalin@blm.gov, stryon@blm.gov, bwgreen@blm.gov, vherren@blm.gov, eroberso@blm.gov, kkelleh@blm.gov, afalwell@blm.gov, cvocelka@blm.gov, pditton@blm.gov, jraby@blm.gov, kmondor@blm.gov, jharriso@blm.gov, lthurn@blm.gov, jconnell@blm.gov, jperez@blm.gov, jperearichmann@blm.gov, gshoop@blm.gov, rhawks@blm.gov, hcantor@blm.gov, rmorales@blm.gov, tyeager@blm.gov, bstgeorg@blm.gov, ssleach@blm.gov, kbail@blm.gov, abilbao@blm.gov  
**To:**  
**Subject:** [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5)

Hi all,  
here are some agenda items, please let me know if you have others

1. discuss SO 3353 report implementation next steps & timeline through October (will be

provided NLT friday am)

- need leader for effort - preferably from field; team members; looking for field reps from each region for policy updates (grazing, habitat/HAF, o&g)
- confirmation that states are moving forward with outreach - FACA concerns (state-led where BLM attends as participant (no advice to BLM) or public meetings)
- internal coordination; sharing of issues/solutions
- outreach/comms needs

2. reminder to please get budget cleaned up - use WBS codes so we can run final reports - gordon will be providing a spreadsheet with specific request to state coordinators

3. reminder to get ES/BAR money (particularly previous years) money obligated

4. round robin

5. mineral MOU update if needed; litigation update if needed

**Sage Grouse Implementation Check in** (b) (5) **passcode** (b) (5)

When Fri Aug 18, 2017 3pm – 4pm Eastern Time

Where BLM-WO MIB RM5653 Conference Room ([map](#))

- Who
- ymackthompson@blm.gov - organizer, optional
  - lthurn@blm.gov - creator, optional
  - jccarls@blm.gov
  - kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov
  - jperez@blm.gov
  - kbail@blm.gov
  - jkalish@blm.gov
  - qfbahr@blm.gov
  - sarah.shattuck@sol.doi.gov
  - mrugwell@blm.gov
  - tyeager@blm.gov
  - j2stout@blm.gov
  - jmunson@blm.gov
  - jtague@blm.gov
  - ssmall@blm.gov
  - tmurphy@blm.gov
  - rhawks@blm.gov
  - kkelleh@blm.gov
  - gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov
  - tshannon@blm.gov
  - dchi@blm.gov
  - gtoevs@blm.gov
  - tspisak@blm.gov
  - bstgeorg@blm.gov
  - mstiewig@blm.gov
  - lclaypoo@blm.gov
  - kstangl@blm.gov
  - vaarmstrong@blm.gov
  - jpollet@blm.gov
  - cvocelka@blm.gov - optional
  - vherren@blm.gov - optional
  - pditton@blm.gov - optional
  - jshoemaker@blm.gov - optional
  - eroberso@blm.gov - optional

- rbjolley@blm.gov - optional
- jruhs@blm.gov - optional
- ppeterse@blm.gov - optional
- bwgreen@blm.gov - optional
- jraby@blm.gov - optional
- jharriso@blm.gov - optional
- aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov - optional
- s1wells@blm.gov - optional
- gshoop@blm.gov - optional
- jconnell@blm.gov - optional
- ssleach@blm.gov - optional
- ajossie@blm.gov - optional
- hhedrick@blm.gov - optional
- jcamargo@blm.gov - optional
- rmorales@blm.gov - optional
- hcantor@blm.gov - optional
- thanley@blm.gov - optional
- jmaluoto@blm.gov - optional
- kmondor@blm.gov - optional
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- m1todd@blm.gov - optional
- stryon@blm.gov - optional
- jperearichmann@blm.gov - optional
- rhotalin@blm.gov - optional
- afalwell@blm.gov - optional
- abilbao@blm.gov - optional

## "Kelleher, Karen" <kkelleh@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Kelleher, Karen" <kkelleh@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 18 2017 08:31:15 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
 John Carlson <jccarls@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, "Jefferson, Ruthie" <rjefferson@blm.gov>, jmaluoto@blm.gov, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, Stephen Small <:ssmall@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, "Wells, Steven" <s1wells@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <jtague@blm.gov>, John Kalish <jkalish@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Theresa Hanley <thanley@blm.gov>, afournie@blm.gov, Gordon Toevs <gtoevs@blm.gov>, Quincy Bahr <qfbahr@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Michael Stiewig <mstiewig@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, "Jolley, Robert" <rbjolley@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, Timothy Shannon <tshannon@blm.gov>, "Camargo, Jessica" <jcamargo@blm.gov>, Sarah Shattuck <sarah.shattuck@sol.doi.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell

**To:** <mrugwell@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Gregory Russell <gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov>, Howard Hedrick <hhedrick@blm.gov>, "Jossie, Abbie E" <ajossie@blm.gov>, "Munson, Johanna" <jmunson@blm.gov>, Larry Claypool <lclaypoo@blm.gov>, "Mack-Thompson, Yolando" <ymackthompson@blm.gov>, Richard Hotaling <rhotalin@blm.gov>, Steve Tryon <stryon@blm.gov>, Buddy Green <bwgreen@blm.gov>, "Herren, Vicki" <vherren@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, Angela Falwell <afalwell@blm.gov>, cvocelka@blm.gov, Peter Ditton <pditton@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, Kathy Mondor <kmondor@blm.gov>, Jamie Harrison <jharriso@blm.gov>, Linda Thurn <lthurn@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, jperearichmann@blm.gov, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Robin Hawks <rhawks@blm.gov>, Howard Cantor <hcantor@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Todd Yeager <tyeager@blm.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, Sandra Leach <ssleach@blm.gov>, "Bail, Kristin" <kbail@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>

**Subject:** Re: [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5)

**Attachments:** SO 3353 Preliminary Overview Action List.docx GRSG2.0 Implementation - preliminary timeline.xlsx

Agenda for 3pm GRSG meeting

1. discuss SO 3353 report implementation next steps & timeline through October (see attached) - Karen & Lori  
- need leader for effort - preferably from field; team members; looking for field reps from each region for policy updates (grazing, habitat/HAF, o&g)  
- confirmation that states are moving forward with outreach - FACA concerns (state-led where BLM attends as participant (no advice to BLM) or public meetings)  
- internal coordination; sharing of issues/solutions  
- outreach/comms needs
2. reminder to please get budget cleaned up - use WBS codes so we can run final reports - gordon will be providing a spreadsheet with specific request to state coordinators - Karen
3. reminder to get ES/BAR money (particularly previous years) money obligated - Karen
4. round robin - All
5. mineral MOU update if needed - 300 attendess
6. litigation update if needed - Greg R
7. targeted grazing/OBGA update/QA - Joe T
8. other

**Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5)**

When Fri Aug 18, 2017 3pm – 4pm Eastern Time

Where BLM-WO MIB RM5653 Conference Room ([map](#))

Who

- [ymackthompson@blm.gov](mailto:ymackthompson@blm.gov) - organizer, optional
- [lthurn@blm.gov](mailto:lthurn@blm.gov) - creator, optional
- [jccariso@blm.gov](mailto:jccariso@blm.gov)
- [kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)
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- [stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov) - optional
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- [rhotalin@blm.gov](mailto:rhotalin@blm.gov) - optional
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--

Karen Kelleher

Deputy Assistant Director - Resources and Planning

Main Interior room 5646

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202-208-4896

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 18 2017 13:17:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) [REDACTED] passcode (b) (5) [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** SO 3353 Preliminary Overview Action List.docx GRSG2.0 Implementation - preliminary timeline.xlsx

Please print the spreadsheet for me for this call. Thx

Marci L. Todd  
State Director, Acting  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Kelleher, Karen <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Fri, Aug 18, 2017 at 7:31 AM  
**Subject:** Re: [Update] Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) [REDACTED] passcode (b) (5) [REDACTED]  
**To:** John Carlson <[jccariso@blm.gov](mailto:jccariso@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto

<[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, "Jefferson, Ruthie" <[rjefferson@blm.gov](mailto:rjefferson@blm.gov)>, [jmaluoto@blm.gov](mailto:jmaluoto@blm.gov), "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, Stephen Small <[ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)>, Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, "Wells, Steven" <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>, Paul Petersen <[ppeterse@blm.gov](mailto:ppeterse@blm.gov)>, Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <[jtague@blm.gov](mailto:jtague@blm.gov)>, John Kalish <[jkalish@blm.gov](mailto:jkalish@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Theresa Hanley <[thanley@blm.gov](mailto:thanley@blm.gov)>, [afournie@blm.gov](mailto:afournie@blm.gov), Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, Quincy Bahr <[qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov)>, Jolie Pollet <[jpollet@blm.gov](mailto:jpollet@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, Michael Stiewig <[mstiewig@blm.gov](mailto:mstiewig@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, "Jolley, Robert" <[rbjolley@blm.gov](mailto:rbjolley@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, Timothy Shannon <[tshannon@blm.gov](mailto:tshannon@blm.gov)>, "Camargo, Jessica" <[jcamargo@blm.gov](mailto:jcamargo@blm.gov)>, Sarah Shattuck <[sarah.shattuck@sol.doi.gov](mailto:sarah.shattuck@sol.doi.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Gregory Russell <[gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov](mailto:gregory.russell@sol.doi.gov)>, Howard Hedrick <[hhedrick@blm.gov](mailto:hhedrick@blm.gov)>, "Jossie, Abbie E" <[ajossie@blm.gov](mailto:ajossie@blm.gov)>, "Munson, Johanna" <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, Larry Claypool <[lclaypoo@blm.gov](mailto:lclaypoo@blm.gov)>, "Mack-Thompson, Yolando" <[ymackthompson@blm.gov](mailto:ymackthompson@blm.gov)>, Richard Hotaling <[rhotalin@blm.gov](mailto:rhotalin@blm.gov)>, Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Buddy Green <[bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)>, "Herren, Vicki" <[vherren@blm.gov](mailto:vherren@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Karen Kelleher <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>, Angela Falwell <[afalwell@blm.gov](mailto:afalwell@blm.gov)>, [cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov), Peter Ditton <[pditton@blm.gov](mailto:pditton@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, Kathy Mondor <[kmondor@blm.gov](mailto:kmondor@blm.gov)>, Jamie Harrison <[jharriso@blm.gov](mailto:jharriso@blm.gov)>, Linda Thurn <[lthurn@blm.gov](mailto:lthurn@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, [jperearichmann@blm.gov](mailto:jperearichmann@blm.gov), Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Robin Hawks <[rhawks@blm.gov](mailto:rhawks@blm.gov)>, Howard Cantor <[hcantor@blm.gov](mailto:hcantor@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Todd Yeager <[tyeager@blm.gov](mailto:tyeager@blm.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, Sandra Leach <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, "Bail, Kristin" <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, Anita Bilbao <[abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov)>

#### Agenda for 3pm GRSG meeting

1. discuss SO 3353 report implementation next steps & timeline through October (see attached) - Karen & Lori
  - need leader for effort - preferably from field; team members; looking for field reps from each region for policy updates (grazing, habitat/HAF, o&g)
  - confirmation that states are moving forward with outreach - FACA concerns (state-led where BLM attends as participant (no advice to BLM) or public meetings)
  - internal coordination; sharing of issues/solutions
  - outreach/comms needs
2. reminder to please get budget cleaned up - use WBS codes so we can run final reports - gordon will be providing a spreadsheet with specific request to state coordinators - Karen
3. reminder to get ES/BAR money (particularly previous years) money obligated - Karen
4. round robin - All
5. mineral MOU update if needed - 300 attendees
6. litigation update if needed - Greg R
7. targeted grazing/OBGA update/QA - Joe T
8. other

When Fri Aug 18, 2017 3pm – 4pm Eastern Time

Where BLM-WO MIB RM5653 Conference Room ([map](#))

Who

- [ymackthompson@blm.gov](mailto:ymackthompson@blm.gov) - organizer, optional
- [lthurn@blm.gov](mailto:lthurn@blm.gov) - creator, optional
- [jccariso@blm.gov](mailto:jccariso@blm.gov)
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- [abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov) - optional

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# Conversation Contents

## Sage Grouse Reports and Orders

"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 17:08:04 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
Alan Bittner <abittner@blm.gov>, Alicia Styles <astyles@blm.gov>, Arlene Kotic <akotic@blm.gov>, Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>, Brittany Brooks <bbb Brooks@blm.gov>, Bryant Smith <b6smith@blm.gov>, Camille Howes <clhowes@blm.gov>, Catrina Williams <cwilliams@blm.gov>, Christopher Carlton <cCarlton@blm.gov>, Colleen Dulin <cdulin@blm.gov>, Craig Drake <cdrake@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, David Kampwerth <dkampwerth@blm.gov>, David Repass <drepass@blm.gov>, Deborah MacNeill <dmacneill@blm.gov>, Dereck Wilson <d65wilso@blm.gov>, Douglas Furtado <dfurtado@blm.gov>, Emily Ryan <esryan@blm.gov>, Eric Boik <eboik@blm.gov>, Erick Kurkowski <ekurkowski@blm.gov>, Gayle Marrs-Smith <gmarrssm@blm.gov>, J Vacca <jvacca@blm.gov>, Jeremiah Karuzas <jkaruzas@blm.gov>, Jill Silvey <jsilvey@blm.gov>, Jon Sherve <jsherve@blm.gov>, Kenneth Collum <kcollum@blm.gov>, Kimberly Dow <kddow@blm.gov>, Marc Jackson <majackson@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Mark Hall <mehall@blm.gov>, Megan Oyarzun <moyarzun@blm.gov>, Melanie Peterson <m1peters@blm.gov>, Michael Herder <mherder@blm.gov>, Michael Toombs <mtoombs@blm.gov>, Mindy Seal <mseal@blm.gov>, Nathan Mendes <nmendes@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Ralph Thomas <rthomas@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Steven Nelson <snelson@blm.gov>, Stuart Mitchell <smitchel@blm.gov>, Tessa Teems <tteems@blm.gov>, Timothy Coward <tcoward@blm.gov>, Vicki Lankford <vlankford@blm.gov>, William Mack Jr <wmack@blm.gov>, "Brewer, Sandra" <sbrewer@blm.gov>, "Pritchett, David" <dpritchett@blm.gov>, Carolyn Sherve-Bybee <csherveb@blm.gov>, Kathryn Dyer <kdyer@blm.gov>, Timothy Theisen <ttheisen@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>

**To:**

**Subject:** Sage Grouse Reports and Orders

Hi Everyone,

This past week was certainly a busy one in the Greater Sage-Grouse world. I apologize ahead of time if you (or your staff) have already received these documents, but I wanted to ensure everyone had access to these important reports/orders.

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While not a new order, SO 3353 signed by Secretary Zinke on June 7, 2017, established a Federal DOI team to engage with the appropriate States, through the Western Governors Associations' Sage Grouse Task Force to: 1. Review existing BLM sage grouse planning documents and policies to ensure they are complementary of state efforts to conserve the species and then identify provisions that may require clarifications, policy changes, or plan modifications; 2. Examine the Department's Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy; and 3. Provide recommendations with regard to captive breeding, opportunities to enhance State involvement, efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis, and additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve current population levels and habitat conditions. The order directed the BLM to provide a report back to the Secretary by August 7th.

**Link:** [https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so\\_3353.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so_3353.pdf)

### **Secretarial Report 3353 Recommendation Report and Memorandum**

This is the report that BLM developed with the Western Governors Associations' Sage Grouse Task Force and was delivered to the Secretary on August 4th in response to SO 3353. In summary, the report identified

short and long term recommendations that the States would like to see BLM undertake to alleviate the concerns they have with the current 2015 sage grouse plans and 7 IMs that were released last September. The link below also includes a memorandum from Secretary Zinke to Deputy Secretary Bernhardt, which directs him to work with the BLM, "to immediately follow through on the short- and long-term recommendations." The memorandum also lists the Secretary's priority recommendations to begin investigating. Our BLM national office is currently in the process of writing a response back to the Deputy Secretary regarding next steps (which we hope to see soon).

Released: August 7, 2017

Link: [https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so3353\\_memo\\_coverletter\\_report\\_080717.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so3353_memo_coverletter_report_080717.pdf)

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On the past few Monthly District and Field Managers GRSG Update Calls, I have been alluding to this long awaited USGS adaptive management model. The report was finally released on Thursday. This USGS Open File Report describes in detail the integrated sage grouse population based model that the BLM Nevada and Northeastern California Approved RMP Amendment directs us to use to assess when we have reached a soft or hard population adaptive management trigger. While this report does allude to areas where we have reached triggers in NV and CA, I want to caution everyone that BLM Nevada and California have yet to adopt the numeric thresholds contained in it. Adaptive management was a issue identified in the SO 3353 Recommendation Report and leadership is waiting to see what modifications may be made to the plan amendment through this process before adopting these new numeric thresholds.

Released: August 10, 2017

Link: <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20171089>

As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks.

--

#### **Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/Northeastern California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

### **Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 17:39:18 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Sage Grouse Reports and Orders

Thanks, Matt. M

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 14, 2017, at 16:08, Magaletti, Matthew <mmagalet@blm.gov> wrote:

Hi Everyone,

This past week was certainly a busy one in the Greater Sage-Grouse world. I apologize ahead of time if you (or your staff) have already received these documents, but I wanted to ensure everyone had access to these important reports/orders.

#### **Secretarial Order 3353: Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with States**

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the Department's Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy; and 3. Provide recommendations with regard to captive breeding, opportunities to enhance State involvement, efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis, and additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve current population levels and habitat conditions. The order directed the BLM to provide a report back to the Secretary by August 7th.

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Released: August 10, 2017

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As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks.

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/Northeastern California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

**Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 17:40:12 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocolka" <cvoelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sage Grouse Reports and Orders

Please print the second and third reports. Thx

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>

**Date:** August 14, 2017 at 16:08:04 PDT

**To:** Alan Bittner <[abittner@blm.gov](mailto:abittner@blm.gov)>, Alicia Styles <[astyles@blm.gov](mailto:astyles@blm.gov)>, Arlene Kosic <[akosic@blm.gov](mailto:akosic@blm.gov)>, Brian Amme <[bamme@blm.gov](mailto:bamme@blm.gov)>, Brittany Brooks <[bbb Brooks@blm.gov](mailto:bbb Brooks@blm.gov)>, Bryant Smith <[b6smith@blm.gov](mailto:b6smith@blm.gov)>, Camille Howes <[clhowes@blm.gov](mailto:clhowes@blm.gov)>, Catrina Williams <[cwilliams@blm.gov](mailto:cwilliams@blm.gov)>, Christopher Carlton <[ccarlton@blm.gov](mailto:ccarlton@blm.gov)>, Colleen Dulin <[cdulin@blm.gov](mailto:cdulin@blm.gov)>, Craig Drake <[cdrake@blm.gov](mailto:cdrake@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, David Kampwerth <[dkampwerth@blm.gov](mailto:dkampwerth@blm.gov)>, David Repass <[drepass@blm.gov](mailto:drepass@blm.gov)>, Deborah MacNeill <[dmacneill@blm.gov](mailto:dmacneill@blm.gov)>, Dereck Wilson <[d65wilso@blm.gov](mailto:d65wilso@blm.gov)>, Douglas Furtado <[dfurtado@blm.gov](mailto:dfurtado@blm.gov)>, Emily Ryan <[esryan@blm.gov](mailto:esryan@blm.gov)>, Eric Boik <[eboik@blm.gov](mailto:eboik@blm.gov)>, Erick Kurkowski <[ekurkowski@blm.gov](mailto:ekurkowski@blm.gov)>, Gayle Marrs-Smith <[gmarrssm@blm.gov](mailto:gmarrssm@blm.gov)>, J Vacca <[jvacca@blm.gov](mailto:jvacca@blm.gov)>, Jeremiah Karuzas <[jkaruzas@blm.gov](mailto:jkaruzas@blm.gov)>, Jill Silvey <[jsilvey@blm.gov](mailto:jsilvey@blm.gov)>, Jon Sherve <[jsherve@blm.gov](mailto:jsherve@blm.gov)>, Kenneth Collum <[kcollum@blm.gov](mailto:kcollum@blm.gov)>, Kimberly Dow <[kddow@blm.gov](mailto:kddow@blm.gov)>, Marc Jackson <[majackson@blm.gov](mailto:majackson@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Mark Hall <[mehall@blm.gov](mailto:mehall@blm.gov)>, Megan Oyarzun <[moyarzun@blm.gov](mailto:moyarzun@blm.gov)>, Melanie Peterson <[m1peters@blm.gov](mailto:m1peters@blm.gov)>, Michael Herder <[mherder@blm.gov](mailto:mherder@blm.gov)>, Michael Toombs <[mtoombs@blm.gov](mailto:mtoombs@blm.gov)>, Mindy Seal <[mseal@blm.gov](mailto:mseal@blm.gov)>, Nathan Mendes <[nmendes@blm.gov](mailto:nmendes@blm.gov)>, Paul Petersen <[ppeterse@blm.gov](mailto:ppeterse@blm.gov)>, Ralph Thomas <[rthomas@blm.gov](mailto:rthomas@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Steven Nelson <[snelson@blm.gov](mailto:snelson@blm.gov)>, Stuart Mitchell <[smitchel@blm.gov](mailto:smitchel@blm.gov)>, Tessa Teems <[tteems@blm.gov](mailto:tteems@blm.gov)>, Timothy Coward <[tcoward@blm.gov](mailto:tcoward@blm.gov)>, Vicki Lankford <[vlankford@blm.gov](mailto:vlankford@blm.gov)>, William Mack Jr <[wmack@blm.gov](mailto:wmack@blm.gov)>, "Brewer, Sandra" <[sbrewer@blm.gov](mailto:sbrewer@blm.gov)>, "Pritchett, David" <[dpritchett@blm.gov](mailto:dpritchett@blm.gov)>, Carolyn Sherve-Bybee <[csherveb@blm.gov](mailto:csherveb@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Dyer <[kdyer@blm.gov](mailto:kdyer@blm.gov)>, Timothy Theisen <[ttheisen@blm.gov](mailto:ttheisen@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>

**Subject:** Sage Grouse Reports and Orders

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Released: August 10, 2017

Link: <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20171089>

As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks.

--

**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/Northeastern California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

# Conversation Contents

Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

**"Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene)" <gseidlit@blm.gov>**

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**From:** "Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene)" <gseidlit@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 07:43:19 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hello NSO

Gene Seidlitz  
ASLM Analyst-Liaison  
202-208-4555 (O)  
775-304-1008 (C)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Lassiter, Tracie** <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Date:** Mon, Aug 14, 2017 at 9:37 AM  
**Subject:** Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
**To:** John Trelease <[jtrelease@osmre.gov](mailto:jtrelease@osmre.gov)>, "Moran, Jill" <[jcmoran@blm.gov](mailto:jcmoran@blm.gov)>, "Joseph (Gene) Seidlitz" <[gseidlit@blm.gov](mailto:gseidlit@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Katharine Macgregor <[katharine\\_macgregor@ios.doi.gov](mailto:katharine_macgregor@ios.doi.gov)>, Richard Cardinale <[richard\\_cardinale@ios.doi.gov](mailto:richard_cardinale@ios.doi.gov)>

All- This is a follow up email to the one I forwarded on last week for Kate's upcoming travel to South Lake Tahoe to speak to the Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention on Saturday, Sept 9th at their morning policy session at 8:45am for 30 minutes followed by Q&A at 11am at the end of the session. Thanks, T.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Allison Isaia** <(b) (6)>  
**Date:** Fri, Aug 11, 2017 at 5:31 PM  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
**To:** "Lassiter, Tracie" <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>

Tracie,

Hi there. Below is our draft schedule for the NvMA Convention, Saturday presentations. As you will see, we have added Ms. MacGregor to the schedule. We'd like to add a title to her presentation/remarks. Please let me know how she would like her talk noted in our program. Would it be helpful to see our full convention schedule? Will Ms. MacGregor be attending beyond Friday and Saturday? Let me know!

7:00am-8:30am **Convention Breakfast**

8:30am- **Opening Remarks, Chairman of the Board, Tim Dyhr, Nevada Copper** (15 min)  
8:45am- Katharine MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior (30 min)  
9:15am- **Presentation: Bradley Crowell, Director, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, "An Overview of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and its Relationship with Mining"** (30 min)  
9:45am- **Presentation: Jeremy Aguero, Applied Analysis, "The State of the Nevada Economy and its Mining Industry"** (45 min)  
10:30am- **Presentation: Steve Hill, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, "Building on Success – Next Steps for Nevada"** (30 min)  
11am-11:30am **Q&A Morning Speakers**

Thanks much.  
Alli

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 10:53 AM, Lassiter, Tracie <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Good afternoon Ms. Bennett:

Thanks! very much for your email. Acting Assistant Secretary MacGregor looks forward to speaking to the group on the morning of Sept 9th. Look forward to coordinating with Allison! Thanks again.

Best,

Tracie

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 9:19 AM, Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)> wrote:

Good morning, Tracie!

We're excited that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will be able to attend the annual convention of the Nevada Mining Association! As you know, the event takes place from Wed, Sept. 6 through Sat, Sept 9 at South Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Harrah's serves as our conference hotel.

I'm especially delighted that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will participate in our Saturday morning policy session. I'll ask that she plan to give about 20 minutes of remarks and then participate in a Q&A session with the other speakers. Because this policy session starts early on Saturday morning, she'll want to arrive by Friday, which means that she'll be able to enjoy the Chairman's Reception and Dinner on the shores of Lake Tahoe. On Saturday afternoon, following the policy session, we close out the convention with our Safety Awards Luncheon. We will reserve a seat for her at the head table. Of course, Ms. MacGregor is welcome to attend the entire convention if it fits in her schedule. I would be happy to ensure that she meets many of the mining executives and state regulators who will be in attendance.

Allison will contact you soon about all of the logistics, but please don't hesitate to let me know if I might provide additional assistance. I look forward to meeting Assistant Secretary MacGregor in a few short weeks!

Cheers,

Dana



**Dana R. Bennett, PhD**  
President

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

---

**From:** Lauren Arends

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM

**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>

**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett  
<[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>

**Subject:** RE: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Thanks so much Tim, we appreciate your call today.

Tracie: I have copied our President, Dana Bennett, and our event planner, Allison Isaia on this email for planning purposes. We will be in touch very soon.

Thank you!

Lauren



**Lauren Arends**  
Office Administrator

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov) [[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)] **On Behalf Of** SIO, Scheduling  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2017 12:03 PM  
**To:** Lauren Arends <[lauren@nevadamining.org](mailto:lauren@nevadamining.org)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hello Lauren. Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this afternoon. As we discussed, Kate MacGregor looks forward to joining you at this year's convention. Please coordinate directly with Tracie Lassiter (copied) to work out logistics and details, and please let me know if our office can be of any further assistance. Thank you.

Tim Nigborowicz  
Office of Scheduling and Advance  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
[202-208-7551](tel:202-208-7551)

---

This email has been scanned for spam and viruses by Proofpoint Essentials. Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.

--

Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)

(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

--  
Allison Isaia  
Conference & Event Specialist

(b) (6) cell  
(b) (6)

--  
Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

(o) 202-208-6734

(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

**Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 07:59:44 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene)" <gseidlit@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Glad Kate will make it to the meeting.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 14, 2017, at 6:43 AM, Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene) <[gseidlitz@blm.gov](mailto:gseidlitz@blm.gov)> wrote:

Hello NSO

Gene Seidlitz  
ASLM Analyst-Liaison  
202-208-4555 (O)  
775-304-1008 (C)

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lassiter, Tracie** <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
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Subject: Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
To: John Trelease <[jtrelease@osmre.gov](mailto:jtrelease@osmre.gov)>, "Moran, Jill" <[jcmoran@blm.gov](mailto:jcmoran@blm.gov)>, "Joseph (Gene) Seidlitz" <[gseidlitz@blm.gov](mailto:gseidlitz@blm.gov)>  
Cc: Katharine Macgregor <[katharine\\_macgregor@ios.doi.gov](mailto:katharine_macgregor@ios.doi.gov)>, Richard Cardinale <[richard\\_cardinale@ios.doi.gov](mailto:richard_cardinale@ios.doi.gov)>

All- This is a follow up email to the one I forwarded on last week for Kate's upcoming travel to South Lake Tahoe to speak to the Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention on Saturday, Sept 9th at their morning policy session at 8:45am for 30 minutes followed by Q&A at 11am at the end of the session. Thanks, T.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Allison Isaia** <(b) (6)>  
Date: Fri, Aug 11, 2017 at 5:31 PM  
Subject: Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
To: "Lassiter, Tracie" <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>

Tracie,

Hi there. Below is our draft schedule for the NvMA Convention, Saturday presentations. As you will see, we have added Ms. MacGregor to the schedule. We'd like to add a title to her presentation/remarks. Please let me know how she would like her talk noted in our program. Would it be helpful to see our full convention schedule? Will Ms. MacGregor be attending beyond Friday and Saturday? Let me know!

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Thanks much.

Alli

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Best,

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Allison will contact you soon about all of the logistics, but please don't hesitate to let me know if I might provide additional assistance. I look forward to meeting Assistant Secretary MacGregor in a few short weeks!

Cheers,

Dana



**Dana R. Bennett, PhD**  
President

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

---

**From:** Lauren Arends  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM  
**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>  
**Subject:** RE: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Thanks so much Tim, we appreciate your call today.

Tracie: I have copied our President, Dana Bennett, and our event planner, Allison Isaia on this email for planning purposes. We will be in touch very soon.

Thank you!

Lauren



**Lauren Arends**

Office Administrator

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

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*Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry*

**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov) [[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)] **On Behalf Of** SIO, Scheduling  
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Tim Nigborowicz  
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U.S. Department of the Interior  
[202-208-7551](tel:202-208-7551)

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Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)

(f) 202- 208-3619

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Allison Isaia  
Conference & Event Specialist  
(b) (6) cell  
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**"Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>**

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**From:** "Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 08:21:08 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>, "Petersen, Paul" <ppeterse@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

fyi

John F. Ruhs  
Deputy Director, Acting  
Bureau of Land Management  
O - 202-208-3801  
C - 307-214-5271

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***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

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**From:** Lauren Arends

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM

**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>

**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>

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Tracie: I have copied our President, Dana Bennett, and our event planner, Allison Isaia on this email for planning purposes. We will be in touch very soon.

Thank you!

Lauren

**Lauren Arends**  
Office Administrator



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**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov) [[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)] **On Behalf Of** SIO, Scheduling  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2017 12:03 PM  
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Thanks,

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(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)

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Allison Isaia  
Conference & Event Specialist

(b) (6) cell  
(o) (b)

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**Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

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**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 08:35:21 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

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fyi

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C - 307-214-5271

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Office of the Secretary  
Land & Minerals Management  
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Washington, DC 20240  
(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)  
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Allison Isaia

Conference & Event Specialist

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**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 08:36:21 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
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John F. Ruhs  
Deputy Director, Acting  
Bureau of Land Management  
O - 202-208-3801  
C - 307-214-5271

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***Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry***

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**From:** Lauren Arends

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM

**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>

**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>

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201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

*Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry*

**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov) [[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)] **On Behalf Of** SIO, Scheduling

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2017 12:03 PM

**To:** Lauren Arends <[lauren@nevadamining.org](mailto:lauren@nevadamining.org)>

**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hello Lauren. Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this afternoon. As we discussed, Kate MacGregor looks forward to joining you at this year's convention. Please coordinate directly with Tracie Lassiter (copied) to work out logistics and details, and please let me know if our office can be of any further assistance. Thank you.

Tim Nigborowicz  
Office of Scheduling and Advance  
U.S. Department of the Interior

[202-208-7551](tel:202-208-7551)

---

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--

Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

(o) [202-208-6734](tel:202-208-6734)

(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

--

Allison Isaia  
Conference & Event Specialist

(b) (6) cell

(b) (6)

--

Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Office of the Secretary  
Land & Minerals Management  
1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615  
Washington, DC 20240  
(o) 202-208-6734  
(f) 202- 208-3619  
[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

---

**Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 14 2017 09:32:28 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Standing by. Thanks, M

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 14, 2017, at 07:36, Ruhs, John <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)> wrote:

No idea, we hadn't even been told she was going. We will get back with you on this.

John F. Ruhs  
Deputy Director, Acting  
Bureau of Land Management  
O - 202-208-3801  
C - 307-214-5271

On Mon, Aug 14, 2017 at 10:35 AM, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)> wrote:  
Thanks. What type/level of support would we be expected to provide during her trip? I don't know how independent she is in her style. Should we tie in with Tracie Lassiter to coordinate logistics? M

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 14, 2017, at 07:21, Ruhs, John <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)> wrote:

fyi

John F. Ruhs  
Deputy Director, Acting  
Bureau of Land Management  
O - 202-208-3801  
C - 307-214-5271

From: **Allison Isaia** <(b) (6)>  
Date: Fri, Aug 11, 2017 at 5:31 PM  
Subject: Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention  
To: "Lassiter, Tracie" <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>

Tracie,

Hi there. Below is our draft schedule for the NvMA Convention, Saturday presentations. As you will see, we have added Ms. MacGregor to the schedule. We'd like to add a title to her presentation/remarks. Please let me know how she would like her talk noted in our program. Would it be helpful to see our full convention schedule? Will Ms. MacGregor be attending beyond Friday and Saturday? Let me know!

7:00am-8:30am **Convention Breakfast**  
8:30am- **Opening Remarks, Chairman of the Board, Tim Dyhr, Nevada Copper** (15 min)  
8:45am- Katharine MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior (30 min)  
9:15am- **Presentation: Bradley Crowell, Director, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, "An Overview of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and its Relationship with Mining"** (30 min)  
9:45am- **Presentation: Jeremy Aguero, Applied Analysis, "The State of the Nevada Economy and its Mining Industry"** (45 min)  
10:30am- **Presentation: Steve Hill, Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, "Building on Success – Next Steps for Nevada"** (30 min)  
11am-11:30am **Q&A Morning Speakers**

Thanks much.  
Alli

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 10:53 AM, Lassiter, Tracie <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Good afternoon Ms. Bennett:

Thanks! very much for your email. Acting Assistant Secretary MacGregor looks forward to speaking to the group on the morning of Sept 9th. Look forward to coordinating with Allison! Thanks again.

Best,

Tracie

On Thu, Aug 10, 2017 at 9:19 AM, Dana Bennett

<[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)> wrote:

Good morning, Tracie!

We're excited that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will be able to attend the annual convention of the Nevada Mining Association! As you know, the event takes place from Wed, Sept. 6 through Sat, Sept 9 at South Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Harrah's serves as our conference hotel.

I'm especially delighted that Assistant Secretary MacGregor will participate in our Saturday morning policy session. I'll ask that she plan to give about 20 minutes of remarks and then participate in a Q&A session with the other speakers. Because this policy session starts early on Saturday morning, she'll want to arrive by Friday, which means that she'll be able to enjoy the Chairman's Reception and Dinner on the shores of Lake Tahoe. On Saturday afternoon, following the policy session, we close out the convention with our Safety Awards Luncheon. We will reserve a seat for her at the head table. Of course, Ms. MacGregor is welcome to attend the entire convention if it fits in her schedule. I would be happy to ensure that she meets many of the mining executives and state regulators who will be in attendance.

Allison will contact you soon about all of the logistics, but please don't hesitate to let me know if I might provide additional assistance. I look forward to meeting Assistant Secretary MacGregor in a few short weeks!

Cheers,

Dana



**Dana R. Bennett, PhD**  
President

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

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---

**From:** Lauren Arends

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2017 12:05 PM  
**To:** SIO, Scheduling <[scheduling\\_sio@ios.doi.gov](mailto:scheduling_sio@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>; Dana Bennett <[dana@nevadamining.org](mailto:dana@nevadamining.org)>; Allison Isaia <(b) (6)>  
**Subject:** RE: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Thanks so much Tim, we appreciate your call today.

Tracie: I have copied our President, Dana Bennett, and our event planner, Allison Isaia on this email for planning purposes. We will be in touch very soon.

Thank you!

Lauren



**Lauren Arends**

Office Administrator

201 W. Liberty Street, Suite 300 | Reno, Nevada  
89501

[775.829.2121](tel:775.829.2121) | [vCard](#) | [website](#) | [email](#)

*Champion of Nevada's 21st-century mining industry*

**From:** [timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov)  
[\[mailto:timothy\\_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov\]](mailto:timothy_nigborowicz@ios.doi.gov) **On Behalf Of** SIO,  
Scheduling  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 09, 2017 12:03 PM  
**To:** Lauren Arends <[lauren@nevadamining.org](mailto:lauren@nevadamining.org)>  
**Cc:** Tracie Lassiter <[tracie\\_lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:tracie_lassiter@ios.doi.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: September 7-9, 2017 -- Nevada Mining Association's Annual Convention

Hello Lauren. Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me this afternoon. As we discussed, Kate MacGregor looks forward to joining you at this year's convention. Please coordinate directly

with Tracie Lassiter (copied) to work out logistics and details, and please let me know if our office can be of any further assistance. Thank you.

Tim Nigborowicz  
Office of Scheduling and Advance  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
[202-208-7551](tel:202-208-7551)

---

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Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Land & Minerals Management

1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

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(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

--

Allison Isaia  
Conference & Event Specialist  
(b) (6) cell

(b) (6)

--

Thanks,

Tracie L. Lassiter

U.S. Department of the Interior

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1849 C. Street, NW, Room 6615

Washington, DC 20240

(o) 202-208-6734

(f) 202- 208-3619

[Tracie\\_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tracie_Lassiter@ios.doi.gov)

# Conversation Contents

Fwd: DOI News Release: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report

**"Clutter, Stephen" <sclutter@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Clutter, Stephen" <sclutter@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 07 2017 14:41:06 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** BLM\_NV\_SLTEexpanded <blm\_nv\_slteexpanded@blm.gov>, BLM\_NV\_AllPAO <blm\_nv\_allpao@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: DOI News Release: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report

FYI - the report, the cover letter from BLM to Secretary Zinke and the memo from Secretary Zinke to the Deputy Secretary Bernhardt are linked at the end of the first paragraph. Steve



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

**U.S. Department  
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov

**News Release**

Date: August 7, 2017

Contact: [Interior\\_Press@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov)

## **Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report**

**WASHINGTON** – Today, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke received a report from the Department of the Interior Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) regarding possible plan and policy modifications to complement state efforts to improve Greater Sage-Grouse conservation and economic development on public lands. The report is the final product required by Secretarial Order 3353 “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” issued June 7, 2017. The report, the cover letter from the Bureau of Land Management to the Secretary, and the memo from Secretary Zinke to Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt are available [here](#).

"I'm thankful to all of the DOI team members as well as the bureau staff and the state partners who put in the hard work and time to develop this report," said Secretary Zinke. "I've directed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt to begin implementation of the recommendations and to direct the Bureau of Land Management, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and other offices in the Department, to immediately follow through on the short- and long-term recommendations."

In addition to officials from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of

Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest Service, representatives from 11 states that have sage-grouse habitat were involved in the creation of the document.

Secretarial Order 3353 aims to improve sage-grouse conservation and to strengthen communication and collaboration between states and the federal government. Together, the federal government and the states are working to conserve and protect sage-grouse and their habitat while also ensuring conservation efforts do not impede local economic opportunities.

In signing Secretarial Order 3353, Secretary Zinke established an internal review team that, among other things, evaluated both federal sage-grouse plans and state plans and programs to ensure they are complementary and explored possible plan modifications with local economic growth and job creation in mind.

###



--

Stephen Clutter  
Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-525-4736  
[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)

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# Conversation Contents

Fwd: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report

**"Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene)" <gseidlit@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Seidlitz, Joseph (Gene)" <gseidlit@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 07 2017 12:01:42 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Brian Amme <bamme@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report

Friends in NV.....

Gene Seidlitz  
ASLM Analyst-Liaison  
202-208-4555 (O)  
775-304-1008 (C)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Krauss, Jeff** <[jkrauss@blm.gov](mailto:jkrauss@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** Mon, Aug 7, 2017 at 1:32 PM  
**Subject:** Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report  
**To:** Michael Nedd <[mike\\_nedd@blm.gov](mailto:mike_nedd@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, BLM\_WO\_100 <[blm\\_wo\\_100@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_100@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Gordon Toevs <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>, "Feeney, Heather A" <[hfeeney@blm.gov](mailto:hfeeney@blm.gov)>, Michael Richardson <[mjrichardson@blm.gov](mailto:mjrichardson@blm.gov)>, Megan Crandall <[mcrandal@blm.gov](mailto:mcrandal@blm.gov)>, Beverly Winston <[bwinston@blm.gov](mailto:bwinston@blm.gov)>

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **U.S. Department of the Interior** <[interior\\_news@updates.interior.gov](mailto:interior_news@updates.interior.gov)>  
**Date:** Mon, Aug 7, 2017 at 1:24 PM  
**Subject:** Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke Statement on Sage Grouse Report  
**To:** [jkrauss@blm.gov](mailto:jkrauss@blm.gov)



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**U.S. Department  
of the Interior**

[www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov)

**News Release**

Date: August 7, 2017

Contact: [Interior\\_Press@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Interior_Press@ios.doi.gov)

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###





# Conversation Contents

## EMBARGOED Until Further Notice: Greater Sage-Grouse Report

### Attachments:

/61. EMBARGOED Until Further Notice: Greater Sage-Grouse Report/1.1 SO3353 cover memo\_final\_080317 (1).pdf

/61. EMBARGOED Until Further Notice: Greater Sage-Grouse Report/1.2 SO3353\_Report\_Final\_080317 (1).pdf

**"Mali, Peter" <pmali@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Mali, Peter" <pmali@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Mon Aug 07 2017 07:58:26 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** BLM\_State\_Directors <blm\_state\_directors@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Michael Nedd <mnedd@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>  
**Subject:** EMBARGOED Until Further Notice: Greater Sage-Grouse Report  
**Attachments:** SO3353 cover memo\_final\_080317 (1).pdf  
SO3353\_Report\_Final\_080317 (1).pdf

IMPORTANT: The attached report and cover memo are embargoed until further notice.

State Directors:

Attached please find a .pdf of the forthcoming report on Greater Sage-Grouse, which the BLM has prepared pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, "Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (June 7, 2017). Also attached is a .pdf of the cover memo.

The Department plans to release the report later today. As noted above, do not circulate this report until you receive permission to do so.

Please refer any media inquiries to DOI Communications (interior\_press@ios.doi.gov)

Peter Mali  
Acting Chief of Staff  
Bureau of Land Management  
Office: (202) 208-4586  
Mobile: (202) 503-7460

# Conversation Contents

Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

## "Toevs, Gordon" <gtoevs@blm.gov>

---

**From:** "Toevs, Gordon" <gtoevs@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 14:42:43 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
Michael Nedd <mnedd@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>, Johanna Munson <jmunson@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Linda Thurn <lthurn@blm.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell <mrugwell@blm.gov>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <jtague@blm.gov>, Stephen Small <ssmall@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Todd Yeager <tyeager@blm.gov>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, Yolando Mack-Thompson <ymackthompson@blm.gov>  
**To:** Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Angela Falwell <afalwell@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>, Buddy Green <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Frank Quamen <fquamen@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Howard Hedrick <hhedrick@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, "Jossie, Abbie" <ajossie@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Michael Stiewig <mstiewig@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Robert Jolley <rbjolley@blm.gov>, Sandra Leach <ssleach@blm.gov>, Steve Tryon <stryon@blm.gov>, Steven Wells <s1wells@blm.gov>, Tamala DeFries <tdefries@blm.gov>  
**CC:** Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5)  
**Subject:** passcode (b) (5) 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

Good Afternoon

As you have noticed from the meeting invite, the call tomorrow has been shortened to 30 minutes and will begin at 3:30 PM ET. The focus of the call will be an update on SO 3353. Please let me know if you have further agenda items. A big thank-you to you and your staff for all the great work on SO 3353 that has led to an on-time delivery!

Thank you  
Gordon

For more information about BLM Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring, see the [AIM Website](#) or [AIM SharePoint](#).

Gordon Toevs, PhD Soil Science  
Senior Policy Adviser, Sage-Grouse Implementation

Desk--202-208-6952  
Cell--202-567-1589

## Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>

---

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 22:21:21 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Matthew Magaletti <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5)  
passcode (b) (5) 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

Matt,

I'll be out of the office tomorrow. Can you attend this call? M

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Toevs, Gordon" <[gtoevs@blm.gov](mailto:gtoevs@blm.gov)>  
**Date:** August 3, 2017 at 13:42:43 PDT  
**To:** Michael Nedd <[mnedd@blm.gov](mailto:mnedd@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Kathleen Benedetto <[kathleen\\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kathleen_benedetto@ios.doi.gov)>, Brian St George <[bstgeorg@blm.gov](mailto:bstgeorg@blm.gov)>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <[cvocelka@blm.gov](mailto:cvocelka@blm.gov)>, Johanna Munson <[jmunson@blm.gov](mailto:jmunson@blm.gov)>, Jolie Pollet <[jpollet@blm.gov](mailto:jpollet@blm.gov)>, Joseph Stout <[j2stout@blm.gov](mailto:j2stout@blm.gov)>, Karen Kelleher <[kkelleh@blm.gov](mailto:kkelleh@blm.gov)>, Kathryn Stangl <[kstangl@blm.gov](mailto:kstangl@blm.gov)>, Kristin Bail <[kbail@blm.gov](mailto:kbail@blm.gov)>, Linda Thurn <[lthurn@blm.gov](mailto:lthurn@blm.gov)>, Mary Jo Rugwell <[mrugwell@blm.gov](mailto:mrugwell@blm.gov)>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <[jtague@blm.gov](mailto:jtague@blm.gov)>, Stephen Small <[ssmall@blm.gov](mailto:ssmall@blm.gov)>, Timothy Murphy <[tmurphy@blm.gov](mailto:tmurphy@blm.gov)>, Timothy Spisak <[tspisak@blm.gov](mailto:tspisak@blm.gov)>, Todd Yeager <[tyeager@blm.gov](mailto:tyeager@blm.gov)>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <[vaarmstrong@blm.gov](mailto:vaarmstrong@blm.gov)>, Yolando Mack-Thompson <[ymackthompson@blm.gov](mailto:ymackthompson@blm.gov)>  
**Cc:** Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Angela Falwell <[afalwell@blm.gov](mailto:afalwell@blm.gov)>, Anita Bilbao <[abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov)>, Buddy Green <[bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Frank Quamen <[fquamen@blm.gov](mailto:fquamen@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Howard Hedrick <[hhedrick@blm.gov](mailto:hhedrick@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, "Jossie, Abbie" <[ajossie@blm.gov](mailto:ajossie@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Michael Stiewig <[mstiewig@blm.gov](mailto:mstiewig@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Robert Jolley <[rbjolley@blm.gov](mailto:rbjolley@blm.gov)>, Sandra Leach <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Tamala DeFries <[tdefries@blm.gov](mailto:tdefries@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) passcode (b) (5) 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

Good Afternoon

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Thank you

Gordon

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Gordon Toevs, PhD Soil Science  
Senior Policy Adviser, Sage-Grouse Implementation  
Desk--202-208-6952  
Cell--202-567-1589

---

**"Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>**

**From:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <mmagalet@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 04 2017 09:07:04 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5)  
passcode (b) (5) 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

I will make sure to be on it Marci. Thanks.

Matt

On Thu, Aug 3, 2017 at 9:21 PM, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov> wrote:

Matt,

I'll be out of the office tomorrow. Can you attend this call? M

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Toevs, Gordon" <gtoevs@blm.gov>  
**Date:** August 3, 2017 at 13:42:43 PDT  
**To:** Michael Nedd <mnedd@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Kathleen Benedetto <kathleen\_benedetto@ios.doi.gov>, Brian St George <bstgeorg@blm.gov>, "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>, Johanna Munson <jmunson@blm.gov>, Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>, Joseph Stout <j2stout@blm.gov>, Karen Kelleher <kkelleh@blm.gov>, Kathryn Stangl <kstangl@blm.gov>, Kristin Bail <kbail@blm.gov>, Linda Thurn <lthurn@blm.gov>, Mary Jo Rugwell <mrugwell@blm.gov>, "Melvin (Joe) Tague" <jtague@blm.gov>, Stephen Small <ssmall@blm.gov>, Timothy Murphy <tmurphy@blm.gov>, Timothy Spisak <tspisak@blm.gov>, Todd Yeager <tyeager@blm.gov>, "Valori (Lori) Armstrong" <vaarmstrong@blm.gov>, Yolando Mack-Thompson <ymackthompson@blm.gov>  
**Cc:** Aaron Moody <aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov>, Angela Falwell <afalwell@blm.gov>, Anita Bilbao <abilbao@blm.gov>, Buddy Green <bwgreen@blm.gov>, Danielle Chi <dchi@blm.gov>, Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>, Frank Quamen <fqamen@blm.gov>, Gregory Shoop <gshoop@blm.gov>, Howard Hedrick <hhedrick@blm.gov>, Jamie Connell <jconnell@blm.gov>, Jerome Perez <jperez@blm.gov>, Jon Raby <jraby@blm.gov>, "Jossie, Abbie" <ajossie@blm.gov>, June Shoemaker <jshoemaker@blm.gov>, Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>, Michael Stiewig <mstiewig@blm.gov>, Raul Morales <rmorales@blm.gov>, Robert Jolley

<[rbjolley@blm.gov](mailto:rbjolley@blm.gov)>, Sandra Leach <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, Steve Tryon  
<[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Tamala DeFries  
<[tdefries@blm.gov](mailto:tdefries@blm.gov)>

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**Matthew Magaletti**

Nevada/California Sage Grouse Implementation Lead  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

---

**Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>**

**From:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Fri Aug 04 2017 10:11:12 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Magaletti, Matthew" <[mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5)  
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**Cc:** Aaron Moody <[aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov](mailto:aaron.moody@sol.doi.gov)>, Angela Falwell <[afalwell@blm.gov](mailto:afalwell@blm.gov)>, Anita Bilbao <[abilbao@blm.gov](mailto:abilbao@blm.gov)>, Buddy Green <[bwgreen@blm.gov](mailto:bwgreen@blm.gov)>, Danielle Chi <[dchi@blm.gov](mailto:dchi@blm.gov)>, Edwin Roberson <[eroberso@blm.gov](mailto:eroberso@blm.gov)>, Frank Quamen <[fquamen@blm.gov](mailto:fquamen@blm.gov)>, Gregory Shoop <[gshoop@blm.gov](mailto:gshoop@blm.gov)>, Howard Hedrick <[hhedrick@blm.gov](mailto:hhedrick@blm.gov)>, Jamie Connell <[jconnell@blm.gov](mailto:jconnell@blm.gov)>, Jerome Perez <[jperez@blm.gov](mailto:jperez@blm.gov)>, Jon Raby <[jraby@blm.gov](mailto:jraby@blm.gov)>, "Jossie, Abbie" <[ajossie@blm.gov](mailto:ajossie@blm.gov)>, June Shoemaker <[jshoemaker@blm.gov](mailto:jshoemaker@blm.gov)>, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>, Michael Stiewig <[mstiewig@blm.gov](mailto:mstiewig@blm.gov)>, Raul Morales <[rmorales@blm.gov](mailto:rmorales@blm.gov)>, Robert Jolley <[rbjolley@blm.gov](mailto:rbjolley@blm.gov)>, Sandra Leach <[ssleach@blm.gov](mailto:ssleach@blm.gov)>, Steve Tryon <[stryon@blm.gov](mailto:stryon@blm.gov)>, Steven Wells <[s1wells@blm.gov](mailto:s1wells@blm.gov)>, Tamala DeFries <[tdefries@blm.gov](mailto:tdefries@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Sage Grouse Implementation Check in (b) (5) [REDACTED]  
passcode (b) (5) [REDACTED] 3:30 PM ET, August 4th

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Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
(775) 861-6472

# Conversation Contents

A Great Big Thank you!

**"Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 09:12:04 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
BLM\_NV\_SNDO\_FTE <blm\_nv\_sndofte@blm.gov>, Alec Goicoechea <agoicoec@blm.gov>, Eric Boik <eboik@blm.gov>, "Evenson, Ronald (Rudy)" <revenson@blm.gov>, Paul Petersen <ppeterse@blm.gov>, John Ruhs <jruhs@blm.gov>, Steven Shaw <srshaw@blm.gov>, Stephen Clutter <sclutter@blm.gov>, BLM\_NV\_EYDO\_FTE <blm\_nv\_eydofte@blm.gov>  
**To:**  
**BCC:** "Cheryl (Cheri) Vocelka" <cvocelka@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** A Great Big Thank you!

All,

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Ely District Manager Mike Herder, Basin and Range Monument Manager Alicia Styles, EMTs Joe Lords and Ruben Rowe, and Archaeologist Harry Konwin coordinated visits to three separate locations in BARNM. They also facilitated meetings at those locations with the Nevada Attorney General, Friends of Gold Butte and Basin and Range, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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Great job everyone! 🙌•Marci and Paul

Marci L. Todd  
Acting State Director  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

## **"Evenson, Ronald (Rudy)" <revenson@blm.gov>**

---

**From:** "Evenson, Ronald (Rudy)" <revenson@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 10:05:38 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

Thanks Marci, that was a very nice note. :-)

Rudy Evenson  
Acting Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-223-3158  
[revenson@blm.gov](mailto:revenson@blm.gov) | [www.blm.gov/nv](http://www.blm.gov/nv)

Follow BLM Nevada on Social Media

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Flickr](#)

On Thu, Aug 3, 2017 at 8:12 AM, Todd, Marci <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)> wrote:

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Reno, NV 89502  
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Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

---

**"Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>**

**From:** "Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 10:34:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Todd, Marci" <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

Good job!!

John F. Ruhs  
Deputy Director, Acting  
Bureau of Land Management  
O - 202-208-3801  
C - 307-214-5271

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---

**From:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 10:35:41 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Ruhs, John" <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!



Sent from my iPhone

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Deputy Director, Acting  
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Office: 775-861-6590  
Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

---

**Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>**

**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 10:41:54 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Ruhs, John" <jruhs@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

At the SEC meeting. Pam (mostly) and I just covered the SO 3353 topic. Went well; there's obvious concern on a number of fronts including, how to incorporate new science, differences and similarities between WHBs and livestock and effects of grazing, and sufficient time for stakeholder review. JJ also asked about time frames and nexus to current lawsuits and associated plan amendments. M

I'll try to call Mark Hall on a break, or tomorrow morning.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 3, 2017, at 09:34, Ruhs, John <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)> wrote:

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Great job everyone! 🙌•Marci and Paul

Marci L. Todd  
Acting State Director  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
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Cell: 775-223-3703  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

---

**"Clutter, Stephen" <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)>**

**From:** "Clutter, Stephen" <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 11:06:01 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Todd, Marci" <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
BLM\_NV\_SNDO\_FTE <[blm\\_nv\\_sndofte@blm.gov](mailto:blm_nv_sndofte@blm.gov)>, Alec Goicoechea <[agoicoec@blm.gov](mailto:agoicoec@blm.gov)>, Eric Boik <[eboik@blm.gov](mailto:eboik@blm.gov)>, "Evenson, Ronald (Rudy)" <[revenson@blm.gov](mailto:revenson@blm.gov)>, Paul Petersen <[ppeterse@blm.gov](mailto:ppeterse@blm.gov)>, John Ruhs <[jruhs@blm.gov](mailto:jruhs@blm.gov)>, Steven Shaw <[srshaw@blm.gov](mailto:srshaw@blm.gov)>, BLM\_NV\_EYDO\_FTE <[blm\\_nv\\_eydofte@blm.gov](mailto:blm_nv_eydofte@blm.gov)>  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

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--

Stephen Clutter

Acting Division Chief, Public Affairs

U.S Department of the Interior

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Washington DC 2003

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C: 775-525-4736

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## Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>

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**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 11:08:16 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Clutter, Stephen" <sclutter@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

Thanks for letting us know. Rudy did a fantastic job! M

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 3, 2017, at 10:06, Clutter, Stephen <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)> wrote:

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## Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>

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**From:** Marci Todd <m1todd@blm.gov>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 11:08:58 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** "Evenson, Ronald (Rudy)" <revenson@blm.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

Thanks to you! M

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 3, 2017, at 09:06, Evenson, Ronald (Rudy) <[revenson@blm.gov](mailto:revenson@blm.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Marci, that was a very nice note. :-)

Rudy Evenson  
Acting Chief of Communications  
Bureau of Land Management - Nevada  
Office: 775-861-6629 Cell: 775-223-3158  
[revenson@blm.gov](mailto:revenson@blm.gov) | [www.blm.gov/nv](http://www.blm.gov/nv)

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**From:** "Clutter, Stephen" <[sclutter@blm.gov](mailto:sclutter@blm.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thu Aug 03 2017 11:51:09 GMT-0600 (MDT)  
**To:** Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: A Great Big Thank you!

Thank you, Marci. She very impressed with the whole team. I've been seeing all the trip material coming up from all the states for these visits, and Nevada's was by far the most comprehensive. See you soon!

Steve

On Thu, Aug 3, 2017 at 1:08 PM, Marci Todd <[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)> wrote:

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Great Basin Regional Prioritization Plan-*Internal BLM Only*  
Updated- September 20, 2017

The Great Basin Regional Prioritization Plan (Plan) outlines a strategic approach to evaluate and rank projects that protect restoration investments, maintain and improve quality habitat, and increase habitat extent and/or connectivity. The Technical Program of Work (TPOW) team developed a process that identifies regional geographic priority areas to assist in assessing and ranking a regional program of work for the Great Basin where fire and invasive species are the primary threats. Other expected benefits include:

- Providing a consistent foundation for regional prioritization of projects
- Facilitating cross-boundary project planning and funding
- Encouraging cooperation and communication with partners

### Evaluation Criteria

- Boundary perimeter and 6 geographic areas identified
- Foundational Prioritization Bins
  - **Spatial Criteria**
    - **Protect, Conserve & Connect = Conservation of Habitat Quality:** Breeding Areas, Habitat Management (Priority, Important, General) & Sagebrush Focal Areas, Resistance and Resilience, Sagebrush Availability & Connectivity
    - **Primary Threats = Restoration of Habitat Impacts:** Wildfire, Invasive Species, Conifer Encroachment, and Anthropogenic Disturbance
  - **Non-Spatial Criteria:** Adaptive Management Triggers, Project Phase & Complementary Location, External Funding, Proportion of HMA by State, and BLM State Priority

### Spatial Data Criteria

- Nationally consistent
- Reliable Level of accuracy
- Periodically updated (1-5 yrs.)

### Methodology

- Identify spatial data to inform conservation areas and habitat impacts
- Categorize spatial inputs (low, moderate, high)
- Assign values, sum inputs, and weight averages of spatial inputs
- Identify non-spatial criteria, categorize, and weight
- Develop formula and combine spatial and non-spatial components

### Outputs

- Spatially display priority areas at the Great Basin scale
- Final project prioritization and ranking calculation tool
- Reviewed, updated, and revised on an annual basis
- Transparent spatial and non-spatial criteria to evaluate and rank current and future projects

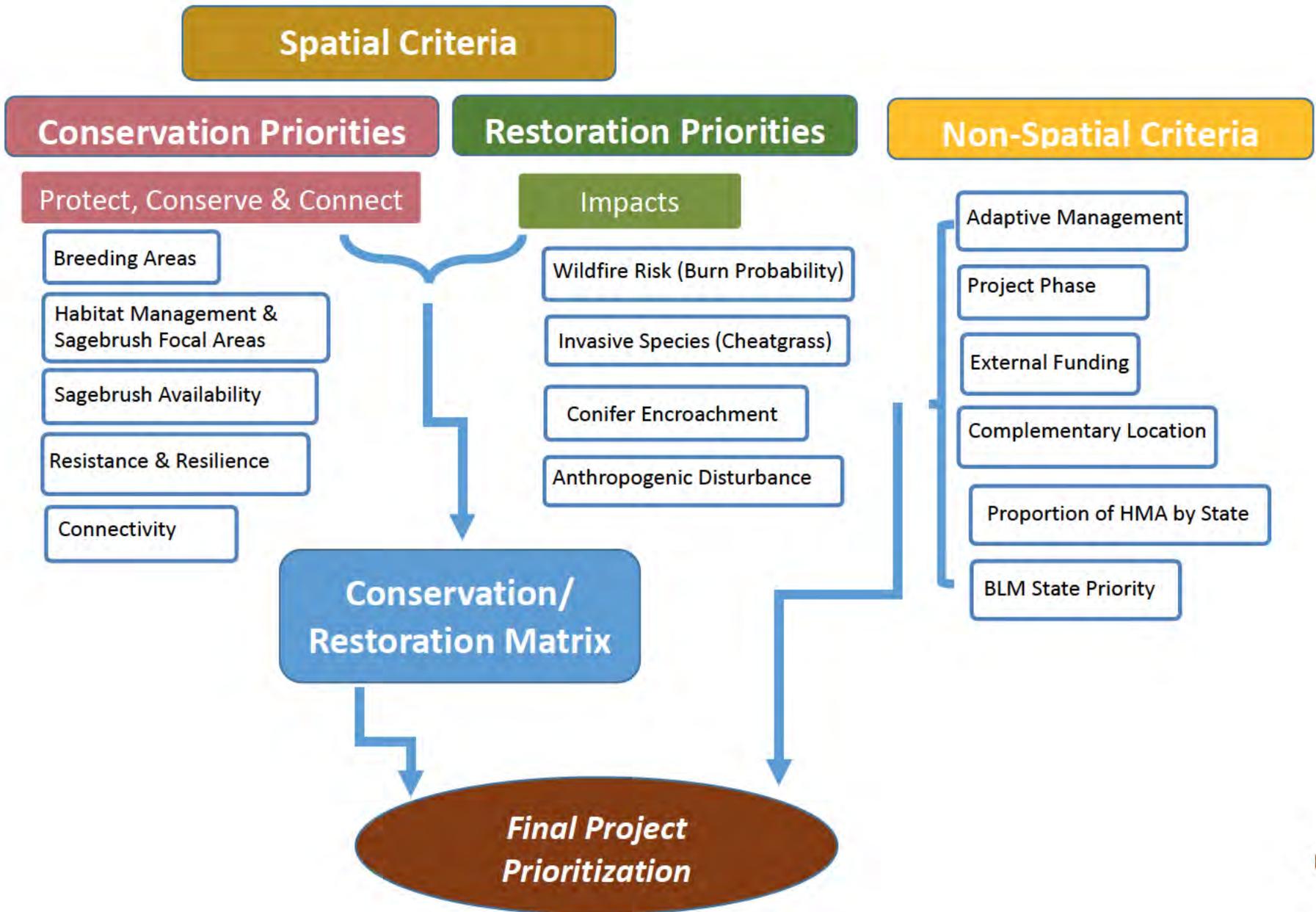
### Next Steps

- Provide webinar(s) for States on use of Prioritization Tool (Oct, 2017)
- Coordinate outreach with State/Federal partners and field offices and incorporate results into the Prioritization Plan (Nov/Dec, 2017)
- Draft direction and guidance to operationalize the FY19 Regional Prioritization Pilot (Nov/Dec, 2017)
- Pilot Regional Prioritization Plan and rank FY19 Great Basin IPOW projects using TPOW methodology (March/April 2018)

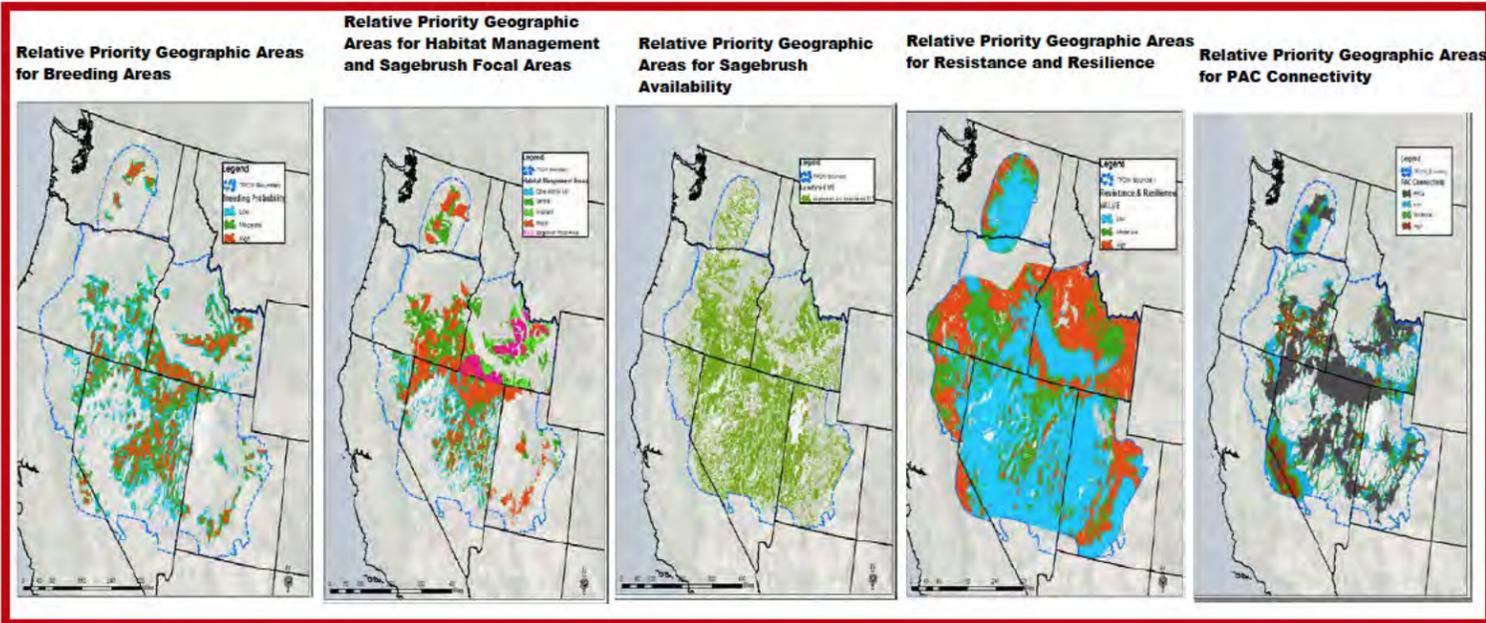
# Regional Prioritization Annual Process Calendar

		Annual Review of Adaptive Management Triggers									
				Field Level POW Development for outyear Projects							
				State & Regional Prioritization of POW for outyear projects							
Review TPOW Process & Data					DSD Final Brief & Approval Execs Brief & Approval for outyear projects						
	Inform Field Of Regional Priority Process					PTA Development for outyear planning			PTA Finalized		
	Regional Prioritization Plan Outreach and Partner Feedback								Annual Partner Project Coordination		
	Finalize Targets with WO (funding dependent)								Accomplishment Reporting		
OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP

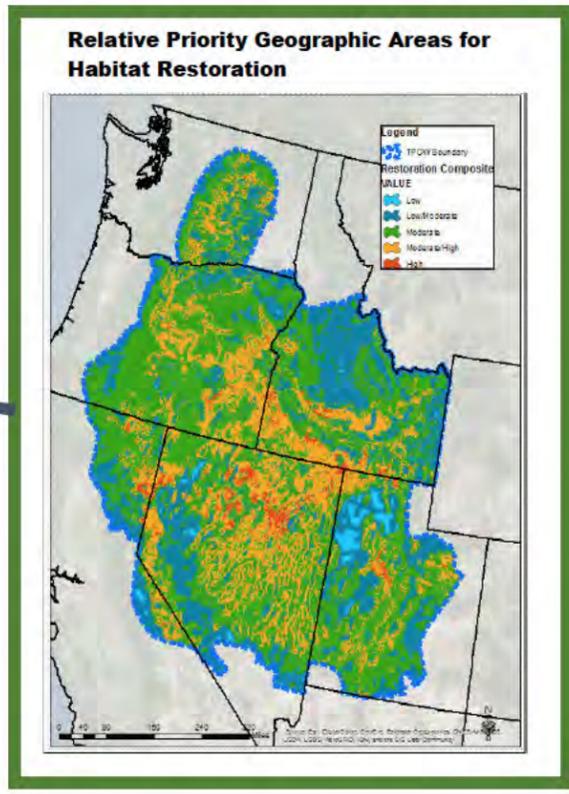
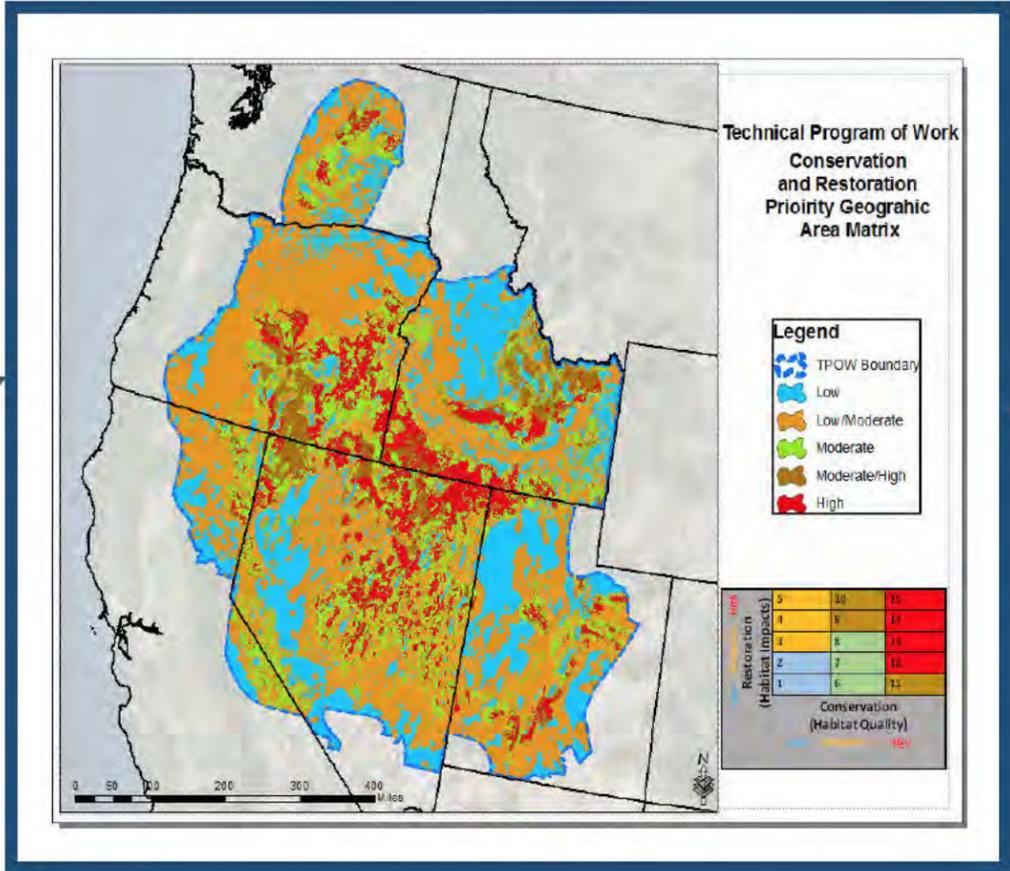
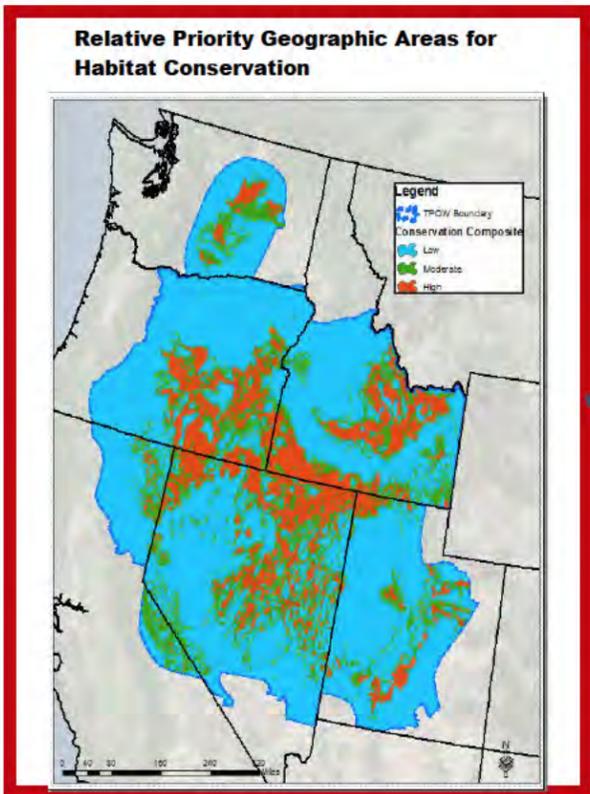
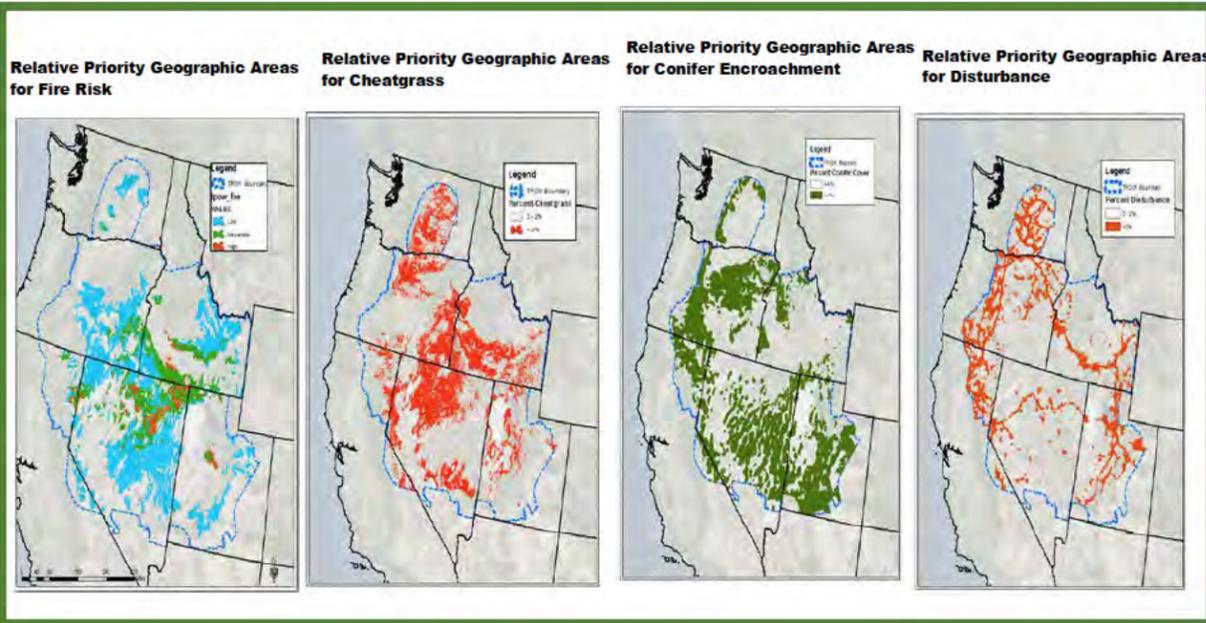
# Great Basin Regional Program of Work Process



# Conservation Priorities



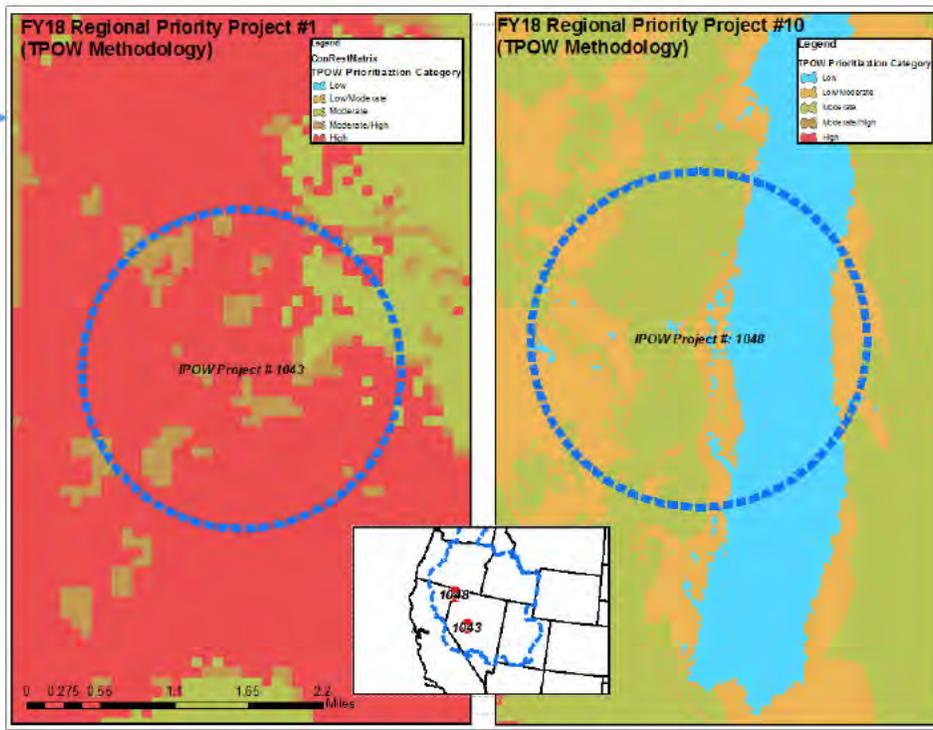
# Restoration Priorities



## Non-Spatial Criteria

Criteria	Criteria Description	Criteria Categories	Category Definition	Category Value	Value Range
<b>Adaptive Management</b>	The Sage-grouse Plan amendments provide BLM direction to prioritize restoration and protection activities in areas where triggers have been tripped. Therefore projects that occur in trigger areas and respond to triggers will receive a higher value.	Does the project occur within the area of a tripped trigger?	yes/no	No = 0/ Yes = 1	0-6
		Soft Trigger or Hard Trigger	soft/hard	NA = 0 / Soft = 1 / Hard = 3	
		Was the project recommended in the causal factor analysis?	yes/no	Yes = 1 / No = 0/ NA = 0	
		Is the project intended to respond to a tripped trigger?	yes/no	Yes = 1 / No = 0/ NA = 0	
<b>Project Phase</b>	Continuing projects where BLM has already committed significant resources versus proposed projects that have had little investment.	How many years are the project activities expected to span?	years	NA	0-6
		What year is the current FY?	number	1 = 0 / 2 = 1 / $\geq 3 = 2$	
		How many acres total will be treated by this project?	acres	NA	
		How many acres total will be protected by this project?	acres	NA	
		How many acres have been treated so far?	percentage of total acres	0 = 0 / $\leq 25\% = 1$ / $> 25\% = 2$	
		How many acres have been protected so far?	percentage of total acres	0 = 0 / $\leq 25\% = 1$ / $> 25\% = 2$	
<b>External Funding</b>	External funding suggests a collaborative approach with outside partners which means more on the ground results per dollar of BLM funds.	Is external funding anticipated for this project?	yes/no	Yes = 2/ No = 0	0-2
<b>Complementary Location</b>	Placing projects adjacent to complementary past projects increases the value of both. Projects adjacent to complementary projects will receive a higher value.	Would the proposed project increase the effectiveness of other completed projects in the area?	yes/no	Yes = 3/ No = 0	0-3
<b>Proportion of HMA by State</b>	The proportion of priority habitat within each State	Value for State based on the proportional percent of PHMA	proportion	CA 2% = 0 UT 8% = 1 ID 21% = 2 OR 23% = 2 NV 46% = 4	0-4
<b>BLM State Priority</b>	Local and State Office information is expected to be more refined than the regional prioritization criteria; therefore, it carries the most weight.	How did the State rank the project (1-10)	State priority	1-10 (subtracted from the sum of the first 5 criteria)	1-10

Example Projects & Priority Calculation						
IPOW Project ID	Project Title	State	Spatial Criteria Value	Non-Spatial Criteria Value	Regional Value	TPOW Regional Ranking
1043	FIAT_Desatoya PPA_Desatoya Mountains JC54	NV	11.24	8	19.24	1
1167	FIAT_Otis PPA_Otis Mountain	OR	10.18	9	19.18	2
1199	PHMA_FFO Southern Sheeprocks	UT	7.99	10	17.99	3
1006	FIAT_Panguitch PHMA (South Canyon)	UT	11.58	6	17.58	4
1227	FIAT_Shinn_PPA	CA	9.02	8	17.02	5
1282	FIAT_OwyheeNorthPPA_SOD A_Fuelbreaks	ID	7.56	8	15.56	6
1102	SFA_FIAT_Oneil PPA JA80	NV	10.98	4	14.98	7
1190	PHMA_FFO Sheeprocks	UT	8.92	3	11.92	8
1208	FIAT_12 Mile PPA_COIN_SBR_Twelve Mile	OR	8.12	3	11.12	9
1048	FIAT_Vya_PPA	CA	3.88	5	8.88	10



# FINAL DRAFT AGENDA

Great Basin Region Leadership Meeting **Version 9.19.17 V. 6**

Sept 27 - 28, 2017

Nevada State Office – Great Basin Room

Reno, Nevada

**T/C: 1-866-633-3076 LC: 6484685# PC: 5883697#**

## Purpose and Expected Outcomes

- Discuss progress and make decisions to update the Great Basin Region Implementation Strategy
  - **Regional IPOW Prioritization Plan** (finalize process for FY 19 projects)
  - **Programmatic EISs**
  - **Regional Support Teams**
  - **FY 17 Accomplishments**
  - **Budget**
  - **Communications Plan**
  - **Governance**
- Discuss status of 2017 fire season and impact on SG habitat
- Discuss status of SO 3353 Report Implementation, proposed GRSG Plan Amendment NOI and make decisions as appropriate
- Discuss status of efforts to utilize grazing management policy and tools to conserve sagebrush habitat and minimize risk of fire and invasives, and make decisions as appropriate

## **DAY 1** Wednesday, Sept 27, 8:00 – 5:00

<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> (10 min)		Tim & Marci
<b>Purpose of meeting, expected outcomes, schedule</b> (15 min)		Johanna
<b>Schedule and Meeting Process</b> (5 min)		Jeff
<b>GB Regional Prioritization of IPOW</b>	<b>INFORMATION &amp; DECISION</b> (30 min)	Johanna/Tim

Presentation – Bonnie Claridge (*add options slide*)

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (30 min)

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on development of Regional Prioritization Methodology, identification of Priority Geographic Areas across the GB, and incorporation of geospatial and non-geospatial data and values into the Prioritization Tool
- ✓ Reach agreement:
  - Regional Prioritization Process
  - Pilot the Prioritization Tool in FY 19 to regionally rate, rank and prioritize IPOW projects and conduct an after action review of FY 19 prioritization process to inform FY 20 and beyond
  - Communication plan to be used for external and internal outreach
  - Next steps (assignments and responsibilities)

**Leaders' Intent** (10 min)

Tim

**Boise Team - Programmatic EISs** INFORMATION (10 min)

Ammon Wilhelm

- Update – NOI, budget, scoping, communication, coordination
- Other assignments

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on progress of Support Team PEIS efforts, scoping plan and other coordination activities (internal communication strategy, etc.)
- ✓ Finalize next steps for internal data collection and coordination with respective States and cooperators

**Leaders' Intent** (5 min)

Tim

**Reno Team** INFORMATION (10 min)

Dave Repass

- Update – Regional Priority Assignments

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on roles, responsibilities and process for identification of regional non-PEIS assignments

**Leaders' Intent** (5 min)

Tim

**BREAK** (15 min)

**Fire Update** (20 min) INFORMATION

Howard

*QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (10 min)*

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on status of FY 15, 16 and 17 fire seasons and impacts on SG habitat

**FY 17 Accomplishments** INFORMATION & DECISION (30 min)

- FY 17 Project Accomplishments

Kathy S/DSDs/Gordon

*QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (15 min)*

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ DSDs report on FY 17 (L1110, 3100 or other funding sources) accomplishments for each GB state, describe types of projects completed and highlights, identify issues to be addressed
- ✓ Reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent regarding geospatial project information to be provided by states in advance of Regional Prioritization in spring and upon project completion
- ✓ Reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent regarding Accomplishment Reporting to be provided at the September Leadership meeting each year

**Leaders' Intent** (5 min)

Tim

- Status of BLM efforts to digitize project information

Howard, Steve, Dave

*QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (5 min)*

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on status of BLM efforts to digitize past, current and future IPOW project polygons, and reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent to

ensure that specific geospatial project information is available to timely inform budget and Regional Prioritization processes and Leadership decisions in the future

**LUNCH** (12:00 noon – 1:15 pm)

**Budget – INFORMATION & DECISION** (15 min)

- FY 18 Budget Update/Outlook Kristin/Karen/Gordon/ASDs

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report from WO on status of FY 18 PTA, CR, EOY Closeout, and FY 19 budget planning, and discussion with GB Leadership. Reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent on any actions needed

**Leaders' Intent** (5 min)

Tim

**Quarterly Communication Update** INFORMATION (5 min)

Johanna/Don Smurthwaite

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on Regional Communications support - Introduction Don Smurthwaite
- ✓ Report on progress, reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent to temporarily delay quarterly publication and revisit issue after October SGTF meeting

**Leaders' Intent/Next Steps** (5 min)

Tim

**Secretarial Order 3353** INFORMATION (30 min)

- Report Implementation & Amendment NOI Update
- State Outreach Meeting Update

Karen/Gordon  
SDs/DSDs

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on progress of SO 3353 Report implementation and GRSG Plan Amendment NOI and scoping - PM recruitment, project planning, BLM and SGTF October meetings, policy development, state-led meetings with stakeholders
- ✓ Reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent as appropriate

**Leaders' Intent/Next Steps** (10 min)

**BREAK** (15 min)

**Grazing Management, Fire and Fuels Strategies and Tools** INFORMATION (60 min)  
June & DSDs

#### QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ DSDs report on current proposals, assignments and efforts to modify/draft regulations, policy, information bulletins, guidance related to targeted/outcome-based grazing
- ✓ Engage in discussion to identify additional issues, communication challenges, tools and opportunities to address fire and invasives threats to sagebrush rangelands, and reach agreement and establish Leaders' Intent as appropriate

**Leaders' Intent/Next Steps** (10 min)

Tim

**End of Day Observations** (30 min)

Tim & SDs

**ADJOURN – 5:00 pm**

**DINNER/SOCIAL – 6:00 pm**

**Day 2 Thursday, Sept 28 8:00 am – 2:30/3:00 pm**

**8:00 – 9:30 am**

**Finalize Leaders' Intent, Decisions and Outcomes**

Tim & SDs

Regional Prioritization Plan

Regional Support Team Assignments

FY 17 Accomplishments & Geospatial Project Information

Budget

Quarterly Communication Update

Governance  
 SO 3353 Report Implementation  
 Grazing Management, Fire & Fuels Strategies & Tools

**Future implementation challenges** (10 min) SDs/Execs

**Final Summation and Comments** (10 min) SDs/Execs

**Next Meeting - Jan 2018** Johanna

**BREAK** (15 min)

**9:45 am**

**GRSG Field Trip – Virginia Mtns (10:00 - 2/2:30) (Lunch on Road)**

- Purpose, background, logistics, and schedule (15 min)
- Travel to and from site(s) (4 hrs)
- Depart at 10:00 and return between 2 and 2:30

Raul

**RETURN FROM FIELD TRIP 2:30 pm**

**TRAVEL - Thursday, Sept 28 or Friday, Sept 29**

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*[insert state billing code]*

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Bureau of Land Management**

*[insert Agency docket number/internal state budget code]*

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**ACTION:** Notice of Intent.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

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In addition, as part of this planning process, the BLM intends to consider how to address new policy directives and recommendations that apply to its management of Sage-Grouse habitat, including Executive Order 13783, *Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth* (March 28, 2017); Secretary’s Order 3347, *Conservation Stewardship and Outdoor Recreation* (March 2, 2017);, Secretary’s Order 3349, *American Energy Independence* (March 29, 2017); Secretary’s Order 3353, *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States* (June 7, 2017); and the August 4, 2017, report prepared by the Department of the Interior’s Sage-Grouse Review Team. In particular, potential amendments and associated NEPA documents may address mitigation standards, lek buffers, disturbance and density caps, adjustments to habitat boundaries to reflect new information, and reversing adaptive management responses when the BLM determines that resource conditions no longer warrant those responses. The BLM may also consider state-specific issues, such as the need for General Habitat Management Areas in Utah.

The BLM coordinated with the Sage Grouse Task Force to develop the SO 3353 report and continues to identify issues that warrant clarification or reconsideration. This coordination effort is continuing and will help to inform the BLM’s implementation of SO 3353 in each state. This notice and potential planning effort does not preclude the BLM’s ongoing efforts to address

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The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

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*[Insert title]*

AUTHORITY: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 43 CFR 1610.2

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The BLM coordinated with the Sage Grouse Task Force to develop the SO 3353 report and continues to identify issues that warrant clarification or reconsideration. This coordination effort is continuing and will help to inform the BLM’s implementation of SO 3353 in each state. This notice and potential planning effort does not preclude the BLM’s ongoing efforts to address

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The BLM will use an interdisciplinary approach to develop the plan amendment in order to consider the variety of resource issues and concerns identified.

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*[Insert name of signing official]*

*[Insert title]*

AUTHORITY: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 43 CFR 1610.2

DRAFT

**NOI – RMP Amendment (07 MAR 14). Federal Register notice must be double-spaced. Insert Blue Data information only, no modification to text of Template. Preserve Page Break on last page for maintaining signature line.**

*[insert state billing code]*

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Bureau of Land Management**

*[insert Agency docket number/internal state budget code]*

**Notice of Intent to Amend the Greater Sage-Grouse Resource Management Plan Revisions and Amendments and Prepare Associated Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) intends to consider preparing Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendments with the associated NEPA documents – Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) or Environmental Assessments (EAs) – to amend all or some BLM land use plans, that were amended or revised in 2015 regarding Greater Sage Grouse conservation, in the States of California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Montana (“2015 Sage-Grouse Plans”). By this notice the BLM is announcing the beginning of the scoping process to solicit public comments and identify issues, and receive input on whether the planning effort should occur through one national, two regional (Great Basin and Rocky Mountain), or state-by-state amendment processes and decision records.

**DATES:** This notice initiates the public scoping process for the RMP amendments with the associated NEPA documents. Comments on issues may be submitted in writing until *[INSERT*

*DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER*]. If your comments are specific to an individual State or region, please specify that in your comments.

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DRAFT

## State Director's Greater Sage Grouse Call

September 15, 2017 12pm

- AFWA Meeting Update:
  - USGS presented their Annual Sage Grouse Science Report.
    - <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/cir1436>
  - Intermountain West Joint Venture Web Portals (Sage West) was presented.
    - <https://www.partnersinthesage.com/>
  - Overall – states reported that sage grouse preliminary numbers are generally down in 2017.
  - BLM presented on our wildland fire season in GRSG habitat. 1.9 million (958k in NV) acres of sage grouse have burned.
- SO 3353 and NOI Amendment Update:
  - Plan to send a draft copy of the NOI (and Communications Plan) to the State Directors tonight and would like to have comments back by COB Tuesday.
  - Key principles as to why we are pushing out the NOI (Kathy Benedetto):
    - Address issues that were not considered in the NEPA documents tied to the 2015 GRSG plans.
    - 90 day settlement stay expires on October 4<sup>th</sup> and we need this NOI. Also, settlement in Nevada told us we had to do an SEIS– this will demonstrate to the courts that we are addressing plaintiff concerns.
    - Also a need to change some provisions
  - Timeline:
    - Working on NOI and Communication Plans
    - 9/19 – Comments from SDs are due
    - 9/22 – Bernhardt will get the NOI
    - 9/26 – DOJ will reach out to plaintiffs for an extension of the stay.
    - 9/29 – NOI will be shared with SGTF (currently scheduling a meeting with them). Looking for comments from them by October 4<sup>th</sup>.
    - 10/6 – 10/10 – Surnaming occurs
    - NOI publishes on October 16<sup>th</sup>.
  - We are doing 1 NOI, not 1 per state.
  - There will be 1 email address on the NOI for comments.
    - We can handle separate points of contacts for each state, but State Directors need to tell us.
  - We will have a SO 3353 National Coordinator and a national Amendment Planner somewhere in the West assigned in the near future. Detail notices are in development.
  - Scoping will be held between October 16<sup>th</sup> to November 16<sup>th</sup>. BLM States may be responsible for scoping meetings. We can extend the scoping period by 30 days.
  - No details, but may need a contractor to handle scoping comments and scoping report.
  - SO 3355 – Whether amendment EIS needs to be completed within one year in light of our participation requirements in our 43 CFR 1600 (Planning) regulations.

- Concern: How do we ensure outreach with local governments and counties are occurring and do not dominate scoping? Solicitors will be looking into this question: would engagement with counties before the NOI trigger a FACA concern?
- For October 10-12 States need to do the following:
  - Determine what can change for a plan amendment v. maintenance by 10/4 with our State Partners.
  - Outreach reporting from what we heard from Stakeholders by 10/6.
- Mineral Withdrawal:
  - Segregation expires on Sep. 21.
  - No news on Final EIS schedule.



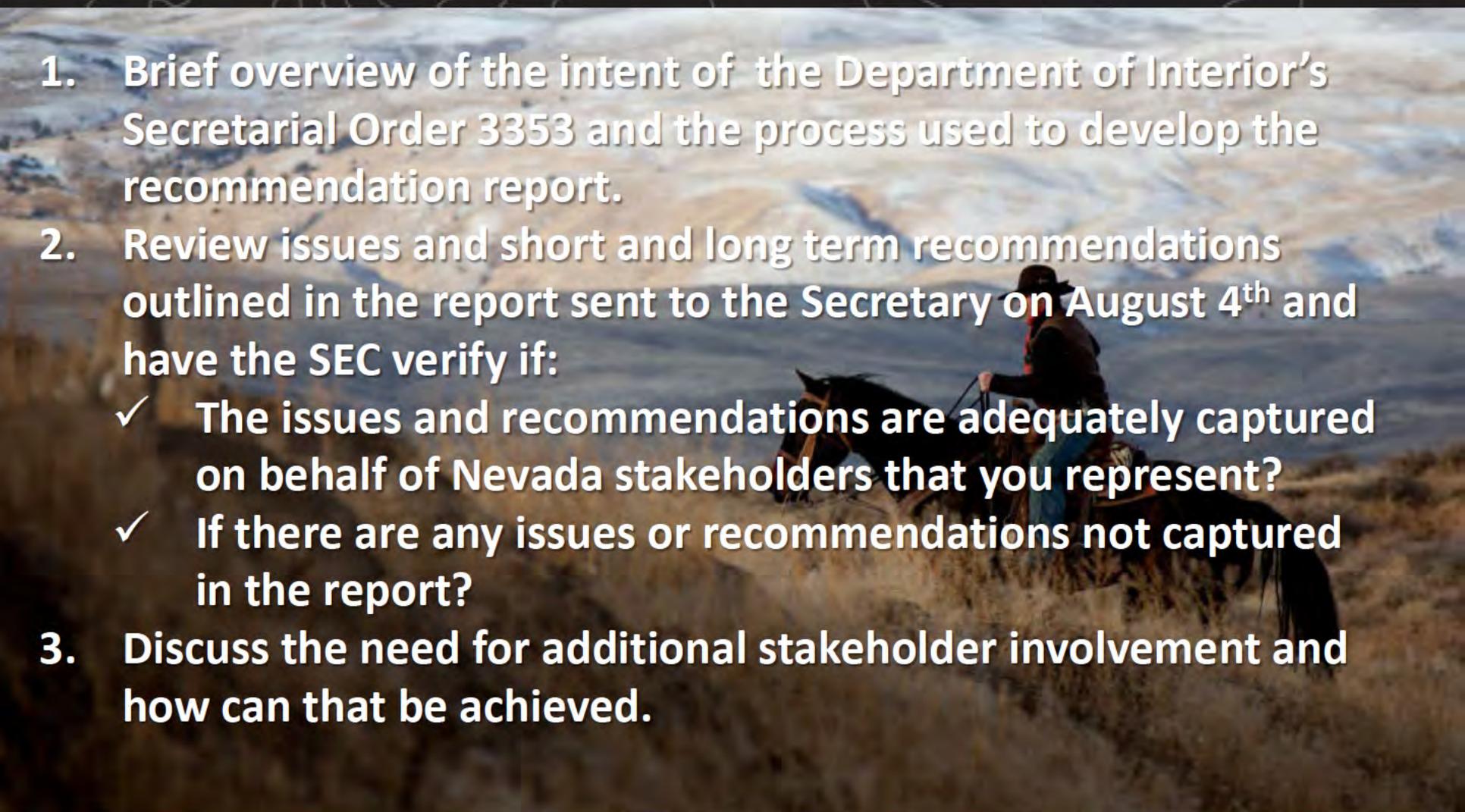
# Our Public Lands

Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Presentation

## **Review of Secretarial Order 3353 – *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States* Recommendation Report**

September 14, 2017

# Desired Outcomes

1. Brief overview of the intent of the Department of Interior's Secretarial Order 3353 and the process used to develop the recommendation report.
  2. Review issues and short and long term recommendations outlined in the report sent to the Secretary on August 4<sup>th</sup> and have the SEC verify if:
    - ✓ The issues and recommendations are adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders that you represent?
    - ✓ If there are any issues or recommendations not captured in the report?
  3. Discuss the need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved.
- 

# Intent of Secretarial Order 3353

- Establish a team to work with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to review BLM sage-grouse policies and plans:
  - To ensure they adequately compliment state efforts to conserve the species
  - To identify provisions that require short and/or long term modifications to give weight to the value of energy development on public lands.
- Examine issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire.
- Examine impacts on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands.
- Provide recommendation on captive breeding, opportunities to enhance state involvement, and the efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis.

Secretary Zinke's Directive: Provide a Recommendation Report to him by August 4, 2017.

# Process for Developing the Report

- June 7: DOI Secretary of Interior Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3353.
- June 16: DOI met with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input identified in the order.
- Late June: States, BLM, and Forest Service coordinated to identify State-specific issues with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans.
- July: Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.
- August 4: Recommendation Report was delivered to the Secretary. Shortly after, Secretary Zinke directed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt to begin implementing the short and long-term recommendations in the Report.

# Types of Recommendations and Acronyms

## Recommendation Types

### Short Term

Recommendations: policy changes or additions (Instruction Memorandums), clarifications, research to see what can occur through plan maintenance, and staff/partner training.

### Long Term

Recommendations: investigating potential targeted plan amendments.

## Acronyms

AIM: Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring

GHMA: General Habitat Management Areas

GRSG: Greater Sage-Grouse

HAF: Habitat Assessment Framework

IM: Instruction Memorandums

PHMA: Priority Habitat Management Areas

RDF: Required Design Features

SGTF: Sage-Grouse Task Force

WAFWA: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

WEM: Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications



# Topic Area 1: Oil and Gas Stipulations and Leasing

**Issues:** 1) Unclear if PHMA and GHMA already provide protection from fluid mineral development (negating the need for additional SFA protections); 2) Concerns with PHMA No Surface Occupancy stipulation's waiver, exception, and modification language; and 3) Differences between state disturbance cap calculations and those in the BLM plans.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Complete a state/BLM plan cross walk to determine if PHMA stipulations already provide enough durability within SFAs.</li><li>2) Work with states to develop new WEM language for PHMA (recognizing State's mitigation hierarchy) and determine if new language can be adopted through maintenance or an amendment.</li><li>3) Rescind existing lease prioritization policy and issue state specific policies/solutions.</li><li>4) Verify if the disturbance protocols are different between the State and BLM. Train staff/partners on what is considered disturbance, and accelerate restoration.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eliminate or remove SFA stipulations.</li><li>• Adopt new state-specific WEM Language.</li><li>• Clarify disturbance types and requirements.</li></ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 2: Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain

**Issue:** Inconsistent mitigation standards and confusion with the term “net conservation gain.”

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Clarification – define net conservation gain, as contained in the BLM plans.</li><li>2) Evaluate – State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of a net conservation gain.</li><li>3) Policy – consider options to use the State’s mitigation standard - if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the BLM plans.</li><li>4) Complete an MOU with the State on application of State’s mitigation approach and verify where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species. If the MOU does not address issues, develop new policy/MOU.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change net conservation gain standard to use State’s standard and evaluate the need for a plan amendment to comply with potentially new DOI mitigation policy.</li></ul>

### **SEC Discussion Items:**

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 3: Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives, and Effectiveness Monitoring

**Issues:** 1) Unclear how habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM, and HAF assessments are related and will be used; 2) Unclear how HAF is being implemented; 3) Need clarity how to use AIM data to determine plan effectiveness; and 4) Need to adjust habitat objectives tables to match the State's.

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Policy – Develop new policy on how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness; how to use existing data and legacy data (specifically during land health standard evaluations); and clarify the scales and the appropriate data used at each scale.
- 2) Training - Continue staff/partner training on use of AIM and HAF data.
- 3) Policy – Issue new IM to clarify purpose of HAF and its relationship to AIM and habitat objectives, how to prioritize assessments, and a statement that HAF should not just be used for grazing, but all public land uses.
- 4) Policy - Issue new IM to clarify the intent, purpose, and use of the habitat objectives table and flexibility provided and BLM's process to adjust objectives based on ecological site potential and state and transition models.

## Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Modify the habitat objectives in the BLM plan.

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 4: Adaptive Management

**Issues:** 1) Need for causal factor analysis once a soft and hard trigger is reached; 2) Need a reversion of hard trigger responses once conditions improve; and 3) Ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Policy – Clarify in a new (or modified) IM that causal factor analysis are required for soft and hard triggers and work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process.</li> <li>2) Investigate ways with the State as to how to revert a hard trigger response back to previous management once conditions improve.</li> <li>3) Work with states to develop a process to ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause for the population/habitat decline.</li> <li>4) Policy – modify existing IM (or issue new state-specific IM) to address advance coordination with States and partners before any adaptive management responses are employed.</li> </ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing reversion to previous management from a hard trigger response once population/habitat conditions improve.</li> </ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 5: Grazing

**Issues:** 1) Need to clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat; 2) Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing should be determined to be the causal factor prior to making changes to a grazing permit; and 3) Need to incorporate flexibility in allotment prioritization process.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Policy – Revise existing grazing IMs to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage quality GRSG habitat.</li><li>• develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus then place emphasis on problem areas.</li><li>• Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.</li></ul></li><li>2) Continue to pursue targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate ways to control fuels and improve habitat conditions.</li><li>3) Clarify that existing regulations allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</li><li>4) Training – to staff and partners on how permits are currently modified.</li></ol>	None at this time.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 6: Exclusion/Avoidance Land Use Plan Designations

**Issues:** 1) Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach; 2) Concern as to how maintenance and production activities for already authorized activities are being managed; 3) Mineral material sales (sand and gravel) closed areas; 4) Valid existing rights; 5) Misinterpretation of "avoidance;" and 6) Plans don't recognize State's guidance that some activities are "de minimis."

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Evaluate - Complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities compared to BLM land use plan designations.
- 2) Policy - Develop a new IM that clarifies that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed for in PHMA and GHMA.
- 3) Evaluate mechanisms to provide conservation while also accommodating the need for mineral materials sales in PHMA.
- 4) Provide clarification to staff and partners, so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights.
- 5) Policy and Training – Develop state-specific IMs that explain what avoidance means and how to apply avoidance criteria and provide training for staff on how to implement this criteria and where there is flexibility.
- 6) Investigate "de minimis" activities as defined by the States and determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval.

## Long Term Recommendations

Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:

- Adjust exclusion or closed boundaries or evaluate new restrictions for different uses based on local threats.

Develop programmatic NEPA documents to analyze impacts for tiering of future projects. And Identify categorical exclusions for "de minimis" activities.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 7: Required Design Features (RDFs)

**Issues:** 1) Need greater flexibility in using State-developed RDFs; 2) Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in NEPA; and 3) Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Clarify that the BLM plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to projects and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation.
- 2) Evaluate the need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of RDFs.
- 3) Training - Provide clarification that RDFs are not “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities. Also provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs.

### Long Term Recommendations

Plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in the State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 8: Lek Buffers

**Issues:** 1) Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development and 2) Need to clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for NEPA analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Provide clarification to staff and partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures and re-visit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffer distances.
- 2) Training - Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix should be used to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the BLM plans based on project-specific information.

### Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Adjust lek buffer distances based on new science and high quality information.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 9: Habitat Management Area Boundaries

**Issues:** 1) Sagebrush Focal Area designations; and 2) Need for flexibility to change PHMA and GHMA boundaries.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that underlay SFAs to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.</li><li>2) Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and their associated management actions to match revised habitat maps without having to conduct a plan amendment.</li><li>3) Develop policy on how to apply management actions, such as stipulations or land use allocations in areas where PHMA or GHMA do not match habitat maps.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove SFA designations and replace their management actions with those attached to PHMA or GHMA or modify only the SFA management actions.</li><li>• Align PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA (and their associated management actions) to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments to habitat management area boundaries.</li></ul>

## **SEC Discussion Items:**

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

### Recommended Additional Steps:

1. Continue to work on the ongoing Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy and the 2006 WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.
2. Support Intermountain West Joint Venture to implement a Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework – Sage West.
3. Support the development of the Western Invasive Weeds Action Plan.
4. Implement DOI's National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.
5. Support agreements between BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with landowners and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasives and wildland fire.
6. Explore options for shared funded positions and sharing fire equipment with local rangeland fire protection associations and rural fire departments.



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

### Recommended Additional Steps (continued):

7. Use good neighbor authority to promote the easy transfer of funds.
8. Promote increased coordination with Federal agencies and local governments.
9. Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding across boundaries.
10. Move to towards a risk-based funding approach at DOI.
11. Conduct research and implementation pilots.
12. Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuel breaks.
13. Work with other agencies to gain approval of concurrent EPA registration and field-testing bio pesticides and chemical herbicides to expedite this process.

#### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 11: Wildlife Management

## Recommended Additional Steps:

### – Captive Breeding:

- If pursued, efforts should use experimental designs to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge of data gaps to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction in the wild.
- Adhere to all relevant State laws and authorities for potential release and reintroductions.

### – Predator Control:

- Continue to communicate on outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the long term results.
- Conduct additional research into both non-lethal and lethal predator control techniques.

### – Population Targets and Species Management

- Support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range wide, state, and local population estimates.
- Develop a framework to assess sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve sage-grouse.
- Work collaboratively with States and Federal partners to develop new and improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ **Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?**
- ✓ **Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?**



## Topic Area 12: Science and Data

### Recommended Additional Steps:

1. Establish data sharing agreements between Federal, State, and local entities.
2. Maintain directory of data stewards and technical experts for all agencies.
3. Improve procedures for maintaining data in mutually developed catalogs.
4. Increase use of common communication tools to increase awareness of new data.
5. Establish minimum data standards for information in shared catalogs for use in agency decision making.
6. Identify multiscale spatial data units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information.
7. Continue to work with States and others to identify barriers to data sharing.
8. Work with States and tribes to explore ways to improve data sharing for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.

### SEC Discussion Items:

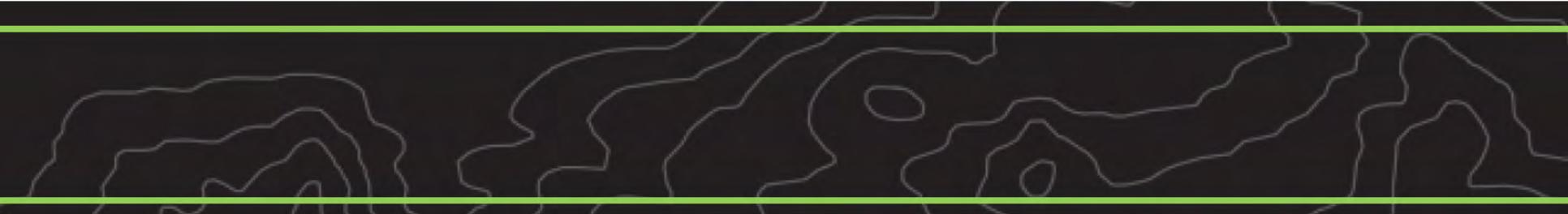
- ✓ Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?

**Discussion: Is there a need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved?**



## Next Steps

- **In coordination with the SGTF, hold discussions with counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration.**
- **Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated at the end of October 2017).**
- **Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented.**
- **For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG.**
- **Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).**



Thank you!

The image features a central landscape photograph of rolling hills at sunset. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The foreground is filled with dense, low-lying vegetation in shades of green and blue. The text "Thank you!" is centered in the upper half of the image. The top and bottom edges of the slide are decorated with a dark background and a light-colored topographic map pattern.

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**Kelly McGowan**, Program Manager  
**Daniel Huser**, Forestry  
**Katie Andrle**, Wildlife

**STATE OF NEVADA**  
**Sagebrush Ecosystem Program**

**SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL**  
**STAFF REPORT**  
**MEETING DATE: September 14, 2017**

**DATE:** September 13, 2017  
**TO:** Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Members  
**FROM:** Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team  
Kelly McGowan: [kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kmcgowan@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)  
Katie Andrle: [kandrle@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:kandrle@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)  
Daniel Huser: [dhuser@sagebrusheco.nv.gov](mailto:dhuser@sagebrusheco.nv.gov)  
Telephone: 775-684-8600  
**SUBJECT:** Staff reviews of S.O. 3353, Response, and the State's feedback to the Sage-Grouse Task Force

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**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this item is to provide the SEC with an overview of outstanding items where inconsistencies or discrepancies exist between the Order or Response and the State Plan.

**PREVIOUS ACTION**

Ms. Pam Robinson, Office of the Governor, provided an update to the SEC at their August 13, 2017 meeting relating to the State's actions and response to Secretarial Order 3353. She related that the State has participated in several federal Review Team meetings to present the State's concerns. Ms. Robinson expressed to the SEC the need for each member to collaborate with their constituents in order to provide additional guidance from the State's perspective.

**BACKGROUND**

On June 19, 2015 the SEC met to finalize their recommendations to the Governor's Consistency Review of the Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/FEIS. The Governor's Consistency Review is intended to allow the Governor to identify, provide recommendations, and if possible, work to resolve inconsistencies between the LUPA/FEIS and State or local plan, policies, or programs.

In June, 2017 the staff of the Governor's Office, BLM State Office, and USFS State Office reviewed the comments submitted during the Governor's Consistency Review

and revisited the Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA) and the State Plan to discuss and outline the significant differences within each of the Plans.

These documented inconsistencies were submitted to the DOI Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) and incorporated into the “Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353” dated August 4, 2017.

### **ADDITIONAL SETT REVIEW**

Inconsistencies between the State of Nevada and Federal Plans that were identified within the recent Consistency Review submitted to the Sage Grouse Task Force, but were not included within or appear to be insufficiently covered in the Sage Grouse Task Force Response (Response) to Secretary Zinke.

- Disturbance Caps
  - If fully implemented on all anthropogenic disturbances, the Nevada Conservation Credit System (CCS) would likely adequately address net conservation gain.
- Exclusion/Closed Land Use Plan Allocations
  - If fully implemented on all anthropogenic disturbances the CCS would likely adequately address net conservation gain.
- Mitigation and Consistent Sage Grouse Habitat Baseline Conditions – is covered in the Response but very open-ended.
  - All mitigation should use consistent metrics that are science based and equally rigorous to that of the CCS, to quantify both baseline disturbance and mitigation to achieve net conservation gain.
- Wild Horse and Burro Management – is covered within the Response in Appendix E despite its importance to the State of Nevada.
  - The State Plan encourages the BLM and Forest Service to implement the wild horse and burro management actions set forth in the ARMPA, consistent with the Wild Horses and Burros Act.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment 1:** SETT review of literature referencing Captive Breeding, Predator Control, Triggers, Population Targets, and Hunting.

# Wildlife Management – Overview of White Papers Provided by WAFWA

## Augmenting Populations

### Translocations

- Sage-grouse translocations have been attempted since the 1930s by wildlife agencies to augment populations
  - Approximately 56 translocations have been attempted moving around 7,200 individuals
  - Some success observed in Idaho, Utah and Colorado
  - Largely unsuccessful due to high adult mortality post-release, significant migration from release site (often back from where it was captured) due to high site fidelity, and females often have very low nest initiation and success rates
  - Selecting high quality site locations, those with natural boundaries to deter emigration, and artificial insemination or translocating females early during the lekking period increases chances of success

### Captive breeding and rearing

- Sage-grouse have been hatched, reared, and bred successfully in captivity
- Eggs collected from wild grouse are larger and have a higher chance of hatching
- Brood-rearing in captivity has not been very successful
- One study has looked at releasing captive reared juvenile sage-grouse to the wild
  - Chicks were younger than 5 days old
  - Chicks had a high adoption rate
  - However, locations of radio-collared females with broods are required to successfully release chicks to the wild, which results in small scale projects that are not feasible to scale up to large projects
- One study raised Gunnison sage-grouse to 5-7 weeks post-hatch and released to the wild, however they all died
- The number of wild collected eggs and number of captive or wild caught adults in captivity would be substantial, primarily due to higher mortality associated with captive (wild and captive reared) adult and juvenile sage-grouse, reduced hatchability, and reduced chick survival
- More research and technique development will be needed to establish an effective captive, breeding program for sage-grouse

**In conclusion, translocations and captive breeding and release have been successful but are going to face significant challenges if the underlying conditions causing population declines are not addressed in conjunction with these methods.**

## **Predator Control**

- Predator control programs can result in short term benefits, but unless constant control is established long term success will be limited
- Predator control during nesting season has been shown to improve nest success. In some populations this vital rate could be at a critically low level where predator control would be effective during this season
- Predator control following translocations may increase survival of translocated individuals due to their increased probability of depredation
- Likely to have significant public opposition to lethal predator control
- Long term application of the reduction of anthropogenic subsidies should be considered in tandem with other predator control methods

**\*Response to secretarial order focuses on how localized predation can impact small, isolated Sage-Grouse populations; however ravens can affect expansive, intact Sage-Grouse populations over larger geographic regions.**

## **Population Targets**

- Population goals typically used for species of economic importance (big game species), for conservation reliant species (endangered species with recovery plans), or when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand (game farms or release of game species such as pheasant or trout)
- A mixed population and habitat based approach is usually employed
- As sage-grouse are becoming a conservation reliant species, a population based management approach could benefit its management
- However, these goals could not be achieved without proper habitat management and restoration range wide
- This approach is only feasible if accurate population estimates can be obtained, and sage-grouse present a difficult species to obtain accurate population estimates
- Currently, research and modeling is being conducted range wide to develop a platform where state agencies can estimate population size. This is expected to be completed within the next year or two

## **Hunting**

- State's manage sage-grouse hunting conservatively
- Mortality from hunting is primarily compensatory and not likely to increase mortality rates as a whole for a given population
- Hunters are important supporters of conservation and a source of information when state agencies assess population dynamics from harvested birds

# Topics Specific to Nevada to Provide Additional Guidance to S.O. 3353

## Triggers

Coates, P.S., Prochazka, B.G., Ricca, M.A., Wann, G.T., Aldridge, C.L., Hanser, S.E., Doherty, K.E., O'Donnel, M.S., Edmunds, D., and Espinosa, S. 2017. Hierarchical population monitoring of greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in Nevada and California – identifying populations for management at the appropriate spatial scale: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2017-1089, 49 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20171089>.

- Hierarchical and spatially nested monitoring framework for estimating annual rates of population change ( $\lambda$ )
- Framework is structured to accomplish three objectives:
  - Allows for partitioning of local compared to regional effects; this can help identify the appropriate scale for management actions
  - Incorporates temporal thresholds, so multiple years of declines are required before management action is taken, this prevents random demographic stochasticity or inaccurate lek counts during a year
  - Quantifies the duration and magnitude of decline at the identified spatial scale; this will help inform when and where to apply actions
- Analysis based on a cluster lek analysis where populations are grouped based on landscape and climatic characteristics that influence spatial connectivity between populations
- Developed three scales: individual lek, a neighborhood cluster, and a climate cluster
- Used 17 years of lek data (2000–2016)
- Three step evaluation process: threshold, warnings, signals
  - Thresholds – describe population declines
    - Destabilizing – identify significant population decline at a particular nested scale
    - Decoupling – identify when rates of population decline at a local scale detrend significantly from median rates of population change at a larger spatial scale
  - Warnings
    - Slow or fast warnings activate if both destabilizing and decoupling threshold are crossed
  - Signals
    - When a temporal threshold is crossed – several consecutive years of warnings have occurred
- Results from Nevada analysis
  - Soft signals were activated across 17 leks and 7 neighborhood clusters

- Hard signals were activated across 5 leks and 0 neighborhood clusters
  - Sage grouse populations have declined by 3.86% annually over 17 years
- This approach aims to target management actions at the appropriate scale and guards against implementing actions misaligned with the size of disturbances driving local populations.
- Prevents misinterpretation of observed patterns as it accounts for both spatial and temporal scales where management may be unsuccessful

### **Lek Buffers**

The CCS provides full habitat function for habitat within 6km of a lek and extends out to 10km. This is based on research identifying that Sage-grouse breeding habitat is spatially tied to lek locations; the majority of females breeding on a given lek nest within 3.73 miles (6 kilometers) of that lek (Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Steering Committee 2008). However, a portion of the female population will move farther than 3.73 miles (6 kilometers) from a lek to nest (Holloran and Anderson 2005, and see Doherty et al. 2011). The HQT therefore modifies breeding habitat function based on distance to closest known lek as follows: map units within 3.73 miles (6 kilometers) of a lek receive a score of 1.0 followed by a decline between 3.73 and 6.21 miles (6 and 10 kilometers) from a lek, map units farther than 6.21 miles (10 kilometers) from a known lek receive a score of 0.25 (Figure 9). The distance to lek score is multiplied by all other local-scale attribute scores to calculate overall local-scale habitat function for breeding habitat. In addition, Coates et al. (2013) identified that about 90% of total space-use (Utilization Distribution) of sage-grouse in Nevada during all seasons was identified within 5km of leks. However, significant use exceeded 8km. They recommended optimal surface use designation to be between 5 and 7.5 km depending on the migratory status of the population.

## **Sage Grouse Review Coordination Call - September 8, 2017**

**Attending:** Kelly McGowan, Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Program; Jim Lawrence, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Pam Robinson and Sheila Anderson, Office of Governor Brian Sandoval; Marci Todd, Raul Morales and Matt Magaletti, BLM Nevada State Office; Bill Dunkelberger, Cheva Gabor, Kris Boatner, and Monique Nelson, U.S. Forest Service

### **Key Points:**

- BLM recapped the review process to date. The next step in the review is state-led stakeholder engagement. BLM has not set a timeline/deadline for stakeholder engagement.
- The Forest Service is participating in BLM's review, rather than conducting a separate review. The regional and Washington offices have asked that the Forest Service stay closely coordinated with BLM and the State.
- In Nevada, the Governor's Office will work with the Governor's Sagebrush Ecosystem Council to engage their constituent groups to answer three questions: whether the report adequately captures issues of concern to Nevada; whether issues are Nevada-specific or rangewide; whether additional stakeholder engagement is necessary.
- The next SEC meeting is Thursday, September 14, and a significant portion of the meeting will be dedicated to the review. At the August meeting, members were asked to engage with their constituencies. They later received a link to the report and the completed issue template for Nevada.
- At this time, review related to the BLM plan amendment should focus on the content of the DOI report, rather than the issues template completed for Nevada. Forest Service information is not included in the DOI report. SEC members can refer to the Nevada template for information on issues as they related to the Forest Service plan amendment. Bill Dunkelberger and Kris Boatner will be available at the SEC meeting to provide any additional information needed.
- The Governor's office has an expectation that SEC members will come to the September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting with constituent input and prepared to discuss the report. The expectation would be that the SEC would forward any broadly supported recommendations from the Council to the Governor's Office and the Governor would elevate these to WGA's Sage Grouse Task Force.
- Periodic additional coordination calls among the State of Nevada, BLM and the Forest Service are desirable.

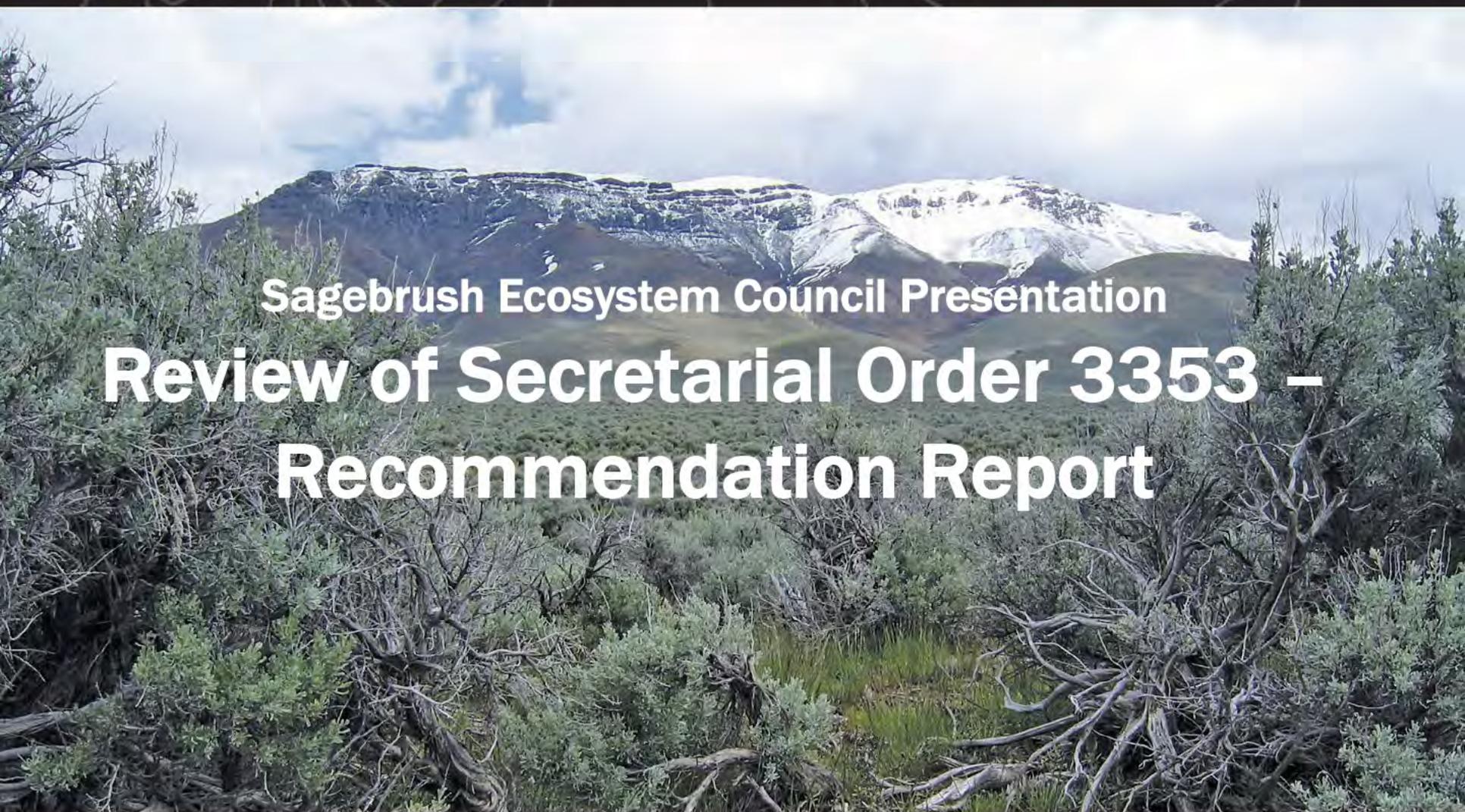
### **Action Items:**

- Kelly McGowan will resend DOI report, completed issue template for Nevada and instructions to SEC members as a package prior to the September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. **(complete)**
- Sheila Anderson will send the materials to Steve Lewis to share with the two Local Area Working Groups with upcoming meeting. **(complete)**
- We will regroup after the SEC meetings and identify a timeline for scheduling the next call. Cheva will coordinate.





# Our Public Lands

A photograph of a sagebrush landscape with snow-capped mountains in the background. The foreground is filled with green and grey sagebrush. The sky is blue with white clouds.

Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Presentation  
**Review of Secretarial Order 3353 –  
Recommendation Report**

September 14, 2017

# Desired Outcomes

1. Brief overview of the intent and purpose of the Department of Interior's Secretarial Order 335 and the process used to develop the recommendation report.
2. Review the short and long term recommendations outlined in the report sent to the Secretary on August 4<sup>th</sup> and have the SEC verify if:
  - ✓ The issue was adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders.
  - ✓ Is the issue and recommendation specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West.
3. Discuss the need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved.

# Intent of Secretarial Order 3353

- Establish a team to work the Sage Grouse Task Force to review BLM sage grouse policies and plans:
  - To ensure they adequately compliment state efforts to conserve the species
  - To identify provisions that require short and/or long term modifications to give weight to the value of energy and other development on public lands.
- Examine issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire.
- Examine impacts on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands.
- Provide recommendation on captive breeding, opportunities to enhance state involvement, and the efficacy of target populated on a State-by-State basis

Secretary Zinke's Directive: Provide a Recommendation Report to him by August 4, 2017.

# Process for Developing the Report

- June 7: DOI Secretary of Interior Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3353.
- June 16: DOI met with the Sage Grouse Task Force to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input identified in the order.
- Late June: States, BLM, and Forest Service coordinated to identify State-specific issues with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans.
- July: Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.
- August 4: Recommendation Report was delivered to the Secretary. Shortly after, Secretary Zinke directed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt to begin implementing the short and long-term recommendations in the Report.

# Types of Recommendations and Acronyms

## Recommendation Types

### Short Term

Recommendations: policy changes or additions (Instruction Memorandums), clarifications, research to see what can occur through plan maintenance, and staff/partner training.

### Long Term

Recommendations: investigating potential targeted plan amendments.

## Acronyms

SGTF: Sage Grouse Task Force

WAFWA: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

WEM: Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications

PHMA: Priority Habitat Management Areas

GHMA: General Habitat Management Areas

IM: Instruction Memorandums

AIM: Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring

HAF: Habitat Assessment Framework



# Topic Area 1: Oil and Gas Stipulations and Leasing

**Issues:** 1) Unclear if PHMA and GHMA already provide protection from fluid mineral development (negating the need for SFAs); 2) Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) No Surface Occupancy stipulation's waiver, exception, and modification language; and 3) Differences between state disturbance cap calculations and those in the BLM plans.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Complete a state/BLM plan cross walk to determine if PHMA stipulations already provide enough durability within SFAs.</li><li>2) Work with states to develop new WEM language for PHMA (recognizing State's mitigation hierarchy) and determine if new language can be adopted through maintenance or an amendment.</li><li>3) Rescind existing lease prioritization policy and issue state specific policies/solutions.</li><li>4) Verify if there disturbance protocols are different between the State and BLM. Train staff/partners on what is considered disturbance, and accelerate restoration.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eliminate or remove SFA stipulations.</li><li>• Adopt new state-specific WEM Language.</li><li>• Clarify disturbance types and requirements.</li></ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



## Topic Area 2: Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain

**Issue:** Inconsistent mitigation standards and confusion with the term “net conservation gain.”

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Clarification – define net conservation gain, as contained in the BLM plans.</li><li>2) Evaluate – State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of a net conservation gain.</li><li>3) Policy – consider options to use the State’s mitigation standard - if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the BLM plans.</li><li>4) Complete an MOU with the State on application of State’s mitigation approach (already completed for Nevada) and verify where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species. If the MOU does not address issues, develop new policy/MOU.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Change net conservation gain standard to use state’s standard and evaluate the need for a plan amendment to comply with potentially new DOI mitigation policy.</li></ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



# Topic Area 3: Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives, and Effectiveness Monitoring

**Issues:** 1) Unclear how habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM, and HAF assessments are related and will be used; 2) Unclear how HAF is being implemented; 3) need clarity on how to use plan effectiveness (AIM data); and 4) need to adjust habitat objectives tables.

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Policy – Develop new policy on how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness; how to use existing data and legacy data (specifically during land health standard evaluations); and clarify the scales and the appropriate data used at each sale.
- 2) Training - Continue staff/partner training on use of AIM and HAF.
- 3) Policy – Issue new IM to clarify purpose of HAF and its relationship to AIM and habitat objectives, how to prioritize assessments, and a statement that HAF should not just be used for grazing, but all public land uses.
- 4) Policy - Issue new IM to clarify the intent, purpose, and use of the habitat objectives table and flexibility provided and BLM's process to adjust objectives based on ecological site potential.

## Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Continue research on habitat requirements, if new science changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided, consider an amendment to modify the habitat objectives in the plan.

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



# Topic Area 4: Adaptive Management

**Issues:** 1) Need for causal factor analysis once a soft and hard trigger is reached; 2) Need a reversion of hard trigger responses once conditions improve; and 3) Ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Policy – Clarify in a new IM that causal factor analysis are required for soft and hard triggers and work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process.</li> <li>2) Investigate ways with the State as to how to revert a hard trigger response back to previous management once conditions improve.</li> <li>3) Work with states to develop a process to ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause for the population/habitat decline.</li> <li>4) Policy – modify existing IM (or issue new state-specific IM) to address advance coordination with States and partners before any adaptive management responses are to take place.</li> </ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing reversion to previous management from a hard trigger response once population/habitat conditions improve.</li> </ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



## Topic Area 5: Grazing

**Issues:** 1) Need to clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat; 2) causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing should be determined to be the causal factor prior to making changes to a grazing permit; and 3) Need to incorporate flexibility in allotment prioritization process (currently SFA focus).

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Policy – Revise existing grazing IMs to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage quality GRSG habitat.</li><li>• develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</li><li>• Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.</li></ul></li><li>2) Continue to pursue targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate ways to control fuels and improve habitat conditions.</li><li>3) Clarify that existing regulations allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability</li><li>4) Training – provide training on how permits are currently modified.</li></ol>	None at this time.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



# Topic Area 6: Exclusion/Avoidance Land Use Plan Designations

**Issues:** 1) Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach; 2) Maintenance and production activities; 3) Mineral material sales (sand and gravel) closed areas; 4) Valid existing rights; 5) Misinterpretation of "avoidance;" and 6) Plans don't recognize State's guidance that some activities are "de minimis."

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities compared to BLM land use plan designations.</li><li>2) Policy - Develop a new IM that clarifies that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed for in PHMA and GHMA.</li><li>3) Evaluate mechanisms to provide conservation while also accommodating the need for mineral materials sales in PHMA.</li><li>4) Provide clarification to staff and partners, so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights.</li><li>5) Policy and Training – Develop state-specific IMs that explain what avoidance means and how to apply avoidance criteria and provide training for staff on how to implement this criteria and where there is flexibility.</li><li>6) Further investigate "de minimis" activities as defined by the States and determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval of activities.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adjust exclusion or closed boundaries or evaluate new restrictions for different uses based on local threats.</li></ul> <p>Develop programmatic NEPA documents to analyze impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identify categorical exclusions for "de minimis" activities.</p>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



## Topic Area 7: Required Design Features (RDFs)

**Issues:** 1) Need greater flexibility in using State-developed RDFs; 2) Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in NEPA; and 3) Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Clarify that the BLM plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to projects and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation.
- 2) Evaluate the need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of RDFs.
- 3) Training - Provide clarification that RDFs are not “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities. Also provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs.

### Long Term Recommendations

Plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in the State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



## Topic Area 8: Lek Buffers

**Issues:** 1) Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development and 2) Need to clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for NEPA analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Provide clarification to staff and partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures and re-visit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffer distances.
- 2) Training - Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix should be used to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the BLM plans based on project-specific information.

### Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Adjust lek buffer distances based on new science and high quality information.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



# Topic Area 9: Habitat Management Area Boundaries

**Issues:** 1) Sagebrush Focal Area designations; and 2) Need for flexibility to change PHMA and GHMA boundaries.

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that underline SFAs to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.
- 2) Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and their associated management actions to match revised habitat maps without having to conduct a plan amendment.
- 3) Develop policy on how to apply management actions, such as stipulations or land use allocations in areas where PHMA or GHMA do not match habitat maps.

## Long Term Recommendations

Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:

- Remove SFA designations and replace their underlined management actions with the underlined habitat types (PHMA or GHMA) or modify only the SFA management actions.
- Align PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA (and their associated management actions) to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments to habitat management area boundaries.

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Issues and recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable to all sage grouse plans in the West?



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

- Recommended Additional Steps:
  - Continue to work on the ongoing “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy and Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”
  - Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement a Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework – Sage West.
  - Support the development of the Western Invasive Weeds Action Plan.
  - Implement the National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.
  - Support agreements between BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with landowners and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasives and wildland fire.
  - Explore options for shared funded positions and sharing fire equipment with local rangeland fire protection associations and rural fire departments.



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

- Recommended Additional Steps (continued):
  - Expand good neighbor authority uses.
  - Promote increased coordination with Federal agencies and local governments.
  - Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding across boundaries.
  - Move to towards a risk-based funding approach at DOI.
  - Conduct research and implementation pilots.
  - Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.
  - Work with other agencies to gain approval of concurrent EPA registration and field-testing bio pesticides and chemical herbicides to expedite this process.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable throughout the West?



## Topic Area 11: Wildlife Management

- Recommended Additional Steps:

- Captive Breeding:

- If pursued, efforts should use experimental designs to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge of data gaps to effectively rear sage grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction in the wild.
- Adhere to all relevant State laws and authorities for potential release and reintroductions.

- Predator Control:

- Continue to communicate on outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the long term results.
- Conduct additional research into both non-lethal and lethal predator control techniques.

- Population Targets and Species Management

- Support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range wide, state, and local population estimates.
- Develop a framework to assess sage grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve sage grouse.
- Work collaboratively with States and Federal partners to develop new and improve existing processes to evaluate sage grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable throughout the West?



## Topic Area 12: Science and Data

- **Recommended Additional Steps:**

- Establish data sharing agreements between Federal, State, tribal, and other entities.
- Maintain directory of data stewards and technical experts for all agencies.
- Improve procedures for maintaining data in mutually developed catalogs.
- Increase use of common communication tools to increase awareness of new data.
- Establish minimum data standards for information in shared catalogs for use in agency decision making.
- Identify multiscale spatial data units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information.
- Continue to work with States and others to identify barriers to data sharing.
- Work with States and tribes to explore ways to improve data sharing for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.

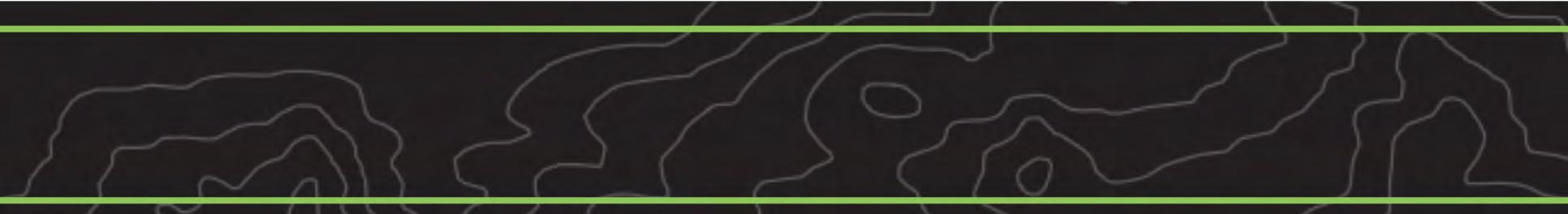
### **SEC Discussion Items:**

- ✓ **Recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?**
- ✓ **Recommendations specific to only Nevada, or globally applicable throughout the West?**

**Discussion: Is there a need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved?**



- **In coordination with the SGTF, hold discussions with counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration.**
- **Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated at the end of October 2017).**
- **Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented.**
- **For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG.**
- **Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).**



Thank you!

The image features a central landscape photograph of rolling hills at sunset. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The foreground is filled with dense, low-lying vegetation in shades of green and blue. The text "Thank you!" is centered in the upper half of the image. The top and bottom edges of the slide are decorated with a dark background and a light-colored topographic map pattern.



# Our Public Lands

Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Presentation

## **Review of Secretarial Order 3353 – *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States* Recommendation Report**

September 14, 2017

# Desired Outcomes

1. Brief overview of the intent of the Department of Interior's Secretarial Order 3353 and the process used to develop the recommendation report.
2. Review issues and short and long term recommendations outlined in the report sent to the Secretary on August 4<sup>th</sup> and have the SEC verify if:
  - ✓ The issues and recommendations are adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders that you represent?
  - ✓ If there are any issues or recommendations not captured in the report?
3. Discuss the need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved.

# Intent of Secretarial Order 3353

- Establish a team to work with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to review BLM sage-grouse policies and plans:
  - To ensure they adequately compliment state efforts to conserve the species
  - To identify provisions that require short and/or long term modifications to give weight to the value of energy development on public lands.
- Examine issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire.
- Examine impacts on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands.
- Provide recommendation on captive breeding, opportunities to enhance state involvement, and the efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis.

Secretary Zinke's Directive: Provide a Recommendation Report to him by August 4, 2017.

# Process for Developing the Report

- June 7: DOI Secretary of Interior Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3353.
- June 16: DOI met with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input identified in the order.
- Late June: States, BLM, and Forest Service coordinated to identify State-specific issues with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans.
- July: Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.
- August 4: Recommendation Report was delivered to the Secretary. Shortly after, Secretary Zinke directed Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt to begin implementing the short and long-term recommendations in the Report.

# Types of Recommendations and Acronyms

## Recommendation Types

### Short Term

Recommendations: policy changes or additions (Instruction Memorandums), clarifications, research to see what can occur through plan maintenance, and staff/partner training.

### Long Term

Recommendations: investigating potential targeted plan amendments.

## Acronyms

AIM: Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring

GHMA: General Habitat Management Areas

GRSG: Greater Sage-Grouse

HAF: Habitat Assessment Framework

IM: Instruction Memorandums

PHMA: Priority Habitat Management Areas

RDF: Required Design Features

SGTF: Sage-Grouse Task Force

WAFWA: Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

WEM: Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications



# Topic Area 1: Oil and Gas Stipulations and Leasing

**Issues:** 1) Unclear if PHMA and GHMA already provide protection from fluid mineral development (negating the need for additional SFA protections); 2) Concerns with PHMA No Surface Occupancy stipulation's waiver, exception, and modification language; and 3) Differences between state disturbance cap calculations and those in the BLM plans.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Complete a state/BLM plan cross walk to determine if PHMA stipulations already provide enough durability within SFAs.</li><li>2) Work with states to develop new WEM language for PHMA (recognizing State's mitigation hierarchy) and determine if new language can be adopted through maintenance or an amendment.</li><li>3) Rescind existing lease prioritization policy and issue state specific policies/solutions.</li><li>4) Verify if the disturbance protocols are different between the State and BLM. Train staff/partners on what is considered disturbance, and accelerate restoration.</li></ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eliminate or remove SFA stipulations.</li><li>• Adopt new state-specific WEM Language.</li><li>• Clarify disturbance types and requirements.</li></ul>

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 2: Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain

**Issue:** Inconsistent mitigation standards and confusion with the term “net conservation gain.”

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Clarification – define net conservation gain, as contained in the BLM plans.
- 2) Evaluate – State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of a net conservation gain.
- 3) Policy – consider options to use the State’s mitigation standard - if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the BLM plans.
- 4) Complete an MOU with the State on application of State’s mitigation approach and verify where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species. If the MOU does not address issues, develop new policy/MOU.

### Long Term Recommendations

Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:

- Change net conservation gain standard to use State’s standard and evaluate the need for a plan amendment to comply with potentially new DOI mitigation policy.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 3: Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives, and Effectiveness Monitoring

**Issues:** 1) Unclear how habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM, and HAF assessments are related and will be used; 2) Unclear how HAF is being implemented; 3) Need clarity how to use AIM data to determine plan effectiveness; and 4) Need to adjust habitat objectives tables to match the State's.

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Policy – Develop new policy on how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness; how to use existing data and legacy data (specifically during land health standard evaluations); and clarify the scales and the appropriate data used at each scale.
- 2) Training - Continue staff/partner training on use of AIM and HAF data.
- 3) Policy – Issue new IM to clarify purpose of HAF and its relationship to AIM and habitat objectives, how to prioritize assessments, and a statement that HAF should not just be used for grazing, but all public land uses.
- 4) Policy - Issue new IM to clarify the intent, purpose, and use of the habitat objectives table and flexibility provided and BLM's process to adjust objectives based on ecological site potential and state and transition models.

## Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Modify the habitat objectives in the BLM plan.

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 4: Adaptive Management

**Issues:** 1) Need for causal factor analysis once a soft and hard trigger is reached; 2) Need a reversion of hard trigger responses once conditions improve; and 3) Ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Policy – Clarify in a new (or modified) IM that causal factor analysis are required for soft and hard triggers and work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process.</li> <li>2) Investigate ways with the State as to how to revert a hard trigger response back to previous management once conditions improve.</li> <li>3) Work with states to develop a process to ensure hard trigger responses are pertinent to the cause for the population/habitat decline.</li> <li>4) Policy – modify existing IM (or issue new state-specific IM) to address advance coordination with States and partners before any adaptive management responses are employed.</li> </ol>	<p>Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider allowing reversion to previous management from a hard trigger response once population/habitat conditions improve.</li> </ul>

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 5: Grazing

**Issues:** 1) Need to clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat; 2) Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing should be determined to be the causal factor prior to making changes to a grazing permit; and 3) Need to incorporate flexibility in allotment prioritization process.

Short Term Recommendations	Long Term Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Policy – Revise existing grazing IMs to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clearly articulate that proper grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage quality GRSG habitat.</li><li>• develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus then place emphasis on problem areas.</li><li>• Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.</li></ul></li><li>2) Continue to pursue targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate ways to control fuels and improve habitat conditions.</li><li>3) Clarify that existing regulations allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</li><li>4) Training – to staff and partners on how permits are currently modified.</li></ol>	None at this time.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 6: Exclusion/Avoidance Land Use Plan Designations

**Issues:** 1) Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach; 2) Concern as to how maintenance and production activities for already authorized activities are being managed; 3) Mineral material sales (sand and gravel) closed areas; 4) Valid existing rights; 5) Misinterpretation of "avoidance;" and 6) Plans don't recognize State's guidance that some activities are "de minimis."

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Evaluate - Complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities compared to BLM land use plan designations.
- 2) Policy - Develop a new IM that clarifies that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed for in PHMA and GHMA.
- 3) Evaluate mechanisms to provide conservation while also accommodating the need for mineral materials sales in PHMA.
- 4) Provide clarification to staff and partners, so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights.
- 5) Policy and Training – Develop state-specific IMs that explain what avoidance means and how to apply avoidance criteria and provide training for staff on how to implement this criteria and where there is flexibility.
- 6) Investigate "de minimis" activities as defined by the States and determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval.

## Long Term Recommendations

Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:

- Adjust exclusion or closed boundaries or evaluate new restrictions for different uses based on local threats.

Develop programmatic NEPA documents to analyze impacts for tiering of future projects. And Identify categorical exclusions for "de minimis" activities.

## SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 7: Required Design Features (RDFs)

**Issues:** 1) Need greater flexibility in using State-developed RDFs; 2) Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in NEPA; and 3) Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Clarify that the BLM plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to projects and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation.
- 2) Evaluate the need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of RDFs.
- 3) Training - Provide clarification that RDFs are not “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities. Also provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs.

### Long Term Recommendations

Plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in the State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 8: Lek Buffers

**Issues:** 1) Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development and 2) Need to clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for NEPA analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).

### Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Provide clarification to staff and partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures and re-visit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffer distances.
- 2) Training - Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix should be used to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the BLM plans based on project-specific information.

### Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Adjust lek buffer distances based on new science and high quality information.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 9: Habitat Management Area Boundaries

**Issues:** 1) Sagebrush Focal Area designations; and 2) Need for flexibility to change PHMA and GHMA boundaries.

## Short Term Recommendations

- 1) Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that underlay SFAs to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.
- 2) Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and their associated management actions to match revised habitat maps without having to conduct a plan amendment.
- 3) Develop policy on how to apply management actions, such as stipulations or land use allocations in areas where PHMA or GHMA do not match habitat maps.

## Long Term Recommendations

- Depending on short term outcomes, conduct a potential plan amendment to:
- Remove SFA designations and replace their management actions with those attached to PHMA or GHMA or modify only the SFA management actions.
  - Align PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA (and their associated management actions) to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments to habitat management area boundaries.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the issues and recommendations adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders for this topic?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

### Recommended Additional Steps:

1. Continue to work on the ongoing Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy and the 2006 WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.
2. Support Intermountain West Joint Venture to implement a Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework – Sage West.
3. Support the development of the Western Invasive Weeds Action Plan.
4. Implement DOI's National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.
5. Support agreements between BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with landowners and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasives and wildland fire.
6. Explore options for shared funded positions and sharing fire equipment with local rangeland fire protection associations and rural fire departments.



## Topic Area 10: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species

### Recommended Additional Steps (continued):

7. Use good neighbor authority to promote the easy transfer of funds.
8. Promote increased coordination with Federal agencies and local governments.
9. Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding across boundaries.
10. Move to towards a risk-based funding approach at DOI.
11. Conduct research and implementation pilots.
12. Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuel breaks.
13. Work with other agencies to gain approval of concurrent EPA registration and field-testing bio pesticides and chemical herbicides to expedite this process.

#### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?



# Topic Area 11: Wildlife Management

## Recommended Additional Steps:

### – Captive Breeding:

- If pursued, efforts should use experimental designs to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge of data gaps to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction in the wild.
- Adhere to all relevant State laws and authorities for potential release and reintroductions.

### – Predator Control:

- Continue to communicate on outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the long term results.
- Conduct additional research into both non-lethal and lethal predator control techniques.

### – Population Targets and Species Management

- Support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range wide, state, and local population estimates.
- Develop a framework to assess sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve sage-grouse.
- Work collaboratively with States and Federal partners to develop new and improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.

### SEC Discussion Items:

- ✓ **Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?**
- ✓ **Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?**



## Topic Area 12: Science and Data

### Recommended Additional Steps:

1. Establish data sharing agreements between Federal, State, and local entities.
2. Maintain directory of data stewards and technical experts for all agencies.
3. Improve procedures for maintaining data in mutually developed catalogs.
4. Increase use of common communication tools to increase awareness of new data.
5. Establish minimum data standards for information in shared catalogs for use in agency decision making.
6. Identify multiscale spatial data units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information.
7. Continue to work with States and others to identify barriers to data sharing.
8. Work with States and tribes to explore ways to improve data sharing for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.

### SEC Discussion Items:

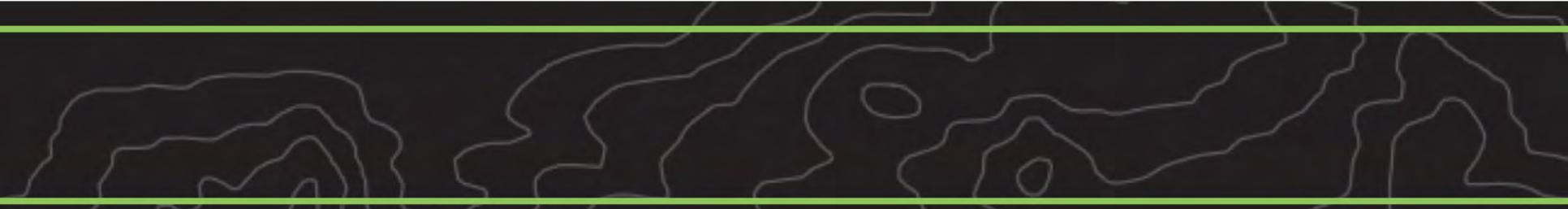
- ✓ Are the recommended additional steps adequately captured on behalf of Nevada stakeholders?
- ✓ Have we missed any issues or recommendations specific to this topic?

**Discussion: Is there a need for additional stakeholder involvement and how can that be achieved?**



## Next Steps

- **In coordination with the SGTF, hold discussions with counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration.**
- **Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated at the end of October 2017).**
- **Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented.**
- **For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG.**
- **Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).**



Thank you!

The image features a central landscape photograph of rolling hills at sunset. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The foreground is filled with dense, low-lying vegetation in shades of green and blue. The text "Thank you!" is centered in the upper half of the image. The top and bottom edges of the slide are decorated with a dark background and a light-colored topographic map pattern.

Background:

The State of Nevada’s Sagebrush Ecosystem Program finalized the *2014 Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan* in October 1, 2014. The State designed their plan to “eliminate the threats facing [GRSG] while balancing the economic and social needs of the residents of Nevada through the use of ‘avoid, minimize and mitigate’ with additional offsite mitigation being accomplished by the use of the Nevada Conservation Credit System.” In response to Secretarial Order 3353, BLM Nevada reviewed its 2015 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA), the State’s Conservation Plan, and the seven national Instruction Memorandum that were released in September 2016. For the purposes of identifying inconsistencies between the State and Federal Plans, BLM Nevada also reviewed the Governor’s Consistency Review conducted in June/July 2015. The topic areas identified in the following tables are a result of this review with the State of Nevada.

BLM Nevada’s discussions with the State of Nevada on this exercise also included the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, as their 2015 plan amendment was developed and analyzed in tandem with BLM’s plan amendment. Responses from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest are identified in green text.

Issue Descriptions and Recommendations:

Topical Area 1 Sage Grouse Habitat Management Area Maps			
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>Since the release of BLM Nevada and California’s Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA), the State of Nevada (in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr. Pete Coates et. al) updated GRSG habitat maps in 2016 for the Nevada and Northeastern California subregion. The State of Nevada (specifically NDOW and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), and counties are already actively using the 2016 habitat management maps to implement the 2014 Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan while BLM Nevada and California sage-grouse land use plan amendment goals, objectives, and management decisions are tied to an older version of GRSG habitat maps that were the basis of the GRSG habitat management areas, as defined in the 2015 ARMPA.</p> <p>This is inconsistent with the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan, which recognizes that mapping habitat management areas <i>“is iterative and is intended to inform and better define aspects of the State Plan. To that end, the habitat and management mapping process will be reviewed and refined every 3 to 5 years. New or improved spatial data (e.g., additional sage-grouse telemetry data, updated or improved vegetation community data) will be incorporated during the refinement process.”</i></p> <p>During a meeting with Governor Sandoval on December 4, 2015, then Department of the Interior</p>			

<p>Secretary Sally Jewell <i>“committed to formally adopt the maps in the most expeditious manner possible.”</i> However, since that commitment, the Department of Interior has yet to adopt the newly updated maps.</p> <p>The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest GRSg plan amendment (HTNF Plan) and management decisions are also tied to the older version of the GRSg habitat maps. In addition, the HTNF Plan includes definitions of “leks” that are inconsistent with the BLM and State of Nevada’s definitions, making it difficult to crosswalk the application of plan standards and guidelines. Finally, requirements for lek surveys in and surrounding proposed project areas (GL-GEN-008) are inconsistent with those of the BLM.</p>	
<p><b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b></p>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Issue clarification (IB) to BLM state, district, and field office staff as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted (i.e. how to use the 2016 maps as best available science when conducting site specific (project) NEPA in GRSg habitat).</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Attempt to find a long term sustainable solution as to the appropriate applications for the habitat maps and how the maps can be updated to reflect the best science in the land use plan amendments without conducting an extensive amendment.</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>The BLM needs to amend the plans (or use plan maintenance if appropriate) to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes. Minor changes could be conducted through plan maintenance, but major changes require a plan amendment. “Minor” and “major” are not defined in BLM’s planning regulations since the specific resource and context involved are key factors in determining what these terms means.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan would most likely require an amendment to adopt current habitat maps because the change would affect where plan components (e.g., standards and guidelines) apply. The HTNF should complete an administrative correction to adopt consistent definitions for leks and consistent requirements for lek surveys for project areas.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Topical Area 2		Sagebrush Focal Areas	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) are inconsistent with the State of Nevada’s Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, which does not include any similar type of designation that recommends habitat management areas for mineral withdrawal or closure. Instead, the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan uses a mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and mitigate) to ensure any anthropogenic disturbances in habitat management areas (not just the ‘best of the best’ in the State) <i>achieves a net conservation gain</i>. The State of Nevada believes this more site specific and science based approach will achieve a net conservation gain while allowing for appropriately well planned development within habitat management areas (including the SFAs), as long as mitigation connected to a development is vetted through the State’s robust Conservation Credit System (or other similar system).</p> <p>A side note here is that during final completion of the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan, the State was advised by our federal partners that our plan would not be accepted without achieving a “net conservation gain.” Our preference is for revised language requiring “no net unmitigated loss.”</p> <p>The HTNF Plan also includes SFAs; the Forest Service is cooperating with the BLM on the environmental analysis for SFA withdrawal from mineral entry.</p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A		
Policy	N/A		
Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment and remove the SFA designation boundaries. If this is not possible, see the cell below.		
Other	<p>There are management decisions set forth in the ARMPA that prioritize restoration activities and livestock grazing permit renewals in the SFAs, the Secretary should call upon the State of Nevada, local stakeholders, and BLM Nevada to work together to create a defensible method for identifying areas that are the “best-of-the-best” for prioritizing BLM driven activities.</p> <p>The HTNF should also be included in any process to address SFAs and/or identify areas that are the “best-of-the-best” on National Forest System lands.</p>		

Topical Area 3		Disturbance Caps	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State

Describe the Issue	
<p>The State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan states that all “<i>anthropogenic disturbances should be avoided in habitats within the SGMA [Sage Grouse Management Areas]. If project proponents wish to demonstrate that a disturbance cannot be avoided, exemptions will be granted if the criteria listed in the table [Table 3-1] can be met for the applicable management category.</i>” The BLM’s ARMPA however calls for no further discrete human disturbances to be authorized if disturbance at either the biologically significant unit or project area scale exceeds 3% disturbance. This is a clear inconsistency with the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan. Disturbance caps are incompatible in Nevada for two reasons: 1) they fail to account for the quality of habitat and seasonal habitats used by the grouse (which the State’s CCS places significant consideration on) and 2) does not incentivize co-location of disturbances if an area (BSU or project area) already exceeds 3% disturbance, thus promoting new disturbances in undisturbed PHMA and/or GHMA which are important to the State.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan includes the same 3% anthropogenic disturbance limit as the BLM. The Forest Service definition of anthropogenic disturbance is inconsistent with the BLM definition even though disturbance calculations are done cooperatively.</p>	
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply	
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A
Policy	N/A
Plan Changes	<p>Amend/Maintain the plan amendment and remove the 3% disturbance cap, specifically at the project analysis scale. In its place, require anthropogenic disturbing activities be quantified through the Nevada Conservation Credit System, which adequately evaluates the quality of habitat and the availability of seasonal habitat types.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan should be amended or corrected consistent with the BLM. The Forest Service should complete an administrative change for the definition of anthropogenic disturbance.</p>
Other	N/A

Topical Area 4		Exclusion/Closed Land Use Plan Allocations	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>In the Nevada portion of the ARMPA, PHMA and GHMA are exclusion areas for wind and solar energy development, are closed for salable and non-energy leasable development, and in the event</p>			

a hard adaptive management trigger is tripped at a biologically significant unit scale, high-voltage transmission line rights-of-way would be excluded in PHMA.

The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan utilizes a rigorous "avoid, minimize, and mitigate" process to deter disturbance activity in priority habitat. Residual disturbance impacts that cannot be avoided or minimized to a level of non-significance are mitigated through the Conservation Credit System which quantifies functional acres of mitigation that are mapped and verified on the ground, and incorporate specific mitigation factors for existing habitat quality, distance criteria and many other parameters in the calculation of debits and credits to ensure net conservation gain.

Nevada worked with USGS to create the habitat maps for use with the Conservation Credit System (CCS) to be able to quantitatively assure that the highest value habitat (measured in functional acres) would require highest levels of mitigation. Nevada does not use the management categories for prescribing land use allocations, exclusions or closures. The mapping results depicted as PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA do not necessarily reflect local or site-scale (on-the ground) conditions, but are the output of a complex GIS modeling exercise that analyzes more than 50 variables simultaneously and calculates a habitat suitability index that is intersected with the space use index to create management categories in the following way.

- Areas with high habitat suitability intersected with high space use are PHMA;
- Areas with high habitat suitability intersected with low space use or areas of non-habitat intersected with high space use are GHMA; and
- Areas with moderate habitat suitability intersected with low space use are OHMA.

The results of the GIS model in and of themselves do not denote areas that require closure, exclusion, or imply any kind of specific management recommendations. In the ARMPA, resource management decisions based on the management category maps alone do not incorporate other important factors that are pertinent to finding the appropriate management actions to achieve local-scale multiple use objectives. The Nevada Plan primarily uses the mapped habitat categories to prioritize management actions such as wildfire suppression and rehabilitation, PJ removal, and wild horse management.

The HTNF Plan includes the same or similar exclusions and restrictions for energy and mineral development.

Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply	
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A
Policy	N/A
Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to allow for some level of disturbance provided that a net conservation gain can be achieved. The State of Nevada recommends that BLM adopt a multi-scale planning approach rather than a complete closure or exclusion of activities through land use plan allocations attached to the existing mapped habitat management areas.

	The HTNF Plan should be amended or corrected consistent with the BLM.
Other	N/A

Topical Area 5		Valid Existing Rights with Closures and Exclusions	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan does not use closures or exclusion areas due to the rigor of the Conservation Credit System to deter disturbances in the most important sage-grouse habitat by requiring the highest levels of mitigation, with assurances to achieve a net conservation gain. Closures and exclusion in the ARMPA are qualified by the use of the term “valid existing rights.” The varied use of this term is confusing and creates uncertainty. It is critical that a definition and efficient process for determining “valid existing rights” is developed in collaboration with the State.</p> <p><b>These concerns are also applicable to the HTNF Plan.</b></p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	<p>Collaborate with Nevada Division of Minerals and the Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Program to clearly and concisely clarify (IB) for both BLM practitioners and BLM stakeholders what constitutes a “valid existing right.”</p> <p><b>The HTNF should participate in both defining valid existing rights and working with the State of Nevada to ensure consistency across ownership boundaries.</b></p>		
Policy	Collaborate with the State to determine the objectives for closures and exclusions to assure that these actions are justified over expansive landscape areas.		
Plan Changes	N/A		
Other	N/A		

Topical Area 6		Habitat Objectives	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The habitat objectives in the ARMPA (Table 2-2) are very similar to the desired habitat conditions for sage-grouse describe in the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. One additional habitat objective is included in the ARMPA that is not present in the State’s Conservation Plan and that is the 7 inch deep rooted perennial bunchgrass (within 200 meters of riparian areas and wet meadows) desired condition.</p>			

<p>The introductory language between the ARMPA’s Table 2-2 and the State’s Conservation Plan which outlines the intent of the desired habitat conditions (habitat objectives) are also inconsistent and is driving some confusion for stakeholders, particularly the livestock grazing community that depends on Nevada rangelands for their livelihood. The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan clearly states that the sage-grouse habitat objectives are to be used as guidelines in conjunction with ecological site descriptions and state and transition models as they may not be applicable to all sagebrush communities. In the Nevada Plan, the sage-grouse habitat objectives are not to be used to conduct land health assessments and are not regulatory. The State Plan also point out that the desired habitat conditions should not be reviewed, measured, or managed for independently and that measurements for a single given year should not necessarily be used to adjust management decisions.</p> <p>Desired habitat conditions for the Forest Service are contained in Tables 1a and 1b, and are not entirely consistent with the BLM habitat objectives in Table 2-2. The HTNF Plan also includes Table 3, grazing guidelines for GRSG seasonal habitat, which includes droop height and stubble height requirements for uplands and mesic meadows. The Forest Service has not provided details on how the direction in this table will be assessed and applied to allotment management.</p>	
<p><b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b></p>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>In the short term, provide BLM practitioners and range users with clarification and training as to the intended uses of the desired habitat conditions as well as the limitations of how they should be interpreted.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to match the desired habitat conditions for sage-grouse describe in the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan. The State’s Conservation Plan includes a desired condition for maintaining a residual grass height that provides for overhead and lateral concealment from predators, but does not identify specific values for those objectives.</p> <p>Amend the HTNF Plan desired conditions tables and grazing guidelines to be consistent with the BLM and current state of knowledge for GRSG habitat.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Collaborate with Nevada state agencies and local stakeholders to define a process for setting feasible desired conditions at the local scale which would include consideration for sage-grouse habitat objectives in conjunction with other existing authorized land uses.</p>

Topical Area 7		Monitoring	
<p><b>Bold All that Apply</b></p>			
<p>Scope</p>	<p>Rangewide</p>	<p>Regional</p>	<p>State</p>

Describe the Issue	
<p>Use of the Habitat Assessment Framework (in coordination with the habitat objectives table) and how it will be applied in conjunction with other assessment tools is also a concern for the State as the BLM proceeds with implementing the ARMPA.</p> <p>The State is concerned that the magnitude of the monitoring requirements for implementation of the ARMPA is not supported with adequate funding or staff. Nevada also is concerned with the sampling design using random points which will not allow for “use management.” Nevada has provided collaborative monitoring guidance for state and federal agencies through the <i>Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook</i> since the 1990s. Considerable data important for interpreting trend exists using the recommended standardized methods which are also included in BLM monitoring handbooks.</p> <p style="color: green;">These concerns are also applicable to the HTNF Plan.</p>	
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Develop clear and understandable guidance for BLM practitioners and State partners as to how the HAF will be applied and used in conjunction with other tools at the BLM’s disposal, specifically the <i>Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook</i> (Third edition).</p> <p>Complete Nevada state-and-transition model/HAF/rangeland health pilot study to determine how Nevada state-and-transition models can be integrated with land health standards determinations and the HAF.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Work collaboratively with the Nevada rangeland monitoring scientists and practitioners to incorporate the HAF monitoring protocols with existing monitoring efforts to assure that monitoring will be implemented within existing resource capability and will address the management needs.</p>

Topical Area 8 Mitigation and Consistent Sage Grouse Habitat Baseline Conditions			
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State

<b>Describe the Issue</b>	
<p>The State of Nevada’s Conservation Credit System (CCS) is a pro-active solution that provides net conservation benefits for sage-grouse, while balancing the need for continued human activities vital to the Nevada economy and way of life. Management Decision MIT I in BLM’s ARMPA states that <i>“In Nevada, coordinate with the SETT on the application of a compensatory mitigation program, such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System (CCS) (Appendix N) for mitigating activities that result in habitat loss and degradation of GRS habitat in Nevada, where the application of compensatory mitigation will occur on or the credit will be applied to disturbance on BLM-administered lands.”</i> In April 2015, BLM and the U.S. Forest Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Nevada’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). One commitment made in this MOU was that BLM will analyze the use of the State’s CCS to offset residual impacts to GRS in at least one NEPA alternative.</p> <p>Since the signing of the MOU and the release of the BLM’s ARMPA, the State of Nevada as a cooperating agency on major locatable mineral projects in GRS habitat, have struggled to effectively comment on mitigation alternatives developed by the BLM, specifically proponent driven mitigation alternatives that do not use the CCS to achieve a net conservation gain for GRS. One reason for this is that other mitigation NEPA alternatives are not utilizing the same robust biological parameters (such as the CCS’ Habitat Quantification Tool) to develop baseline habitat conditions to help identify direct, indirect, and residual impacts to GRS from a proposed activity. In additions, proponent driven mitigation alternatives are not using consistent metrics to quantify disturbance and mitigation. As such, it is difficult to ascertain if the other mitigation proposals are achieving net conservation and how they compare with the CCS alternative.</p> <p>The HTNF did not commit to analyzing the use of the CCS in at least one NEPA alternative, but did commit to identifying the DCNR as a cooperating agency on projects within PHMA or GHMA. The Forest Service did commit to coordinate with the DCNR to determine if use of the CCS would result in a net conservation gain for projects which may result in residual impacts.</p>	
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Work with the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team and Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDOA) to establish a curriculum and training for all BLM District offices regarding the use of the CCS Habitat Quantification Tool, in an effort to establish consistent science based baseline conditions for NEPA analysis, as well as quantification of conservation gain. This curriculum and training should also be available to NEPA consultants.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Require BLM staff and their consultants to use the CCS Habitat Quantification Tool for all NEPA alternatives resulting in anthropogenic disturbances in GRS habitat. Reiterate (per the MOU) consultation (at minimum, a pre-application conference) with the Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team to assess the functionality of the habitat proposed to be impacted by developments. Any proponent-driven mitigation must utilize consistent metrics hat are science based, to quantify both baseline, disturbance, and mitigation to achieve conservation gain.</p> <p>As stated previously, the Forest Service has already committed to coordinate with the DCNR to determine if use of the CCS would result in a net conservation gain for projects which may result in residual impacts.</p>

Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to require mitigation (achieve a net conservation gain to GRSG) in OHMA.
Other	N/A

Topical Area 9		Wild Horse and Burro Management	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>While the ARMPA directs the BLM to “manage herd management areas (HMAs) in GRSG habitat within established AML ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives” and “prioritize gathers and population growth suppression techniques in HMAs in GRSG habitat” (ARMPA, Management Decisions WHB 2 and 4), it is not evident that the BLM has prioritized funding to implement these actions which will reduce the present and widespread threat to GRSG that is prevalent throughout the State. As a result of this inaction, there is a perception held by many local stakeholders in Nevada that BLM is more focused on redirecting livestock grazing management rather than the overpopulation of wild horses in areas important to GRSG.</p> <p>The ARMPA perpetuates the fallacy that BLM can manage wild horses and burros under existing policies and conflicts with actions proposed in the State Plan to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reevaluate Herd Areas and adjust to avoid PHMA</li> <li>2. Reevaluate AML and adjust if necessary</li> </ol> <p><b>The same concern applies to wild horse and burro territories on National Forest System Lands and the associated standards and guidelines in the HTNF Plan (HB-ST-68 and HB-GL-70).</b></p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A		
Policy	<p>Work in collaboration with state and local stakeholders to reevaluate existing boundaries for HMAs and HAs for possible realignments to avoid conflicts with PHMA and GHMA.</p> <p>Work in collaboration with state and local stakeholders to reevaluate appropriate management levels and propose justifiable adjustments.</p>		
Plan Changes	N/A		
Other	Recommend that BLM and Forest Service begin to implement the wild horse and burro management actions set forth in ARMPA, consistent with laws and mandates that are already in place.		

Topical Area 10		Adaptive Management	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>The BLM’s ARMPA calls for the use of a USGS GRSG state-space models (Coates et al. 2014) to assess the rate of GRSG population growth (increase or decrease in population numbers) and the number of males at individual lek, lek cluster, BSU scales to determine whether or not an adaptive management population trigger will be tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale. In the event a hard adaptive management trigger is reached, more restrictive land use plan allocation decisions (as outlined in Table J-1 and J-2 in the ARMPA) will be immediately employed.</p> <p>The State understands that USGS is currently in the process of adjusting the GRSG state-space model, which will result in newly defined BSU boundaries and updated population triggers. Once USGS is finished finalizing this model, the BLM will then be required to conduct a plan maintenance action or a plan amendment to adopt these new boundaries and numeric triggers. Before this occurs, the State of Nevada recommends that USGS present the model to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council before the BLM moves forward with conducting any changes. In 2012, Governor Brian Sandoval established the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (via Executive Order 2012-19 and later approved by the legislature in 2013 as state statute). The council is a nine member body representing all of Nevada’s diverse industries and resources, as well as ex-officio members from Federal and state agency leaders.</p> <p>In addition to reaching out to the SEC before making any changes to the existing ARMPA’s adaptive management strategy, the State would also like to see a causal factor analysis process established by the BLM before implementing a hard trigger response. Currently, a causal factor analysis process that brings in local stakeholders to assess why a hard trigger is tripped and what the appropriate response is to reverse the trigger is not set forth in the ARMPA or addressed in IM 2016-140. Instead, the ARMPA calls for the BLM to implement a set of allocation decisions (Table J-1 and J-2) that may or may not address the causal factors resulting in the population decline.</p> <p>The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan does not include adaptive management triggers.</p> <p style="color: green;">The HTNF Plan also calls for use of the Coates state-space models for adaptive management, and changes to the model would be adopted by both the HTNF and the BLM concurrently. The HTNF Plan does not state explicitly where allocation decisions or other management decisions would be applied in the event of a hard trigger. The HTNF does acknowledge the possibility of a causal factor analysis in the event of a hard trigger but does not require it.</p>			
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	As a temporary solution, update IM 2016-140 to allow the BLM to conduct a casual factor analysis before implementing unnecessary hard trigger responses (new land use plan allocations).		
Policy	N/A		

Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to address the state-space model changes proposed by USGS and BLM only after the SEC approves the methodology.
Other	Work collaboratively with the State Sagebrush Ecosystem Council and Technical Team to identify hard triggers for adaptive management that are agreed upon and can be incorporated into both the ARMPA and the State Plan.

<b>Topical Area 11</b>		<b>Seasonal Timing Restrictions</b>	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>Management Decisions SSS 2E and SSS 3D of the BLM’s ARMPA calls for the application of seasonal timing restrictions <i>“to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands to prevent disturbing GRSG during seasonal life cycle periods.”</i> In December 2016, BLM Nevada conducted a plan maintenance action to clarify that seasonal timing restrictions only need to be applied to uses on public lands that are <u>disruptive</u> to GRSG, therefore, the application of timing restrictions are no longer necessary to be applied to uses and public activities that do not have a direct or indirect impact on GRSG (i.e. permits to survey bats in PHMA that result in no surface disturbance or noise). However, there continues to be inconsistent interpretations across BLM Nevada District Offices as to what constitutes a “restriction.” For example, some offices interpret a seasonal restriction as a moratorium on any actions to occur on the ground during the seasonal timing periods, while other offices interpret seasonal restrictions as a time to avoid certain activities (i.e. do not travel on roads between the hours of 6:00 am to 9:00 pm during the nesting season).</p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Collaborate with the State to develop a range-wide clarifying document that clarifies what a seasonal timing restriction is and how to consistently apply them to protect GRSG during seasonal life cycle periods, while not arbitrarily applying moratoriums for certain uses on public lands.		
Policy	N/A		
Plan Changes	N/A		

# REPORT IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

## August 4, 2017

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). In response to the Order, the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team)<sup>1</sup> to address the elements of the order and produce a report. In developing the report and recommendations, the DOI Team sought input from the Eleven Western States<sup>2</sup> identified in the Order and coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). The DOI Team respectfully requests the Secretary to direct the appropriate DOI bureaus to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary.

Together, the DOI Team, and managers and staff from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF)—made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the Eleven States—identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order. The DOI Team and the SGTF are committed to a balanced approach that provides both responsible economic development and long term conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)<sup>3</sup>. This commitment includes an interest by most States in retaining the 2015 GRSG Plans—using policy and clarifications initially to better align them with State plans and programs and to meet the purposes of the Order, while continuing joint engagement to further define consideration of potential targeted plan amendments. The Federal agencies and States are also committed to continue to work with partners to prioritize staff and funding to implement on-the-ground actions to conserve and restore GRSG habitat.

The DOI Team and the SGTF affirm that the issues and options identified in this report do not apply to each State, are not consensus opinions from all States, and are not “one size fits all.” Pertinent issues and associated solutions should be tailored to each State’s needs while ensuring conservation of the species. Whenever possible, the options identified by the DOI Team provide near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the purpose of the Order, including development of policies, clarification, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and training, many of which can be completed within 6 months (see Section IV and Appendix A). The DOI Team also identified longer term options, including potential plan amendments, which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies (see Section IV and Appendix A).

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<sup>1</sup> The DOI Team consists of co-leads Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary - BLM; John Ruhs, BLM Deputy Director of Operations; Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary - Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Gregory Sheehan, FWS Deputy Director; Anne Kinsinger, USGS Associate Director for Ecosystems; Cynthia Moses-Nedd, DOI Liaison to State and Local Government; Timothy Williams, DOI Deputy Director of External Affairs; Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary; and Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The Eleven States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the States of Idaho and Utah have pending challenges to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. While these States participated in identifying issues related to the Federal plans, these States do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments. The Nevada Attorney General also filed suit and does not waive or concede Nevada’s legal arguments. Similarly, the federal agencies do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments.

This report recommends continued collaboration with the States, including both through the SGTF and between each Governor's office and the respective Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director and USFS Regional Forester, as well as key BLM and USFS national-level Directors. This report also recommends engagement on the issues and options identified in this report with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as with ranchers, industry, conservation groups, and other stakeholders. This additional engagement would be used to refine the options and develop a plan for prioritized implementation of the options in this report.

The review conducted in response to the Order identified many opportunities, summarized in this report, to clarify the BLM's management under the 2015 GRSG Plans. Clarifications, policies, agreements, or training could: (1) address issues related to habitat assessment and monitoring, including the Habitat Assessment Framework, and grazing management; (2) take advantage of flexibility in the 2015 GRSG Plans to support energy, mineral, and other development; (3) increase consistency between the BLM and States on density and disturbance caps and mitigation; and (4) in some cases, allow adjustments to habitat boundaries and address issues with adaptive management.

The review also identified longer term options to consider some issues through a potential plan amendment process. This report recommends further investigation of potential plan amendments, including considering what combination of potential plan amendments would best balance continuing to conserve the GRSG and its habitat and supporting economic development, and whether to consider State-by-State or range-wide amendments. Potential plan amendments could be considered in some States to remove or modify sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations; address adjustments to habitat management boundaries; adjust responses to reaching adaptive management triggers; evaluate the compensatory mitigation standard; and provide additional flexibility in resource development.

The report identifies opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management develop MOUs, increase data sharing, initiate new research, and incorporate new information into plan implementation. The report also includes recommendations on captive breeding, translocations, predator control, and setting population targets.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The GRSG is a State-managed species throughout its range with approximately half of its habitat managed by the BLM and USFS. State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950s. For the past two decades, State wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been coordinating efforts to conserve GRSG and its habitat.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that the GRSG was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing due to other species with higher listing priority. In the 2010 finding, the FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and lack of regulatory mechanisms as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to identify conservation objectives for GRSG and its

habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for 14 potential threats to the GRSG including: fire, nonnative invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, range management structures, wild horses and burros, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences.

The BLM and USFS initiated land use planning processes to provide regulatory certainty in addressing the threats of habitat loss and fragmentation on Federal lands to conserve the GRSG and its habitat, avoid further population declines, and avoid the need to list under the ESA. Early in the process, the BLM and USFS collaborated with the States to pursue State-by-State land use planning. These State-by-State approaches were supplemented with range-wide decisions to increase consistency between the 2015 GRSG Plans and to respond to the issues addressed in the FWS's 2010 listing determination. Several States identified instances in which they did not believe the final approved BLM 2015 GRSG Plan was consistent with the applicable State plan, particularly with regard to range-wide decisions. There were also concerns that the records of decision and final approved 2015 GRSG Plans included decisions from alternatives other than proposed alternative (as described in the proposed plans and final environmental impact statements) and therefore differed from the State's expectations based on the collaborative planning efforts.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 GRSG Plans) across the ten<sup>4</sup> Western States addressing, in part, GRSG and its habitat. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven instruction memoranda (IMs; IMs 2016-139 through 2016-145) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 GRSG Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 GRSG Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the GRSG did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, the FWS determined the 2015 GRSG Plans provided certain and effective measures for conservation of the species. The FWS also committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a GRSG status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the GRSG and its habitat.

The BLM, USFS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FWS, State agencies, and other partners have been working collaboratively, to the extent practicable, to implement the Federal and State plans to conserve GRSG and its habitat. A particular focus has been placed on an all-lands approach, encompassing Federal, State, and private lands, to achieve habitat restoration, fire control, and fuels management. Through these efforts, hundreds of thousands of acres of sagebrush rangelands have been restored or are on their way to being restored.

### **III. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW**

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and DOI staff met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input on the items identified in the Order. The

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<sup>4</sup> While Washington is included in the review for the Order, the majority of the State was not part of the 2015 GRSG Plans. A BLM land use plan that will include GRSG conservation for the Spokane District in Washington is currently under development.

BLM, FWS, and USGS managers and staff also began working with each State to gather information related to the Order, including State-specific issues and potential options for actions with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF developed an initial list of issues and refined those issues and options on a State-by-State basis while working with the respective BLM State Directors. In July 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.

The following actions were also completed to address specific sections of the Order:

- Section 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) of the Order: Each BLM State Director worked with their Governor's office(s) to review State plans and programs and the 2015 GRSG Plans.
- Section 4b(ii): DOI staff worked with the SGTF and individual Governor's offices to further examine invasive species and wildland fire issues.
- Section 4b(v): The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) developed and submitted to the SGTF white papers on each of the topics described in this provision of the Order.
- DOI staff also worked with the SGTF and the individual Governor's offices to gather further information on data and science.

In these reviews, the need for MOUs and other agreements and training, as called for in Section 4a of the Order, and cooperative management and collaborative partnerships, as called for in Section 5c of the Order were also considered. These individual reviews were then rolled-up for further discussion with the SGTF and the DOI Team and staff. Based on these reviews, the SGTF and DOI Team identified issues, potential options, and next steps to include in this report in response to Section 5d of the Order.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section provides an overview of the issues identified and potential options to address those issues (see Appendix A), as well as recommendations on the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science (see Appendices B through D). Appendix E contains other issues identified that are not directly related to the 2015 GRSG Plans and that are not addressed in this report but may warrant further coordination between the BLM and the States. Appendix F contains white papers developed by WAFWA related to wildlife topics.

In regard to Washington, a new BLM land use plan for the Spokane District has not yet been issued. Based on the Order and the recommendations included in this report for the 2015 GRSG Plans, Washington and the BLM will review the BLM's preliminary draft plan to identify any further opportunities to increase compatibility with the State plan, address the elements of the Order, and consider issues and options included in this report. The BLM will work to issue the Spokane District draft plan for public comment as soon as practicable after this review is complete.

In discussions with the SGTF, there is general consensus that all partners are committed to effective and durable measures to provide for the conservation of GRSG to ensure there is no need to list GRSG under the ESA in the future. There is agreement that monitoring and reporting on conservation actions, habitat condition and trends, and economic development are essential.

Such monitoring is key to demonstrate the effectiveness of State and Federal GRSG Plans in addressing the threats, including habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and fire, as well as support for local economic opportunities and development.

This report includes short and long term approaches to address issues of concern through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as investigating potential targeted plan amendments (long term). Certain options are prioritized for further work to begin immediately, including: identifying options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas; clarifying mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs); modifying the fluid mineral lease prioritization policy; issuing or modifying policy and providing training on use of the habitat objectives tables from the 2015 GRSG Plans; identifying options for addressing hard trigger responses when applying adaptive management decisions; and researching the ability to streamline authorizations for activities with little or no impact on GRSG.

**a. 2015 GRSG Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) and 4a of the Order)**

**i. *Fluid Minerals (Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions, Modifications, Leasing Prioritization) and Density and Disturbance***

There are multiple opportunities to be responsive to the Executive Order on “Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth” and the Secretarial Order on “American Energy Independence,” while continuing a robust commitment to the conservation of GRSG. A cooperative DOI and State effort can provide the flexibility for responsible economic growth and at the same time ensure conservation of GRSG habitat.

The areas of leasing prioritization and the PHMA stipulation’s waiver, exception, and modification language are suggested issues of focus for the BLM subsequent to the submittal of this report. Leasing prioritization options include policy clarification while developing the approach to revise IMs for leasing prioritization either nationally or State-by-State. For waiver, exception, and modification language for PHMA stipulations, options include investigating opportunities to provide additional waivers, modifications, and exceptions through policy or potential plan amendments, while adequately addressing the threats in the area, avoiding habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensuring effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development.

For general habitat management areas (GHMAs), stipulations identified vary on a State-by-State basis. Options include developing State-specific policy or training to explain how to use existing flexibility or considering alternative stipulations.

For SFAs, longer term options include considering potential plan amendment(s) to modify or remove SFA fluid minerals stipulations.

The 2015 GRSG Plans define processes for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities. The 2015 GRSG Plans recognized State processes, if they were in place prior to the plans being approved and if the data could be accessed to meet reporting requirements for density of development and acres disturbed

and reclaimed. Some States have developed or are in the process of developing new tools for density and disturbance calculations. For some States, there may be differences between the State plans and the 2015 GRSG Plans in the list of disturbances to count and the appropriate scale (project and biologically significant unit) where the disturbance and density caps should apply. Options include the BLM and the States identifying State-specific inconsistencies and evaluating the various processes and tools for (1) consistency between Federal and State approaches for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities, (2) adequacy to conserve GRSG, and (3) the ability to report on disturbance associated with uses, as well as restoration actions that result in achieving conservation of the habitat.

ii. ***Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain***

There are concerns that the mitigation requirements in the 2015 GRSG Plans (including the net conservation gain standard and the need for a clear definition of that standard) may differ from requirements in some of the State plans. The States prefer consistency between State mitigation standards and the BLM mitigation standard and a definition that encompasses the various standards the States have adopted. The DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies and may issue revised policy, including consideration of various mitigation standards, such as one-to-one ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standards. It was recognized during the review that if the States have permitting authority that includes compensatory mitigation requirements, applicants for uses on public lands may need to meet both State and Federal compensatory mitigation requirements. The DOI Team and the SGTF agree that consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and compensate), including compensatory mitigation standards and other requirements between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures, is desirable. Additional coordination on the approach to mitigation and standards is a priority.

In 2015, the SGTF formed the Sage-Grouse Mitigation Workgroup to develop a report to provide for greater certainty of implementing mitigation across the range. The report, “Greater Sage-Grouse Compensatory Mitigation,” was delivered to the SGTF in December 2016. The report identifies the key principles for successful compensatory mitigation efforts. This report may be helpful to further coordinate on mitigation. States have demonstrated, or are confident that as their mechanism(s) become available, that their mitigation approaches are or will be adequate to meet the principles in this mitigation framework while supporting economic development. States have indicated that compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable impacts is an important tool, in addition to restrictions associated with avoid and minimize, to provide increased flexibility and options to authorize development and provide adequate conservation of the habitat.

In the short term, options identified to address concerns related to mitigation include defining “net conservation gain” and developing policy and MOUs with the States to ensure compensatory mitigation is commensurate with the project-specific residual impacts and coordinate and clarify options for use of each State’s approach when applying mitigation, including meeting the net conservation gain standard. Longer term options could include a potential plan amendment to consider changes to the Federal

compensatory mitigation standard. Options to consider could include investigating using the State standards; setting a Federal standard as a minimum and using the State standards if they are equal or higher than the Federal standard; or using the Federal standard on public land and the State standard on private or State lands.

**iii. *Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring***

The SGTF and DOI Team discussed issues relating to confusion on the use and inconsistent application of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF); Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; other data; and the habitat objectives table that is included in each of the 2015 GRSB Plans. Clarifications on how information is collected and used will improve the way the BLM evaluates GRSB habitat and applies the data and habitat objectives tables to management decisions on public lands.

In the short term, options include providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods; revising the policies on habitat assessment and effectiveness monitoring as needed to clarify their use; and issuing new policy explaining how to use habitat objectives. Other short term options include investigating tools and methods to streamline gathering and reporting on habitats in good condition and focusing increased attention and time on degraded habitats or habitats at risk. In the longer term, new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the habitat objectives tables in the 2015 GRSB Plans to reflect best available science.

**iv. *Adaptive Management***

The SGTF and DOI Team identified two main issues: (1) responses instituted to respond to tripping a hard trigger prior to causal factor analysis may not address the threat identified in the analysis; and (2) the inability to revert to previous management when conditions improve after tripping and responding to a trigger.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process, including conducting causal analysis when either a soft or hard trigger is reached. However, most concerns with adaptive management can likely not be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (1) removing automatic hard trigger management responses when population or habitat recovers above the original condition (the condition prior to a trigger being reached), and more restrictive hard trigger management responses are no longer required to conserve the GRSB or its habitat; and (2) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached, while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses.

**v. *Livestock Grazing***

The SGTF and the DOI Team recognize that improper grazing is a threat to the conservation of GRSB, while proper grazing management is compatible with conserving GRSB habitat and, in some situations, may support or benefit habitat management. There is a perception of undue emphasis on livestock grazing in general, instead of a focus on

improper grazing. Issues include how to prioritize and process grazing permits and monitoring actions and provide additional flexibility in applying management appropriate to on-the-ground conditions at the BLM field office level.

In the short term, options include revising policy to: incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal and to emphasize where there are known impacts to GRS habitat; clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see Section IV(a)(iii) of this report); and clarify that thresholds and responses can vary in different habitat types. Additional short term options include developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. Policies and training should clarify that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRS habitat and, in some cases, may be used to address threats to GRS (e.g., controlling invasive exotic annual grass species). In addition, the BLM will continue to pursue (1) targeted grazing pilot projects to investigate the use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks and (2) outcome-based grazing demonstration projects to investigate the use of flexible grazing permits to respond effectively to changing conditions while helping to improve habitat.

vi. ***Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way)***

These discussions centered on four distinct topics: (1) concerns that broad exclusions and closure areas may not address the uses and associated threats to GRS in a PHMA; (2) a need to clarify how to evaluate proposed actions in an avoidance area; (3) available flexibility on application of required design features (RDFs); and (4) lack of clarity on the application and size of lek buffers. The discussions varied according to the needs of each State, as there are complexities created by the various land ownership patterns (e.g., consolidated Federal ownership vs. scattered Federal ownership).

Options include evaluating each State's approach to identify how it differs from each 2015 GRS Plan and to consider whether the State's mechanism, including compensatory mitigation, could adequately address the threats in the area, avoid habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensure effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development. For example, if gravel pits are in an area closed to that use, and the State's mechanisms for managing gravel pits, including compensatory mitigation, may provide equivalent assurance for conservation of the species and its habitat, then this topic should be further investigated.

The topics of how to implement land use authorizations in avoidance areas, the application of RDFs, and the use of lek buffers all share the need for additional clarity or training, including sharing lessons learned across jurisdictional boundaries. In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate proposed uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers. This includes the consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. The DOI Team also recommends additional research to (1)

evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs and (2) incorporation of new science into plan implementation as it becomes available.

**vii. *Habitat Boundaries - Sagebrush Focal Areas and Habitat Management Areas***

Concerns were identified with: (1) whether SFA designations and their associated decisions are necessary in some States or if underlying allocations (PHMAs, Important Habitat Management Areas, GHMAs, or others) and associated decisions are adequate to meet GRSG conservation, including effectiveness and durability; and (2) the BLM's ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States. States regularly refine habitat maps delineating GHMAs and PHMAs through on-the-ground verification and incorporation of new information, and the concern was expressed that the 2015 GRSG Plans may not provide the flexibility to incorporate these updates.

In the short term, options include investigating each 2015 GRSG Plan to determine if there is flexibility to adopt revised habitat maps from the States to adjust habitat management area boundaries and develop a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections, which may include considering potential plan amendments in some States. In the long term, options include potential plan amendments to evaluate the need to remove or modify SFAs allocations in some States, including whether to retain, modify, or remove associated SFA management actions to achieve effective and durable GRSG conservation.

**b. Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4b(ii) and 4a of the Order)**

Pursuant to the Order, the DOI Team examined the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy" (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and controlling the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. Recommended additional steps are outlined in Appendix B.

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity, and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The following recommendations will further enhance the implementation of the IRFMS:

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS; support ongoing State-led efforts, including the WAFWA "Sagebrush Conservation Strategy" and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) "Western Invasive Weed Action Plan"; implement the "National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration"; and implement action items from the Western Governors Association National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative.
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs),

establishment of wildfire protection agreements, and support for the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.”

- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Agency registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing.
- Work with the DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting.
- Enhance multijurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multiyear funding of projects to increase likelihood of success.
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in the DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high-risk/high-value areas, including increasing the BLM’s fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

**c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

As a State trust species, individual States exercise their authority to manage and conserve GRSG according to their own laws and policies. In response to the Order, the WAFWA developed four technical white papers (Appendix F) to summarize the current scientific literature and management experience on the issues of: (1) captive breeding, (2) population objectives, (3) predator control, and (4) hunting. As recognized by the Order, it is the prerogative of each individual State to conserve and manage State trust species and, thus, to determine whether a Statewide population target is appropriate and whether any of these management tools should be implemented within the respective States. In support of setting population targets, the DOI Team recommends support for developing tools and techniques to estimate and set population objectives, including (1) a State/Federal/academic partnership that is working to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations over the next two years; and (2) USGS-supported research to improve the ability to find new leks, understand the percent of leks not counted because they are unknown, and increasing the accuracy of counts once leks are detected.

- i. Captive breeding, as a wildlife management tool, is best suited to augmenting small, at-risk populations for short periods of time, while factors contributing to population declines are simultaneously addressed. Because captive breeding of GRSG has not yet proven effective, requires expenditures that would limit funding availability for other priority efforts and may require the removal of potentially viable eggs from the wild, further work is needed to fairly evaluate captive breeding. The DOI Team recommends that new captive breeding efforts continue to be investigated to improve effectiveness.
- ii. While State wildlife agencies set population objectives routinely for big game and/or large carnivores based on species biology, landowner tolerance, public safety, habitat availability, and social factors, most States do not routinely establish Statewide population targets for avian species like GRSG. GRSG populations respond to climate, weather, and habitat conditions at different and, often, very fine scales. Thus, GRSG numbers vary widely in a relatively short period of time, within individual States and

across the range. States manage GRSG, in part, based on male lek counts as an indicator of habitat availability, condition, and other factors. While States support efforts to estimate and explain populations, fluctuations, and trends, any such effort must recognize and account for the relationship between the species and its habitat. Further, any population metric would have to reflect the natural range of variability, include confidence intervals, and be tied to habitat availability. Ultimately, the best method for determining GRSG viability will be to assess a combination of habitat availability and populations, which are inseparable. The DOI Team recommends that establishing a Statewide or range-wide GRSG population objective or target should be pursued.

- iii. The primary issue relative to predation is the recent emergence of predation by species with which GRSG either did not evolve or did not confront in current numbers. Among these are corvid species, such as ravens. Excessive predation by avian and/or mammalian predators may be occurring in localized settings but is not a uniform pressure across the landscape or range-wide. Localized predation can be a significant threat for small, isolated, or reintroduced populations. Even in those circumstances, however, predator control should be simultaneous with efforts to address the underlying reasons for predator population growth or concentration in localized areas of concern for GRSG. Control of multiple factors that provide predator subsidies, such as open landfills or unneeded infrastructure that provides nesting or perching sites, is a low-cost, sustainable strategy. The SGTF requests the DOI work with the States to investigate options for corvid control, including streamlining approval and reporting requirements in compliance with current law and international treaties. It is important that predator control efforts be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future decisions about how to prioritize available funding.
- iv. Hunting is an adequately regulated activity managed by States to avoid additive mortality (above and beyond natural annual mortality) so that it does not contribute to population declines. Common techniques implemented by States include short seasons, low limits of take, and permit-only hunt systems. Harvest strategies in many States can be considered more conservative than guidelines suggest. In addition to these conservative strategies, providing hunting opportunities, when appropriate and sustainable, provides an avenue to better help support the use of Pittman-Robertson wildlife restoration grant funding. In turn, this supports a multitude of conservation efforts related to GRSG, including inventory and monitoring, local conservation planning and project implementation, and research, among other endeavors, that provides States with much needed information on the status of the species.

Appendix C provides a summary of potential next steps for wildlife management.

**d. Data Management and the Use of Science (Addressing Section 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

Addressing priority science needs of managers and sharing high-quality science and information, including locally collected monitoring and assessment data, among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of

GRSG and the sagebrush ecosystem. Continued development and integration of local data and information, peer-reviewed science, and other high-quality information forms the foundation for management decisions and identifies the need for new science and information. Attributes to assess the quality and reliability of new science, data, and information include peer review, repeatability of methods and analyses, quality assurance, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions.

Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for sharing science, information, and data can help facilitate ongoing GRSG and sagebrush management efforts. Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency agreements, and online data catalogs (both public and private). Updating information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can improve the use of new information, increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes, reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues, and provide opportunities for inclusion of local and traditional ecological knowledge.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D):

- Implement the “IRFMS Actionable Science Plan.”
- Coordinate research efforts among agencies and organizations, including science needs related to human dimensions and economics.
- Develop processes to use data from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journals, agency data, and locally collected partner information.
- Work to provide policymakers and managers with science and data in a form most useful to decision-making.
- Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant science and data to inform implementation of management actions.
- Establish data standards and data sharing agreements, resolve barriers to data sharing, and improve procedures for maintaining and updating data.
- Develop methods to gather and use local and traditional ecological knowledge.

## V. NEXT STEPS

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team recommends the following next steps:

- Reaffirm DOI and State commitments to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF’s charter as needed. Coordinate with individual States to determine the need for and, as appropriate, develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation.
- Work with the USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this report, considering the USFS’s unique plans and associated decisions and laws and regulations. Work to align recommendations and future actions to the maximum extent possible.
- Continue to work with the States to further refine the options in this report and identify multistate or State-specific solutions as needed.

- In coordination with the SGTF, initiate additional discussions with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the report is submitted, continuing for approximately 2 months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify other clarifications or policy approaches that could address and resolve issues. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate whether clarification and policy actions sufficiently address the issues identified by the States and other partners or if additional actions should be considered. For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or November 2017).
- Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).

**APPENDIX A – 2015 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANS AND STATE PLAN CONSISTENCY REVIEW**

<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) and no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each State to evaluate whether general habitat management area (GHMA) and priority habitat management area (PHMA) stipulations already provide for the durable and effective conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, potential plan amendment to consider eliminating or reducing the SFAs and changes to stipulations. May be State-specific outcome.	Multistate
General habitat management area (GHMA) stipulations (vary by State)	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of priority habitat management area (PHMA), and informs industry of expectations.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations, and issue State-specific policy as needed; determine if a controlled surface use (CSU) stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multistate (Utah in particular)
Priority habitat management area (PHMA) no surface occupancy (NSO) and waiver, exception, and modification (WEM) language	<p>Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs, which recognizes the State’s mitigation hierarchy, maintains collaborative approach, and removes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) role in approving WEMs.</p> <p>Short term option to clarify which mechanism to modify WEMs is identified as an immediate action item. Then work with the States to engage with partners and stakeholders on the short term evaluation or potential adjustment process.</p>	<p>Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.</p> <p>Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs, and work with the States to adjust or add as necessary.</p>	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Lease prioritization instruction memorandum (IM)	<p>Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.</p> <p>Short term option to clarify to staff leasing is not restricted in GRSG habitat. Identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Clarify that all habitat types are open for leasing. Modify and reissue IM to address other concerns</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
	<p>Rescind the national IM.</p> <p>Then issue State-level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and include State-specific solutions.</p> <p>Short term option identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Rescind the National IM, and develop BLM State-specific IMs that include all habitat types are open for leasing and other State-specific concerns.</p>	<p>If the BLM State-level IMs do not address the issues, then consider a potential plan amendment to address concerns.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
Density and disturbance	<p>There is variation between the States on what counts as a disturbance and towards a density cap, the level of disturbance that is allowed, and the scales the caps apply to (project or biologically significant unit - BSU). There is a need for a consolidated (BLM/State) process so industry knows where to start and the steps to follow.</p> <p>On a State-by-State basis, develop a crosswalk to explore the potential to develop a density and disturbance process that recognizes State-specific issues and needed flexibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include recommendations based on science for the difference in calculation of the cap, or what counts for disturbance and density, and the appropriate scale (e.g., project or BSU).</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies, then solidify through BLM State-level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation.</p> <p>In cooperation with the State, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	<p>If inconsistencies, then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require future consideration of a plan amendment process.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Inconsistent mitigation standards</p>	<p>BLM plans have a net conservation gain standard while the State mechanisms have adopted differing standards. There is confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States wish to use the State mitigation approach to achieve a seamless mitigation standard and approach across State, private, and Federal lands. States have various definitions for their mitigation standard including net gain, habitat assurance, no net loss, no net loss with conservation benefit, and others. Many of the State standards also account for the risk of the action to achieve the desired environmental benefit.</p> <p>Removing the net conservation gain language creates issues for some States as they have adopted that language as the standard for their State mitigation mechanism.</p> <p>States want to apply mitigation actions on Federal lands while meeting the mitigation principles in the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) GRSG compensatory mitigation report.</p> <p>Recognize that Federal land users must also comply with State requirements, when applicable.</p> <p>Recognize that the DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, including the compensatory mitigation standards and may issue revised policy, including consideration of a 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard.</p>	<p>Define net conservation gain for the BLM plans.</p> <p>Evaluate and document each State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of net conservation gain.</p> <p>Consider policy on options to use the State’s mitigation standard if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the GRSG plans.</p>	<p>If policy does not address the concern, then consider a potential plan amendment to change the net conservation gain standard. Options to further evaluate could include using each State’s standard (may vary by State), setting a minimum standard for public lands and using the State standard if it is higher, or setting a standard for public lands while the State standard applies to State and private lands.</p> <p>Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with DOI policy on mitigation.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
State mitigation plans	Use the State mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	<p>Complete an MOU with each State on application of the State mitigation approach if it is consistent with the BLM plans and meets the principles in the SGTF Mitigation Report and DOI policy</p> <p>If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach.</p>	None at this time	Multistate
Regional mitigation strategies	In coordination with the States, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>How are habitat objectives; plan effectiveness reporting; Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; and Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) assessments related?</p>	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the land health standards evaluation and management decisions.</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well.</p> <p>Issuance of policy identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Issue IMs to provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of land health standards; use habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Continue outreach and training on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF)</p>	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments (e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat).</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions, not just grazing.</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with the BLM, other agencies, and States, including the Department of Agriculture.</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF, as well as how these relate to the habitat objectives table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) - Continued	<p>Explore use of and continue the development of tools to streamline habitat assessments (e.g., remote sensing) for rapid assessment of habitat conditions.</p> <p>Issuance of new HAF IM identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Continue to learn from the pilot studies (e.g., Oregon State and Transition Model) and other tools to streamline habitat assessments, and advance or integrate outcomes into BLM's approach to HAF and related work through IM or other policy clarification and training.	None at this time	Multistate
Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM)	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated.</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between the National Operations Center (NOC) and field offices.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Issue clarification that addresses concerns; provide training.	None at this time	Multistate

<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Adjusting the habitat objectives tables	<p>Codify guidance issued on habitat objectives tables in an IM which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site.</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to habitat objectives tables as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in habitat objectives tables are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (e.g., Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (not all States have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives tables from the plans, and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement, as described in 43 CFR 4180.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on the intent, purpose, and use of habitat objectives tables, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential.</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans.</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for GRSG, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan. An amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis	Work with States to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each State to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers.	None at this time	Multistate
Reversion of trigger responses when conditions improve	Work with States on process to revert to previous management, or change the response based on positive habitat/population response.	Evaluate plans to determine which do not have a “reversion” clause and whether each plan provides any flexibility to address through policy.	Potential plan amendment to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger.	Multistate
Implementation of hard trigger responses	Work with States to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.  Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.	Work with States on development of the process in the recommendation.	Potential plan amendment to consider options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger, such as a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed, or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Multistate
Adaptive management policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM State-specific IM to address advance coordination with the States and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM.	Modify the current IM.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Research and data collection needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached. Identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement predefined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify multiprong impacts to populations.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data. Must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis.</p>	<p><i>Defer to "Data Management and the Use of Science" topic in the report for recommendation.</i></p>		
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) are inconsistent with the state plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way, and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFAs, as needed.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) habitat.</p>	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/fragmentation).</p> <p>Should not be spending a lot of time monitoring and inspecting allotments that are providing good quality sagebrush habitat.</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for GRSG.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage for quality GRSG habitat.</p> <p>Revise prioritization IM to develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome-based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition.</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow animal unit months (AUMs) to increase based on forage availability.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit.	Reinforce/offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance.	None at this time	Multistate
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs.	None at this time	Multistate
Removal of livestock grazing from research natural areas (RNAs)	The Oregon Approved Resource Management Plans and Amendments (ARMPA) identifies key RNAs that will be unavailable to livestock grazing. While the general issue of research within RNAs, including with varying levels of livestock use, is not something Oregon opposes, the State Action Plan does not include having RNAs unavailable for grazing. The State is concerned about potential loss of animal unit months (AUMs), economic losses, potential effects to habitat, and impacts to livestock operators on allotments containing RNAs that are subject to being unavailable for grazing, especially if unsupported by indications of adverse habitat impacts caused by livestock grazing management.	Work with Oregon to evaluate RNAs and grazing closures.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment and relationship to future grazing, grass banks, or other uses.	When grazing permits or leases are voluntarily relinquished or where allotments otherwise become vacant, current Oregon ARMPA language would make retirement of permits an option under these circumstances. The steps BLM takes pursuant to current and ARMPA-adopted language at the point in time following voluntary relinquishment or vacancy should not run counter to State interests in working lands and habitat health.	Ensure LG/RM 15 language in the Oregon ARMPA is consistent with regulation and as needed develop State-specific policy on its use.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)
Habitat objectives table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the West.	<i>See "Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring" section in the report.</i>			
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See the "Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands" section in the report.</i>			

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach.	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with State partners, evaluate if the States' plans would provide durable and effective conservation while providing exceptions to activities.	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities.	If short term flexibilities do not resolve concerns, evaluate a potential plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multistate
Maintenance and production activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multistate
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs) under the use of the State's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multistate
Valid existing rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognize valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Misinterpretation of “avoidance” in the field</p>	<p>Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see Colorado and Nevada for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.</p>	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue State-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses.</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	<p>Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a potential plan amendment.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Plans do not recognize the State’s guidance that some activities are “de minimis” (negligible or no impact to GRSG).</p>	<p>Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to GRSG.</p> <p>Long term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate “de minimis” activities as defined in State plans, and evaluate against Federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>Development of programmatic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of categorical exclusions for “de minimis” activities.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g., TIMING AND TALL STRUCTURES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using State-developed required design features (RDFs).	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features, outside those identified in the current plans, can be used without further analysis by the BLM. Design features selected should help to encourage development in lower quality habitat (e.g., in general habitat management areas instead of priority habitat management areas).	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to project and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time	Multistate
Requirement to include discussion on all required design features (RDFs) in the project-level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used.	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time	Multistate
Lack of consistent application of required design features (RDFs) in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that RDFs are not a “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, a plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development (e.g., range improvements).</p>	<p>Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat, which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.</p> <p>Suggest a two-step process of clarifying justifiable departures and then streamline the process using local information.</p> <p>Need to revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers ahead of initiating new science for buffers.</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures. Evaluate each plan to ensure adequate flexibility to address project-specific information is available.</p> <p>Revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers.</p>	<p>If needed, initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses, and identify any potential changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue, then evaluate a potential plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information.</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>
<p>Clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for National Environmental Policy Act analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and record of decision (ROD) description should be used and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project-specific information.</p>	<p>Develop policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation, and clarify language in ROD and plan.</p> <p>Evaluate need for templates, streamlined processes, and programmatic analysis to standardize the evaluation of lek buffers, including justifiable departures, in project-level analysis.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>

TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS)				
Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations	<p>Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions, or change those SFA management actions as described elsewhere in this table.</p>	Multistate
Need flexibility to change priority habitat management area (PHMA)/general habitat management area (GHMA) boundaries.	<p>Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground surveys and improved understanding of GRSG habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes, such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.</p> <p>Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, waivers, exceptions, modifications, exclusion and avoidance, etc., in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider aligning PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc., and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground surveys, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS) - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>General habitat management area (GHMA) is inconsistent with Utah's plan.</p>	<p>GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.</p>	<p>Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.</p> <p>Also, consider the application of the State mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.</p>	<p>Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a potential State-specific plan amendment.</p>	<p>Utah specific</p>

## APPENDIX B – WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES ISSUES

<b>TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected States provided feedback.	Incorporate additional information received from States and other stakeholders.
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management, and provide recommendations to improve management.	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy” (IRFMS) action items.  Complete the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy.”	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the “Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework” (SageWest).  Support development and implementation of WAFWA’s “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”  Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture’s (WASDA) “Western Invasive Weed Action Plan.”  Support implementation of the “National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.”  Support the memorandum of understanding between the BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with private landowners, and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasive species and wildland fire.
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators.	Reinstate grant authority and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators.  Address the General Services Administration policy that prevents excess Federal firefighting equipment (e.g., engines, radios) from going directly to partners, such as rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs).  Explore options for shared funded positions to enhance cooperative efforts (e.g., RFPA support).  Continue to support and develop additional RFPAs.

**TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES**

Issue/Comment	Recommended Additional Steps
Consider related Western Governors' Association (WGA) efforts that enhance implementation of the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy."	Further action items in the WGA's National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative, such as: expanding good neighbor authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating Federal, State, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; and flexibilities in grazing management.
Improve coordination with States on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery.	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the "National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy."
Ensure funding for fire, fuels, and restoration projects.	<p>Explore options for multijurisdictional funding, multiyear funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects.</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the DOI. The risk-based funding modeling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and improve restoration success.	<p>Conduct research, testing, and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g., biopesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies.	Work with appropriate Departments, agencies, offices, and companies to gain approval of concurrent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration and field-testing of biopesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration

## APPENDIX C – WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop rangewide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess GRSG population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate GRSG population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

## APPENDIX D – SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES

TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES	
Issue/Comment	Recommended Additional Steps
<p>Address priority science needs, and increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts.</p>	<p>Implement the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan.” Actions include: coordination of research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among State and Federal agencies and other organizations; implementation of research efforts, as funding allows; and development of a tracking mechanism for publications and products.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts, identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions and economics in the sagebrush ecosystem, and address prioritized science needs, as funding allows.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data and other information from entities other than Federal or State agencies to ensure it meets quality, reliability, and relevance standards for use.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data to identify new potential science needs that can be addressed using formal experimental or other scientific investigations.</p> <p>Work to increase development of information products that translate and synthesize peer-reviewed science into more accessible formats for decision-makers, and improve access to peer-reviewed science journals for those who need that level of information.</p> <p>Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant peer-reviewed science, high-quality information, and local on-the-ground data that is pertinent to implementation of management actions.</p> <p>Evaluate use of the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) as the coordinating body for the intersection of science with policy and management and to identify priority science and data needs to inform management and policy.</p>

**TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES**

<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing.</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multiagency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that nonproprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements for information included in shared data catalogs and information gathered by third party sources for potential inclusion in agency databases or use in decision-making.</p> <p>Identify multiscale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information, when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and tribes to explore options to improve or develop data sharing mechanisms for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**APPENDIX E – OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS**

<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Reserve common allotments	Reserve common allotments are a tool available on public lands that could be used to provide alternative locations for grazing permittees/leases when their allotment is unavailable due to fire, restoration activities, or other reasons. However, there are concerns that designation of allotments as reserve common allotments could take those allotments out of regular use and result in economic loss. Further investigation with the BLM, Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF), ranchers, and other stakeholders is warranted to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be considered.	Engage with the SGTF, counties, Public Lands Council, ranchers, and other stakeholders to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be used.		Multistate
Water rights	There is concern that the BLM may be managing water rights they do not own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. This may be a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressed in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate: Utah, Idaho, Nevada
Changes in grazing management following natural events	Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.  Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate
Wild horse and burro: appropriate management level (AML) achievement	Verify that the BLM has the tools and funding to achieve AML across the West. Evaluate priorities (e.g., Priority given to sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) potentially limits funding and staff to initiate gathers in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs)).	BLM state offices reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with States. Elevate unresolved issue to management.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long term resolution.	Multistate
Herd management areas and associated appropriate management level (AML) may need to be analyzed for adjustments	Implement solutions for reaching current AML prior to reevaluating herd management areas and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML is reached.	Multistate

## **APPENDIX F: TECHNICAL WHITE PAPERS FROM THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

### **White Paper Titles**

1. Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means (3 pages)
2. Population and Habitat-Based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
3. Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
4. Hunting Sage-Grouse, Impacts and Management (2 pages)
5. Literature Cited in WAFWA Tech. Committee White Papers on Predator Control, Captive Breeding and Population and Habitat Management

## AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS

### WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994; Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild,

**AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS  
THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS**

however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1 September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Attwater's prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

**Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season (31 Mar)**

Method	Hatchability	Survival to release	Post-release survival to 31 Mar.	Number of birds or eggs needed	Net Removal from source population
Spring transplant	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≥ 12 weeks old	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

**AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS  
THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS**

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**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

**Conclusions**

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

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Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse *by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al.

## POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

(2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

### Conclusions:

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

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Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boarman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boarman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that

## PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

### **Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website.*



**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**  
**HUNTING SAGE-GROUSE, IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT**

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Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily,

## HUNTING SAGE-GROUSE, IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT

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4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

### Conclusions:

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website*



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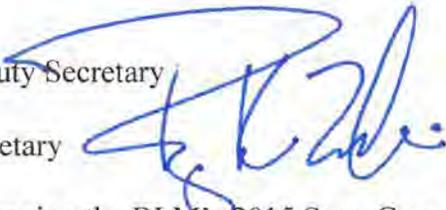


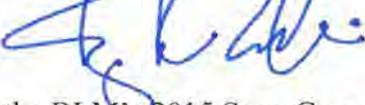
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

AUG 04 2017

**Memorandum**

**To:** Deputy Secretary 

**From:** Secretary 

**Subject:** Improving the BLM's 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans

On June 7, 2017, I issued Secretary's Order 3353, "Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (Order). The Order was issued in response to concerns I have heard regarding the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse) Plans. The Department of the Interior (Department) Sage-Grouse Review Team has completed the "Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353" (Report) outlining short- and long-term recommendations as directed in my Order.

I hereby direct you to ensure implementation of the recommendations and direct BLM, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and other offices in the Department, to immediately begin implementing the short- and long-term recommendations in the Report. As part of this effort, the BLM should collaborate with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to engage with stakeholders and to improve the compatibility of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans with the States,<sup>1</sup> beginning with these actions:

- Identify options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas;
- Clarify mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs);
- Modify or issue new policy on fluid mineral leasing and development, including the prioritization policy;
- Issue or modify policy and provide training on use of assessment and monitoring data and tools, the habitat objectives table from the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and to increase flexibility in grazing management;
- Identify options for flexibility when applying adaptive management decisions;
- Investigate options to streamline use authorizations with little impact on the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans;
- Clarify the appropriate use of compensatory mitigation and identify opportunities to increase consistency between the Federal and State plans;
- Work with the States to improve techniques and methods to allow the States to set appropriate population objectives; and
- Investigate the removal or modification of Sage-Grouse Focal Areas in certain States.

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<sup>1</sup>The States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

I am particularly interested in assisting the States in setting Sage-Grouse population objectives to improve management of the species. I also believe we should examine a program to enhance scientific research. Please report to my office periodically, and no less than every 6 months, on the progress you have made in implementing the recommendations from the Report.

Background:

The State of Nevada’s Sagebrush Ecosystem Program finalized the *2014 Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan* in October 1, 2014. The State designed their plan to “eliminate the threats facing [GRSG] while balancing the economic and social needs of the residents of Nevada through the use of ‘avoid, minimize and mitigate’ with additional offsite mitigation being accomplished by the use of the Nevada Conservation Credit System.” In response to Secretarial Order 3353, BLM Nevada reviewed its 2015 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA), the State’s Conservation Plan, and the seven national Instruction Memorandum that were released in September 2016. For the purposes of identifying inconsistencies between the State and Federal Plans, BLM Nevada also reviewed the Governor’s Consistency Review conducted in June/July 2015. The topic areas identified in the following tables are a result of this review with the State of Nevada.

BLM Nevada’s discussions with the State of Nevada on this exercise also included the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, as their 2015 plan amendment was developed and analyzed in tandem with BLM’s plan amendment. Responses from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest are identified in **green** text.

Issue Descriptions and Recommendations:

Topical Area 1 Sage Grouse Habitat Management Area Maps			
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>Since the release of BLM Nevada and California’s Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA), the State of Nevada (in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr. Pete Coates et. al) updated GRSG habitat maps in 2016 for the Nevada and Northeastern California subregion. The State of Nevada (specifically NDOW and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), and counties are already actively using the 2016 habitat management maps to implement the 2014 Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan while BLM Nevada and California sage-grouse land use plan amendment goals, objectives, and management decisions are tied to an older version of GRSG habitat maps that were the basis of the GRSG habitat management areas, as defined in the 2015 ARMPA.</p> <p>This is inconsistent with the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan, which recognizes that mapping habitat management areas <i>“is iterative and is intended to inform and better define aspects of the State Plan. To that end, the habitat and management mapping process will be reviewed and refined every 3 to 5 years. New or improved spatial data (e.g., additional sage-grouse telemetry data, updated or improved vegetation community data) will be incorporated during the refinement process.”</i></p> <p>During a meeting with Governor Sandoval on December 4, 2015, then Department of the Interior</p>			

<p>Secretary Sally Jewell <i>“committed to formally adopt the maps in the most expeditious manner possible.”</i> However, since that commitment, the Department of Interior has yet to adopt the newly updated maps.</p> <p>The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest GRSg plan amendment (HTNF Plan) and management decisions are also tied to the older version of the GRSg habitat maps. In addition, the HTNF Plan includes definitions of “leks” that are inconsistent with the BLM and State of Nevada’s definitions, making it difficult to crosswalk the application of plan standards and guidelines. Finally, requirements for lek surveys in and surrounding proposed project areas (GL-GEN-008) are inconsistent with those of the BLM.</p>	
<p><b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b></p>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Issue clarification (IB) to BLM state, district, and field office staff as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted (i.e. how to use the 2016 maps as best available science when conducting site specific (project) NEPA in GRSg habitat).</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Attempt to find a long term sustainable solution as to the appropriate applications for the habitat maps and how the maps can be updated to reflect the best science in the land use plan amendments without conducting an extensive amendment.</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>The BLM needs to amend the plans (or use plan maintenance if appropriate) to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes. Minor changes could be conducted through plan maintenance, but major changes require a plan amendment. “Minor” and “major” are not defined in BLM’s planning regulations since the specific resource and context involved are key factors in determining what these terms means.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan would most likely require an amendment to adopt current habitat maps because the change would affect where plan components (e.g., standards and guidelines) apply. The HTNF should complete an administrative correction to adopt consistent definitions for leks and consistent requirements for lek surveys for project areas.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Topical Area 2		Sagebrush Focal Areas	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) are inconsistent with the State of Nevada’s Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, which does not include any similar type of designation that recommends habitat management areas for mineral withdrawal or closure. Instead, the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan uses a mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and mitigate) to ensure any anthropogenic disturbances in habitat management areas (not just the ‘best of the best’ in the State) <i>achieves a net conservation gain</i>. The State of Nevada believes this more site specific and science based approach will achieve a net conservation gain while allowing for appropriately well planned development within habitat management areas (including the SFAs), as long as mitigation connected to a development is vetted through the State’s robust Conservation Credit System (or other similar system).</p> <p>A side note here is that during final completion of the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan, the State was advised by our federal partners that our plan would not be accepted without achieving a “net conservation gain.” Our preference is for revised language requiring “no net unmitigated loss.”</p> <p>The HTNF Plan also includes SFAs; the Forest Service is cooperating with the BLM on the environmental analysis for SFA withdrawal from mineral entry.</p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A		
Policy	N/A		
Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment and remove the SFA designation boundaries. If this is not possible, see the cell below.		
Other	<p>There are management decisions set forth in the ARMPA that prioritize restoration activities and livestock grazing permit renewals in the SFAs, the Secretary should call upon the State of Nevada, local stakeholders, and BLM Nevada to work together to create a defensible method for identifying areas that are the “best-of-the-best” for prioritizing BLM driven activities.</p> <p>The HTNF should also be included in any process to address SFAs and/or identify areas that are the “best-of-the-best” on National Forest System lands.</p>		

Topical Area 3		Disturbance Caps	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State

Describe the Issue	
<p>The State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan states that all “<i>anthropogenic disturbances should be avoided in habitats within the SGMA [Sage Grouse Management Areas]. If project proponents wish to demonstrate that a disturbance cannot be avoided, exemptions will be granted if the criteria listed in the table [Table 3-1] can be met for the applicable management category.</i>” The BLM’s ARMPA however calls for no further discrete human disturbances to be authorized if disturbance at either the biologically significant unit or project area scale exceeds 3% disturbance. This is a clear inconsistency with the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan. Disturbance caps are incompatible in Nevada for two reasons: 1) they fail to account for the quality of habitat and seasonal habitats used by the grouse (which the State’s CCS places significant consideration on) and 2) does not incentivize co-location of disturbances if an area (BSU or project area) already exceeds 3% disturbance, thus promoting new disturbances in undisturbed PHMA and/or GHMA which are important to the State.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan includes the same 3% anthropogenic disturbance limit as the BLM. The Forest Service definition of anthropogenic disturbance is inconsistent with the BLM definition even though disturbance calculations are done cooperatively.</p>	
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply	
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A
Policy	N/A
Plan Changes	<p>Amend/Maintain the plan amendment and remove the 3% disturbance cap, specifically at the project analysis scale. In its place, require anthropogenic disturbing activities be quantified through the Nevada Conservation Credit System, which adequately evaluates the quality of habitat and the availability of seasonal habitat types.</p> <p>The HTNF Plan should be amended or corrected consistent with the BLM. The Forest Service should complete an administrative change for the definition of anthropogenic disturbance.</p>
Other	N/A

Topical Area 4		Exclusion/Closed Land Use Plan Allocations	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>In the Nevada portion of the ARMPA, PHMA and GHMA are exclusion areas for wind and solar energy development, are closed for salable and non-energy leasable development, and in the event</p>			

a hard adaptive management trigger is tripped at a biologically significant unit scale, high-voltage transmission line rights-of-way would be excluded in PHMA.

The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan utilizes a rigorous "avoid, minimize, and mitigate" process to deter disturbance activity in priority habitat. Residual disturbance impacts that cannot be avoided or minimized to a level of non-significance are mitigated through the Conservation Credit System which quantifies functional acres of mitigation that are mapped and verified on the ground, and incorporate specific mitigation factors for existing habitat quality, distance criteria and many other parameters in the calculation of debits and credits to ensure net conservation gain.

Nevada worked with USGS to create the habitat maps for use with the Conservation Credit System (CCS) to be able to quantitatively assure that the highest value habitat (measured in functional acres) would require highest levels of mitigation. Nevada does not use the management categories for prescribing land use allocations, exclusions or closures. The mapping results depicted as PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA do not necessarily reflect local or site-scale (on-the ground) conditions, but are the output of a complex GIS modeling exercise that analyzes more than 50 variables simultaneously and calculates a habitat suitability index that is intersected with the space use index to create management categories in the following way.

- Areas with high habitat suitability intersected with high space use are PHMA;
- Areas with high habitat suitability intersected with low space use or areas of non-habitat intersected with high space use are GHMA; and
- Areas with moderate habitat suitability intersected with low space use are OHMA.

The results of the GIS model in and of themselves do not denote areas that require closure, exclusion, or imply any kind of specific management recommendations. In the ARMPA, resource management decisions based on the management category maps alone do not incorporate other important factors that are pertinent to finding the appropriate management actions to achieve local-scale multiple use objectives. The Nevada Plan primarily uses the mapped habitat categories to prioritize management actions such as wildfire suppression and rehabilitation, PJ removal, and wild horse management.

The HTNF Plan includes the same or similar exclusions and restrictions for energy and mineral development.

**Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply**

Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A
Policy	N/A
Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to allow for some level of disturbance provided that a net conservation gain can be achieved. The State of Nevada recommends that BLM adopt a multi-scale planning approach rather than a complete closure or exclusion of activities through land use plan allocations attached to the existing mapped habitat management areas.

	The HTNF Plan should be amended or corrected consistent with the BLM.
Other	N/A

Topical Area 5		Valid Existing Rights with Closures and Exclusions	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan does not use closures or exclusion areas due to the rigor of the Conservation Credit System to deter disturbances in the most important sage-grouse habitat by requiring the highest levels of mitigation, with assurances to achieve a net conservation gain. Closures and exclusion in the ARMPA are qualified by the use of the term “valid existing rights.” The varied use of this term is confusing and creates uncertainty. It is critical that a definition and efficient process for determining “valid existing rights” is developed in collaboration with the State.</p> <p><b>These concerns are also applicable to the HTNF Plan.</b></p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	<p>Collaborate with Nevada Division of Minerals and the Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Program to clearly and concisely clarify (IB) for both BLM practitioners and BLM stakeholders what constitutes a “valid existing right.”</p> <p><b>The HTNF should participate in both defining valid existing rights and working with the State of Nevada to ensure consistency across ownership boundaries.</b></p>		
Policy	<p>Collaborate with the State to determine the objectives for closures and exclusions to assure that these actions are justified over expansive landscape areas.</p>		
Plan Changes	N/A		
Other	N/A		

Topical Area 6		Habitat Objectives	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>The habitat objectives in the ARMPA (Table 2-2) are very similar to the desired habitat conditions for sage-grouse describe in the Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. One additional habitat objective is included in the ARMPA that is not present in the State’s Conservation Plan and that is the 7 inch deep rooted perennial bunchgrass (within 200 meters of riparian areas and wet meadows) desired condition.</p>			

<p>The introductory language between the ARMPA’s Table 2-2 and the State’s Conservation Plan which outlines the intent of the desired habitat conditions (habitat objectives) are also inconsistent and is driving some confusion for stakeholders, particularly the livestock grazing community that depends on Nevada rangelands for their livelihood. The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan clearly states that the sage-grouse habitat objectives are to be used as guidelines in conjunction with ecological site descriptions and state and transition models as they may not be applicable to all sagebrush communities. In the Nevada Plan, the sage-grouse habitat objectives are not to be used to conduct land health assessments and are not regulatory. The State Plan also point out that the desired habitat conditions should not be reviewed, measured, or managed for independently and that measurements for a single given year should not necessarily be used to adjust management decisions.</p> <p>Desired habitat conditions for the Forest Service are contained in Tables 1a and 1b, and are not entirely consistent with the BLM habitat objectives in Table 2-2. The HTNF Plan also includes Table 3, grazing guidelines for GRSG seasonal habitat, which includes droop height and stubble height requirements for uplands and mesic meadows. The Forest Service has not provided details on how the direction in this table will be assessed and applied to allotment management.</p>	
<p><b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b></p>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>In the short term, provide BLM practitioners and range users with clarification and training as to the intended uses of the desired habitat conditions as well as the limitations of how they should be interpreted.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to match the desired habitat conditions for sage-grouse describe in the State of Nevada’s Conservation Plan. The State’s Conservation Plan includes a desired condition for maintaining a residual grass height that provides for overhead and lateral concealment from predators, but does not identify specific values for those objectives.</p> <p>Amend the HTNF Plan desired conditions tables and grazing guidelines to be consistent with the BLM and current state of knowledge for GRSG habitat.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Collaborate with Nevada state agencies and local stakeholders to define a process for setting feasible desired conditions at the local scale which would include consideration for sage-grouse habitat objectives in conjunction with other existing authorized land uses.</p>

Topical Area 7		Monitoring	
<p><b>Bold All that Apply</b></p>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State

Describe the Issue	
<p>Use of the Habitat Assessment Framework (in coordination with the habitat objectives table) and how it will be applied in conjunction with other assessment tools is also a concern for the State as the BLM proceeds with implementing the ARMPA.</p> <p>The State is concerned that the magnitude of the monitoring requirements for implementation of the ARMPA is not supported with adequate funding or staff. Nevada also is concerned with the sampling design using random points which will not allow for “use management.” Nevada has provided collaborative monitoring guidance for state and federal agencies through the <i>Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook</i> since the 1990s. Considerable data important for interpreting trend exists using the recommended standardized methods which are also included in BLM monitoring handbooks.</p> <p style="color: green;">These concerns are also applicable to the HTNF Plan.</p>	
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Develop clear and understandable guidance for BLM practitioners and State partners as to how the HAF will be applied and used in conjunction with other tools at the BLM’s disposal, specifically the <i>Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook</i> (Third edition).</p> <p>Complete Nevada state-and-transition model/HAF/rangeland health pilot study to determine how Nevada state-and-transition models can be integrated with land health standards determinations and the HAF.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Plan Changes</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Work collaboratively with the Nevada rangeland monitoring scientists and practitioners to incorporate the HAF monitoring protocols with existing monitoring efforts to assure that monitoring will be implemented within existing resource capability and will address the management needs.</p>

Topical Area 8 Mitigation and Consistent Sage Grouse Habitat Baseline Conditions			
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State

<b>Describe the Issue</b>	
<p>The State of Nevada’s Conservation Credit System (CCS) is a pro-active solution that provides net conservation benefits for sage-grouse, while balancing the need for continued human activities vital to the Nevada economy and way of life. Management Decision MIT I in BLM’s ARMPA states that <i>“In Nevada, coordinate with the SETT on the application of a compensatory mitigation program, such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System (CCS) (Appendix N) for mitigating activities that result in habitat loss and degradation of GRS habitat in Nevada, where the application of compensatory mitigation will occur on or the credit will be applied to disturbance on BLM-administered lands.”</i> In April 2015, BLM and the U.S. Forest Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Nevada’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). One commitment made in this MOU was that BLM will analyze the use of the State’s CCS to offset residual impacts to GRS in at least one NEPA alternative.</p> <p>Since the signing of the MOU and the release of the BLM’s ARMPA, the State of Nevada as a cooperating agency on major locatable mineral projects in GRS habitat, have struggled to effectively comment on mitigation alternatives developed by the BLM, specifically proponent driven mitigation alternatives that do not use the CCS to achieve a net conservation gain for GRS. One reason for this is that other mitigation NEPA alternatives are not utilizing the same robust biological parameters (such as the CCS’ Habitat Quantification Tool) to develop baseline habitat conditions to help identify direct, indirect, and residual impacts to GRS from a proposed activity. In additions, proponent driven mitigation alternatives are not using consistent metrics to quantify disturbance and mitigation. As such, it is difficult to ascertain if the other mitigation proposals are achieving net conservation and how they compare with the CCS alternative.</p> <p>The HTNF did not commit to analyzing the use of the CCS in at least one NEPA alternative, but did commit to identifying the DCNR as a cooperating agency on projects within PHMA or GHMA. The Forest Service did commit to coordinate with the DCNR to determine if use of the CCS would result in a net conservation gain for projects which may result in residual impacts.</p>	
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>	
<p>Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)</p>	<p>Work with the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team and Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDOA) to establish a curriculum and training for all BLM District offices regarding the use of the CCS Habitat Quantification Tool, in an effort to establish consistent science based baseline conditions for NEPA analysis, as well as quantification of conservation gain. This curriculum and training should also be available to NEPA consultants.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Require BLM staff and their consultants to use the CCS Habitat Quantification Tool for all NEPA alternatives resulting in anthropogenic disturbances in GRS habitat. Reiterate (per the MOU) consultation (at minimum, a pre-application conference) with the Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team to assess the functionality of the habitat proposed to be impacted by developments. Any proponent-driven mitigation must utilize consistent metrics hat are science based, to quantify both baseline, disturbance, and mitigation to achieve conservation gain.</p> <p>As stated previously, the Forest Service has already committed to coordinate with the DCNR to determine if use of the CCS would result in a net conservation gain for projects which may result in residual impacts.</p>

Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to require mitigation (achieve a net conservation gain to GRSG) in OHMA.
Other	N/A

Topical Area 9		Wild Horse and Burro Management	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>While the ARMPA directs the BLM to “manage herd management areas (HMAs) in GRSG habitat within established AML ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives” and “prioritize gathers and population growth suppression techniques in HMAs in GRSG habitat” (ARMPA, Management Decisions WHB 2 and 4), it is not evident that the BLM has prioritized funding to implement these actions which will reduce the present and widespread threat to GRSG that is prevalent throughout the State. As a result of this inaction, there is a perception held by many local stakeholders in Nevada that BLM is more focused on redirecting livestock grazing management rather than the overpopulation of wild horses in areas important to GRSG.</p> <p>The ARMPA perpetuates the fallacy that BLM can manage wild horses and burros under existing policies and conflicts with actions proposed in the State Plan to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reevaluate Herd Areas and adjust to avoid PHMA</li> <li>2. Reevaluate AML and adjust if necessary</li> </ol> <p>The same concern applies to wild horse and burro territories on National Forest System Lands and the associated standards and guidelines in the HTNF Plan (HB-ST-68 and HB-GL-70).</p>			
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	N/A		
Policy	<p>Work in collaboration with state and local stakeholders to reevaluate existing boundaries for HMAs and HAs for possible realignments to avoid conflicts with PHMA and GHMA.</p> <p>Work in collaboration with state and local stakeholders to reevaluate appropriate management levels and propose justifiable adjustments.</p>		
Plan Changes	N/A		
Other	Recommend that BLM and Forest Service begin to implement the wild horse and burro management actions set forth in ARMPA, consistent with laws and mandates that are already in place.		

Topical Area 10		Adaptive Management	
Bold All that Apply			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
Describe the Issue			
<p>The BLM’s ARMPA calls for the use of a USGS GRSG state-space models (Coates et al. 2014) to assess the rate of GRSG population growth (increase or decrease in population numbers) and the number of males at individual lek, lek cluster, BSU scales to determine whether or not an adaptive management population trigger will be tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale. In the event a hard adaptive management trigger is reached, more restrictive land use plan allocation decisions (as outlined in Table J-1 and J-2 in the ARMPA) will be immediately employed.</p> <p>The State understands that USGS is currently in the process of adjusting the GRSG state-space model, which will result in newly defined BSU boundaries and updated population triggers. Once USGS is finished finalizing this model, the BLM will then be required to conduct a plan maintenance action or a plan amendment to adopt these new boundaries and numeric triggers. Before this occurs, the State of Nevada recommends that USGS present the model to the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council before the BLM moves forward with conducting any changes. In 2012, Governor Brian Sandoval established the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (via Executive Order 2012-19 and later approved by the legislature in 2013 as state statute). The council is a nine member body representing all of Nevada’s diverse industries and resources, as well as ex-officio members from Federal and state agency leaders.</p> <p>In addition to reaching out to the SEC before making any changes to the existing ARMPA’s adaptive management strategy, the State would also like to see a causal factor analysis process established by the BLM before implementing a hard trigger response. Currently, a causal factor analysis process that brings in local stakeholders to assess why a hard trigger is tripped and what the appropriate response is to reverse the trigger is not set forth in the ARMPA or addressed in IM 2016-140. Instead, the ARMPA calls for the BLM to implement a set of allocation decisions (Table J-1 and J-2) that may or may not address the causal factors resulting in the population decline.</p> <p>The Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan does not include adaptive management triggers.</p> <p style="color: green;">The HTNF Plan also calls for use of the Coates state-space models for adaptive management, and changes to the model would be adopted by both the HTNF and the BLM concurrently. The HTNF Plan does not state explicitly where allocation decisions or other management decisions would be applied in the event of a hard trigger. The HTNF does acknowledge the possibility of a causal factor analysis in the event of a hard trigger but does not require it.</p>			
Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	As a temporary solution, update IM 2016-140 to allow the BLM to conduct a casual factor analysis before implementing unnecessary hard trigger responses (new land use plan allocations).		
Policy	N/A		

Plan Changes	Amend/Maintain the plan amendment to address the state-space model changes proposed by USGS and BLM only after the SEC approves the methodology.
Other	Work collaboratively with the State Sagebrush Ecosystem Council and Technical Team to identify hard triggers for adaptive management that are agreed upon and can be incorporated into both the ARMPA and the State Plan.

<b>Topical Area 11</b>		<b>Seasonal Timing Restrictions</b>	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<p>Management Decisions SSS 2E and SSS 3D of the BLM’s ARMPA calls for the application of seasonal timing restrictions <i>“to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands to prevent disturbing GRSG during seasonal life cycle periods.”</i> In December 2016, BLM Nevada conducted a plan maintenance action to clarify that seasonal timing restrictions only need to be applied to uses on public lands that are <u>disruptive</u> to GRSG, therefore, the application of timing restrictions are no longer necessary to be applied to uses and public activities that do not have a direct or indirect impact on GRSG (i.e. permits to survey bats in PHMA that result in no surface disturbance or noise). However, there continues to be inconsistent interpretations across BLM Nevada District Offices as to what constitutes a “restriction.” For example, some offices interpret a seasonal restriction as a moratorium on any actions to occur on the ground during the seasonal timing periods, while other offices interpret seasonal restrictions as a time to avoid certain activities (i.e. do not travel on roads between the hours of 6:00 am to 9:00 pm during the nesting season).</p>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Collaborate with the State to develop a range-wide clarifying document that clarifies what a seasonal timing restriction is and how to consistently apply them to protect GRSG during seasonal life cycle periods, while not arbitrarily applying moratoriums for certain uses on public lands.		
Policy	N/A		
Plan Changes	N/A		

# REPORT IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

## August 4, 2017

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). In response to the Order, the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team)<sup>1</sup> to address the elements of the order and produce a report. In developing the report and recommendations, the DOI Team sought input from the Eleven Western States<sup>2</sup> identified in the Order and coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). The DOI Team respectfully requests the Secretary to direct the appropriate DOI bureaus to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary.

Together, the DOI Team, and managers and staff from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF)—made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the Eleven States—identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order. The DOI Team and the SGTF are committed to a balanced approach that provides both responsible economic development and long term conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)<sup>3</sup>. This commitment includes an interest by most States in retaining the 2015 GRSG Plans—using policy and clarifications initially to better align them with State plans and programs and to meet the purposes of the Order, while continuing joint engagement to further define consideration of potential targeted plan amendments. The Federal agencies and States are also committed to continue to work with partners to prioritize staff and funding to implement on-the-ground actions to conserve and restore GRSG habitat.

The DOI Team and the SGTF affirm that the issues and options identified in this report do not apply to each State, are not consensus opinions from all States, and are not “one size fits all.” Pertinent issues and associated solutions should be tailored to each State’s needs while ensuring conservation of the species. Whenever possible, the options identified by the DOI Team provide near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the purpose of the Order, including development of policies, clarification, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and training, many of which can be completed within 6 months (see Section IV and Appendix A). The DOI Team also identified longer term options, including potential plan amendments, which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies (see Section IV and Appendix A).

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<sup>1</sup> The DOI Team consists of co-leads Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary - BLM; John Ruhs, BLM Deputy Director of Operations; Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary - Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Gregory Sheehan, FWS Deputy Director; Anne Kinsinger, USGS Associate Director for Ecosystems; Cynthia Moses-Nedd, DOI Liaison to State and Local Government; Timothy Williams, DOI Deputy Director of External Affairs; Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary; and Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The Eleven States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the States of Idaho and Utah have pending challenges to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. While these States participated in identifying issues related to the Federal plans, these States do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments. The Nevada Attorney General also filed suit and does not waive or concede Nevada’s legal arguments. Similarly, the federal agencies do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments.

This report recommends continued collaboration with the States, including both through the SGTF and between each Governor's office and the respective Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director and USFS Regional Forester, as well as key BLM and USFS national-level Directors. This report also recommends engagement on the issues and options identified in this report with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as with ranchers, industry, conservation groups, and other stakeholders. This additional engagement would be used to refine the options and develop a plan for prioritized implementation of the options in this report.

The review conducted in response to the Order identified many opportunities, summarized in this report, to clarify the BLM's management under the 2015 GRSG Plans. Clarifications, policies, agreements, or training could: (1) address issues related to habitat assessment and monitoring, including the Habitat Assessment Framework, and grazing management; (2) take advantage of flexibility in the 2015 GRSG Plans to support energy, mineral, and other development; (3) increase consistency between the BLM and States on density and disturbance caps and mitigation; and (4) in some cases, allow adjustments to habitat boundaries and address issues with adaptive management.

The review also identified longer term options to consider some issues through a potential plan amendment process. This report recommends further investigation of potential plan amendments, including considering what combination of potential plan amendments would best balance continuing to conserve the GRSG and its habitat and supporting economic development, and whether to consider State-by-State or range-wide amendments. Potential plan amendments could be considered in some States to remove or modify sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations; address adjustments to habitat management boundaries; adjust responses to reaching adaptive management triggers; evaluate the compensatory mitigation standard; and provide additional flexibility in resource development.

The report identifies opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management develop MOUs, increase data sharing, initiate new research, and incorporate new information into plan implementation. The report also includes recommendations on captive breeding, translocations, predator control, and setting population targets.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The GRSG is a State-managed species throughout its range with approximately half of its habitat managed by the BLM and USFS. State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950s. For the past two decades, State wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been coordinating efforts to conserve GRSG and its habitat.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that the GRSG was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing due to other species with higher listing priority. In the 2010 finding, the FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and lack of regulatory mechanisms as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to identify conservation objectives for GRSG and its

habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for 14 potential threats to the GRSG including: fire, nonnative invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, range management structures, wild horses and burros, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences.

The BLM and USFS initiated land use planning processes to provide regulatory certainty in addressing the threats of habitat loss and fragmentation on Federal lands to conserve the GRSG and its habitat, avoid further population declines, and avoid the need to list under the ESA. Early in the process, the BLM and USFS collaborated with the States to pursue State-by-State land use planning. These State-by-State approaches were supplemented with range-wide decisions to increase consistency between the 2015 GRSG Plans and to respond to the issues addressed in the FWS's 2010 listing determination. Several States identified instances in which they did not believe the final approved BLM 2015 GRSG Plan was consistent with the applicable State plan, particularly with regard to range-wide decisions. There were also concerns that the records of decision and final approved 2015 GRSG Plans included decisions from alternatives other than proposed alternative (as described in the proposed plans and final environmental impact statements) and therefore differed from the State's expectations based on the collaborative planning efforts.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 GRSG Plans) across the ten<sup>4</sup> Western States addressing, in part, GRSG and its habitat. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven instruction memoranda (IMs; IMs 2016-139 through 2016-145) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 GRSG Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 GRSG Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the GRSG did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, the FWS determined the 2015 GRSG Plans provided certain and effective measures for conservation of the species. The FWS also committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a GRSG status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the GRSG and its habitat.

The BLM, USFS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FWS, State agencies, and other partners have been working collaboratively, to the extent practicable, to implement the Federal and State plans to conserve GRSG and its habitat. A particular focus has been placed on an all-lands approach, encompassing Federal, State, and private lands, to achieve habitat restoration, fire control, and fuels management. Through these efforts, hundreds of thousands of acres of sagebrush rangelands have been restored or are on their way to being restored.

### **III. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW**

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and DOI staff met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input on the items identified in the Order. The

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<sup>4</sup> While Washington is included in the review for the Order, the majority of the State was not part of the 2015 GRSG Plans. A BLM land use plan that will include GRSG conservation for the Spokane District in Washington is currently under development.

BLM, FWS, and USGS managers and staff also began working with each State to gather information related to the Order, including State-specific issues and potential options for actions with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF developed an initial list of issues and refined those issues and options on a State-by-State basis while working with the respective BLM State Directors. In July 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.

The following actions were also completed to address specific sections of the Order:

- Section 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) of the Order: Each BLM State Director worked with their Governor's office(s) to review State plans and programs and the 2015 GRSG Plans.
- Section 4b(ii): DOI staff worked with the SGTF and individual Governor's offices to further examine invasive species and wildland fire issues.
- Section 4b(v): The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) developed and submitted to the SGTF white papers on each of the topics described in this provision of the Order.
- DOI staff also worked with the SGTF and the individual Governor's offices to gather further information on data and science.

In these reviews, the need for MOUs and other agreements and training, as called for in Section 4a of the Order, and cooperative management and collaborative partnerships, as called for in Section 5c of the Order were also considered. These individual reviews were then rolled-up for further discussion with the SGTF and the DOI Team and staff. Based on these reviews, the SGTF and DOI Team identified issues, potential options, and next steps to include in this report in response to Section 5d of the Order.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section provides an overview of the issues identified and potential options to address those issues (see Appendix A), as well as recommendations on the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science (see Appendices B through D). Appendix E contains other issues identified that are not directly related to the 2015 GRSG Plans and that are not addressed in this report but may warrant further coordination between the BLM and the States. Appendix F contains white papers developed by WAFWA related to wildlife topics.

In regard to Washington, a new BLM land use plan for the Spokane District has not yet been issued. Based on the Order and the recommendations included in this report for the 2015 GRSG Plans, Washington and the BLM will review the BLM's preliminary draft plan to identify any further opportunities to increase compatibility with the State plan, address the elements of the Order, and consider issues and options included in this report. The BLM will work to issue the Spokane District draft plan for public comment as soon as practicable after this review is complete.

In discussions with the SGTF, there is general consensus that all partners are committed to effective and durable measures to provide for the conservation of GRSG to ensure there is no need to list GRSG under the ESA in the future. There is agreement that monitoring and reporting on conservation actions, habitat condition and trends, and economic development are essential.

Such monitoring is key to demonstrate the effectiveness of State and Federal GRSG Plans in addressing the threats, including habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and fire, as well as support for local economic opportunities and development.

This report includes short and long term approaches to address issues of concern through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as investigating potential targeted plan amendments (long term). Certain options are prioritized for further work to begin immediately, including: identifying options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas; clarifying mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs); modifying the fluid mineral lease prioritization policy; issuing or modifying policy and providing training on use of the habitat objectives tables from the 2015 GRSG Plans; identifying options for addressing hard trigger responses when applying adaptive management decisions; and researching the ability to streamline authorizations for activities with little or no impact on GRSG.

**a. 2015 GRSG Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) and 4a of the Order)**

**i. *Fluid Minerals (Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions, Modifications, Leasing Prioritization) and Density and Disturbance***

There are multiple opportunities to be responsive to the Executive Order on “Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth” and the Secretarial Order on “American Energy Independence,” while continuing a robust commitment to the conservation of GRSG. A cooperative DOI and State effort can provide the flexibility for responsible economic growth and at the same time ensure conservation of GRSG habitat.

The areas of leasing prioritization and the PHMA stipulation’s waiver, exception, and modification language are suggested issues of focus for the BLM subsequent to the submittal of this report. Leasing prioritization options include policy clarification while developing the approach to revise IMs for leasing prioritization either nationally or State-by-State. For waiver, exception, and modification language for PHMA stipulations, options include investigating opportunities to provide additional waivers, modifications, and exceptions through policy or potential plan amendments, while adequately addressing the threats in the area, avoiding habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensuring effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development.

For general habitat management areas (GHMAs), stipulations identified vary on a State-by-State basis. Options include developing State-specific policy or training to explain how to use existing flexibility or considering alternative stipulations.

For SFAs, longer term options include considering potential plan amendment(s) to modify or remove SFA fluid minerals stipulations.

The 2015 GRSG Plans define processes for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities. The 2015 GRSG Plans recognized State processes, if they were in place prior to the plans being approved and if the data could be accessed to meet reporting requirements for density of development and acres disturbed

and reclaimed. Some States have developed or are in the process of developing new tools for density and disturbance calculations. For some States, there may be differences between the State plans and the 2015 GRSG Plans in the list of disturbances to count and the appropriate scale (project and biologically significant unit) where the disturbance and density caps should apply. Options include the BLM and the States identifying State-specific inconsistencies and evaluating the various processes and tools for (1) consistency between Federal and State approaches for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities, (2) adequacy to conserve GRSG, and (3) the ability to report on disturbance associated with uses, as well as restoration actions that result in achieving conservation of the habitat.

ii. ***Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain***

There are concerns that the mitigation requirements in the 2015 GRSG Plans (including the net conservation gain standard and the need for a clear definition of that standard) may differ from requirements in some of the State plans. The States prefer consistency between State mitigation standards and the BLM mitigation standard and a definition that encompasses the various standards the States have adopted. The DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies and may issue revised policy, including consideration of various mitigation standards, such as one-to-one ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standards. It was recognized during the review that if the States have permitting authority that includes compensatory mitigation requirements, applicants for uses on public lands may need to meet both State and Federal compensatory mitigation requirements. The DOI Team and the SGTF agree that consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and compensate), including compensatory mitigation standards and other requirements between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures, is desirable. Additional coordination on the approach to mitigation and standards is a priority.

In 2015, the SGTF formed the Sage-Grouse Mitigation Workgroup to develop a report to provide for greater certainty of implementing mitigation across the range. The report, “Greater Sage-Grouse Compensatory Mitigation,” was delivered to the SGTF in December 2016. The report identifies the key principles for successful compensatory mitigation efforts. This report may be helpful to further coordinate on mitigation. States have demonstrated, or are confident that as their mechanism(s) become available, that their mitigation approaches are or will be adequate to meet the principles in this mitigation framework while supporting economic development. States have indicated that compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable impacts is an important tool, in addition to restrictions associated with avoid and minimize, to provide increased flexibility and options to authorize development and provide adequate conservation of the habitat.

In the short term, options identified to address concerns related to mitigation include defining “net conservation gain” and developing policy and MOUs with the States to ensure compensatory mitigation is commensurate with the project-specific residual impacts and coordinate and clarify options for use of each State’s approach when applying mitigation, including meeting the net conservation gain standard. Longer term options could include a potential plan amendment to consider changes to the Federal

compensatory mitigation standard. Options to consider could include investigating using the State standards; setting a Federal standard as a minimum and using the State standards if they are equal or higher than the Federal standard; or using the Federal standard on public land and the State standard on private or State lands.

**iii. *Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring***

The SGTF and DOI Team discussed issues relating to confusion on the use and inconsistent application of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF); Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; other data; and the habitat objectives table that is included in each of the 2015 GRSB Plans. Clarifications on how information is collected and used will improve the way the BLM evaluates GRSB habitat and applies the data and habitat objectives tables to management decisions on public lands.

In the short term, options include providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods; revising the policies on habitat assessment and effectiveness monitoring as needed to clarify their use; and issuing new policy explaining how to use habitat objectives. Other short term options include investigating tools and methods to streamline gathering and reporting on habitats in good condition and focusing increased attention and time on degraded habitats or habitats at risk. In the longer term, new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the habitat objectives tables in the 2015 GRSB Plans to reflect best available science.

**iv. *Adaptive Management***

The SGTF and DOI Team identified two main issues: (1) responses instituted to respond to tripping a hard trigger prior to causal factor analysis may not address the threat identified in the analysis; and (2) the inability to revert to previous management when conditions improve after tripping and responding to a trigger.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process, including conducting causal analysis when either a soft or hard trigger is reached. However, most concerns with adaptive management can likely not be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (1) removing automatic hard trigger management responses when population or habitat recovers above the original condition (the condition prior to a trigger being reached), and more restrictive hard trigger management responses are no longer required to conserve the GRSB or its habitat; and (2) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached, while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses.

**v. *Livestock Grazing***

The SGTF and the DOI Team recognize that improper grazing is a threat to the conservation of GRSB, while proper grazing management is compatible with conserving GRSB habitat and, in some situations, may support or benefit habitat management. There is a perception of undue emphasis on livestock grazing in general, instead of a focus on

improper grazing. Issues include how to prioritize and process grazing permits and monitoring actions and provide additional flexibility in applying management appropriate to on-the-ground conditions at the BLM field office level.

In the short term, options include revising policy to: incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal and to emphasize where there are known impacts to GRS habitat; clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see Section IV(a)(iii) of this report); and clarify that thresholds and responses can vary in different habitat types. Additional short term options include developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. Policies and training should clarify that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRS habitat and, in some cases, may be used to address threats to GRS (e.g., controlling invasive exotic annual grass species). In addition, the BLM will continue to pursue (1) targeted grazing pilot projects to investigate the use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks and (2) outcome-based grazing demonstration projects to investigate the use of flexible grazing permits to respond effectively to changing conditions while helping to improve habitat.

vi. ***Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way)***

These discussions centered on four distinct topics: (1) concerns that broad exclusions and closure areas may not address the uses and associated threats to GRS in a PHMA; (2) a need to clarify how to evaluate proposed actions in an avoidance area; (3) available flexibility on application of required design features (RDFs); and (4) lack of clarity on the application and size of lek buffers. The discussions varied according to the needs of each State, as there are complexities created by the various land ownership patterns (e.g., consolidated Federal ownership vs. scattered Federal ownership).

Options include evaluating each State's approach to identify how it differs from each 2015 GRS Plan and to consider whether the State's mechanism, including compensatory mitigation, could adequately address the threats in the area, avoid habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensure effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development. For example, if gravel pits are in an area closed to that use, and the State's mechanisms for managing gravel pits, including compensatory mitigation, may provide equivalent assurance for conservation of the species and its habitat, then this topic should be further investigated.

The topics of how to implement land use authorizations in avoidance areas, the application of RDFs, and the use of lek buffers all share the need for additional clarity or training, including sharing lessons learned across jurisdictional boundaries. In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate proposed uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers. This includes the consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. The DOI Team also recommends additional research to (1)

evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs and (2) incorporation of new science into plan implementation as it becomes available.

**vii. *Habitat Boundaries - Sagebrush Focal Areas and Habitat Management Areas***

Concerns were identified with: (1) whether SFA designations and their associated decisions are necessary in some States or if underlying allocations (PHMAs, Important Habitat Management Areas, GHMAs, or others) and associated decisions are adequate to meet GRSG conservation, including effectiveness and durability; and (2) the BLM's ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States. States regularly refine habitat maps delineating GHMAs and PHMAs through on-the-ground verification and incorporation of new information, and the concern was expressed that the 2015 GRSG Plans may not provide the flexibility to incorporate these updates.

In the short term, options include investigating each 2015 GRSG Plan to determine if there is flexibility to adopt revised habitat maps from the States to adjust habitat management area boundaries and develop a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections, which may include considering potential plan amendments in some States. In the long term, options include potential plan amendments to evaluate the need to remove or modify SFAs allocations in some States, including whether to retain, modify, or remove associated SFA management actions to achieve effective and durable GRSG conservation.

**b. Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4b(ii) and 4a of the Order)**

Pursuant to the Order, the DOI Team examined the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy" (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and controlling the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. Recommended additional steps are outlined in Appendix B.

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity, and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The following recommendations will further enhance the implementation of the IRFMS:

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS; support ongoing State-led efforts, including the WAFWA "Sagebrush Conservation Strategy" and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) "Western Invasive Weed Action Plan"; implement the "National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration"; and implement action items from the Western Governors Association National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative.
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs),

establishment of wildfire protection agreements, and support for the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.”

- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Agency registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing.
- Work with the DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting.
- Enhance multijurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multiyear funding of projects to increase likelihood of success.
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in the DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high-risk/high-value areas, including increasing the BLM’s fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

**c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

As a State trust species, individual States exercise their authority to manage and conserve GRSG according to their own laws and policies. In response to the Order, the WAFWA developed four technical white papers (Appendix F) to summarize the current scientific literature and management experience on the issues of: (1) captive breeding, (2) population objectives, (3) predator control, and (4) hunting. As recognized by the Order, it is the prerogative of each individual State to conserve and manage State trust species and, thus, to determine whether a Statewide population target is appropriate and whether any of these management tools should be implemented within the respective States. In support of setting population targets, the DOI Team recommends support for developing tools and techniques to estimate and set population objectives, including (1) a State/Federal/academic partnership that is working to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations over the next two years; and (2) USGS-supported research to improve the ability to find new leks, understand the percent of leks not counted because they are unknown, and increasing the accuracy of counts once leks are detected.

- i. Captive breeding, as a wildlife management tool, is best suited to augmenting small, at-risk populations for short periods of time, while factors contributing to population declines are simultaneously addressed. Because captive breeding of GRSG has not yet proven effective, requires expenditures that would limit funding availability for other priority efforts and may require the removal of potentially viable eggs from the wild, further work is needed to fairly evaluate captive breeding. The DOI Team recommends that new captive breeding efforts continue to be investigated to improve effectiveness.
- ii. While State wildlife agencies set population objectives routinely for big game and/or large carnivores based on species biology, landowner tolerance, public safety, habitat availability, and social factors, most States do not routinely establish Statewide population targets for avian species like GRSG. GRSG populations respond to climate, weather, and habitat conditions at different and, often, very fine scales. Thus, GRSG numbers vary widely in a relatively short period of time, within individual States and

across the range. States manage GRSG, in part, based on male lek counts as an indicator of habitat availability, condition, and other factors. While States support efforts to estimate and explain populations, fluctuations, and trends, any such effort must recognize and account for the relationship between the species and its habitat. Further, any population metric would have to reflect the natural range of variability, include confidence intervals, and be tied to habitat availability. Ultimately, the best method for determining GRSG viability will be to assess a combination of habitat availability and populations, which are inseparable. The DOI Team recommends that establishing a Statewide or range-wide GRSG population objective or target should be pursued.

- iii. The primary issue relative to predation is the recent emergence of predation by species with which GRSG either did not evolve or did not confront in current numbers. Among these are corvid species, such as ravens. Excessive predation by avian and/or mammalian predators may be occurring in localized settings but is not a uniform pressure across the landscape or range-wide. Localized predation can be a significant threat for small, isolated, or reintroduced populations. Even in those circumstances, however, predator control should be simultaneous with efforts to address the underlying reasons for predator population growth or concentration in localized areas of concern for GRSG. Control of multiple factors that provide predator subsidies, such as open landfills or unneeded infrastructure that provides nesting or perching sites, is a low-cost, sustainable strategy. The SGTF requests the DOI work with the States to investigate options for corvid control, including streamlining approval and reporting requirements in compliance with current law and international treaties. It is important that predator control efforts be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future decisions about how to prioritize available funding.
- iv. Hunting is an adequately regulated activity managed by States to avoid additive mortality (above and beyond natural annual mortality) so that it does not contribute to population declines. Common techniques implemented by States include short seasons, low limits of take, and permit-only hunt systems. Harvest strategies in many States can be considered more conservative than guidelines suggest. In addition to these conservative strategies, providing hunting opportunities, when appropriate and sustainable, provides an avenue to better help support the use of Pittman-Robertson wildlife restoration grant funding. In turn, this supports a multitude of conservation efforts related to GRSG, including inventory and monitoring, local conservation planning and project implementation, and research, among other endeavors, that provides States with much needed information on the status of the species.

Appendix C provides a summary of potential next steps for wildlife management.

**d. Data Management and the Use of Science (Addressing Section 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

Addressing priority science needs of managers and sharing high-quality science and information, including locally collected monitoring and assessment data, among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of

GRSG and the sagebrush ecosystem. Continued development and integration of local data and information, peer-reviewed science, and other high-quality information forms the foundation for management decisions and identifies the need for new science and information. Attributes to assess the quality and reliability of new science, data, and information include peer review, repeatability of methods and analyses, quality assurance, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions.

Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for sharing science, information, and data can help facilitate ongoing GRSG and sagebrush management efforts. Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency agreements, and online data catalogs (both public and private). Updating information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can improve the use of new information, increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes, reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues, and provide opportunities for inclusion of local and traditional ecological knowledge.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D):

- Implement the “IRFMS Actionable Science Plan.”
- Coordinate research efforts among agencies and organizations, including science needs related to human dimensions and economics.
- Develop processes to use data from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journals, agency data, and locally collected partner information.
- Work to provide policymakers and managers with science and data in a form most useful to decision-making.
- Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant science and data to inform implementation of management actions.
- Establish data standards and data sharing agreements, resolve barriers to data sharing, and improve procedures for maintaining and updating data.
- Develop methods to gather and use local and traditional ecological knowledge.

## V. NEXT STEPS

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team recommends the following next steps:

- Reaffirm DOI and State commitments to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF’s charter as needed. Coordinate with individual States to determine the need for and, as appropriate, develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation.
- Work with the USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this report, considering the USFS’s unique plans and associated decisions and laws and regulations. Work to align recommendations and future actions to the maximum extent possible.
- Continue to work with the States to further refine the options in this report and identify multistate or State-specific solutions as needed.

- In coordination with the SGTF, initiate additional discussions with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the report is submitted, continuing for approximately 2 months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify other clarifications or policy approaches that could address and resolve issues. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate whether clarification and policy actions sufficiently address the issues identified by the States and other partners or if additional actions should be considered. For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or November 2017).
- Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).

**APPENDIX A – 2015 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANS AND STATE PLAN CONSISTENCY REVIEW**

<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) and no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each State to evaluate whether general habitat management area (GHMA) and priority habitat management area (PHMA) stipulations already provide for the durable and effective conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, potential plan amendment to consider eliminating or reducing the SFAs and changes to stipulations. May be State-specific outcome.	Multistate
General habitat management area (GHMA) stipulations (vary by State)	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of priority habitat management area (PHMA), and informs industry of expectations.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations, and issue State-specific policy as needed; determine if a controlled surface use (CSU) stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multistate (Utah in particular)
Priority habitat management area (PHMA) no surface occupancy (NSO) and waiver, exception, and modification (WEM) language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs, which recognizes the State’s mitigation hierarchy, maintains collaborative approach, and removes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) role in approving WEMs.  Short term option to clarify which mechanism to modify WEMs is identified as an immediate action item. Then work with the States to engage with partners and stakeholders on the short term evaluation or potential adjustment process.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs, and work with the States to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Lease prioritization instruction memorandum (IM)	<p>Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.</p> <p>Short term option to clarify to staff leasing is not restricted in GRSG habitat. Identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Clarify that all habitat types are open for leasing. Modify and reissue IM to address other concerns</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
	<p>Rescind the national IM.</p> <p>Then issue State-level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and include State-specific solutions.</p> <p>Short term option identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Rescind the National IM, and develop BLM State-specific IMs that include all habitat types are open for leasing and other State-specific concerns.</p>	<p>If the BLM State-level IMs do not address the issues, then consider a potential plan amendment to address concerns.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
Density and disturbance	<p>There is variation between the States on what counts as a disturbance and towards a density cap, the level of disturbance that is allowed, and the scales the caps apply to (project or biologically significant unit - BSU). There is a need for a consolidated (BLM/State) process so industry knows where to start and the steps to follow.</p> <p>On a State-by-State basis, develop a crosswalk to explore the potential to develop a density and disturbance process that recognizes State-specific issues and needed flexibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Include recommendations based on science for the difference in calculation of the cap, or what counts for disturbance and density, and the appropriate scale (e.g., project or BSU).</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies, then solidify through BLM State-level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation.</p> <p>In cooperation with the State, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	<p>If inconsistencies, then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require future consideration of a plan amendment process.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Inconsistent mitigation standards</p>	<p>BLM plans have a net conservation gain standard while the State mechanisms have adopted differing standards. There is confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States wish to use the State mitigation approach to achieve a seamless mitigation standard and approach across State, private, and Federal lands. States have various definitions for their mitigation standard including net gain, habitat assurance, no net loss, no net loss with conservation benefit, and others. Many of the State standards also account for the risk of the action to achieve the desired environmental benefit.</p> <p>Removing the net conservation gain language creates issues for some States as they have adopted that language as the standard for their State mitigation mechanism.</p> <p>States want to apply mitigation actions on Federal lands while meeting the mitigation principles in the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) GRSG compensatory mitigation report.</p> <p>Recognize that Federal land users must also comply with State requirements, when applicable.</p> <p>Recognize that the DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, including the compensatory mitigation standards and may issue revised policy, including consideration of a 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard.</p>	<p>Define net conservation gain for the BLM plans.</p> <p>Evaluate and document each State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of net conservation gain.</p> <p>Consider policy on options to use the State’s mitigation standard if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the GRSG plans.</p>	<p>If policy does not address the concern, then consider a potential plan amendment to change the net conservation gain standard. Options to further evaluate could include using each State’s standard (may vary by State), setting a minimum standard for public lands and using the State standard if it is higher, or setting a standard for public lands while the State standard applies to State and private lands.</p> <p>Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with DOI policy on mitigation.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
State mitigation plans	Use the State mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	<p>Complete an MOU with each State on application of the State mitigation approach if it is consistent with the BLM plans and meets the principles in the SGTF Mitigation Report and DOI policy</p> <p>If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach.</p>	None at this time	Multistate
Regional mitigation strategies	In coordination with the States, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>How are habitat objectives; plan effectiveness reporting; Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; and Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) assessments related?</p>	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the land health standards evaluation and management decisions.</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well.</p> <p>Issuance of policy identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Issue IMs to provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of land health standards; use habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Continue outreach and training on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF)</p>	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments (e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat).</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions, not just grazing.</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with the BLM, other agencies, and States, including the Department of Agriculture.</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF, as well as how these relate to the habitat objectives table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) - Continued	<p>Explore use of and continue the development of tools to streamline habitat assessments (e.g., remote sensing) for rapid assessment of habitat conditions.</p> <p>Issuance of new HAF IM identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Continue to learn from the pilot studies (e.g., Oregon State and Transition Model) and other tools to streamline habitat assessments, and advance or integrate outcomes into BLM's approach to HAF and related work through IM or other policy clarification and training.	None at this time	Multistate
Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM)	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated.</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between the National Operations Center (NOC) and field offices.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Issue clarification that addresses concerns; provide training.	None at this time	Multistate

<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Adjusting the habitat objectives tables	<p>Codify guidance issued on habitat objectives tables in an IM which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site.</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to habitat objectives tables as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in habitat objectives tables are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (e.g., Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (not all States have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives tables from the plans, and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement, as described in 43 CFR 4180.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on the intent, purpose, and use of habitat objectives tables, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential.</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans.</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for GRSG, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan. An amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis	Work with States to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each State to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers.	None at this time	Multistate
Reversion of trigger responses when conditions improve	Work with States on process to revert to previous management, or change the response based on positive habitat/population response.	Evaluate plans to determine which do not have a “reversion” clause and whether each plan provides any flexibility to address through policy.	Potential plan amendment to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger.	Multistate
Implementation of hard trigger responses	Work with States to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.  Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.	Work with States on development of the process in the recommendation.	Potential plan amendment to consider options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger, such as a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed, or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Multistate
Adaptive management policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM State-specific IM to address advance coordination with the States and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM.	Modify the current IM.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Research and data collection needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached. Identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement predefined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify multiprong impacts to populations.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data. Must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis.</p>	<p><i>Defer to "Data Management and the Use of Science" topic in the report for recommendation.</i></p>		
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) are inconsistent with the state plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way, and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFAs, as needed.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) habitat.</p>	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/fragmentation).</p> <p>Should not be spending a lot of time monitoring and inspecting allotments that are providing good quality sagebrush habitat.</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for GRSG.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage for quality GRSG habitat.</p> <p>Revise prioritization IM to develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome-based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition.</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow animal unit months (AUMs) to increase based on forage availability.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit.	Reinforce/offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance.	None at this time	Multistate
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs.	None at this time	Multistate
Removal of livestock grazing from research natural areas (RNAs)	The Oregon Approved Resource Management Plans and Amendments (ARMPA) identifies key RNAs that will be unavailable to livestock grazing. While the general issue of research within RNAs, including with varying levels of livestock use, is not something Oregon opposes, the State Action Plan does not include having RNAs unavailable for grazing. The State is concerned about potential loss of animal unit months (AUMs), economic losses, potential effects to habitat, and impacts to livestock operators on allotments containing RNAs that are subject to being unavailable for grazing, especially if unsupported by indications of adverse habitat impacts caused by livestock grazing management.	Work with Oregon to evaluate RNAs and grazing closures.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment and relationship to future grazing, grass banks, or other uses.	When grazing permits or leases are voluntarily relinquished or where allotments otherwise become vacant, current Oregon ARMPA language would make retirement of permits an option under these circumstances. The steps BLM takes pursuant to current and ARMPA-adopted language at the point in time following voluntary relinquishment or vacancy should not run counter to State interests in working lands and habitat health.	Ensure LG/RM 15 language in the Oregon ARMPA is consistent with regulation and as needed develop State-specific policy on its use.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)
Habitat objectives table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the West.	<i>See "Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring" section in the report.</i>			
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See the "Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands" section in the report.</i>			

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach.	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with State partners, evaluate if the States' plans would provide durable and effective conservation while providing exceptions to activities.	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities.	If short term flexibilities do not resolve concerns, evaluate a potential plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multistate
Maintenance and production activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multistate
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs) under the use of the State's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multistate
Valid existing rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognize valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Misinterpretation of “avoidance” in the field</p>	<p>Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see Colorado and Nevada for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.</p>	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue State-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses.</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	<p>Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a potential plan amendment.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Plans do not recognize the State’s guidance that some activities are “de minimis” (negligible or no impact to GRSG).</p>	<p>Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to GRSG.</p> <p>Long term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate “de minimis” activities as defined in State plans, and evaluate against Federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>Development of programmatic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of categorical exclusions for “de minimis” activities.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g., TIMING AND TALL STRUCTURES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using State-developed required design features (RDFs).	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features, outside those identified in the current plans, can be used without further analysis by the BLM. Design features selected should help to encourage development in lower quality habitat (e.g., in general habitat management areas instead of priority habitat management areas).	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to project and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time	Multistate
Requirement to include discussion on all required design features (RDFs) in the project-level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used.	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time	Multistate
Lack of consistent application of required design features (RDFs) in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that RDFs are not a “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, a plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development (e.g., range improvements).</p>	<p>Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat, which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.</p> <p>Suggest a two-step process of clarifying justifiable departures and then streamline the process using local information.</p> <p>Need to revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers ahead of initiating new science for buffers.</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures. Evaluate each plan to ensure adequate flexibility to address project-specific information is available.</p> <p>Revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers.</p>	<p>If needed, initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses, and identify any potential changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue, then evaluate a potential plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information.</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>
<p>Clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for National Environmental Policy Act analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and record of decision (ROD) description should be used and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project-specific information.</p>	<p>Develop policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation, and clarify language in ROD and plan.</p> <p>Evaluate need for templates, streamlined processes, and programmatic analysis to standardize the evaluation of lek buffers, including justifiable departures, in project-level analysis.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>

TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS)				
Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations	<p>Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions, or change those SFA management actions as described elsewhere in this table.</p>	Multistate
Need flexibility to change priority habitat management area (PHMA)/general habitat management area (GHMA) boundaries.	<p>Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground surveys and improved understanding of GRSG habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes, such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.</p> <p>Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, waivers, exceptions, modifications, exclusion and avoidance, etc., in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider aligning PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc., and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground surveys, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS) - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>General habitat management area (GHMA) is inconsistent with Utah's plan.</p>	<p>GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.</p>	<p>Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.</p> <p>Also, consider the application of the State mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.</p>	<p>Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a potential State-specific plan amendment.</p>	<p>Utah specific</p>

## APPENDIX B – WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES ISSUES

<b>TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected States provided feedback.	Incorporate additional information received from States and other stakeholders.
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management, and provide recommendations to improve management.	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy” (IRFMS) action items.  Complete the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy.”	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the “Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework” (SageWest).  Support development and implementation of WAFWA’s “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”  Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture’s (WASDA) “Western Invasive Weed Action Plan.”  Support implementation of the “National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.”  Support the memorandum of understanding between the BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with private landowners, and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasive species and wildland fire.
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators.	Reinstate grant authority and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators.  Address the General Services Administration policy that prevents excess Federal firefighting equipment (e.g., engines, radios) from going directly to partners, such as rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs).  Explore options for shared funded positions to enhance cooperative efforts (e.g., RFPA support).  Continue to support and develop additional RFPAs.

**TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES**

Issue/Comment	Recommended Additional Steps
Consider related Western Governors' Association (WGA) efforts that enhance implementation of the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy."	Further action items in the WGA's National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative, such as: expanding good neighbor authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating Federal, State, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; and flexibilities in grazing management.
Improve coordination with States on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery.	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the "National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy."
Ensure funding for fire, fuels, and restoration projects.	<p>Explore options for multijurisdictional funding, multiyear funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects.</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the DOI. The risk-based funding modeling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and improve restoration success.	<p>Conduct research, testing, and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g., biopesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies.	Work with appropriate Departments, agencies, offices, and companies to gain approval of concurrent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration and field-testing of biopesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration

## APPENDIX C – WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop rangewide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess GRSG population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate GRSG population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

## APPENDIX D – SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES

<b>TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Address priority science needs, and increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts.</p>	<p>Implement the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan.” Actions include: coordination of research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among State and Federal agencies and other organizations; implementation of research efforts, as funding allows; and development of a tracking mechanism for publications and products.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts, identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions and economics in the sagebrush ecosystem, and address prioritized science needs, as funding allows.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data and other information from entities other than Federal or State agencies to ensure it meets quality, reliability, and relevance standards for use.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data to identify new potential science needs that can be addressed using formal experimental or other scientific investigations.</p> <p>Work to increase development of information products that translate and synthesize peer-reviewed science into more accessible formats for decision-makers, and improve access to peer-reviewed science journals for those who need that level of information.</p> <p>Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant peer-reviewed science, high-quality information, and local on-the-ground data that is pertinent to implementation of management actions.</p> <p>Evaluate use of the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) as the coordinating body for the intersection of science with policy and management and to identify priority science and data needs to inform management and policy.</p>

**TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES**

<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing.</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multiagency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that nonproprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements for information included in shared data catalogs and information gathered by third party sources for potential inclusion in agency databases or use in decision-making.</p> <p>Identify multiscale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information, when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and tribes to explore options to improve or develop data sharing mechanisms for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**APPENDIX E – OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS**

<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Reserve common allotments	Reserve common allotments are a tool available on public lands that could be used to provide alternative locations for grazing permittees/leases when their allotment is unavailable due to fire, restoration activities, or other reasons. However, there are concerns that designation of allotments as reserve common allotments could take those allotments out of regular use and result in economic loss. Further investigation with the BLM, Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF), ranchers, and other stakeholders is warranted to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be considered.	Engage with the SGTF, counties, Public Lands Council, ranchers, and other stakeholders to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be used.		Multistate
Water rights	There is concern that the BLM may be managing water rights they do not own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. This may be a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressed in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate: Utah, Idaho, Nevada
Changes in grazing management following natural events	Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.  Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate
Wild horse and burro: appropriate management level (AML) achievement	Verify that the BLM has the tools and funding to achieve AML across the West. Evaluate priorities (e.g., Priority given to sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) potentially limits funding and staff to initiate gathers in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs)).	BLM state offices reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with States. Elevate unresolved issue to management.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long term resolution.	Multistate
Herd management areas and associated appropriate management level (AML) may need to be analyzed for adjustments	Implement solutions for reaching current AML prior to reevaluating herd management areas and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML is reached.	Multistate

## **APPENDIX F: TECHNICAL WHITE PAPERS FROM THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

### **White Paper Titles**

1. Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means (3 pages)
2. Population and Habitat-Based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
3. Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
4. Hunting Sage-Grouse, Impacts and Management (2 pages)
5. Literature Cited in WAFWA Tech. Committee White Papers on Predator Control, Captive Breeding and Population and Habitat Management

**AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS**  
**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

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Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994; Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild,

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however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1 September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Attwater's prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

**Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season (31 Mar)**

Method	Hatchability	Survival to release	Post-release survival to 31 Mar.	Number of birds or eggs needed	Net Removal from source population
Spring transplant	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≥ 12 weeks old	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

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**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

**Conclusions**

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

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Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse *by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al.

## POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

(2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

### Conclusions:

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

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Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boarman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boarman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that

## PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

### **Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website.*



**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**  
**HUNTING SAGE-GROUSE, IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT**

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Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily,

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4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

### Conclusions:

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website*



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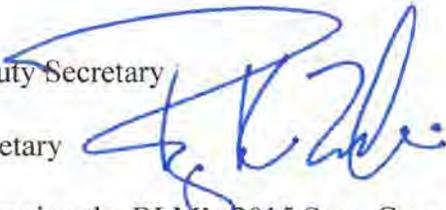


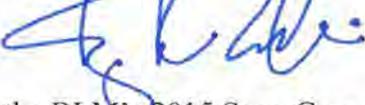
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

AUG 04 2017

**Memorandum**

**To:** Deputy Secretary 

**From:** Secretary 

**Subject:** Improving the BLM's 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans

On June 7, 2017, I issued Secretary's Order 3353, "Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (Order). The Order was issued in response to concerns I have heard regarding the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse) Plans. The Department of the Interior (Department) Sage-Grouse Review Team has completed the "Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353" (Report) outlining short- and long-term recommendations as directed in my Order.

I hereby direct you to ensure implementation of the recommendations and direct BLM, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and other offices in the Department, to immediately begin implementing the short- and long-term recommendations in the Report. As part of this effort, the BLM should collaborate with the Sage-Grouse Task Force to engage with stakeholders and to improve the compatibility of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans with the States,<sup>1</sup> beginning with these actions:

- Identify options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas;
- Clarify mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs);
- Modify or issue new policy on fluid mineral leasing and development, including the prioritization policy;
- Issue or modify policy and provide training on use of assessment and monitoring data and tools, the habitat objectives table from the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and to increase flexibility in grazing management;
- Identify options for flexibility when applying adaptive management decisions;
- Investigate options to streamline use authorizations with little impact on the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans;
- Clarify the appropriate use of compensatory mitigation and identify opportunities to increase consistency between the Federal and State plans;
- Work with the States to improve techniques and methods to allow the States to set appropriate population objectives; and
- Investigate the removal or modification of Sage-Grouse Focal Areas in certain States.

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<sup>1</sup>The States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

I am particularly interested in assisting the States in setting Sage-Grouse population objectives to improve management of the species. I also believe we should examine a program to enhance scientific research. Please report to my office periodically, and no less than every 6 months, on the progress you have made in implementing the recommendations from the Report.



August 24, 2017

*By E-mail*

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**Re: Interest in Oil and Gas in Nevada is a Sham, Pause on New Leasing Needed**

Dear Mr. Nedd and Ms. Todd:

We are writing to urge the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) to immediately put a halt to new onshore oil and gas leasing in the Nevada State Office and to reassess the State Office’s approach to reviewing and proposing oil and gas leases in Nevada. According to the oil and gas industry, there is no legitimate interest in leasing publicly owned oil and gas reserves in the State. The BLM must immediately halt new oil and gas leasing and conduct an assessment of the appropriateness of spending taxpayer dollars to conduct any further leasing in Nevada.

As you are aware, millions of acres of public lands and minerals in Nevada have drawn interest for their supposed oil and gas development potential. Interests purporting to represent the oil and gas industry have submitted numerous “expressions of interest” to the BLM, in effect identifying lands they believe should be offered for competitive sale. Many of these expressions of interest have come from anonymous sources. These “expressions of interest” have prompted the BLM to hold several recent competitive lease sales that have failed to generate any meaningful amount of oil and gas industry participation. In June of this year, the agency attempted to auction off 106 oil and gas lease parcels in Nevada, yet only 3 received any bids. Although the BLM reported it generated a little more than \$38,000 in revenue, records indicate the agency spent far more to prepare for and conduct the lease sale.

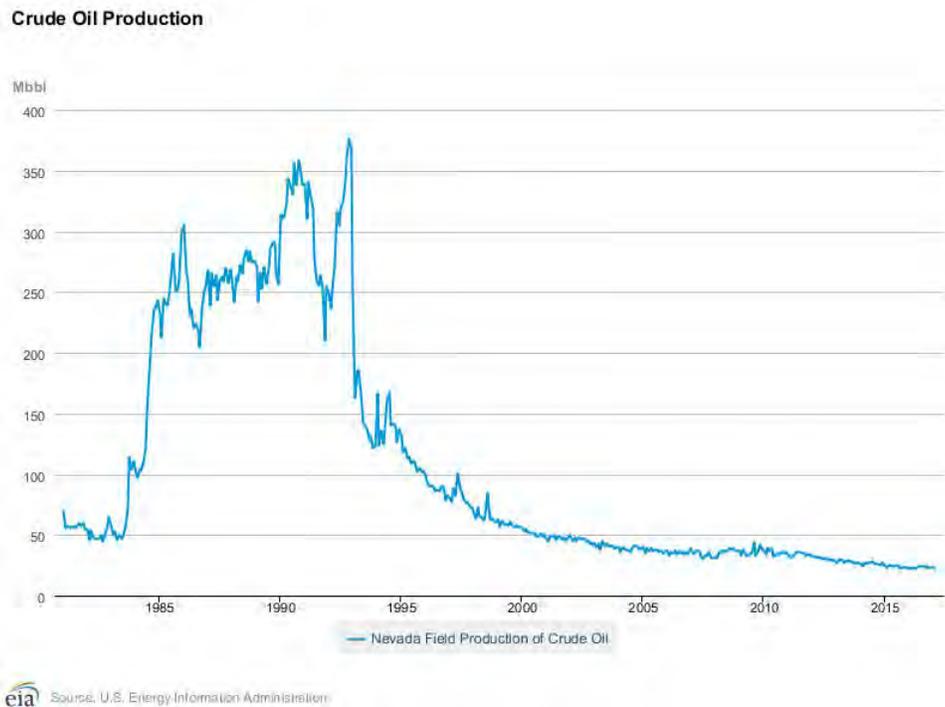
Actual and credible oil and gas industry representatives have described the expressions of interest in leasing in the Nevada State Office as not representing any legitimate industry interest. In fact, Kathleen Sgamma, the President of the Western Energy Alliance, a leading oil and gas trade association, stated that the expressions of interest currently pending in Nevada were not submitted by reputable companies. In a news article, Sgamma commented, “Something very weird is going on in Nevada[.]” See Exhibit 1.

Industry’s observations are not a surprise. Nevada is marginal, at best, for oil and gas production. While there are 627 leases covering 1,124,320 acres in the state only 37 of these leases—or 2.4% of all leased acreage—is actually producing oil and gas (as of the end of FY 2016). On average nationally, 46% of all leased federal oil and gas acreage is in production, meaning Nevada is far, far below what is normal at the moment. *See Table below.*

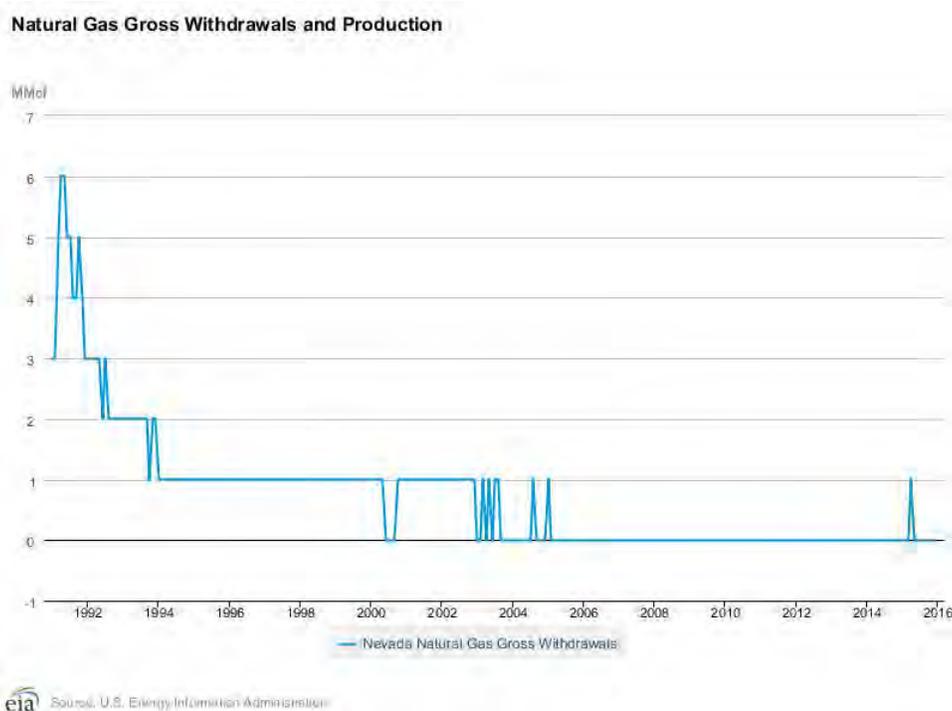
**Oil and Gas Leases in Nevada**

<b>Number of Leases</b>	<b>Leased Acres</b>	<b>Producing Leases (%)</b>	<b>Acres in Production (%)</b>
627	1,124,320	37 (5.9%)	27,001 (2.4%)

This reflects the fact that Nevada’s oil and gas production is smaller than a blip in terms of overall U.S. production. While the state produced upward of 350,000 barrels a month in the early 1990’s, its production has hovered below 50,000 barrels monthly since 2000. To put this into perspective, total U.S. oil production amounted to 3.3 billion barrels in 2016. Furthermore, the state’s natural gas production rate is described by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (“EIA”) as “NA,” or effectively zero. *See Charts below.*



**Oil Production in Nevada, 1980’s to the Present. Data available at <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet crd crpdn adc mbbbl m.htm>.**



**Below, Natural Gas Production in Nevada, 1990's to the Present. Data available at [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_sum\\_a\\_EPG0\\_FGW\\_mmcf\\_m.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_sum_a_EPG0_FGW_mmcf_m.htm).**

Although there are less than 100 oil and gas wells that are considered to be “producers” by the State of Nevada, as of 2015, the EIA reports there was one producing natural gas well and four producing oil wells. See [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_wells\\_s1\\_a.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_wells_s1_a.htm) and [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_oilwells\\_s1\\_a.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_oilwells_s1_a.htm).

Furthermore, the areas where purported oil and gas industry representatives have expressed “interest” in leasing are not remotely near where any “producer” oil and gas wells are even located. The only location where any amount of oil and gas development is occurring appears to be in the Railroad Valley of southern Nevada. Only a handful of proposed leases and expressions of interest have been located in this area.

In spite of this, the BLM has proposed to sell oil and gas leases in areas outside the Railroad Valley, including in areas considered to have low to no oil and gas development potential. For instance, in the June 2017 lease sale, the BLM attempted to auction off oil and gas leases in the Big Smokey Valley area of Nye and Lander Counties, a region considered to have effectively no oil and gas potential. Not surprisingly, none of these leases received any bids.

It is telling that in prior lease sales held in Nevada, there has also been exceptionally low interest and activity. In March of 2017, the BLM offered 67 parcels for sale in the Elko District, yet only 20—or less than 30%—received bids. See [https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_20170314\\_COMP\\_SALE\\_RESULTS.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_20170314_COMP_SALE_RESULTS.pdf). Further, of the 20 parcels that received bids, 19—or 95%—received only the minimum bid of \$2.00 per acre. See

[https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_20170314\\_Elko\\_Sale\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_20170314_Elko_Sale_Summary.pdf). Similarly, in June of 2016, the BLM offered 42 parcels for sale in the Ely District, yet only four received bids. *See* [https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_BMDO\\_Sale\\_Competitive\\_Results\\_20160614.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_BMDO_Sale_Competitive_Results_20160614.pdf). The BLM received bids of \$2.00, \$3,00, \$4,00, and \$21.00 per acre for the four parcels. *See id.*

As reported, there are millions of acres of expressions of interest that have been submitted by purported industry interests since 2014 (all expressions of interest submitted for Nevada public lands are available at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/leasing/regional-lease-sales/nevada>). Just since January 20, 2017, more than 2,300 expressions of interest have been submitted. *See* map below.

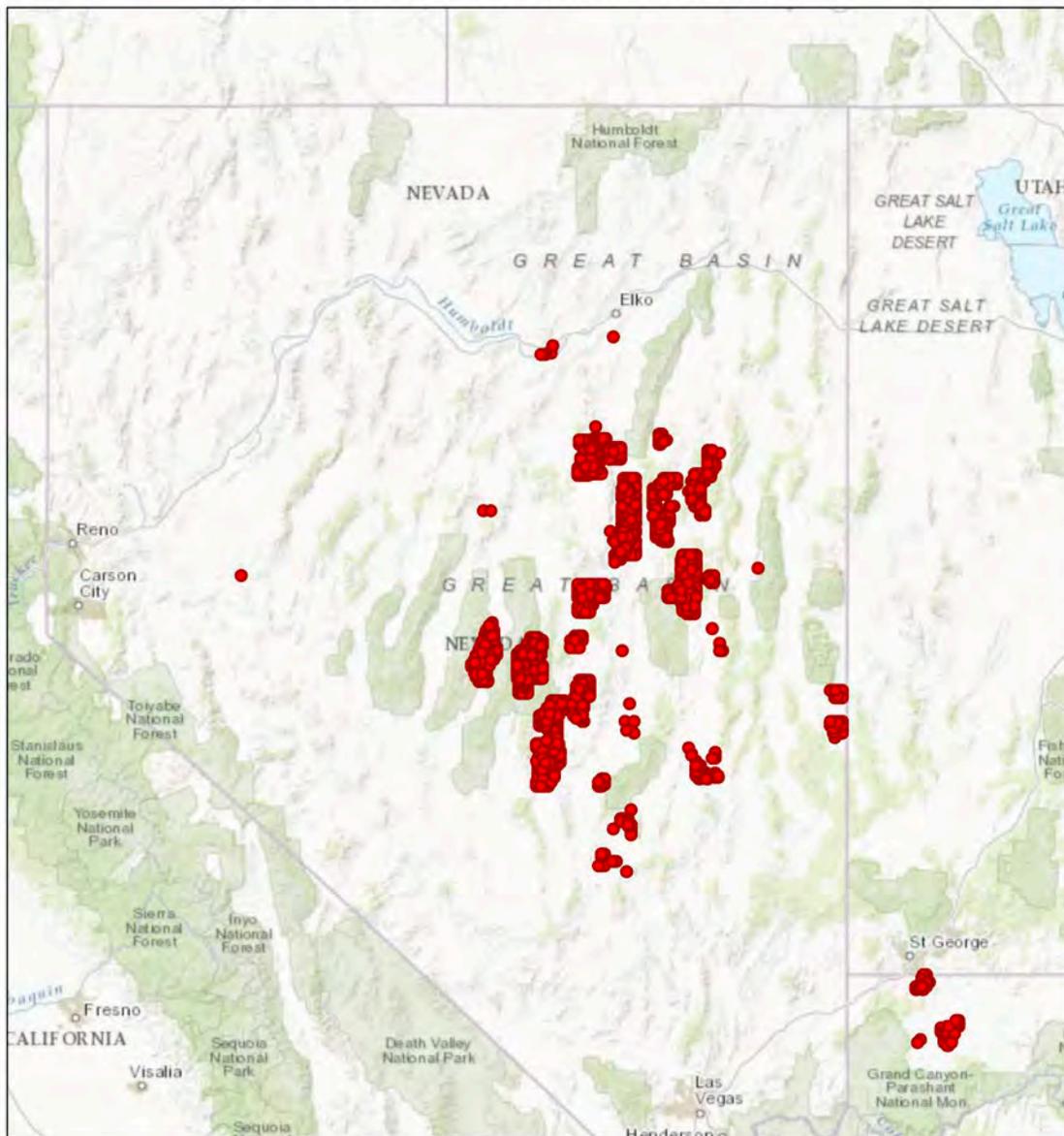
For the BLM to spend taxpayer dollars and agency time and energy to process these expressions of interest, which the oil and gas industry itself says are not coming from reputable interests, would represent a serious miscarriage of public stewardship. Yet BLM appears poised to do just that.

Already, the agency is scheduled to offer competitive oil and gas leases for sale on September 12, 2017. According to the BLM, a sale is also scheduled for the week of December 11. We also presume that additional sales will be scheduled in 2018 and in future years. As is evident, in spite of industry acknowledging that there is no legitimate interest in oil and gas in Nevada, the BLM is still proceeding to propose lease sales. This is beyond irresponsible and it has to stop.

Accordingly, we call on you to immediately take the following actions in order to effectively confront the sham oil and gas leasing that is unfolding in the Nevada State Office:

1. **Institute a pause.** Immediately institute a pause on new oil and gas leasing in and on accepting new expressions of interest in the Nevada State Office. To this end, we call on you to cancel the September 12, 2017 oil and gas lease sale and the sale scheduled for the week of December 11.
2. **Reject all submitted expressions of interest.** All indications are that all expressions of interest currently before the Nevada State Office are sham expressions of interest that do not reflect legitimate industry desire to develop by reputable companies. These expressions of interest should be rejected by the BLM.
3. **Reassess the appropriateness of oil and gas leasing in Nevada.** Before accepting any new expressions of interest and undertaking any new oil and gas leasing, the BLM must conduct a rigorous and objective assessment of the viability and legitimacy of future oil and gas leasing in the Nevada State Office. We would urge the agency to conduct this assessment as part of a statewide Resource Management Plan revision that ultimately leads to a new Record of Decision governing oil and gas leasing in Nevada.

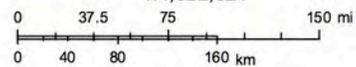
## 2017 Expressions of Interest in Nevada



August 24, 2017

● Expressions of Interest Submitted After Jan. 20, 2017

1:4,622,324



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**Location of Expressions of Interest submitted in Nevada since January 20, 2017. Data from BLM's National Fluids Lease Sale System database, <https://nflss.blm.gov/eoi/list>.**

These actions are more than justified under the U.S. Mineral Leasing Act. Indeed, leasing is only allowed where there are lands that are “known or believed to contain oil or gas deposits.” 30 U.S.C. § 226(a). Here, it appears that the lands in Nevada being eyed by purported oil and gas industry interests do not contain oil and gas deposits, or at least do not contain any viable oil and gas deposits. Given BLM’s duty under the Mineral Leasing Act, the agency is more than justified in instituting a pause and initiating greater scrutiny of future leasing.

Furthermore, as the BLM itself has acknowledged, under the Mineral Leasing Act, it cannot lease lands for oil and gas development if there is no intent to diligently develop. The agency confirmed this in a recent decision denying the issuance of an oil and gas lease to a lessee, explaining:

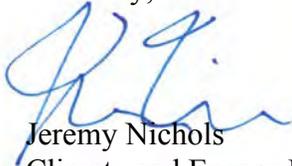
A fundamental requirement of every oil and gas lease, as stated in Section 4 on page 3 of Form 3100-1, is the requirement that the “Lessee must exercise reasonable diligence in developing and producing, and must prevent unnecessary damage to, loss of, or waste of leased resources.” This diligent development requirement has its basis in the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. See 30 U.S.C. § 187. Thus, an expressed intent by a person offering to purchase a lease to not develop and produce the oil and gas resources on the leasehold would directly conflict with the diligent development requirement and require that the offer be rejected.

*See* Exhibit 2. Given this, there is further ample justification under the Mineral Leasing Act for the BLM to exert heightened scrutiny around leasing and expressions of interest in Nevada.

We agree with the oil and gas industry that something very weird is going on in Nevada with respect to the BLM’s oil and gas leasing program. What’s more, given the oil and gas industry’s comments, it would appear that what is going on in Nevada is also a waste of taxpayer dollars and agency resources, and not warranted under federal law. It behooves the BLM to step up and do something about this, rather than allow disreputable interests undermine the public interest and the agency’s own credibility and integrity.

Once again, we call on you to institute a pause on new oil and gas leasing, reject all outstanding expressions of interest, and to reassess the appropriateness of oil and gas leasing in the BLM’s Nevada State Office.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Nichols  
Climate and Energy Program Director  
WildEarth Guardians  
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Denver, CO 80205  
[jnichols@wildearthguardians.org](mailto:jnichols@wildearthguardians.org)

# **Exhibit 1**

## 'Something's Fishy': Oil Speculation Skyrockets In State With 'Very Little Oil'

Posted By [Tim Pearce](#) On 7:49 PM 08/19/2017 In | [No Comments](#)

Millions of acres worth of requests for oil speculation on federal lands were submitted in Nevada just years before former President Barack Obama designated two national monuments in the state, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) found Friday.

Expression of Interest (EOI) documents are submitted to state Bureau of Land Management (BLM) agencies for any parcel of federal land that prospectors think may produce oil. The BLM is then required by law to study the area and decide whether it should be leased to an oil company for development.

The Nevada EOIs are mostly worthless and a waste of taxpayer money, however, according to CBD Nevada state director, Patrick Donnelly.

CBD is using the information as [evidence](#) President Donald Trump's review of national monument designations, and its potential to roll back some of those, is "a complete sham," Donnelly told TheDCNF.

"It appears there could be multiple motives for the monument review including potentially opening up lands that are currently protected for oil and gas," Donnelly said. "There are certain places that should be off limits to oil and gas and these monuments ... are too special to be developed for oil and gas."

The oil industry's actual interest in Nevada is "very small" and not representative of the massive amount of EOIs submitted to Nevada BLM, Western Energy Alliance president Kathleen Sgamma told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

EOIs, while usually covering one or two million acres in Nevada, [exploded](#) in 2014, covering a total of 28 million acres, according to BLM data.

"Something very weird is going on in Nevada with those [EOIs]," Sgamma said. "The [EOIs] of just millions of acres at a time ... do not appear to be from reputable companies. They do not reflect any industry interest."

While millions of acres of federal land in Nevada is supposedly drawing interest for oil development, oil companies [purchase](#) very few leases that are auctioned off by the BLM. In 2015, BLM's most current data, of the 248 parcels of land BLM offered to lease to oil companies, only 14 were bought.

"The interest in Nevada is very small," Sgamma said. "There are some companies, there are a few number of wells that have been drilled over the last couple of years, but they are not in these monument areas [of Gold Butte and Basin and Range]."

CBD cannot explain why EOIs spiked in 2014. While blaming oil companies for wanting to downsize national monuments, CBD and the oil industry agree that developing the vast amount of land in Nevada would be a waste of money.

"There is very little oil and gas in Nevada, very little. Its not Wyoming here. We just don't have a ton of oil and gas potential so it sort of is all the more jarring to see this level of speculation,"

Donnelly said. "I think these speculators are waiting for some geopolitical crisis where the price of oil spikes dramatically, and then, potentially, its economically feasible to extract."

Donnelly blamed "speculators" in Texas operating out of "one man shops" for the million of acres of supposed oil interest.

Positively knowing who has been requesting the EOIs is strictly dependent on how much information is filled out on the form and released by the BLM. Many forms lack enough information to get even a general sense of the request's origin, Sgamma said.

"It could be a bad industry actor. It could be an environmental group nominating things so that they can later say, 'Hey, we need this monument designation to protect from the greedy oil and gas industry,'" Sgamma said. "[CBD is] looking at very fishy data that just are not reflective of industry interest."

*[Follow Tim Pearce on Twitter](#)*

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URL to article: **<http://dailycaller.com/2017/08/19/somethings-fishy-oil-speculation-skyrockets-in-state-with-very-little-oil/>**

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# **Exhibit 2**



## United States Department of the Interior



### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Utah State Office

440 West 200 South, Suite 500

Salt Lake City, UT 84101

<http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en.html>

IN REPLY REFER TO:

3120

(UT-922000)

**APR 15 2016**

CERTIFIED MAIL – 91 7199 9991 7035 9043 6708

Return Receipt Requested

Terry Tempest Williams  
dba Tempest Exploration  
P.O. Box 40  
Moose, Wyoming 83012-0040

Dear Ms. Williams:

I am writing to you concerning your pending noncompetitive lease offers for oil and gas parcels UTU91481 (on February 16, 2016) and UTU91574 (on February 18, 2016). I want to ensure that you understand your obligations under the leases if issued, and to request that you clarify statements you made about your intentions with respect to these leases in your essay entitled “Keeping My Fossil Fuel in the Ground,” which appeared in the opinion pages of the New York Times on March 29, 2016.

Your offers to lease were made by signing and dating Form 3100-11 (“Offer to Lease and Lease for Oil and Gas”), which contains the basic terms and conditions of an issued oil and gas lease, and may be supplemented by stipulations attached to the lease parcel. Paragraph 4 on page 2 of Form 3100-11 sets out the qualifications necessary to be an offeror, and the offeror’s agreement to all of the terms and conditions of the lease that is the subject of the offer and to the stipulations attached to the lease.

One of the basic terms of such a standard oil and gas lease, found in Section 4 on page 3 of Form 3100-11, is the requirement that the lessee must exercise reasonable diligence in developing and producing the leased resource. In light of that requirement, I wanted to follow up on your statements in your essay that “[w]e have every intention of complying with the law, even as we challenge it. . . . We will pay the annual rent for the duration of the 10-year lease and keep whatever oil and gas lies beneath these lands in the ground.”

The diligent development requirement set forth in Section 4 of your lease forms is a requirement that is mandated by the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. See 30 U.S.C. §187. Therefore, please advise me in writing within 30 days of your receipt of this letter whether you would accept the duty to exercise reasonable diligence in developing and producing oil and gas from the two leases you have offered to purchase rather than keeping the resources “in the ground” as stated in your essay.

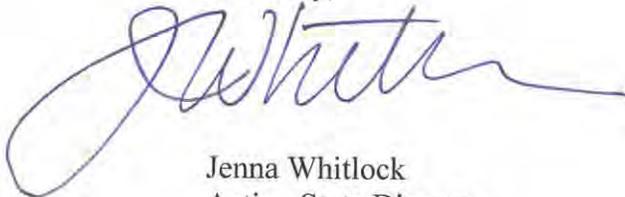
I also want to make you aware of the stipulation attached to one of your lease parcels -- UTU91481 -- which is part of a unit plan for development previously established by owners of the resource pool. See 43 C.F.R. Subpart 3180. In such situations, the lease offeror is required to either join the established unit or to show the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) why such joinder is not required. In any event, a lessee in a unit is required to conform to the terms and provisions of the unit agreement with respect to operations. See 43 C.F.R. § 3101.3-1.

This requirement is in Stipulation UT-S-317 attached to Parcel UTU91481, as set forth on the Canyon Country District’s February 2016 Final Oil & Gas Lease Sale List. It provides: “The successful bidder will be required to join the Crescent Unit Agreement or show reason why a joinder should not be required.” The operator of the Unit is Tidewater Oil & Gas Co., 110 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 405, Denver, Colorado 80202-5206. Thus, before any lease could be issued for the parcel, it would be necessary for you to join the Crescent Unit Agreement, or demonstrate why joinder should not be required. Please inform me in writing within 30 days of your receipt of this letter whether you have contacted the Unit operator to begin the process of joining the Unit or if not why joinder should not be required.

If I do not receive a response to this letter within 30 days of your receipt of it that provides the necessary information discussed above and demonstrates your compliance with the requirements that must be a part of such leases, the BLM may reject your two noncompetitive lease offers. In that case, a refund will be made of all funds submitted in connection with the offers.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or would like to discuss any aspect of it, please contact Kent Hoffman, Deputy State Director for Lands and Minerals, at (801) 539-4063.

Sincerely, \*



Jenna Whitlock  
Acting State Director



August 24, 2017

*By E-mail*

Mike Nedd  
Acting Director  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C St. Rm. 5665  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
[mnedd@blm.gov](mailto:mnedd@blm.gov)

Marci Todd  
Acting State Director  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV  
[m1todd@blm.gov](mailto:m1todd@blm.gov)

**Re: Interest in Oil and Gas in Nevada is a Sham, Pause on New Leasing Needed**

Dear Mr. Nedd and Ms. Todd:

We are writing to urge the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) to immediately put a halt to new onshore oil and gas leasing in the Nevada State Office and to reassess the State Office’s approach to reviewing and proposing oil and gas leases in Nevada. According to the oil and gas industry, there is no legitimate interest in leasing publicly owned oil and gas reserves in the State. The BLM must immediately halt new oil and gas leasing and conduct an assessment of the appropriateness of spending taxpayer dollars to conduct any further leasing in Nevada.

As you are aware, millions of acres of public lands and minerals in Nevada have drawn interest for their supposed oil and gas development potential. Interests purporting to represent the oil and gas industry have submitted numerous “expressions of interest” to the BLM, in effect identifying lands they believe should be offered for competitive sale. Many of these expressions of interest have come from anonymous sources. These “expressions of interest” have prompted the BLM to hold several recent competitive lease sales that have failed to generate any meaningful amount of oil and gas industry participation. In June of this year, the agency attempted to auction off 106 oil and gas lease parcels in Nevada, yet only 3 received any bids. Although the BLM reported it generated a little more than \$38,000 in revenue, records indicate the agency spent far more to prepare for and conduct the lease sale.

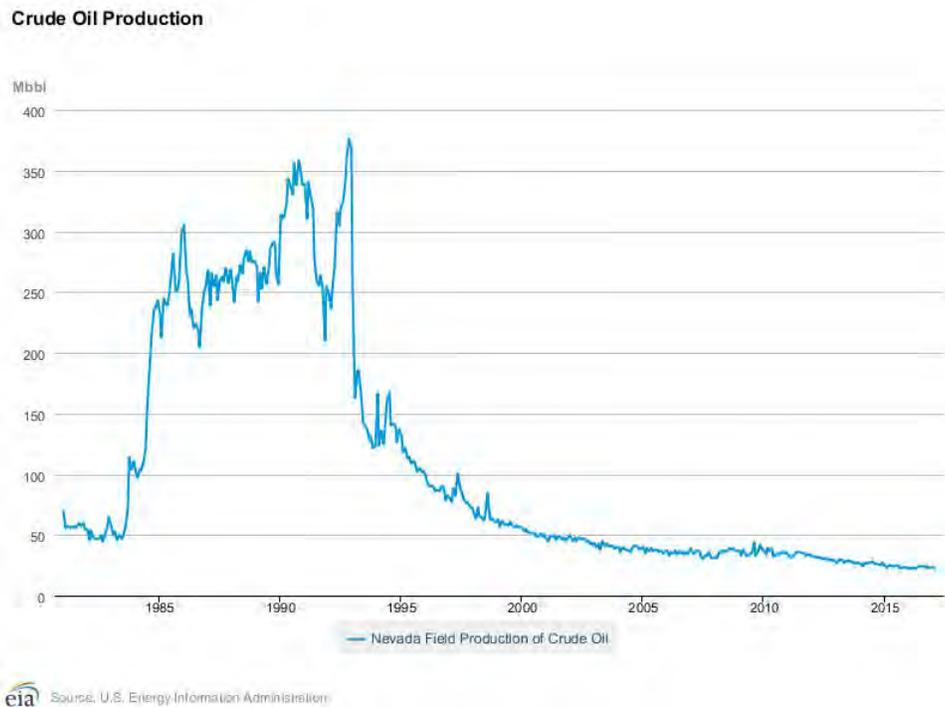
Actual and credible oil and gas industry representatives have described the expressions of interest in leasing in the Nevada State Office as not representing any legitimate industry interest. In fact, Kathleen Sgamma, the President of the Western Energy Alliance, a leading oil and gas trade association, stated that the expressions of interest currently pending in Nevada were not submitted by reputable companies. In a news article, Sgamma commented, “Something very weird is going on in Nevada[.]” See Exhibit 1.

Industry’s observations are not a surprise. Nevada is marginal, at best, for oil and gas production. While there are 627 leases covering 1,124,320 acres in the state only 37 of these leases—or 2.4% of all leased acreage—is actually producing oil and gas (as of the end of FY 2016). On average nationally, 46% of all leased federal oil and gas acreage is in production, meaning Nevada is far, far below what is normal at the moment. *See Table below.*

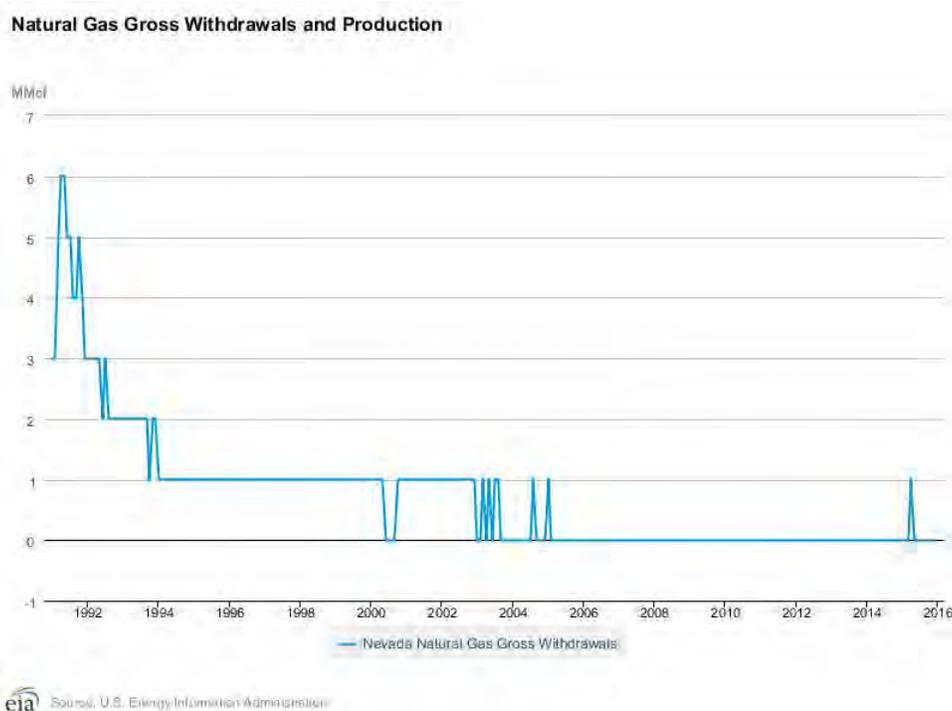
**Oil and Gas Leases in Nevada**

<b>Number of Leases</b>	<b>Leased Acres</b>	<b>Producing Leases (%)</b>	<b>Acres in Production (%)</b>
627	1,124,320	37 (5.9%)	27,001 (2.4%)

This reflects the fact that Nevada’s oil and gas production is smaller than a blip in terms of overall U.S. production. While the state produced upward of 350,000 barrels a month in the early 1990’s, its production has hovered below 50,000 barrels monthly since 2000. To put this into perspective, total U.S. oil production amounted to 3.3 billion barrels in 2016. Furthermore, the state’s natural gas production rate is described by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (“EIA”) as “NA,” or effectively zero. *See Charts below.*



**Oil Production in Nevada, 1980’s to the Present. Data available at <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/pet crd crpdn adc mbbbl m.htm>.**



**Below, Natural Gas Production in Nevada, 1990's to the Present. Data available at [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_sum\\_a\\_EPG0\\_FGW\\_mmcf\\_m.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_sum_a_EPG0_FGW_mmcf_m.htm).**

Although there are less than 100 oil and gas wells that are considered to be “producers” by the State of Nevada, as of 2015, the EIA reports there was one producing natural gas well and four producing oil wells. See [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_wells\\_s1\\_a.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_wells_s1_a.htm) and [https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng\\_prod\\_oilwells\\_s1\\_a.htm](https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_oilwells_s1_a.htm).

Furthermore, the areas where purported oil and gas industry representatives have expressed “interest” in leasing are not remotely near where any “producer” oil and gas wells are even located. The only location where any amount of oil and gas development is occurring appears to be in the Railroad Valley of southern Nevada. Only a handful of proposed leases and expressions of interest have been located in this area.

In spite of this, the BLM has proposed to sell oil and gas leases in areas outside the Railroad Valley, including in areas considered to have low to no oil and gas development potential. For instance, in the June 2017 lease sale, the BLM attempted to auction off oil and gas leases in the Big Smokey Valley area of Nye and Lander Counties, a region considered to have effectively no oil and gas potential. Not surprisingly, none of these leases received any bids.

It is telling that in prior lease sales held in Nevada, there has also been exceptionally low interest and activity. In March of 2017, the BLM offered 67 parcels for sale in the Elko District, yet only 20—or less than 30%—received bids. See [https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_20170314\\_COMP\\_SALE\\_RESULTS.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_20170314_COMP_SALE_RESULTS.pdf). Further, of the 20 parcels that received bids, 19—or 95%—received only the minimum bid of \$2.00 per acre. See

[https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_20170314\\_Elko\\_Sale\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_20170314_Elko_Sale_Summary.pdf). Similarly, in June of 2016, the BLM offered 42 parcels for sale in the Ely District, yet only four received bids. *See* [https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV\\_OG\\_BMDO\\_Sale\\_Competitive\\_Results\\_20160614.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/uploads/NV_OG_BMDO_Sale_Competitive_Results_20160614.pdf). The BLM received bids of \$2.00, \$3,00, \$4,00, and \$21.00 per acre for the four parcels. *See id.*

As reported, there are millions of acres of expressions of interest that have been submitted by purported industry interests since 2014 (all expressions of interest submitted for Nevada public lands are available at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/leasing/regional-lease-sales/nevada>). Just since January 20, 2017, more than 2,300 expressions of interest have been submitted. *See* map below.

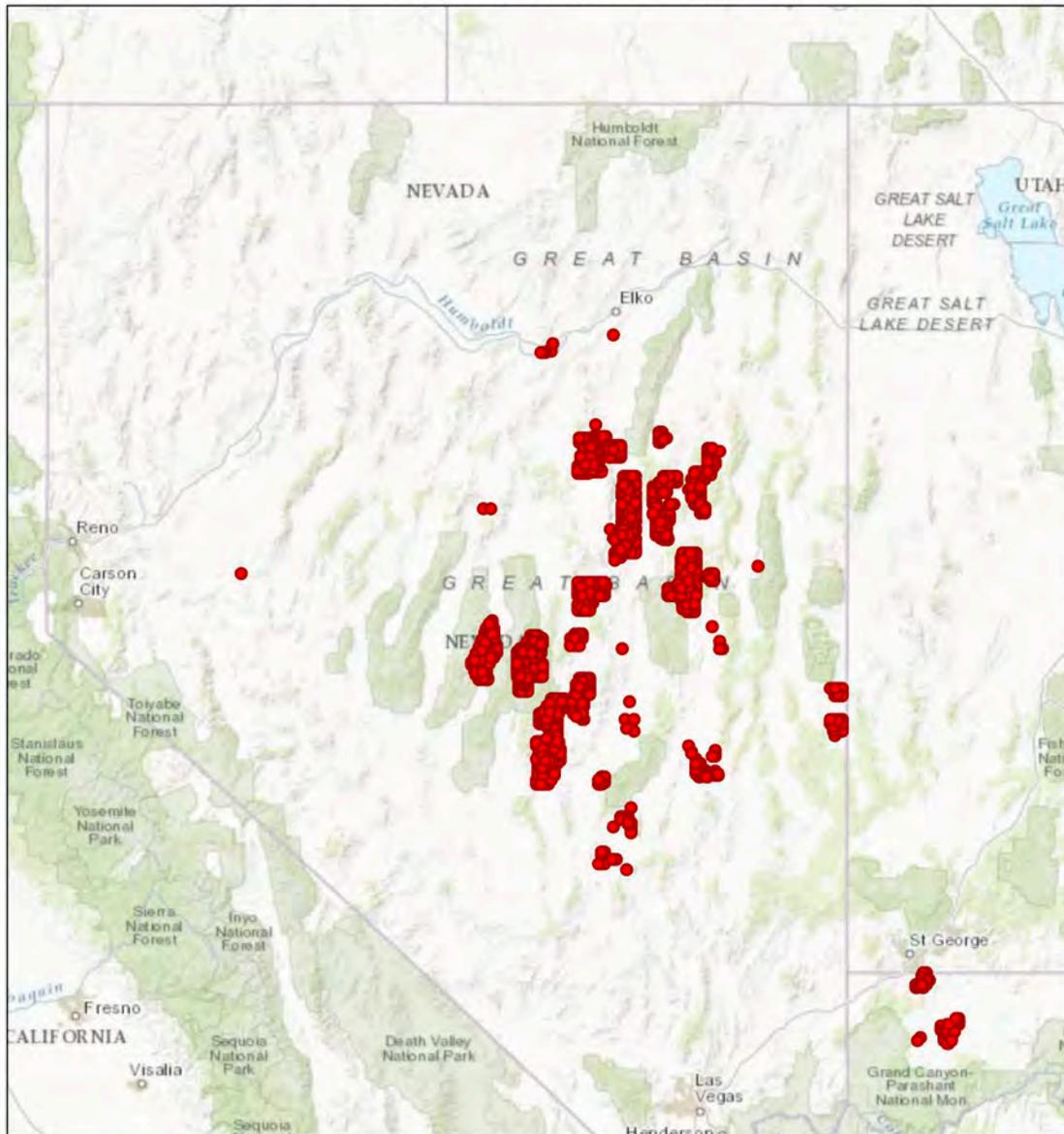
For the BLM to spend taxpayer dollars and agency time and energy to process these expressions of interest, which the oil and gas industry itself says are not coming from reputable interests, would represent a serious miscarriage of public stewardship. Yet BLM appears poised to do just that.

Already, the agency is scheduled to offer competitive oil and gas leases for sale on September 12, 2017. According to the BLM, a sale is also scheduled for the week of December 11. We also presume that additional sales will be scheduled in 2018 and in future years. As is evident, in spite of industry acknowledging that there is no legitimate interest in oil and gas in Nevada, the BLM is still proceeding to propose lease sales. This is beyond irresponsible and it has to stop.

Accordingly, we call on you to immediately take the following actions in order to effectively confront the sham oil and gas leasing that is unfolding in the Nevada State Office:

1. **Institute a pause.** Immediately institute a pause on new oil and gas leasing in and on accepting new expressions of interest in the Nevada State Office. To this end, we call on you to cancel the September 12, 2017 oil and gas lease sale and the sale scheduled for the week of December 11.
2. **Reject all submitted expressions of interest.** All indications are that all expressions of interest currently before the Nevada State Office are sham expressions of interest that do not reflect legitimate industry desire to develop by reputable companies. These expressions of interest should be rejected by the BLM.
3. **Reassess the appropriateness of oil and gas leasing in Nevada.** Before accepting any new expressions of interest and undertaking any new oil and gas leasing, the BLM must conduct a rigorous and objective assessment of the viability and legitimacy of future oil and gas leasing in the Nevada State Office. We would urge the agency to conduct this assessment as part of a statewide Resource Management Plan revision that ultimately leads to a new Record of Decision governing oil and gas leasing in Nevada.

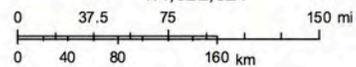
## 2017 Expressions of Interest in Nevada



August 24, 2017

● Expressions of Interest Submitted After Jan. 20, 2017

1:4,622,324



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**Location of Expressions of Interest submitted in Nevada since January 20, 2017. Data from BLM's National Fluids Lease Sale System database, <https://nflss.blm.gov/eoi/list>.**

These actions are more than justified under the U.S. Mineral Leasing Act. Indeed, leasing is only allowed where there are lands that are “known or believed to contain oil or gas deposits.” 30 U.S.C. § 226(a). Here, it appears that the lands in Nevada being eyed by purported oil and gas industry interests do not contain oil and gas deposits, or at least do not contain any viable oil and gas deposits. Given BLM’s duty under the Mineral Leasing Act, the agency is more than justified in instituting a pause and initiating greater scrutiny of future leasing.

Furthermore, as the BLM itself has acknowledged, under the Mineral Leasing Act, it cannot lease lands for oil and gas development if there is no intent to diligently develop. The agency confirmed this in a recent decision denying the issuance of an oil and gas lease to a lessee, explaining:

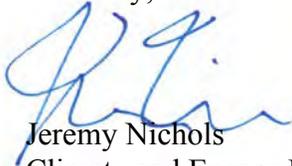
A fundamental requirement of every oil and gas lease, as stated in Section 4 on page 3 of Form 3100-1, is the requirement that the “Lessee must exercise reasonable diligence in developing and producing, and must prevent unnecessary damage to, loss of, or waste of leased resources.” This diligent development requirement has its basis in the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. See 30 U.S.C. § 187. Thus, an expressed intent by a person offering to purchase a lease to not develop and produce the oil and gas resources on the leasehold would directly conflict with the diligent development requirement and require that the offer be rejected.

*See* Exhibit 2. Given this, there is further ample justification under the Mineral Leasing Act for the BLM to exert heightened scrutiny around leasing and expressions of interest in Nevada.

We agree with the oil and gas industry that something very weird is going on in Nevada with respect to the BLM’s oil and gas leasing program. What’s more, given the oil and gas industry’s comments, it would appear that what is going on in Nevada is also a waste of taxpayer dollars and agency resources, and not warranted under federal law. It behooves the BLM to step up and do something about this, rather than allow disreputable interests undermine the public interest and the agency’s own credibility and integrity.

Once again, we call on you to institute a pause on new oil and gas leasing, reject all outstanding expressions of interest, and to reassess the appropriateness of oil and gas leasing in the BLM’s Nevada State Office.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Nichols  
Climate and Energy Program Director  
WildEarth Guardians  
2590 Walnut St.  
Denver, CO 80205  
[jnichols@wildearthguardians.org](mailto:jnichols@wildearthguardians.org)

# **Exhibit 1**

## 'Something's Fishy': Oil Speculation Skyrockets In State With 'Very Little Oil'

Posted By [Tim Pearce](#) On 7:49 PM 08/19/2017 In | [No Comments](#)

Millions of acres worth of requests for oil speculation on federal lands were submitted in Nevada just years before former President Barack Obama designated two national monuments in the state, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) found Friday.

Expression of Interest (EOI) documents are submitted to state Bureau of Land Management (BLM) agencies for any parcel of federal land that prospectors think may produce oil. The BLM is then required by law to study the area and decide whether it should be leased to an oil company for development.

The Nevada EOIs are mostly worthless and a waste of taxpayer money, however, according to CBD Nevada state director, Patrick Donnelly.

CBD is using the information as [evidence](#) President Donald Trump's review of national monument designations, and its potential to roll back some of those, is "a complete sham," Donnelly told TheDCNF.

"It appears there could be multiple motives for the monument review including potentially opening up lands that are currently protected for oil and gas," Donnelly said. "There are certain places that should be off limits to oil and gas and these monuments ... are too special to be developed for oil and gas."

The oil industry's actual interest in Nevada is "very small" and not representative of the massive amount of EOIs submitted to Nevada BLM, Western Energy Alliance president Kathleen Sgamma told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

EOIs, while usually covering one or two million acres in Nevada, [exploded](#) in 2014, covering a total of 28 million acres, according to BLM data.

"Something very weird is going on in Nevada with those [EOIs]," Sgamma said. "The [EOIs] of just millions of acres at a time ... do not appear to be from reputable companies. They do not reflect any industry interest."

While millions of acres of federal land in Nevada is supposedly drawing interest for oil development, oil companies [purchase](#) very few leases that are auctioned off by the BLM. In 2015, BLM's most current data, of the 248 parcels of land BLM offered to lease to oil companies, only 14 were bought.

"The interest in Nevada is very small," Sgamma said. "There are some companies, there are a few number of wells that have been drilled over the last couple of years, but they are not in these monument areas [of Gold Butte and Basin and Range]."

CBD cannot explain why EOIs spiked in 2014. While blaming oil companies for wanting to downsize national monuments, CBD and the oil industry agree that developing the vast amount of land in Nevada would be a waste of money.

"There is very little oil and gas in Nevada, very little. Its not Wyoming here. We just don't have a ton of oil and gas potential so it sort of is all the more jarring to see this level of speculation,"

Donnelly said. "I think these speculators are waiting for some geopolitical crisis where the price of oil spikes dramatically, and then, potentially, its economically feasible to extract."

Donnelly blamed "speculators" in Texas operating out of "one man shops" for the million of acres of supposed oil interest.

Positively knowing who has been requesting the EOIs is strictly dependent on how much information is filled out on the form and released by the BLM. Many forms lack enough information to get even a general sense of the request's origin, Sgamma said.

"It could be a bad industry actor. It could be an environmental group nominating things so that they can later say, 'Hey, we need this monument designation to protect from the greedy oil and gas industry,'" Sgamma said. "[CBD is] looking at very fishy data that just are not reflective of industry interest."

*[Follow Tim Pearce on Twitter](#)*

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# **Exhibit 2**



## United States Department of the Interior



### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Utah State Office

440 West 200 South, Suite 500

Salt Lake City, UT 84101

<http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en.html>

IN REPLY REFER TO:

3120

(UT-922000)

**APR 15 2016**

CERTIFIED MAIL – 91 7199 9991 7035 9043 6708

Return Receipt Requested

Terry Tempest Williams  
dba Tempest Exploration  
P.O. Box 40  
Moose, Wyoming 83012-0040

Dear Ms. Williams:

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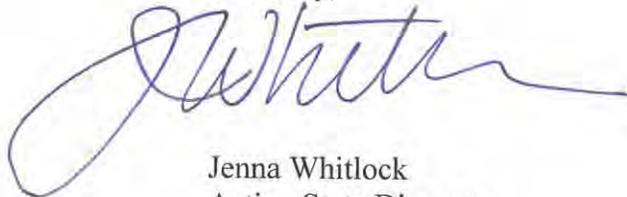
I also want to make you aware of the stipulation attached to one of your lease parcels -- UTU91481 -- which is part of a unit plan for development previously established by owners of the resource pool. See 43 C.F.R. Subpart 3180. In such situations, the lease offeror is required to either join the established unit or to show the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) why such joinder is not required. In any event, a lessee in a unit is required to conform to the terms and provisions of the unit agreement with respect to operations. See 43 C.F.R. § 3101.3-1.

This requirement is in Stipulation UT-S-317 attached to Parcel UTU91481, as set forth on the Canyon Country District’s February 2016 Final Oil & Gas Lease Sale List. It provides: “The successful bidder will be required to join the Crescent Unit Agreement or show reason why a joinder should not be required.” The operator of the Unit is Tidewater Oil & Gas Co., 110 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 405, Denver, Colorado 80202-5206. Thus, before any lease could be issued for the parcel, it would be necessary for you to join the Crescent Unit Agreement, or demonstrate why joinder should not be required. Please inform me in writing within 30 days of your receipt of this letter whether you have contacted the Unit operator to begin the process of joining the Unit or if not why joinder should not be required.

If I do not receive a response to this letter within 30 days of your receipt of it that provides the necessary information discussed above and demonstrates your compliance with the requirements that must be a part of such leases, the BLM may reject your two noncompetitive lease offers. In that case, a refund will be made of all funds submitted in connection with the offers.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or would like to discuss any aspect of it, please contact Kent Hoffman, Deputy State Director for Lands and Minerals, at (801) 539-4063.

Sincerely, \*



Jenna Whitlock  
Acting State Director

## Recommendations – Improve BLM NEPA Process

1. Recommend having 4-6 people trained in the NEPA process per BLM office. Currently most BLM offices in Nevada have only 1 person trained in NEPA to manage the EA/EIS Process. Because there isn't enough BLM staff trained in the NEPA process, this becomes a bottleneck in the process. BLM staff also need to be confident in their NEPA training and confident in making decisions. In many cases, the NEPA process is stalled due to the fact that the BLM NEPA Specialist won't make a decision on a particular step in the process because they 'just don't know' the answer.
2. BLM Staff (Project Geologist, NEPA Specialist, Realty Specialist, etc.) should not be allowed to leave or be temporarily reassigned on fire duty. At times, BLM staff (e.g., Realty Specialist) has left for 3+ months on fire duty (to fight wildland fires) and all his work and responsibilities were in limbo until he returned; this caused significant and costly project delays. Personally, I was working on a project with AT&T (for a fiber optic cable right of way). The BLM Realty Specialist was just about to issue the Finding of No Significant Impact and ROW approval; when he was called away on fire duty. The project's approval was on hold for over 3 months while the staff was out of the office. This delayed the project's construction.
3. BLM Staff should not be allowed to be 'temporarily reassigned'. When staff is temporarily reassigned; other staff leave their position to back fill other positions. What results is that multiple staff are temporarily reassigned, and no one really knows how to efficiently and effectively perform the job they are doing.
4. BLM needs competent archaeologists and biologists to review, comment on, and process cultural resource reports and baseline reports (these reports are used to support the NEPA process). Often, when a position is vacated; the BLM often goes 6 or more months before filling a position. If a cultural resource report or baseline report has not been reviewed or approved by BLM staff, it can significantly delay the NEPA schedule.
5. The BLM Winnemucca District Habitat Evaluation (HE) requirement is burdensome and not needed. The BLM Winnemucca District requires the applicant to complete the HE paperwork prior to the BLM identifying site specific vegetation and wildlife survey protocols. Completion of the HE paperwork requires the applicant to perform detailed field work to identify site conditions and habitat; all which will be studied in detail with additional field work once site specific vegetation and wildlife surveys are performed. The HE requirement is duplicative, not necessary, results in schedule delays, results in seasonal delays, and results in additional cost (in labor) to both applicant and BLM.
6. The majority of BLM comments on NEPA documents are minor grammar items that do not change the meaning or intent of the document (for example, change 'the' to 'a'; change 'will' to 'would'). These minor comments take a significant amount of time to address and cost both the applicant and the BLM a lot of money [in labor]. Suggest either the BLM forgoes these types of comments, and concentrate only on the significant comments that change the outcome of the NEPA document.
7. It is common practice that the BLM prepare a comment letter, detailing every comment they have on a NEPA document; the contractor then prepares a detailed response letter indicating how they responded to the comment. Recommendation; for simple, easy to address, minor comments, instead of preparing a detailed comment letter, have the BLM make the change directly in the EIS document using 'redline strikeout' track changes mode. By having the BLM

make the change directly into the NEPA document, this saves everyone time (making the process more efficient and cost effective). For substantive comments, a formal comment letter may be appropriate. For simple, minor comments; editing the NEPA document directly would save everyone time.

8. Require the BLM and contractors to A) maintain strict internal review timeframes for all NEPA documents (including the biological resource reports that support the NEPA document), and B) limit the number of internal reviews for each document. Currently, NEPA documents undergo 3 to 6 internal reviews by the BLM prior to issuing the Draft NEPA document. Each review further delays the project's timeline and is a significant cost to both the BLM and contractor. Based on my personal experience, I once estimated each internal review of an Administrative Draft EIS cost the client over \$15,000. Suggest the BLM limits the internal review for each NEPA document to 1 or 2. Suggest the internal review timeframe by the BLM be limited to 30 days or less. Currently, the BLM is taking 30 to 60 days for each internal review. If some staff is on vacation, the BLM will wait for that staff to return from vacation to provide his/her comments. Development cannot wait indefinitely for one person to return to provide his/her comments. Internal review and revision time (by both BLM and Contractor) should have mandatory time limits.
9. Recommendation - The BLM's Native American Consultation Process, that is a component of the NEPA process, should have 'set' time limits. Currently the time limit to complete the Native American Consultation Process is unlimited. Development cannot wait an indefinite amount of time, and this process often delays the NEPA decision process. A set timeframe to complete the Native American Consultation Process (such as 60 to 90 days) should be established.
10. Use of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) "Teams" Program is not recommended. Although the USFS Teams Program has some benefits, and they have qualified staff; it is not a benefit or cost savings to the BLM and their use does not expedite the NEPA processing time. The use of USFS Teams does not save the BLM staff time or money. It has been my experience that the BLM still uses their internal staff to process, administer, and manage NEPA documents in their office. The use of a USFS Teams member is just another member of the team, adding an additional cost.
11. The NEPA documents currently prepared by the BLM are becoming excessive; hundreds of pages and multiple appendices. Simple projects are taking years to process. Suggest the BLM bring back a simple 'check list'; and process simple projects using a 'check list' format (and the BLM's RMP can used as supporting documentation). The majority of the time spent by the BLM now is to ensure the format of the NEPA document is correct, spelling is correct, and grammar is correct; all this is adding to pages and pages of unnecessary text. Many projects can get through the NEPA process using a similar 2-page check list (e.g., is the species present, will there be significant impact). The BLM's Administrative Determination is not a simple check list process. As an option, the BLM might want to elect having a 2-page check list and have supporting site-specific maps created in GIS documenting site conditions (to be attached to the checklist).
12. Recommend the BLM, Applicant, and NEPA contractor have a more open relationship. Currently the BLM staff directs the NEPA contractor; and at times without knowledge of the Applicant. Because the Applicant is responsible for paying the NEPA contractor's invoice, the Applicant needs to have knowledge of and approve the NEPA contractor's scope of work (prior to the work being performed). I was involved in a project where the BLM staff directed the NEPA contractor to perform a GIS Visual Simulation at a cost of thousands of dollars. If the BLM staff

and NEPA contractor first consulted with the Applicant, it would have been identified that the GIS Visual Simulation was previously completed by another consultant (and this would have saved the Applicant money and saved the BLM time).

13. The process to review and approve the Federal Register notice by the BLM Washington DC office needs to be expedited. Recommend concurrent reviews, mandatory time limits (e.g., 20 days) to review the notice prior to publication, and possible management of the Federal Register Notice in the local State Office (and not in Washington DC).

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
AND  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Regarding  
Coordination Roles for Implementing the BLM's Nevada and  
Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office (the "BLM"), and the State of Nevada's Department of Wildlife ("NDOW") to confirm the interagency coordination commitments under the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment* (the "Sage Grouse Plan Amendment, or SGPA"). Through this MOU, the BLM and NDOW agree to work cooperatively to conserve, enhance, and restore sagebrush ecosystems in Nevada and Northeastern California.

**I. Background**

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS's 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the SGPA, NDOW was an active cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with NDOW as the BLM implements the SGPA. This MOU reaffirms those interagency coordination commitments to sustain coordination between the BLM and NDOW.

The USFWS was also an active cooperating agency that assisted with the development of the SGPA. Many of the coordination commitments set forth in the SGPA with the USFWS are similar to those

outlined with NDOW. A separate MOU between BLM and the USFWS (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) includes the affirmation of these commitments.

## **II. Authorities**

The following authorities and policies apply to this MOU:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.,
- Council on Environmental Quality, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500-1508 and 43 CFR Part 46,
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.,
- Federal regulations codified at 43 CFR Part 1600,
- The Nevada and Northeastern California Approved Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (September 2015),
- Secretarial Order Section 307(b) of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976,
- Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management, and Restoration, and
- Nevada Revised Statutes, Sections 501.105, 501.331, 501.351, and 503.584-589.

## **III. Purpose**

This MOU commits the BLM and NDOW to continue and build on their existing collaborative working relationship to better meet the shared goal to conserve, enhance, and restore the sagebrush ecosystems upon which GRSG populations depend in an effort to maintain and/or increase their abundance and distribution. This goal is stated as Goal SSS-1 of the SGPA. Specifically, the two agencies commit to:

1. Supporting full and successful implementation of the management decisions in the BLM's SGPA, through coordination between the BLM and NDOW,
2. Identifying opportunities and overcoming challenges to fully implement the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
3. Establishing a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

## **IV. Implementing the SGPA - Commitments between the BLM and NDOW**

### **A. Seasonal Habitat Delineations and Modifications**

**SGPA, Management Decisions (MD) SSS 2-E and SSS 3-D state:**

*“Seasonal restrictions will be applied during the periods specified below to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands (i.e., anthropogenic disturbances) that are disruptive to GRSG, to prevent disturbances to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods.”*

*1. In breeding habitat within 4 miles of active and pending GRSG leks from March 1 through June 30*

*a. Lek—March 1 to May 15*

*b. Lek hourly restrictions—6 p.m. to 9 a.m.*

*c. Nesting—April 1 to June 30*

*2. Brood-rearing habitat from May 15 to September 15*

*a. Early—May 15 to June 15*

*b. Late—June 15 to September 15*

*3. Winter habitat from November 1 to February 28*

*The seasonal dates may be modified due to documented local variations (e.g., higher/lower elevations) or annual climatic fluctuations (e.g., early/late spring, long/heavy winter), in coordination with NDOW and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in order to better protect GRSG and its habitat.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM receives an application or proposal for a discretionary surface-disturbing activity or use on public lands that may be disruptive to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas (PHMA and GHMA), the BLM project lead or biologist (in coordination with their office’s GIS specialist and/or wildlife biologist), will run an initial screening to identify GRSG seasonal habitats. The BLM will first develop a project analysis area by applying a 4-mile buffer around the proposed activity boundary. Once the proposed activity analysis area has been developed, the BLM will use the best available geospatial layers available and agreed upon by the BLM and NDOW to develop seasonal habitat maps. This process would include “clipping” the USGS geospatial layers for the following within the analysis area: nesting, summer/brood-rearing, and winter habitats.

Step 2: Once step 1 is completed and the BLM has a sufficient amount of information related to the proposed activity in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas, the BLM project lead or biologist will submit an email to their appropriate NDOW Habitat biologist with the following:

- i. Completed *Form for Proposed Activities in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas* -“GRSG form,”

- ii. PDFs of the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area, as well as the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.(ESRI) shapefiles for these maps, and
- iii. [Optional] A request for feedback and comments from NDOW as to whether or not the seasonal timing restrictions associated with the GRSG seasonal life-cycle periods identified on the PDF maps should be modified based on local variations or annual climatic fluctuations. BLM may request a meeting between BLM, NDOW, and the proponent to explore proposed activity siting to avoid and minimize impacts to GRSG habitats.

Step 3: Upon receipt of the completed GRSG form, PDF maps of the seasonal habitats within the project analysis area and the shapefiles for these maps, the NDOW Habitat Biologist will confirm receipt of these files via email to the BLM personnel submitting the request. Within 14 business days of this acknowledgement, NDOW will complete a review of the GRSG form (proposed activity)<sup>2</sup> and the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area. NDOW will then provide input regarding the following (note: this information can be placed within the “remarks” section of Part F of the GRSG form or within an email back to the BLM):

- i. Any initial comments regarding the proposed activity (as it relates to GRSG protections, specifically related to the management prescriptions set forth in the SGPA) understanding that further comment may be provided as more information comes forward in the NEPA process,
- ii. A statement concurring with the seasonal habitat maps provided by the BLM. If NDOW has recommendation for further refinement of these maps, they will summarize these changes and will attach modified shapefiles depicting these changes to the GRSG form, and
- iii. If applicable, feedback and comments regarding modifications to seasonal timing restriction dates.

Step 4: The BLM project lead or biologist will submit the proposed activity’s GRSG form to the GRSG Implementation Lead at the NVSO for tracking purposes (which will include the completed Part F of the GRSG form). Once the GRSG form is tracked at the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will continue the authorization and NEPA process for the proposed activity. If for any reason changes to the proposed activity occurs after the completed GRSG form is submitted to the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will convey those changes to NDOW for additional review and commenting by providing NDOW with an updated GRSG form for review before a decision is made on the proposed activity.

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<sup>2</sup> In order for Field and District Offices to provide Emergency Stabilization and Restoration (ES&R) plans to the BLM Washington Office no later than 7 business days after the conclusion of a fire, NDOW has committed to coordinate on the application of seasonal timing restrictions in 7 days in order for BLM to meet the ES&R plan submittal deadline. If BLM does not receive any correspondence back from NDOW within 7 days for ES&R projects or within 14 days for all other proposed activities that may be disruptive to GRSG, the BLM will proceed with authorizing the proposed activity, applying seasonal habitat restrictions to the seasonal habitats identified in the USGS geospatial layers.

**B. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):**

**SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:**

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (**Appendix E**).*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the 3 percent disturbance cap at the project or Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) scales, the BLM GRSG Implementation Lead (hereafter referred to as “BLM Implementation Lead”) will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity’s exception to the disturbance cap in GRSG PHMA. The BLM’s Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to identify new or site-specific information that would allow the project to be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. The technical team shall consider the

following factors when developing its recommendation: GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its recommendation report to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation that with the exception, the proposed activity will provide a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not provide for a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official, who will deny the exception request and apply the 3 percent disturbance cap in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## **B. Qualified Biologist to Conduct GRSG Surveys:**

### **SGPA, MD SSS 8 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities (to the extent possible under existing law) and rights-of-way actions proposed in PHMAs and GHMAs, the proponent will use the services of a qualified biologist approved by the BLM to conduct surveys for GRSG breeding activity during the GRSG breeding season before project activities begin. The surveys must encompass all suitable GRSG habitats within a minimum of 4 miles of the proposed activities. Surveys will be conducted following protocols established by state fish and wildlife agencies during planning operations and during project activities. GRSG seasonal habitat delineations will also be required within a minimum of 4 miles of project activities.*

### **SGPA, MD SSS 22 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions (with the possible exception of short*

*duration activities outside of seasonal GRSG habitats) BLM will require that active and pending leks be monitored annually within 4 miles of disturbance until the use terminates and all disturbances have been restored. The proponent will fund the services of an independent qualified biologist approved by the BLM, in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, consistent with applicable law.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

When the project analysis area for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions includes any active or pending leks within BLM managed PHMA or GHMA, the project proponent, in accordance with all existing and applicable laws, will be responsible for contracting the services of a qualified biologist to conduct lek activity surveys. BLM and NDOW will coordinate (as described in part A of this MOU) to review the minimum qualifications and project survey design. The results of surveys will be shared with both BLM and NDOW upon annual completion, but no later than June 15 of the year of survey.

**C. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:**

**SGPA, MD SSS 17 states:**

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and USFWS, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities)**

The BLM will coordinate with the NDOW prior to formally adopting, either through plan maintenance or a plan amendment, any revised GRSG Habitat Management Area maps. NDOW will provide a recommendation to the BLM regarding the suitability of the updated maps for making land use level plan decisions in support of the SGPA's purpose to conserve and enhance GRSG habitat. The BLM and the USFWS understand that providing input to USGS during any future Habitat Management Area modeling and map revision process is the

responsibility primarily of NDOW and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) (as the responsible party for incorporating updates into the Nevada Conservation Credit System).

#### **D. Vegetation Restoration Activities and Fire and Fuels Management Strategy**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD VEG 12:** Continue to coordinate with NDOW, CDFW, and NRCS for all development or habitat restoration proposals in PHMAs and GHMAs. Also, coordinate with the Nevada SETT, tribes, and local working groups on projects proposed in sagebrush ecosystems.*

*BLM restoration project leads will coordinate with partner agencies as identified to develop habitat restoration proposals in PHMA and GHMA. The Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development will be the coordinating program for habitat restoration activities at NDOW.*

***MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.*

***MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.*

***MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.*

***MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with USFWS and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).*

##### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

At the state office level, BLM and NDOW will coordinate, as outlined in the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT) process, to discuss BLM's strategy and progress towards implementing vegetation treatments in GRSG habitat in relation to the GRSG landscape

wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments, completed in 2015. The two agencies, with other partners, will identify research needs and research funding to support future vegetation treatment projects. Consideration will be given to seasonal habitat values and the need for implementing or avoiding projects within these seasonal habitats based upon local conditions and/or climatic fluctuations not analyzed through the FIAT tool.

Additional opportunities for addressing project level treatment needs that will provide a net conservation gain for GRSG in relation to wildfire and invasive species vegetation treatment projects may be developed through the Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network (i.e., local area working groups, field specialists, and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council). NDOW and the BLM will work with partners and other stakeholders to identify project level treatment needs.

NDOW will continue to have the opportunity to provide comment on NEPA documents related to vegetation treatment projects in PHMA and/or GHMA. The BLM will review NDOW feedback for recommendations on project design to achieve SGPA Table 2-2 habitat objectives.

#### **F. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:*

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,*
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.*

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that*

*the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, USFWS, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

**Appendix G (p. G-2–3): Relief from Stipulations:** *With regards to fluid minerals, surface use stipulations could have exceptions, modifications, or waivers applied with approval by the authorized officer. Table G.1 specifies the types of habitat where these stipulations would/not apply:*

#### *Exception*

*An exception to this stipulation may be granted by the authorized officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), if the operator submits a plan that demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if the submitted plan demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed exception.*

#### *Modification*

*The boundaries of the stipulated area may be modified if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat or that the area*

*no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The dates for timing limitations may be modified if new information indicates the dates are not valid for the leasehold.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat, or the area no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed modification.*

#### *Waiver*

*The stipulation may be waived if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed waiver.*

#### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the fluid mineral stipulation, the BLM Implementation Lead will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity's no surface occupancy fluid mineral stipulation exception in GRSG PHMA. The BLM's Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to come to a unanimous recommendation. The technical team will make its recommendation based on the criteria for approval of the exception as it is outlined in MD MR 3 and MD MR 4a for oil and gas and geothermal leasing, respectively.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its completed *GRSG BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days, of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, with the exception, the proposed activity can be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official will then deny the exception, in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## H. Mitigation

### The SGPA states:

**MD MIT 2:** *Identify compensatory mitigation areas in PHMAs and GHMAs with the potential to achieve GRSG habitat objectives (Table 2-2), in accordance with FIAT, the SFA prioritization, and the State of Nevada Strategic Action Plan.*

**Appendix I (p. I-2): Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate:** *In reviewing a proposal, determine if the project will have a direct and indirect impact on population or to the habitat (PHMA or GHMA). This can be done by:*

1. *Coordination with the appropriate State agencies such as Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team or Nevada Department of Wildlife,*
2. *Reviewing Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat maps,*
3. *Reviewing the 'Base Line Environment Report' (USGS), which identifies the area of direct and indirect effect for various anthropogenic activities,*
4. *Consultation with agency or State Wildlife Agency biologist,*
5. *Other methods.*

*If the proposal will not have a direct or indirect impact on either the habitat or population, proceed with the appropriate process for review, decision, and implementation of the project.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Per the Master Agreement (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) between BLM and NDOW, the BLM project lead or biologist will coordinate with the NDOW Regional Habitat Supervisors to solicit input on a proposed project's potential impacts to GRSG within PHMA and GHMA. NDOW will work with project proponents and the BLM on avoidance and minimization of impacts to GRSG beginning in the early stages of project planning.

**I. Adaptive Management**

**The SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds emerge. The BLM, Forest Service, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW would pursue a program to collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2016-140, the BLM is committed to coordinate with partners to evaluate population and habitat data to determine if the adaptive management soft and hard triggers, as defined in the SGPA, have been exceeded. Through an interagency agreement between the BLM Nevada State Office and USGS, the USGS will develop (and update on an annual basis) a state-space/IPM model that will incorporate Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) population data (provided to WAFWA by NDOW and CDFW) as the basis for evaluating whether population soft or hard triggers have been reached at each spatial scale referred to in Appendix J of the SGPA. Through the interagency agreement with USGS, the model results will be presented to the BLM on an annual basis. The BLM will analyze habitat triggers while the state-space/IPM model is being developed/updated annually. The BLM Implementation Lead will schedule a meeting with BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW to review the model results and habitat calculations prior to the BLM making the determination that a trigger has or has not been tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale.

**V. Communication**

The BLM Implementation Lead will provide notification to NDOW (at the state level) as new policies, guidance, and tools for SGPA implementation, such as national or state-level Instruction Memorandums and policies, are produced. Additionally, NDOW state and regional staff will be engaged at both the BLM State and field office level and have opportunity to help provide consistent communication.

Tier One (Staff Level)

The BLM and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) will meet monthly (or quarterly, as appropriate) throughout the calendar year. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Ensure close and continuous coordination is occurring, to identify opportunities and challenges for fully implementing the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
- Establish a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

Tier Two (Leadership Level)

At the request of BLM Nevada and NDOW leadership, the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) shall jointly report to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director, identifying strengths and deficiencies in the cooperative implementation of the BLM SGPA and related GRSG conservation.

**VII. Conflict Resolution**

Any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU or to the SGPA that cannot be resolved at the staff level may be elevated to the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff for guidance or resolution. If needed, any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU that cannot be resolved by the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff may be elevated to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director.

**VIII. Administration**

1. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to limit or affect in any way the authority or legal responsibilities of the BLM or NDOW (Parties).
2. Nothing in this MOU binds the Parties to perform beyond their respective authorities.
3. Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate the BLM or the United States to any current or future expenditure of resources in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress. Nor does this agreement obligate the BLM to spend funds on any particular project or purpose, even if funds are available.
4. The mission requirements, funding, personnel, and other priorities of the Parties may affect their ability to fully implement all the provisions identified in this MOU.

5. Specific activities that involve the transfer of money, services, or property between or among the Parties will require execution of separate agreements or contracts.
6. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to restrict the Parties from direct contact, or participating in similar activities or arrangements, with other public or private agencies, organizations, or individuals.
7. This MOU is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its Departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.
8. Any information furnished between the Parties under this MOU may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 et seq.
9. This MOU is subject to all applicable laws of the United States of America and the State of Nevada.
10. All cooperative work under the provisions of this MOU will be accomplished without discrimination against any employee because of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or any other legally protected class as identified in Federal law or the United States Constitution, as applicable.

#### **IX. Termination**

Any of the Parties, in writing, may terminate this MOU in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.

#### **X. Modifications**

Modifications within the scope of this MOU must be made by mutual consent of the Parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials, prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modification should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.

#### **XI. Commencement and Expiration**

This MOU is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective until the SGPA coordination commitments between the BLM and NDOW are revised or amended, at which time it will expire, unless extended by an executed modification, signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials.

#### **XII. Authorized Representatives**

Draft Document - Version: 6/21/17

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual Parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this MOU. In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

John Ruhs, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

Date

Jerome E. Perez, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, California

Date

Tony Wasley, Director  
Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date

**Attachment 1 - BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report for Disturbance Cap or No Surface Occupancy Exception in PHMA**

**Part A – Proposed Project Description**

What exception is this report related to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Disturbance Cap (MD SSS 2) \_\_\_\_\_ No Surface Occupancy Stipulation (MD MR 3 and 4a)

Proposed Project Title (as titled on the GRSG Form): \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please attach the project's "Form for Proposed Activities in GRSG Habitat Management Areas," that was developed consistent with BLM Nevada Instruction Memorandum 2016-038, if still applicable.]*

**Part B – Technical Team Members**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Technical Team Member and Position Title</b>
Bureau of Land Management	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
Nevada Department of Wildlife	

**Part C – GRSG Site-Specific Information**

**[For Disturbance Cap Variance only]** Describe the new or site-specific information that was used to evaluate if (or if not) the proposed project can be modified to a result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level (consistent with the BLM's Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Plan Amendment Management Decision SSS 2a) - *"factors considered by the team should include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors."*

*[Provide information here.]*

**[For a Fluid Mineral NSO Exception Variance only]** Describe how (or how not) the proposed project will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, if the project is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, will the project provide a clear net conservation gain to GRSG.

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part C – Technical Team Recommendation**

Has the technical team reached a unanimous recommendation?

Yes       No

If yes, what is the unanimous recommendation?

Exception recommended as project achieves net conservation gain.

Exception not recommended because project does not achieve net conservation gain.

Provide a summary justifying why (or why not) the project with the exception will (or will not) achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral exception only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat.

*[Provide information here.]*

If no, what were the areas of disagreement (*Note: In the event that the technical team cannot come to a unanimous recommendation, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous consensus at this level, the exception will not be granted.*)

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part D-1 – BLM State Director Concurrence** (*only to be completed if the technical team has reached a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral exception, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat*).

I hereby concur with the recommendation made by this technical team and support the BLM’s authorizing official's approval of the variance:

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

**Part D-2 – Leadership Finding** *(only to be completed if the technical team cannot make a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral variance, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain for disturbance cap variance or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous recommendation at this level, the exception will not be granted.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception can proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ No c unanimous recommendation has been reached, therefore the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_

State Director

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Director

Nevada Department of Wildlife

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Field Supervisor

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Internal Review Document – Not for Distribution

### BLM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/DEPUTY DIRECTOR BRIEFING MEMO

DATE: August 17, 2017  
FROM: Marci Todd, Acting State Director, BLM Nevada  
SUBJECT: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Coordination Commitments in the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

#### Background

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS’s 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment (SGPA), the USFWS was a cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with the USFWS as the BLM implements the SGPA. Other management decisions contained in sage grouse plans/plan amendments throughout the West also call for “unanimous” agreement between the BLM, USFWS, and the appropriate state wildlife agency before BLM can move forward with exceptions to specific SGPA decisions. The coordination process with these decisions, as well as where they apply is described in detail in this document.

#### Discussion

##### Summary of Coordination Commitments with the USFWS Contained in the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment

Specific to the Nevada and Northeastern California SGPA, there are five management decisions in the SGPA that reference BLM’s commitment to either coordinate/consult, provide a work product, or to come to unanimous consensus with the USFWS before making a final decision on exceptions to specific decisions in the SGPA. These commitments include:

1. A commitment to provide the USFWS with a 5-years plan effectiveness and adaptive management report (Appendix D and J, SGPA).
2. Annually consult with the USFWS to review GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments and proposed sagebrush treatments in Nevada and California (Management Decisions Fire 3, 24, 26, and 31, SGPA).
3. Consult with the USFWS prior to adopting (either through plan maintenance or amendment) new habitat management area maps (Management Decision SSS 17, SGPA).
4. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving an authorization in priority habitat management area that exceeds the 3% anthropogenic disturbance

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cap at either the project analysis area or biologically significant unit scale (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2, SGPA).

5. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving a no surface occupancy (NSO) fluid mineral exception (Management Decision MR 3 and 4a).

The specific decision language contained in the SGPA for each of these five commitments can be found in **Attachment 1**. As for the two commitments that require a unanimous consensus (items 4 and 5 above), BLM Nevada has drafted a formal process with the Reno USFWS Office (through a draft memorandum of understanding, see **Attachment 2**) to ensure consistent and adequate documentation throughout all BLM Nevada District Offices. This process is discussed in detail in the next section of the briefing paper. To date, BLM Nevada has tracked almost 300 proposed land use authorizations throughout Nevada in sage grouse habitat since the approval of the SGPA and has yet to proceed with a disturbance cap or NSO exception process with the USFWS.

Not all of these USFWS coordination commitments are present or the same across all the BLM sage grouse plans/plan amendments in the West (which were approved in September 2015). Table 1 (below) highlights which coordination commitments are found in each BLM state/sub-regional sage grouse plan/plan amendment. Because the Sage Grouse Monitoring Framework was an appendix contained in all sage grouse plans/plan amendments, BLM’s commitment to deliver a 5-year sage grouse plan effectiveness monitoring report to USFWS in 2020 is contained in each plan/plan amendment. It is also important to note that Nevada’s SGPA is the only plan amendment to contain exception language for the 3% disturbance cap management decision.

<b>Table 1: USFWS Coordination Commitments Contained in BLM Sage Grouse Plans/Plan Amendments across the West</b>								
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>NV</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>UT</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>MT</b>	<b>WY</b>	<b>CO</b>
1) Plan Effectiveness & Adaptive Management	Yes							
2) Fire and Fuels Management	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
3) Revising Habitat Management Areas Maps	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
4) Disturbance Cap Exception	Yes	No	No	No*	No	No	No	No
Fluid Minerals Exception Process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

**BLM Nevada’s Exception Process for Disturbance Caps and No Surface Occupancy Stipulations**

According to the SGPA (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2), an authorized official in Nevada may not grant a 3% disturbance cap or NSO exception unless the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), the USFWS, and BLM Nevada unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies certain resource conditions (for example, to proceed with a disturbance cap exception, a biological analysis must indicate that if the exception were to proceed, a net conservation gain to GRSG must be reached). Such finding shall initially be made by a technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency (NDOW, USFWS, and BLM). In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted.

BLM Nevada and the USFWS have worked together to ensure documentation of this exception process is clearly outlined. A report template can be found within the draft MOU between BLM and the USFWS (see **Attachment 2**).

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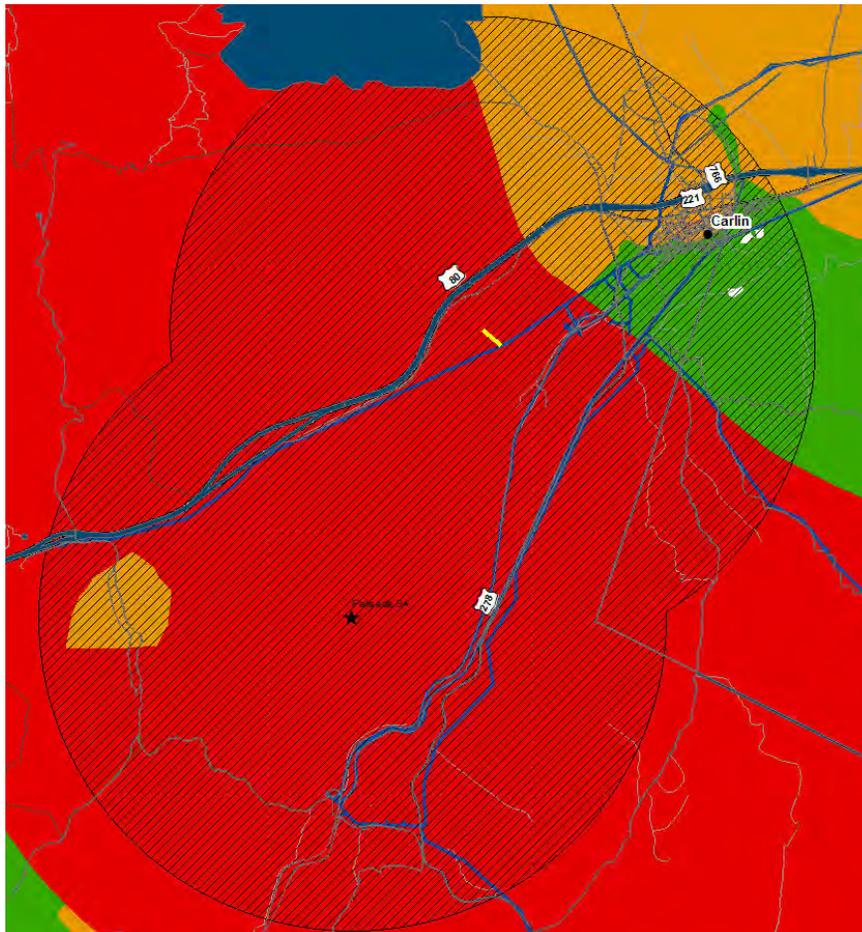
### Example Scenario of Conducting a Disturbance Cap Calculation in Nevada

Management Decision SSS 2-A of the Nevada SGPA states that, “if the 3 percent anthropogenic disturbance cap is exceeded on all lands (regardless of land ownership) within a proposed project analysis area in a PHMA, then no further anthropogenic disturbance will be permitted by BLM until disturbance in the proposed project analysis area has been reduced to maintain the area under the cap (subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 Mining Law, as amended, valid existing rights).

All BLM sage grouse plans and plan amendments across the West, except for those plans in Montana and Wyoming include the exact same disturbance cap management decision as Nevada’s SGPA. The only unique aspect of the Nevada decision is that it contains an exception.

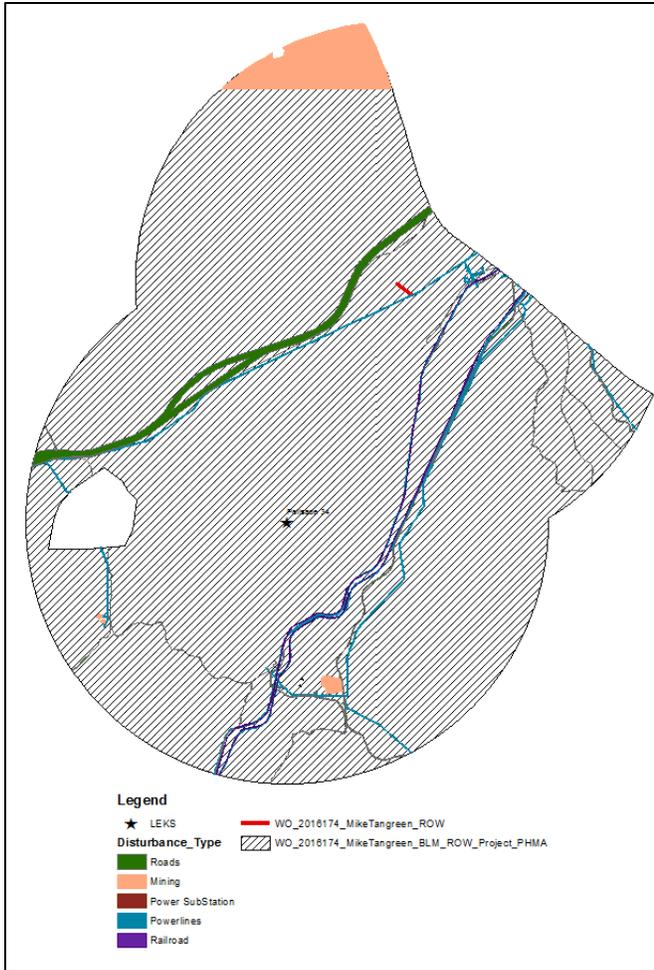
Below is a step-by-step description of the process BLM Nevada undertakes when generating a disturbance cap. For this description, a real proposed action that BLM Nevada is currently evaluating under this 3 percent disturbance cap management decision is described.

Step 1: BLM receives an application for a 2,000ft 14kV transmission line right-of-way that is proposed to cross BLM managed PHMA (identified as a yellow line in the image below). BLM first buffers the proposed project footprint by 4 miles. If a lek falls within this 4 mile buffered area, then an additional 4 mile buffer is applied to that lek. For this proposed project, only one lek falls within the 4 mile project footprint buffer. All non-PHMA (yellow on the map represents Other Habitat Management Areas and green is General Habitat Management Areas) is removed from the two buffered areas, which creates the “proposed project analysis area” in which the 3% calculation is run.



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Step 2: With the project analysis area now defined, the BLM Nevada State Office then automates the anthropogenic disturbance within this project analysis area. What constitutes anthropogenic disturbance is defined in the Monitoring Framework, which is an appendix to the SGPA.



	Percent	Acres
<b>Disturbance Area (PHMA)</b>		<b>43,259.00</b>
Max Disturbance	3%	1,297.77

<b>Existing Disturbance</b>		
Roads	1.921%	830.85
Energy Oil & Gas	0.000%	
Energy Coal	0.000%	
Energy Wind	0.000%	
Energy Solar	0.000%	
Energy Geothermal	0.000%	
Mining ( Locatables, leasable, and saleable)	2.491%	1,077.45
Railroads	0.162%	70.05
Powerlines	1.016%	439.50
Communication Towers	0.000%	
Other vertical structures	0.006%	2.50
Other developed ROW	0.000%	-
Other disturbance areas	0.000%	
<b>% TOTAL</b>	<b>5.595%</b>	<b>2,420.35</b>

**The seven Site Scale Features considered in Disturbance Calc at project level**

Coalbed Methan Ponds	0.000%	0.00
Meteorological Towers	0.000%	0.00
Nuclear Energy Facilities	0.000%	0.00
Airport Facilities and Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
Military Range Facility & Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
Hydroelectric Plants	0.000%	0.00
Recreation Areas Facilities and Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
<b>% Total</b>	<b>0.000%</b>	<b>0.00</b>

This project is located within 2016 Central Great Basin BSU - this BSU is at 0.90%

<b>Project and Existing Totals</b>		
<b>Project Specific Area</b>	0.03%	2.000
<b>Total Existing Disturbance</b>	5.595%	2,420.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.627%</b>	<b>2,422.35</b>

Step 3: Based on the 3% disturbance calculation at the project analysis area scale, if built, the project analysis area would reach 5.627%, therefore, the Field Office’s authorizing official would need to make the determination as to whether or not to reject the right-of-way application or pursue the a 3% exception process, as described earlier in this briefing paper.

**Contact**

For more information regarding the topics outlined in this briefing paper, feel free to contact Matthew Magaletti, BLM Nevada Sage Grouse Implementation Lead at (775) 861-6472, or email at [mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov).

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 – Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language
- Attachment 2 – Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS

## COORDINATION COMMITMENTS BETWEEN BLM AND USFWS (AS SPELLED OUT IN THE BLM NEVADA AND NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA SAGE GROUSE PLAN AMENDMENT)

### A. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):

#### SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, **USFWS** State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (Appendix E).*

### B. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:

#### SGPA MD SSS 17 states:

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and **USFWS**, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat*

management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.

### C. Fire and Fuels Management Strategy

#### The SGPA states:

**MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.

**MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.

**MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

**MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with **USFWS** and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).

### D. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception

#### The SGPA states:

**MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, **USFWS State Ecological Services Director**, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, **USFWS**, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

## **E. Adaptive Management**

### **SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model. A 5-year summary report will be provided to the **USFWS**.*

## **F. 5 Year Reporting**

### **SGPA Monitoring Framework Appendix**

*The compilation of broad- and mid-scale data (and population trends as available) into an effectiveness monitoring report will occur on a 5-year reporting schedule , which may be*

*accelerated to respond to critical emerging issues (in consultation with the USFWS and state wildlife agencies).*

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
AND  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Regarding  
Coordination Roles for Implementing the BLM's Nevada and  
Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office (the "BLM"), and the State of Nevada's Department of Wildlife ("NDOW") to confirm the interagency coordination commitments under the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment* (the "Sage Grouse Plan Amendment, or SGPA"). Through this MOU, the BLM and NDOW agree to work cooperatively to conserve, enhance, and restore sagebrush ecosystems in Nevada and Northeastern California.

**I. Background**

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS's 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the SGPA, NDOW was an active cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with NDOW as the BLM implements the SGPA. This MOU reaffirms those interagency coordination commitments to sustain coordination between the BLM and NDOW.

The USFWS was also an active cooperating agency that assisted with the development of the SGPA. Many of the coordination commitments set forth in the SGPA with the USFWS are similar to those

outlined with NDOW. A separate MOU between BLM and the USFWS (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) includes the affirmation of these commitments.

## **II. Authorities**

The following authorities and policies apply to this MOU:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.,
- Council on Environmental Quality, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500-1508 and 43 CFR Part 46,
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.,
- Federal regulations codified at 43 CFR Part 1600,
- The Nevada and Northeastern California Approved Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (September 2015),
- Secretarial Order Section 307(b) of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976,
- Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management, and Restoration, and
- Nevada Revised Statutes, Sections 501.105, 501.331, 501.351, and 503.584-589.

## **III. Purpose**

This MOU commits the BLM and NDOW to continue and build on their existing collaborative working relationship to better meet the shared goal to conserve, enhance, and restore the sagebrush ecosystems upon which GRSG populations depend in an effort to maintain and/or increase their abundance and distribution. This goal is stated as Goal SSS-1 of the SGPA. Specifically, the two agencies commit to:

1. Supporting full and successful implementation of the management decisions in the BLM's SGPA, through coordination between the BLM and NDOW,
2. Identifying opportunities and overcoming challenges to fully implement the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
3. Establishing a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

## **IV. Implementing the SGPA - Commitments between the BLM and NDOW**

### **A. Seasonal Habitat Delineations and Modifications**

**SGPA, Management Decisions (MD) SSS 2-E and SSS 3-D state:**

*“Seasonal restrictions will be applied during the periods specified below to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands (i.e., anthropogenic disturbances) that are disruptive to GRSG, to prevent disturbances to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods.”*

*1. In breeding habitat within 4 miles of active and pending GRSG leks from March 1 through June 30*

*a. Lek—March 1 to May 15*

*b. Lek hourly restrictions—6 p.m. to 9 a.m.*

*c. Nesting—April 1 to June 30*

*2. Brood-rearing habitat from May 15 to September 15*

*a. Early—May 15 to June 15*

*b. Late—June 15 to September 15*

*3. Winter habitat from November 1 to February 28*

*The seasonal dates may be modified due to documented local variations (e.g., higher/lower elevations) or annual climatic fluctuations (e.g., early/late spring, long/heavy winter), in coordination with NDOW and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in order to better protect GRSG and its habitat.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM receives an application or proposal for a discretionary surface-disturbing activity or use on public lands that may be disruptive to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas (PHMA and GHMA), the BLM project lead or biologist (in coordination with their office’s GIS specialist and/or wildlife biologist), will run an initial screening to identify GRSG seasonal habitats. The BLM will first develop a project analysis area by applying a 4-mile buffer around the proposed activity boundary. Once the proposed activity analysis area has been developed, the BLM will use the best available geospatial layers available and agreed upon by the BLM and NDOW to develop seasonal habitat maps. This process would include “clipping” the USGS geospatial layers for the following within the analysis area: nesting, summer/brood-rearing, and winter habitats.

Step 2: Once step 1 is completed and the BLM has a sufficient amount of information related to the proposed activity in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas, the BLM project lead or biologist will submit an email to their appropriate NDOW Habitat biologist with the following:

- i. Completed *Form for Proposed Activities in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas* -“GRSG form,”

- ii. PDFs of the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area, as well as the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.(ESRI) shapefiles for these maps, and
- iii. [Optional] A request for feedback and comments from NDOW as to whether or not the seasonal timing restrictions associated with the GRSG seasonal life-cycle periods identified on the PDF maps should be modified based on local variations or annual climatic fluctuations. BLM may request a meeting between BLM, NDOW, and the proponent to explore proposed activity siting to avoid and minimize impacts to GRSG habitats.

Step 3: Upon receipt of the completed GRSG form, PDF maps of the seasonal habitats within the project analysis area and the shapefiles for these maps, the NDOW Habitat Biologist will confirm receipt of these files via email to the BLM personnel submitting the request. Within 14 business days of this acknowledgement, NDOW will complete a review of the GRSG form (proposed activity)<sup>2</sup> and the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area. NDOW will then provide input regarding the following (note: this information can be placed within the “remarks” section of Part F of the GRSG form or within an email back to the BLM):

- i. Any initial comments regarding the proposed activity (as it relates to GRSG protections, specifically related to the management prescriptions set forth in the SGPA) understanding that further comment may be provided as more information comes forward in the NEPA process,
- ii. A statement concurring with the seasonal habitat maps provided by the BLM. If NDOW has recommendation for further refinement of these maps, they will summarize these changes and will attach modified shapefiles depicting these changes to the GRSG form, and
- iii. If applicable, feedback and comments regarding modifications to seasonal timing restriction dates.

Step 4: The BLM project lead or biologist will submit the proposed activity’s GRSG form to the GRSG Implementation Lead at the NVSO for tracking purposes (which will include the completed Part F of the GRSG form). Once the GRSG form is tracked at the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will continue the authorization and NEPA process for the proposed activity. If for any reason changes to the proposed activity occurs after the completed GRSG form is submitted to the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will convey those changes to NDOW for additional review and commenting by providing NDOW with an updated GRSG form for review before a decision is made on the proposed activity.

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<sup>2</sup> In order for Field and District Offices to provide Emergency Stabilization and Restoration (ES&R) plans to the BLM Washington Office no later than 7 business days after the conclusion of a fire, NDOW has committed to coordinate on the application of seasonal timing restrictions in 7 days in order for BLM to meet the ES&R plan submittal deadline. If BLM does not receive any correspondence back from NDOW within 7 days for ES&R projects or within 14 days for all other proposed activities that may be disruptive to GRSG, the BLM will proceed with authorizing the proposed activity, applying seasonal habitat restrictions to the seasonal habitats identified in the USGS geospatial layers.

**B. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):**

**SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:**

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (**Appendix E**).*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the 3 percent disturbance cap at the project or Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) scales, the BLM GRSG Implementation Lead (hereafter referred to as “BLM Implementation Lead”) will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity’s exception to the disturbance cap in GRSG PHMA. The BLM’s Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to identify new or site-specific information that would allow the project to be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. The technical team shall consider the

following factors when developing its recommendation: GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its recommendation report to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation that with the exception, the proposed activity will provide a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not provide for a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official, who will deny the exception request and apply the 3 percent disturbance cap in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## **B. Qualified Biologist to Conduct GRSG Surveys:**

### **SGPA, MD SSS 8 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities (to the extent possible under existing law) and rights-of-way actions proposed in PHMAs and GHMAs, the proponent will use the services of a qualified biologist approved by the BLM to conduct surveys for GRSG breeding activity during the GRSG breeding season before project activities begin. The surveys must encompass all suitable GRSG habitats within a minimum of 4 miles of the proposed activities. Surveys will be conducted following protocols established by state fish and wildlife agencies during planning operations and during project activities. GRSG seasonal habitat delineations will also be required within a minimum of 4 miles of project activities.*

### **SGPA, MD SSS 22 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions (with the possible exception of short*

*duration activities outside of seasonal GRSG habitats) BLM will require that active and pending leks be monitored annually within 4 miles of disturbance until the use terminates and all disturbances have been restored. The proponent will fund the services of an independent qualified biologist approved by the BLM, in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, consistent with applicable law.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

When the project analysis area for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions includes any active or pending leks within BLM managed PHMA or GHMA, the project proponent, in accordance with all existing and applicable laws, will be responsible for contracting the services of a qualified biologist to conduct lek activity surveys. BLM and NDOW will coordinate (as described in part A of this MOU) to review the minimum qualifications and project survey design. The results of surveys will be shared with both BLM and NDOW upon annual completion, but no later than June 15 of the year of survey.

**C. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:**

**SGPA, MD SSS 17 states:**

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and USFWS, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities)**

The BLM will coordinate with the NDOW prior to formally adopting, either through plan maintenance or a plan amendment, any revised GRSG Habitat Management Area maps. NDOW will provide a recommendation to the BLM regarding the suitability of the updated maps for making land use level plan decisions in support of the SGPA's purpose to conserve and enhance GRSG habitat. The BLM and the USFWS understand that providing input to USGS during any future Habitat Management Area modeling and map revision process is the

responsibility primarily of NDOW and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) (as the responsible party for incorporating updates into the Nevada Conservation Credit System).

#### **D. Vegetation Restoration Activities and Fire and Fuels Management Strategy**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD VEG 12:** Continue to coordinate with NDOW, CDFW, and NRCS for all development or habitat restoration proposals in PHMAs and GHMAs. Also, coordinate with the Nevada SETT, tribes, and local working groups on projects proposed in sagebrush ecosystems.*

*BLM restoration project leads will coordinate with partner agencies as identified to develop habitat restoration proposals in PHMA and GHMA. The Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development will be the coordinating program for habitat restoration activities at NDOW.*

***MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.*

***MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.*

***MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.*

***MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with USFWS and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).*

##### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

At the state office level, BLM and NDOW will coordinate, as outlined in the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT) process, to discuss BLM's strategy and progress towards implementing vegetation treatments in GRSG habitat in relation to the GRSG landscape

wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments, completed in 2015. The two agencies, with other partners, will identify research needs and research funding to support future vegetation treatment projects. Consideration will be given to seasonal habitat values and the need for implementing or avoiding projects within these seasonal habitats based upon local conditions and/or climatic fluctuations not analyzed through the FIAT tool.

Additional opportunities for addressing project level treatment needs that will provide a net conservation gain for GRSG in relation to wildfire and invasive species vegetation treatment projects may be developed through the Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network (i.e., local area working groups, field specialists, and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council). NDOW and the BLM will work with partners and other stakeholders to identify project level treatment needs.

NDOW will continue to have the opportunity to provide comment on NEPA documents related to vegetation treatment projects in PHMA and/or GHMA. The BLM will review NDOW feedback for recommendations on project design to achieve SGPA Table 2-2 habitat objectives.

#### **F. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:*

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,*
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.*

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that*

*the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, USFWS, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

**Appendix G (p. G-2–3): Relief from Stipulations:** *With regards to fluid minerals, surface use stipulations could have exceptions, modifications, or waivers applied with approval by the authorized officer. Table G.1 specifies the types of habitat where these stipulations would/not apply:*

#### *Exception*

*An exception to this stipulation may be granted by the authorized officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), if the operator submits a plan that demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if the submitted plan demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed exception.*

#### *Modification*

*The boundaries of the stipulated area may be modified if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat or that the area*

*no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The dates for timing limitations may be modified if new information indicates the dates are not valid for the leasehold.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat, or the area no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed modification.*

#### *Waiver*

*The stipulation may be waived if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed waiver.*

#### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the fluid mineral stipulation, the BLM Implementation Lead will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity's no surface occupancy fluid mineral stipulation exception in GRSG PHMA. The BLM's Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to come to a unanimous recommendation. The technical team will make its recommendation based on the criteria for approval of the exception as it is outlined in MD MR 3 and MD MR 4a for oil and gas and geothermal leasing, respectively.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its completed *GRSG BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days, of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, with the exception, the proposed activity can be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official will then deny the exception, in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## H. Mitigation

### The SGPA states:

**MD MIT 2:** *Identify compensatory mitigation areas in PHMAs and GHMAs with the potential to achieve GRSG habitat objectives (Table 2-2), in accordance with FIAT, the SFA prioritization, and the State of Nevada Strategic Action Plan.*

**Appendix I (p. I-2): Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate:** *In reviewing a proposal, determine if the project will have a direct and indirect impact on population or to the habitat (PHMA or GHMA). This can be done by:*

1. *Coordination with the appropriate State agencies such as Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team or Nevada Department of Wildlife,*
2. *Reviewing Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat maps,*
3. *Reviewing the 'Base Line Environment Report' (USGS), which identifies the area of direct and indirect effect for various anthropogenic activities,*
4. *Consultation with agency or State Wildlife Agency biologist,*
5. *Other methods.*

*If the proposal will not have a direct or indirect impact on either the habitat or population, proceed with the appropriate process for review, decision, and implementation of the project.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Per the Master Agreement (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) between BLM and NDOW, the BLM project lead or biologist will coordinate with the NDOW Regional Habitat Supervisors to solicit input on a proposed project's potential impacts to GRSG within PHMA and GHMA. NDOW will work with project proponents and the BLM on avoidance and minimization of impacts to GRSG beginning in the early stages of project planning.

**I. Adaptive Management**

**The SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds emerge. The BLM, Forest Service, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW would pursue a program to collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2016-140, the BLM is committed to coordinate with partners to evaluate population and habitat data to determine if the adaptive management soft and hard triggers, as defined in the SGPA, have been exceeded. Through an interagency agreement between the BLM Nevada State Office and USGS, the USGS will develop (and update on an annual basis) a state-space/IPM model that will incorporate Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) population data (provided to WAFWA by NDOW and CDFW) as the basis for evaluating whether population soft or hard triggers have been reached at each spatial scale referred to in Appendix J of the SGPA. Through the interagency agreement with USGS, the model results will be presented to the BLM on an annual basis. The BLM will analyze habitat triggers while the state-space/IPM model is being developed/updated annually. The BLM Implementation Lead will schedule a meeting with BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW to review the model results and habitat calculations prior to the BLM making the determination that a trigger has or has not been tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale.

**V. Communication**

The BLM Implementation Lead will provide notification to NDOW (at the state level) as new policies, guidance, and tools for SGPA implementation, such as national or state-level Instruction Memorandums and policies, are produced. Additionally, NDOW state and regional staff will be engaged at both the BLM State and field office level and have opportunity to help provide consistent communication.

Tier One (Staff Level)

The BLM and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) will meet monthly (or quarterly, as appropriate) throughout the calendar year. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Ensure close and continuous coordination is occurring, to identify opportunities and challenges for fully implementing the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
- Establish a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

Tier Two (Leadership Level)

At the request of BLM Nevada and NDOW leadership, the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) shall jointly report to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director, identifying strengths and deficiencies in the cooperative implementation of the BLM SGPA and related GRSG conservation.

**VII. Conflict Resolution**

Any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU or to the SGPA that cannot be resolved at the staff level may be elevated to the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff for guidance or resolution. If needed, any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU that cannot be resolved by the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff may be elevated to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director.

**VIII. Administration**

1. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to limit or affect in any way the authority or legal responsibilities of the BLM or NDOW (Parties).
2. Nothing in this MOU binds the Parties to perform beyond their respective authorities.
3. Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate the BLM or the United States to any current or future expenditure of resources in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress. Nor does this agreement obligate the BLM to spend funds on any particular project or purpose, even if funds are available.
4. The mission requirements, funding, personnel, and other priorities of the Parties may affect their ability to fully implement all the provisions identified in this MOU.

5. Specific activities that involve the transfer of money, services, or property between or among the Parties will require execution of separate agreements or contracts.
6. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to restrict the Parties from direct contact, or participating in similar activities or arrangements, with other public or private agencies, organizations, or individuals.
7. This MOU is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its Departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.
8. Any information furnished between the Parties under this MOU may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 et seq.
9. This MOU is subject to all applicable laws of the United States of America and the State of Nevada.
10. All cooperative work under the provisions of this MOU will be accomplished without discrimination against any employee because of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or any other legally protected class as identified in Federal law or the United States Constitution, as applicable.

#### **IX. Termination**

Any of the Parties, in writing, may terminate this MOU in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.

#### **X. Modifications**

Modifications within the scope of this MOU must be made by mutual consent of the Parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials, prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modification should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.

#### **XI. Commencement and Expiration**

This MOU is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective until the SGPA coordination commitments between the BLM and NDOW are revised or amended, at which time it will expire, unless extended by an executed modification, signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials.

#### **XII. Authorized Representatives**

Draft Document - Version: 6/21/17

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual Parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this MOU. In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

John Ruhs, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

Date

Jerome E. Perez, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, California

Date

Tony Wasley, Director  
Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date

**Attachment 1 - BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report for Disturbance Cap or No Surface Occupancy Exception in PHMA**

**Part A – Proposed Project Description**

What exception is this report related to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Disturbance Cap (MD SSS 2) \_\_\_\_\_ No Surface Occupancy Stipulation (MD MR 3 and 4a)

Proposed Project Title (as titled on the GRSG Form): \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please attach the project's "Form for Proposed Activities in GRSG Habitat Management Areas," that was developed consistent with BLM Nevada Instruction Memorandum 2016-038, if still applicable.]*

**Part B – Technical Team Members**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Technical Team Member and Position Title</b>
Bureau of Land Management	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
Nevada Department of Wildlife	

**Part C – GRSG Site-Specific Information**

**[For Disturbance Cap Variance only]** Describe the new or site-specific information that was used to evaluate if (or if not) the proposed project can be modified to a result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level (consistent with the BLM's Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Plan Amendment Management Decision SSS 2a) - *"factors considered by the team should include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors."*

*[Provide information here.]*

**[For a Fluid Mineral NSO Exception Variance only]** Describe how (or how not) the proposed project will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, if the project is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, will the project provide a clear net conservation gain to GRSG.

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part C – Technical Team Recommendation**

Has the technical team reached a unanimous recommendation?

\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, what is the unanimous recommendation?

\_\_\_\_ Exception recommended as project achieves net conservation gain.

\_\_\_\_ Exception not recommended because project does not achieve net conservation gain.

Provide a summary justifying why (or why not) the project with the exception will (or will not) achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral exception only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat.

*[Provide information here.]*

If no, what were the areas of disagreement (*Note: In the event that the technical team cannot come to a unanimous recommendation, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous consensus at this level, the exception will not be granted.*)

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part D-1 – BLM State Director Concurrence** (*only to be completed if the technical team has reached a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral exception, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat*).

I hereby concur with the recommendation made by this technical team and support the BLM’s authorizing official's approval of the variance:

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

**Part D-2 – Leadership Finding** *(only to be completed if the technical team cannot make a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral variance, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain for disturbance cap variance or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous recommendation at this level, the exception will not be granted.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception can proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ No c unanimous recommendation has been reached, therefore the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_

State Director

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Director

Nevada Department of Wildlife

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Field Supervisor

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Internal Review Document – Not for Distribution

### BLM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/DEPUTY DIRECTOR BRIEFING MEMO

DATE: August 17, 2017  
FROM: Marci Todd, Acting State Director, BLM Nevada  
SUBJECT: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Coordination Commitments in the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

#### Background

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS’s 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment (SGPA), the USFWS was a cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with the USFWS as the BLM implements the SGPA. Other management decisions contained in sage grouse plans/plan amendments throughout the West also call for “unanimous” agreement between the BLM, USFWS, and the appropriate state wildlife agency before BLM can move forward with exceptions to specific SGPA decisions. The coordination process with these decisions, as well as where they apply is described in detail in this document.

#### Discussion

##### Summary of Coordination Commitments with the USFWS Contained in the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment

Specific to the Nevada and Northeastern California SGPA, there are five management decisions in the SGPA that reference BLM’s commitment to either coordinate/consult, provide a work product, or to come to unanimous consensus with the USFWS before making a final decision on exceptions to specific decisions in the SGPA. These commitments include:

1. A commitment to provide the USFWS with a 5-years plan effectiveness and adaptive management report (Appendix D and J, SGPA).
2. Annually consult with the USFWS to review GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments and proposed sagebrush treatments in Nevada and California (Management Decisions Fire 3, 24, 26, and 31, SGPA).
3. Consult with the USFWS prior to adopting (either through plan maintenance or amendment) new habitat management area maps (Management Decision SSS 17, SGPA).
4. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving an authorization in priority habitat management area that exceeds the 3% anthropogenic disturbance

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cap at either the project analysis area or biologically significant unit scale (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2, SGPA).

5. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving a no surface occupancy (NSO) fluid mineral exception (Management Decision MR 3 and 4a).

The specific decision language contained in the SGPA for each of these five commitments can be found in **Attachment 1**. As for the two commitments that require a unanimous consensus (items 4 and 5 above), BLM Nevada has drafted a formal process with the Reno USFWS Office (through a draft memorandum of understanding, see **Attachment 2**) to ensure consistent and adequate documentation throughout all BLM Nevada District Offices. This process is discussed in detail in the next section of the briefing paper. To date, BLM Nevada has tracked almost 300 proposed land use authorizations throughout Nevada in sage grouse habitat since the approval of the SGPA and has yet to proceed with a disturbance cap or NSO exception process with the USFWS.

Not all of these USFWS coordination commitments are present or the same across all the BLM sage grouse plans/plan amendments in the West (which were approved in September 2015). Table 1 (below) highlights which coordination commitments are found in each BLM state/sub-regional sage grouse plan/plan amendment. Because the Sage Grouse Monitoring Framework was an appendix contained in all sage grouse plans/plan amendments, BLM’s commitment to deliver a 5-year sage grouse plan effectiveness monitoring report to USFWS in 2020 is contained in each plan/plan amendment. It is also important to note that Nevada’s SGPA is the only plan amendment to contain exception language for the 3% disturbance cap management decision.

Commitment	NV	OR	UT	ID	CA	MT	WY	CO
1) Plan Effectiveness & Adaptive Management	Yes							
2) Fire and Fuels Management	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
3) Revising Habitat Management Areas Maps	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
4) Disturbance Cap Exception	Yes	No	No	No*	No	No	No	No
Fluid Minerals Exception Process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

BLM Nevada’s Exception Process for Disturbance Caps and No Surface Occupancy Stipulations

According to the SGPA (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2), an authorized official in Nevada may not grant a 3% disturbance cap or NSO exception unless the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), the USFWS, and BLM Nevada unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies certain resource conditions (for example, to proceed with a disturbance cap exception, a biological analysis must indicate that if the exception were to proceed, a net conservation gain to GRSG must be reached). Such finding shall initially be made by a technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency (NDOW, USFWS, and BLM). In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted.

BLM Nevada and the USFWS have worked together to ensure documentation of this exception process is clearly outlined. A report template can be found within the draft MOU between BLM and the USFWS (see **Attachment 2**).

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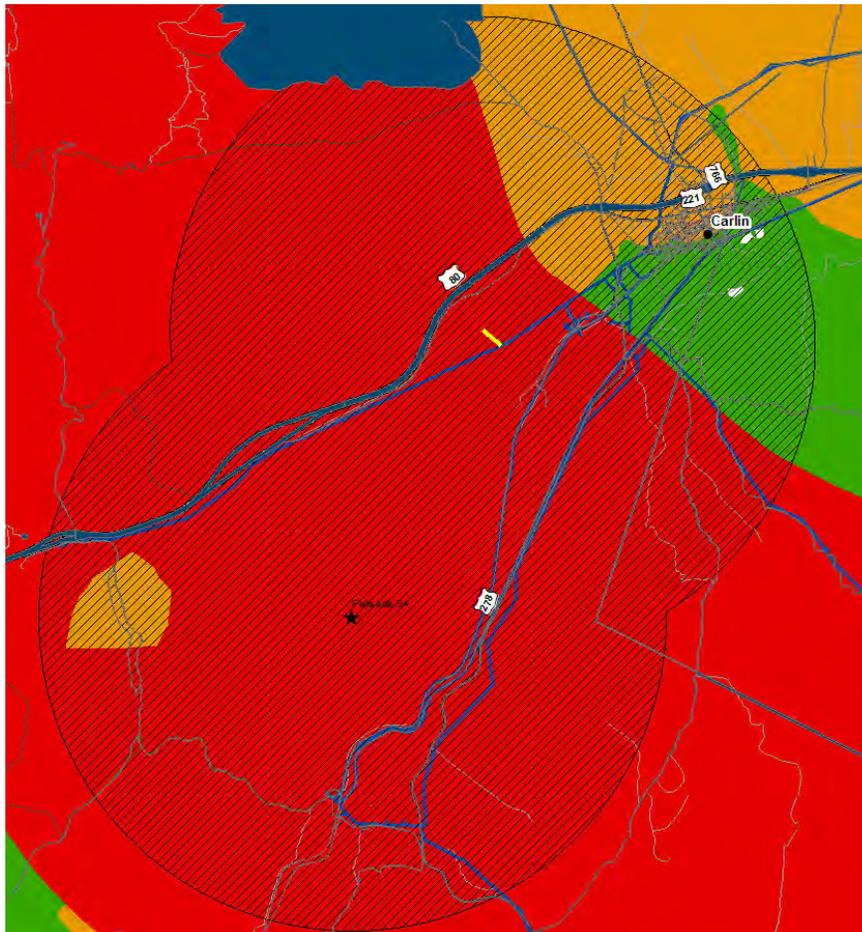
### Example Scenario of Conducting a Disturbance Cap Calculation in Nevada

Management Decision SSS 2-A of the Nevada SGPA states that, “if the 3 percent anthropogenic disturbance cap is exceeded on all lands (regardless of land ownership) within a proposed project analysis area in a PHMA, then no further anthropogenic disturbance will be permitted by BLM until disturbance in the proposed project analysis area has been reduced to maintain the area under the cap (subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 Mining Law, as amended, valid existing rights).

All BLM sage grouse plans and plan amendments across the West, except for those plans in Montana and Wyoming include the exact same disturbance cap management decision as Nevada’s SGPA. The only unique aspect of the Nevada decision is that it contains an exception.

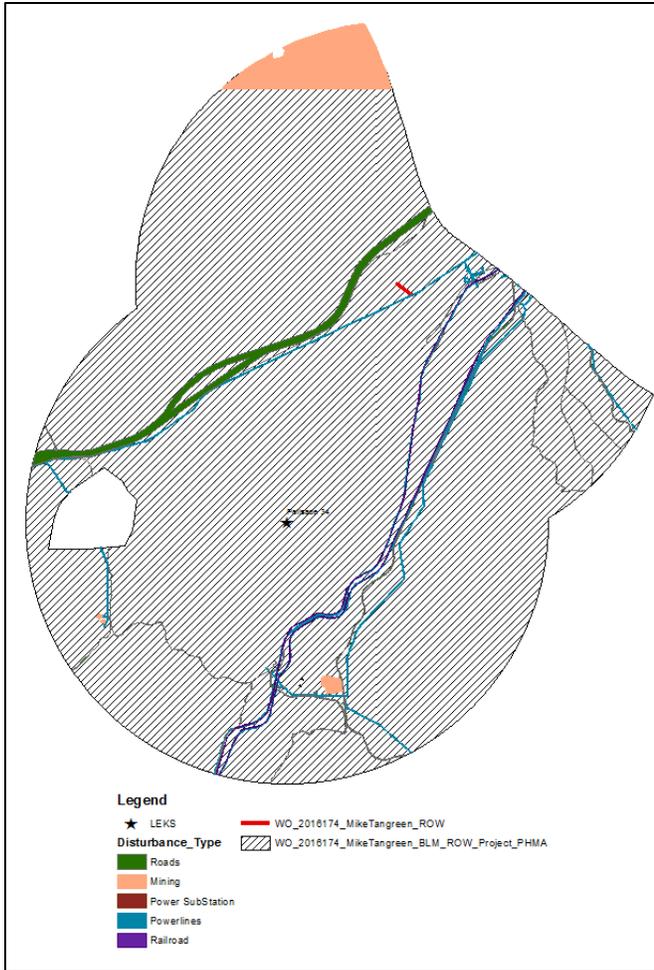
Below is a step-by-step description of the process BLM Nevada undertakes when generating a disturbance cap. For this description, a real proposed action that BLM Nevada is currently evaluating under this 3 percent disturbance cap management decision is described.

Step 1: BLM receives an application for a 2,000ft 14kV transmission line right-of-way that is proposed to cross BLM managed PHMA (identified as a yellow line in the image below). BLM first buffers the proposed project footprint by 4 miles. If a lek falls within this 4 mile buffered area, then an additional 4 mile buffer is applied to that lek. For this proposed project, only one lek falls within the 4 mile project footprint buffer. All non-PHMA (yellow on the map represents Other Habitat Management Areas and green is General Habitat Management Areas) is removed from the two buffered areas, which creates the “proposed project analysis area” in which the 3% calculation is run.



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Step 2: With the project analysis area now defined, the BLM Nevada State Office then automates the anthropogenic disturbance within this project analysis area. What constitutes anthropogenic disturbance is defined in the Monitoring Framework, which is an appendix to the SGPA.



	Percent	Acres
<b>Disturbance Area (PHMA)</b>		<b>43,259.00</b>
Max Disturbance	3%	1,297.77

<b>Existing Disturbance</b>		
Roads	1.921%	830.85
Energy Oil & Gas	0.000%	
Energy Coal	0.000%	
Energy Wind	0.000%	
Energy Solar	0.000%	
Energy Geothermal	0.000%	
Mining ( Locatables, leasable, and saleable)	2.491%	1,077.45
Railroads	0.162%	70.05
Powerlines	1.016%	439.50
Communication Towers	0.000%	
Other vertical structures	0.006%	2.50
Other developed ROW	0.000%	-
Other disturbance areas	0.000%	
<b>% TOTAL</b>	<b>5.595%</b>	<b>2,420.35</b>

**The seven Site Scale Features considered in Disturbance Calc at project level**

Coalbed Methan Ponds	0.000%	0.00
Meteorological Towers	0.000%	0.00
Nuclear Energy Facilities	0.000%	0.00
Airport Facilities and Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
Military Range Facility & Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
Hydroelectric Plants	0.000%	0.00
Recreation Areas Facilities and Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
<b>% Total</b>	<b>0.000%</b>	<b>0.00</b>

This project is located within 2016 Central Great Basin BSU - this BSU is at 0.90%

<b>Project and Existing Totals</b>		
<b>Project Specific Area</b>	0.03%	2.000
<b>Total Existing Disturbance</b>	5.595%	2,420.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.627%</b>	<b>2,422.35</b>

Step 3: Based on the 3% disturbance calculation at the project analysis area scale, if built, the project analysis area would reach 5.627%, therefore, the Field Office’s authorizing official would need to make the determination as to whether or not to reject the right-of-way application or pursue the a 3% exception process, as described earlier in this briefing paper.

**Contact**

For more information regarding the topics outlined in this briefing paper, feel free to contact Matthew Magaletti, BLM Nevada Sage Grouse Implementation Lead at (775) 861-6472, or email at [mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov).

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 – Nevada SGPA USFWS Coordination Language
- Attachment 2 – Draft MOU between BLM Nevada and USFWS

## COORDINATION COMMITMENTS BETWEEN BLM AND USFWS (AS SPELLED OUT IN THE BLM NEVADA AND NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA SAGE GROUSE PLAN AMENDMENT)

### A. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):

#### SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, **USFWS** State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (Appendix E).*

### B. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:

#### SGPA MD SSS 17 states:

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and **USFWS**, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat*

management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.

### C. Fire and Fuels Management Strategy

#### The SGPA states:

**MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.

**MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.

**MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

**MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with **USFWS** and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).

### D. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception

#### The SGPA states:

**MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, **USFWS State Ecological Services Director**, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, **USFWS**, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

## **E. Adaptive Management**

### **SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model. A 5-year summary report will be provided to the **USFWS**.*

## **F. 5 Year Reporting**

### **SGPA Monitoring Framework Appendix**

*The compilation of broad- and mid-scale data (and population trends as available) into an effectiveness monitoring report will occur on a 5-year reporting schedule , which may be*

*accelerated to respond to critical emerging issues (in consultation with the **USFWS** and state wildlife agencies).*

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
AND  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Regarding  
Coordination Roles for Implementing the BLM's Nevada and  
Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office (the "BLM"), and the State of Nevada's Department of Wildlife ("NDOW") to confirm the interagency coordination commitments under the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment* (the "Sage Grouse Plan Amendment, or SGPA"). Through this MOU, the BLM and NDOW agree to work cooperatively to conserve, enhance, and restore sagebrush ecosystems in Nevada and Northeastern California.

**I. Background**

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS's 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the SGPA, NDOW was an active cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with NDOW as the BLM implements the SGPA. This MOU reaffirms those interagency coordination commitments to sustain coordination between the BLM and NDOW.

The USFWS was also an active cooperating agency that assisted with the development of the SGPA. Many of the coordination commitments set forth in the SGPA with the USFWS are similar to those

outlined with NDOW. A separate MOU between BLM and the USFWS (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) includes the affirmation of these commitments.

## **II. Authorities**

The following authorities and policies apply to this MOU:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.,
- Council on Environmental Quality, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500-1508 and 43 CFR Part 46,
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.,
- Federal regulations codified at 43 CFR Part 1600,
- The Nevada and Northeastern California Approved Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (September 2015),
- Secretarial Order Section 307(b) of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976,
- Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management, and Restoration, and
- Nevada Revised Statutes, Sections 501.105, 501.331, 501.351, and 503.584-589.

## **III. Purpose**

This MOU commits the BLM and NDOW to continue and build on their existing collaborative working relationship to better meet the shared goal to conserve, enhance, and restore the sagebrush ecosystems upon which GRSG populations depend in an effort to maintain and/or increase their abundance and distribution. This goal is stated as Goal SSS-1 of the SGPA. Specifically, the two agencies commit to:

1. Supporting full and successful implementation of the management decisions in the BLM's SGPA, through coordination between the BLM and NDOW,
2. Identifying opportunities and overcoming challenges to fully implement the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
3. Establishing a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

## **IV. Implementing the SGPA - Commitments between the BLM and NDOW**

### **A. Seasonal Habitat Delineations and Modifications**

**SGPA, Management Decisions (MD) SSS 2-E and SSS 3-D state:**

*“Seasonal restrictions will be applied during the periods specified below to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands (i.e., anthropogenic disturbances) that are disruptive to GRSG, to prevent disturbances to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods.”*

*1. In breeding habitat within 4 miles of active and pending GRSG leks from March 1 through June 30*

*a. Lek—March 1 to May 15*

*b. Lek hourly restrictions—6 p.m. to 9 a.m.*

*c. Nesting—April 1 to June 30*

*2. Brood-rearing habitat from May 15 to September 15*

*a. Early—May 15 to June 15*

*b. Late—June 15 to September 15*

*3. Winter habitat from November 1 to February 28*

*The seasonal dates may be modified due to documented local variations (e.g., higher/lower elevations) or annual climatic fluctuations (e.g., early/late spring, long/heavy winter), in coordination with NDOW and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in order to better protect GRSG and its habitat.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM receives an application or proposal for a discretionary surface-disturbing activity or use on public lands that may be disruptive to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas (PHMA and GHMA), the BLM project lead or biologist (in coordination with their office's GIS specialist and/or wildlife biologist), will run an initial screening to identify GRSG seasonal habitats. The BLM will first develop a project analysis area by applying a 4-mile buffer around the proposed activity boundary. Once the proposed activity analysis area has been developed, the BLM will use the best available geospatial layers available and agreed upon by the BLM and NDOW to develop seasonal habitat maps. This process would include "clipping" the USGS geospatial layers for the following within the analysis area: nesting, summer/brood-rearing, and winter habitats.

Step 2: Once step 1 is completed and the BLM has a sufficient amount of information related to the proposed activity in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas, the BLM project lead or biologist will submit an email to their appropriate NDOW Habitat biologist with the following:

- i. Completed *Form for Proposed Activities in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas* -"GRSG form,"

- ii. PDFs of the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area, as well as the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.(ESRI) shapefiles for these maps, and
- iii. [Optional] A request for feedback and comments from NDOW as to whether or not the seasonal timing restrictions associated with the GRSG seasonal life-cycle periods identified on the PDF maps should be modified based on local variations or annual climatic fluctuations. BLM may request a meeting between BLM, NDOW, and the proponent to explore proposed activity siting to avoid and minimize impacts to GRSG habitats.

Step 3: Upon receipt of the completed GRSG form, PDF maps of the seasonal habitats within the project analysis area and the shapefiles for these maps, the NDOW Habitat Biologist will confirm receipt of these files via email to the BLM personnel submitting the request. Within 14 business days of this acknowledgement, NDOW will complete a review of the GRSG form (proposed activity)<sup>2</sup> and the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area. NDOW will then provide input regarding the following (note: this information can be placed within the “remarks” section of Part F of the GRSG form or within an email back to the BLM):

- i. Any initial comments regarding the proposed activity (as it relates to GRSG protections, specifically related to the management prescriptions set forth in the SGPA) understanding that further comment may be provided as more information comes forward in the NEPA process,
- ii. A statement concurring with the seasonal habitat maps provided by the BLM. If NDOW has recommendation for further refinement of these maps, they will summarize these changes and will attach modified shapefiles depicting these changes to the GRSG form, and
- iii. If applicable, feedback and comments regarding modifications to seasonal timing restriction dates.

Step 4: The BLM project lead or biologist will submit the proposed activity’s GRSG form to the GRSG Implementation Lead at the NVSO for tracking purposes (which will include the completed Part F of the GRSG form). Once the GRSG form is tracked at the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will continue the authorization and NEPA process for the proposed activity. If for any reason changes to the proposed activity occurs after the completed GRSG form is submitted to the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will convey those changes to NDOW for additional review and commenting by providing NDOW with an updated GRSG form for review before a decision is made on the proposed activity.

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<sup>2</sup> In order for Field and District Offices to provide Emergency Stabilization and Restoration (ES&R) plans to the BLM Washington Office no later than 7 business days after the conclusion of a fire, NDOW has committed to coordinate on the application of seasonal timing restrictions in 7 days in order for BLM to meet the ES&R plan submittal deadline. If BLM does not receive any correspondence back from NDOW within 7 days for ES&R projects or within 14 days for all other proposed activities that may be disruptive to GRSG, the BLM will proceed with authorizing the proposed activity, applying seasonal habitat restrictions to the seasonal habitats identified in the USGS geospatial layers.

**B. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):**

**SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:**

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (**Appendix E**).*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the 3 percent disturbance cap at the project or Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) scales, the BLM GRSG Implementation Lead (hereafter referred to as “BLM Implementation Lead”) will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity’s exception to the disturbance cap in GRSG PHMA. The BLM’s Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to identify new or site-specific information that would allow the project to be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. The technical team shall consider the

following factors when developing its recommendation: GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its recommendation report to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation that with the exception, the proposed activity will provide a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not provide for a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official, who will deny the exception request and apply the 3 percent disturbance cap in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## **B. Qualified Biologist to Conduct GRSG Surveys:**

### **SGPA, MD SSS 8 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities (to the extent possible under existing law) and rights-of-way actions proposed in PHMAs and GHMAs, the proponent will use the services of a qualified biologist approved by the BLM to conduct surveys for GRSG breeding activity during the GRSG breeding season before project activities begin. The surveys must encompass all suitable GRSG habitats within a minimum of 4 miles of the proposed activities. Surveys will be conducted following protocols established by state fish and wildlife agencies during planning operations and during project activities. GRSG seasonal habitat delineations will also be required within a minimum of 4 miles of project activities.*

### **SGPA, MD SSS 22 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions (with the possible exception of short*

*duration activities outside of seasonal GRS habitat) BLM will require that active and pending leks be monitored annually within 4 miles of disturbance until the use terminates and all disturbances have been restored. The proponent will fund the services of an independent qualified biologist approved by the BLM, in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, consistent with applicable law.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

When the project analysis area for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions includes any active or pending leks within BLM managed PHMA or GHMA, the project proponent, in accordance with all existing and applicable laws, will be responsible for contracting the services of a qualified biologist to conduct lek activity surveys. BLM and NDOW will coordinate (as described in part A of this MOU) to review the minimum qualifications and project survey design. The results of surveys will be shared with both BLM and NDOW upon annual completion, but no later than June 15 of the year of survey.

**C. Revising GRS Habitat Management Areas:**

**SGPA, MD SSS 17 states:**

*As site-specific GRS data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRS data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRS habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRS data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRS habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and USFWS, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRS data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRS habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRS data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRS habitat management categories.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities)**

The BLM will coordinate with the NDOW prior to formally adopting, either through plan maintenance or a plan amendment, any revised GRS Habitat Management Area maps. NDOW will provide a recommendation to the BLM regarding the suitability of the updated maps for making land use level plan decisions in support of the SGPA's purpose to conserve and enhance GRS habitat. The BLM and the USFWS understand that providing input to USGS during any future Habitat Management Area modeling and map revision process is the

responsibility primarily of NDOW and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) (as the responsible party for incorporating updates into the Nevada Conservation Credit System).

#### **D. Vegetation Restoration Activities and Fire and Fuels Management Strategy**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD VEG 12:** Continue to coordinate with NDOW, CDFW, and NRCS for all development or habitat restoration proposals in PHMAs and GHMAs. Also, coordinate with the Nevada SETT, tribes, and local working groups on projects proposed in sagebrush ecosystems.*

*BLM restoration project leads will coordinate with partner agencies as identified to develop habitat restoration proposals in PHMA and GHMA. The Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development will be the coordinating program for habitat restoration activities at NDOW.*

***MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.*

***MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.*

***MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.*

***MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with USFWS and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).*

##### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

At the state office level, BLM and NDOW will coordinate, as outlined in the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT) process, to discuss BLM's strategy and progress towards implementing vegetation treatments in GRSG habitat in relation to the GRSG landscape

wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments, completed in 2015. The two agencies, with other partners, will identify research needs and research funding to support future vegetation treatment projects. Consideration will be given to seasonal habitat values and the need for implementing or avoiding projects within these seasonal habitats based upon local conditions and/or climatic fluctuations not analyzed through the FIAT tool.

Additional opportunities for addressing project level treatment needs that will provide a net conservation gain for GRSG in relation to wildfire and invasive species vegetation treatment projects may be developed through the Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network (i.e., local area working groups, field specialists, and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council). NDOW and the BLM will work with partners and other stakeholders to identify project level treatment needs.

NDOW will continue to have the opportunity to provide comment on NEPA documents related to vegetation treatment projects in PHMA and/or GHMA. The BLM will review NDOW feedback for recommendations on project design to achieve SGPA Table 2-2 habitat objectives.

#### **F. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:*

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,*
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.*

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that*

*the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, USFWS, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

**Appendix G (p. G-2–3): Relief from Stipulations:** *With regards to fluid minerals, surface use stipulations could have exceptions, modifications, or waivers applied with approval by the authorized officer. Table G.1 specifies the types of habitat where these stipulations would/not apply:*

#### *Exception*

*An exception to this stipulation may be granted by the authorized officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), if the operator submits a plan that demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if the submitted plan demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed exception.*

#### *Modification*

*The boundaries of the stipulated area may be modified if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat or that the area*

*no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The dates for timing limitations may be modified if new information indicates the dates are not valid for the leasehold.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat, or the area no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed modification.*

#### *Waiver*

*The stipulation may be waived if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed waiver.*

#### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the fluid mineral stipulation, the BLM Implementation Lead will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity's no surface occupancy fluid mineral stipulation exception in GRSG PHMA. The BLM's Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to come to a unanimous recommendation. The technical team will make its recommendation based on the criteria for approval of the exception as it is outlined in MD MR 3 and MD MR 4a for oil and gas and geothermal leasing, respectively.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its completed *GRSG BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days, of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, with the exception, the proposed activity can be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official will then deny the exception, in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## H. Mitigation

### The SGPA states:

**MD MIT 2:** *Identify compensatory mitigation areas in PHMAs and GHMAs with the potential to achieve GRSG habitat objectives (Table 2-2), in accordance with FIAT, the SFA prioritization, and the State of Nevada Strategic Action Plan.*

**Appendix I (p. I-2): Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate:** *In reviewing a proposal, determine if the project will have a direct and indirect impact on population or to the habitat (PHMA or GHMA). This can be done by:*

- 1. Coordination with the appropriate State agencies such as Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team or Nevada Department of Wildlife,*
- 2. Reviewing Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat maps,*
- 3. Reviewing the 'Base Line Environment Report' (USGS), which identifies the area of direct and indirect effect for various anthropogenic activities,*
- 4. Consultation with agency or State Wildlife Agency biologist,*
- 5. Other methods.*

*If the proposal will not have a direct or indirect impact on either the habitat or population, proceed with the appropriate process for review, decision, and implementation of the project.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Per the Master Agreement (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) between BLM and NDOW, the BLM project lead or biologist will coordinate with the NDOW Regional Habitat Supervisors to solicit input on a proposed project's potential impacts to GRSG within PHMA and GHMA. NDOW will work with project proponents and the BLM on avoidance and minimization of impacts to GRSG beginning in the early stages of project planning.

**I. Adaptive Management**

**The SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds emerge. The BLM, Forest Service, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW would pursue a program to collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2016-140, the BLM is committed to coordinate with partners to evaluate population and habitat data to determine if the adaptive management soft and hard triggers, as defined in the SGPA, have been exceeded. Through an interagency agreement between the BLM Nevada State Office and USGS, the USGS will develop (and update on an annual basis) a state-space/IPM model that will incorporate Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) population data (provided to WAFWA by NDOW and CDFW) as the basis for evaluating whether population soft or hard triggers have been reached at each spatial scale referred to in Appendix J of the SGPA. Through the interagency agreement with USGS, the model results will be presented to the BLM on an annual basis. The BLM will analyze habitat triggers while the state-space/IPM model is being developed/updated annually. The BLM Implementation Lead will schedule a meeting with BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW to review the model results and habitat calculations prior to the BLM making the determination that a trigger has or has not been tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale.

**V. Communication**

The BLM Implementation Lead will provide notification to NDOW (at the state level) as new policies, guidance, and tools for SGPA implementation, such as national or state-level Instruction Memorandums and policies, are produced. Additionally, NDOW state and regional staff will be engaged at both the BLM State and field office level and have opportunity to help provide consistent communication.

Tier One (Staff Level)

The BLM and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) will meet monthly (or quarterly, as appropriate) throughout the calendar year. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Ensure close and continuous coordination is occurring, to identify opportunities and challenges for fully implementing the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
- Establish a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

Tier Two (Leadership Level)

At the request of BLM Nevada and NDOW leadership, the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) shall jointly report to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director, identifying strengths and deficiencies in the cooperative implementation of the BLM SGPA and related GRSG conservation.

**VII. Conflict Resolution**

Any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU or to the SGPA that cannot be resolved at the staff level may be elevated to the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff for guidance or resolution. If needed, any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU that cannot be resolved by the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff may be elevated to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director.

**VIII. Administration**

1. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to limit or affect in any way the authority or legal responsibilities of the BLM or NDOW (Parties).
2. Nothing in this MOU binds the Parties to perform beyond their respective authorities.
3. Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate the BLM or the United States to any current or future expenditure of resources in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress. Nor does this agreement obligate the BLM to spend funds on any particular project or purpose, even if funds are available.
4. The mission requirements, funding, personnel, and other priorities of the Parties may affect their ability to fully implement all the provisions identified in this MOU.

5. Specific activities that involve the transfer of money, services, or property between or among the Parties will require execution of separate agreements or contracts.
6. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to restrict the Parties from direct contact, or participating in similar activities or arrangements, with other public or private agencies, organizations, or individuals.
7. This MOU is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its Departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.
8. Any information furnished between the Parties under this MOU may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 et seq.
9. This MOU is subject to all applicable laws of the United States of America and the State of Nevada.
10. All cooperative work under the provisions of this MOU will be accomplished without discrimination against any employee because of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or any other legally protected class as identified in Federal law or the United States Constitution, as applicable.

#### **IX. Termination**

Any of the Parties, in writing, may terminate this MOU in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.

#### **X. Modifications**

Modifications within the scope of this MOU must be made by mutual consent of the Parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials, prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modification should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.

#### **XI. Commencement and Expiration**

This MOU is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective until the SGPA coordination commitments between the BLM and NDOW are revised or amended, at which time it will expire, unless extended by an executed modification, signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials.

#### **XII. Authorized Representatives**

Draft Document - Version: 6/21/17

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual Parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this MOU. In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

John Ruhs, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

Date

Jerome E. Perez, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, California

Date

Tony Wasley, Director  
Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date

**Attachment 1 - BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report for Disturbance Cap or No Surface Occupancy Exception in PHMA**

**Part A – Proposed Project Description**

What exception is this report related to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Disturbance Cap (MD SSS 2) \_\_\_\_\_ No Surface Occupancy Stipulation (MD MR 3 and 4a)

Proposed Project Title (as titled on the GRSG Form): \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please attach the project's "Form for Proposed Activities in GRSG Habitat Management Areas," that was developed consistent with BLM Nevada Instruction Memorandum 2016-038, if still applicable.]*

**Part B – Technical Team Members**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Technical Team Member and Position Title</b>
Bureau of Land Management	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
Nevada Department of Wildlife	

**Part C – GRSG Site-Specific Information**

**[For Disturbance Cap Variance only]** Describe the new or site-specific information that was used to evaluate if (or if not) the proposed project can be modified to a result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level (consistent with the BLM's Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Plan Amendment Management Decision SSS 2a) - *"factors considered by the team should include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors."*

*[Provide information here.]*

**[For a Fluid Mineral NSO Exception Variance only]** Describe how (or how not) the proposed project will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, if the project is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, will the project provide a clear net conservation gain to GRSG.

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part C – Technical Team Recommendation**

Has the technical team reached a unanimous recommendation?

Yes       No

If yes, what is the unanimous recommendation?

Exception recommended as project achieves net conservation gain.

Exception not recommended because project does not achieve net conservation gain.

Provide a summary justifying why (or why not) the project with the exception will (or will not) achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral exception only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat.

*[Provide information here.]*

If no, what were the areas of disagreement (*Note: In the event that the technical team cannot come to a unanimous recommendation, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous consensus at this level, the exception will not be granted.*)

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part D-1 – BLM State Director Concurrence** (*only to be completed if the technical team has reached a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral exception, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat*).

I hereby concur with the recommendation made by this technical team and support the BLM’s authorizing official's approval of the variance:

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

**Part D-2 – Leadership Finding** *(only to be completed if the technical team cannot make a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral variance, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain for disturbance cap variance or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous recommendation at this level, the exception will not be granted.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception can proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ No c unanimous recommendation has been reached, therefore the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_

State Director

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Director

Nevada Department of Wildlife

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Field Supervisor

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## COORDINATION COMMITMENTS BETWEEN BLM AND USFWS (AS SPELLED OUT IN THE BLM NEVADA AND NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA SAGE GROUSE PLAN AMENDMENT)

### A. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):

#### SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, **USFWS** State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (Appendix E).*

### B. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:

#### SGPA MD SSS 17 states:

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and **USFWS**, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat*

management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.

### C. Fire and Fuels Management Strategy

#### The SGPA states:

**MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.

**MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.

**MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the **USFWS** and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

**MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with **USFWS** and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).

### D. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception

#### The SGPA states:

**MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, **USFWS State Ecological Services Director**, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, **USFWS**, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

## **E. Adaptive Management**

### **SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model. A 5-year summary report will be provided to the **USFWS**.*

## **F. 5 Year Reporting**

### **SGPA Monitoring Framework Appendix**

*The compilation of broad- and mid-scale data (and population trends as available) into an effectiveness monitoring report will occur on a 5-year reporting schedule , which may be*

*accelerated to respond to critical emerging issues (in consultation with the USFWS and state wildlife agencies).*

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### BLM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/DEPUTY DIRECTOR BRIEFING MEMO

DATE: August 17, 2017  
FROM: Marci Todd, Acting State Director, BLM Nevada  
SUBJECT: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Coordination Commitments in the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment

#### Background

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS’s 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment (SGPA), the USFWS was a cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with the USFWS as the BLM implements the SGPA. Other management decisions contained in sage grouse plans/plan amendments throughout the West also call for “unanimous” agreement between the BLM, USFWS, and the appropriate state wildlife agency before BLM can move forward with exceptions to specific SGPA decisions. The coordination process with these decisions, as well as where they apply is described in detail in this document.

#### Discussion

##### Summary of Coordination Commitments with the USFWS Contained in the Nevada and Northeastern California Sage Grouse Plan Amendment

Specific to the Nevada and Northeastern California SGPA, there are five management decisions in the SGPA that reference BLM’s commitment to either coordinate/consult, provide a work product, or to come to unanimous consensus with the USFWS before making a final decision on exceptions to specific decisions in the SGPA. These commitments include:

1. A commitment to provide the USFWS with a 5-years plan effectiveness and adaptive management report (Appendix D and J, SGPA).
2. Annually consult with the USFWS to review GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments and proposed sagebrush treatments in Nevada and California (Management Decisions Fire 3, 24, 26, and 31, SGPA).
3. Consult with the USFWS prior to adopting (either through plan maintenance or amendment) new habitat management area maps (Management Decision SSS 17, SGPA).
4. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving an authorization in priority habitat management area that exceeds the 3% anthropogenic disturbance

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cap at either the project analysis area or biologically significant unit scale (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2, SGPA).

5. Come to a unanimous consensus with the USFWS and state wildlife agency before approving a no surface occupancy (NSO) fluid mineral exception (Management Decision MR 3 and 4a).

The specific decision language contained in the SGPA for each of these five commitments can be found in **Attachment 1**. As for the two commitments that require a unanimous consensus (items 4 and 5 above), BLM Nevada has drafted a formal process with the Reno USFWS Office (through a draft memorandum of understanding, see **Attachment 2**) to ensure consistent and adequate documentation throughout all BLM Nevada District Offices. This process is discussed in detail in the next section of the briefing paper. To date, BLM Nevada has tracked almost 300 proposed land use authorizations throughout Nevada in sage grouse habitat since the approval of the SGPA and has yet to proceed with a disturbance cap or NSO exception process with the USFWS.

Not all of these USFWS coordination commitments are present or the same across all the BLM sage grouse plans/plan amendments in the West (which were approved in September 2015). Table 1 (below) highlights which coordination commitments are found in each BLM state/sub-regional sage grouse plan/plan amendment. Because the Sage Grouse Monitoring Framework was an appendix contained in all sage grouse plans/plan amendments, BLM’s commitment to deliver a 5-year sage grouse plan effectiveness monitoring report to USFWS in 2020 is contained in each plan/plan amendment. It is also important to note that Nevada’s SGPA is the only plan amendment to contain exception language for the 3% disturbance cap management decision.

Commitment	NV	OR	UT	ID	CA	MT	WY	CO
1) Plan Effectiveness & Adaptive Management	Yes							
2) Fire and Fuels Management	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
3) Revising Habitat Management Areas Maps	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
4) Disturbance Cap Exception	Yes	No	No	No*	No	No	No	No
Fluid Minerals Exception Process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

BLM Nevada’s Exception Process for Disturbance Caps and No Surface Occupancy Stipulations

According to the SGPA (Management Decision SSS 2 A-2), an authorized official in Nevada may not grant a 3% disturbance cap or NSO exception unless the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), the USFWS, and BLM Nevada unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies certain resource conditions (for example, to proceed with a disturbance cap exception, a biological analysis must indicate that if the exception were to proceed, a net conservation gain to GRSG must be reached). Such finding shall initially be made by a technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency (NDOW, USFWS, and BLM). In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted.

BLM Nevada and the USFWS have worked together to ensure documentation of this exception process is clearly outlined. A report template can be found within the draft MOU between BLM and the USFWS (see **Attachment 2**).

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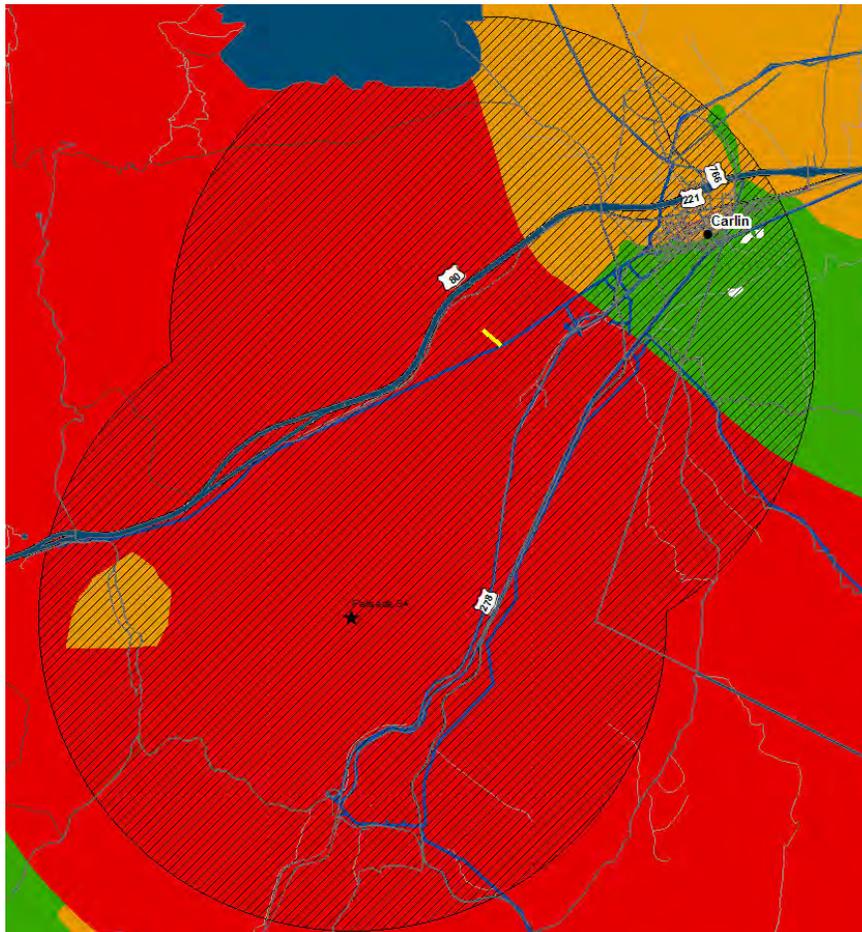
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Management Decision SSS 2-A of the Nevada SGPA states that, “if the 3 percent anthropogenic disturbance cap is exceeded on all lands (regardless of land ownership) within a proposed project analysis area in a PHMA, then no further anthropogenic disturbance will be permitted by BLM until disturbance in the proposed project analysis area has been reduced to maintain the area under the cap (subject to applicable laws and regulations, such as the 1872 Mining Law, as amended, valid existing rights).

All BLM sage grouse plans and plan amendments across the West, except for those plans in Montana and Wyoming include the exact same disturbance cap management decision as Nevada’s SGPA. The only unique aspect of the Nevada decision is that it contains an exception.

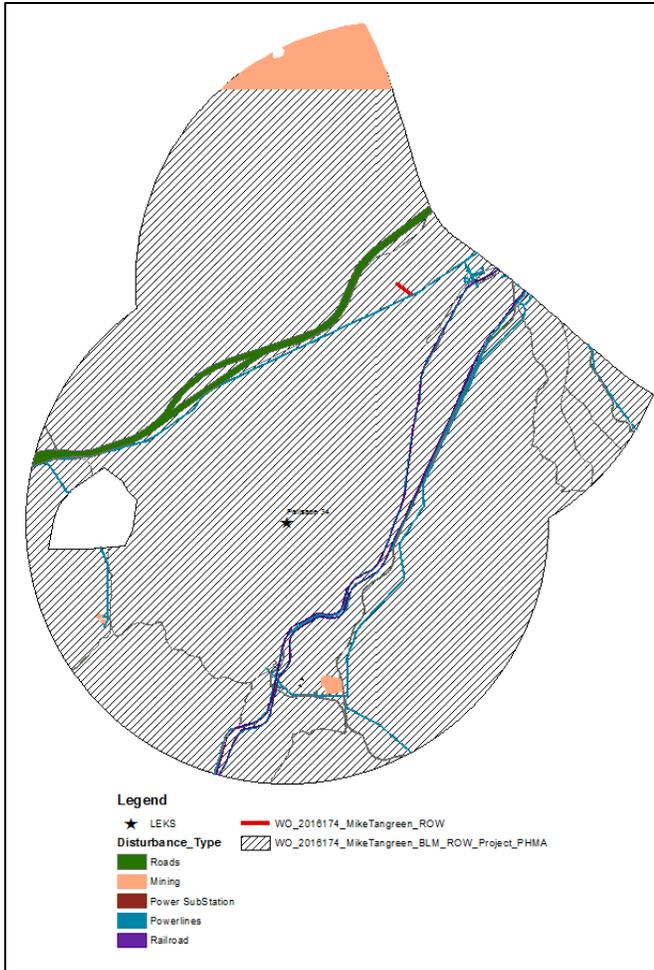
Below is a step-by-step description of the process BLM Nevada undertakes when generating a disturbance cap. For this description, a real proposed action that BLM Nevada is currently evaluating under this 3 percent disturbance cap management decision is described.

Step 1: BLM receives an application for a 2,000ft 14kV transmission line right-of-way that is proposed to cross BLM managed PHMA (identified as a yellow line in the image below). BLM first buffers the proposed project footprint by 4 miles. If a lek falls within this 4 mile buffered area, then an additional 4 mile buffer is applied to that lek. For this proposed project, only one lek falls within the 4 mile project footprint buffer. All non-PHMA (yellow on the map represents Other Habitat Management Areas and green is General Habitat Management Areas) is removed from the two buffered areas, which creates the “proposed project analysis area” in which the 3% calculation is run.



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Step 2: With the project analysis area now defined, the BLM Nevada State Office then automates the anthropogenic disturbance within this project analysis area. What constitutes anthropogenic disturbance is defined in the Monitoring Framework, which is an appendix to the SGPA.



	Percent	Acres
<b>Disturbance Area (PHMA)</b>		<b>43,259.00</b>
Max Disturbance	3%	1,297.77

Existing Disturbance		
Roads	1.921%	830.85
Energy Oil & Gas	0.000%	
Energy Coal	0.000%	
Energy Wind	0.000%	
Energy Solar	0.000%	
Energy Geothermal	0.000%	
Mining ( Locatables, leasable, and saleable)	2.491%	1,077.45
Railroads	0.162%	70.05
Powerlines	1.016%	439.50
Communication Towers	0.000%	
Other vertical structures	0.006%	2.50
Other developed ROW	0.000%	-
Other disturbance areas	0.000%	
<b>% TOTAL</b>	<b>5.595%</b>	<b>2,420.35</b>

**The seven Site Scale Features considered in Disturbance Calc at project level**

Coalbed Methan Ponds	0.000%	0.00
Meteorological Towers	0.000%	0.00
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Recreation Areas Facilities and Infrastructure	0.000%	0.00
<b>% Total</b>	<b>0.000%</b>	<b>0.00</b>

This project is located within 2016 Central Great Basin BSU - this BSU is at 0.90%

Project and Existing Totals		
<b>Project Specific Area</b>	0.03%	2.000
<b>Total Existing Disturbance</b>	5.595%	2,420.35
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Step 3: Based on the 3% disturbance calculation at the project analysis area scale, if built, the project analysis area would reach 5.627%, therefore, the Field Office’s authorizing official would need to make the determination as to whether or not to reject the right-of-way application or pursue the a 3% exception process, as described earlier in this briefing paper.

### Contact

For more information regarding the topics outlined in this briefing paper, feel free to contact Matthew Magaletti, BLM Nevada Sage Grouse Implementation Lead at (775) 861-6472, or email at [mmagalet@blm.gov](mailto:mmagalet@blm.gov).

### ATTACHMENTS

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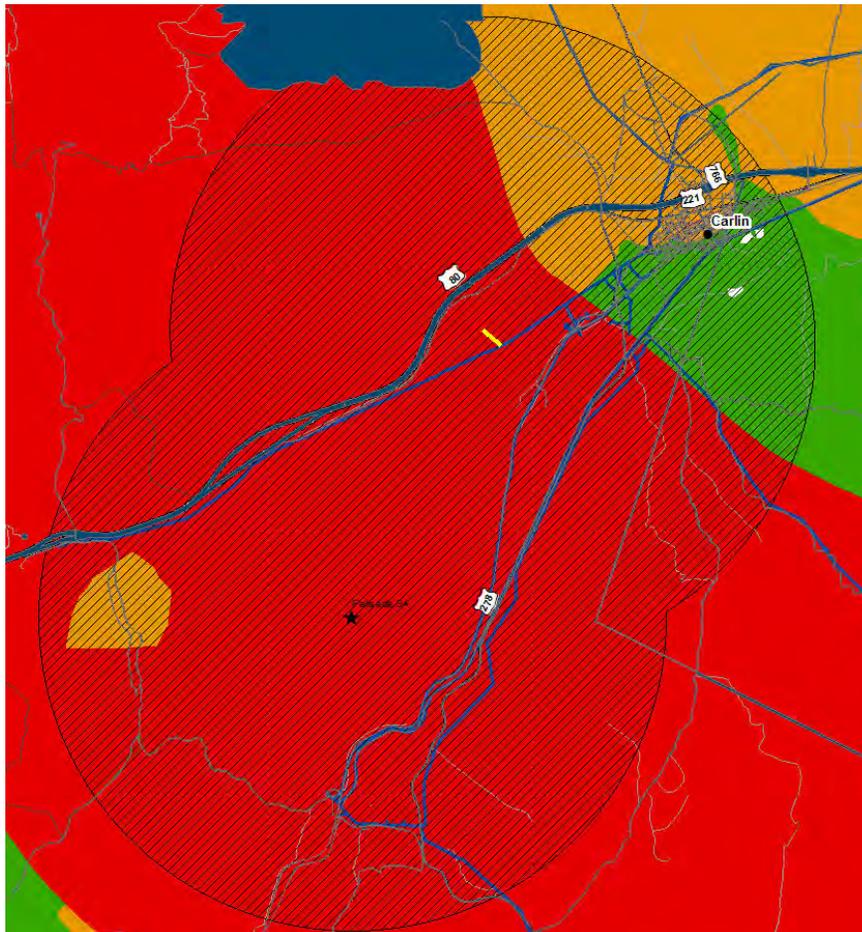
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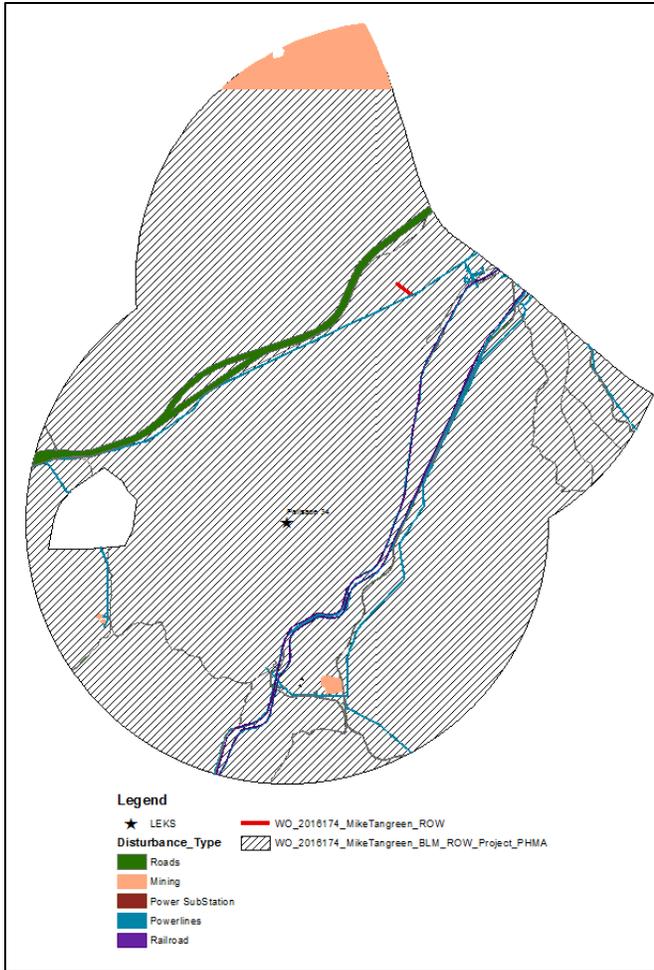
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## COORDINATION COMMITMENTS BETWEEN BLM AND USFWS (AS SPELLED OUT IN THE BLM NEVADA AND NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA SAGE GROUSE PLAN AMENDMENT)

### A. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):

#### SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, **USFWS** State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (Appendix E).*

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### D. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception

#### The SGPA states:

**MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the **USFWS**, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, **USFWS State Ecological Services Director**, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, **USFWS**, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

## **E. Adaptive Management**

### **SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model. A 5-year summary report will be provided to the **USFWS**.*

## **F. 5 Year Reporting**

### **SGPA Monitoring Framework Appendix**

*The compilation of broad- and mid-scale data (and population trends as available) into an effectiveness monitoring report will occur on a 5-year reporting schedule , which may be*

*accelerated to respond to critical emerging issues (in consultation with the **USFWS** and state wildlife agencies).*

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office  
AND  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Regarding  
Coordination Roles for Implementing the BLM's Nevada and  
Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Plan Amendment**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into by the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office (the "BLM"), and the State of Nevada's Department of Wildlife ("NDOW") to confirm the interagency coordination commitments under the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment* (the "Sage Grouse Plan Amendment, or SGPA"). Through this MOU, the BLM and NDOW agree to work cooperatively to conserve, enhance, and restore sagebrush ecosystems in Nevada and Northeastern California.

**I. Background**

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the greater sage-grouse (GRSG) warranted listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing was precluded at that time by other priorities. In 2011, in settlement of multi-district litigation, the USFWS agreed to further assess the status of the GRSG and make a decision on whether to propose the species for listing no later than September 30, 2015. Prior to the USFWS's 2015 determination, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, the BLM undertook amendments to their respective land use plans with the expressed purpose of identifying measures to achieve the conservation of GRSG and to establish sufficient regulatory certainty that conservation would occur, thereby reducing the threats acting upon the species. Plan amendments were adopted by the BLM and the Forest Service in September, 2015. Due in part to the federal plan amendments across the range of the GRSG, the USFWS determined in September, 2015 that listing GRSG under the ESA was no longer warranted.

Throughout the planning process for the SGPA, NDOW was an active cooperating agency that assisted with its development. As a result of this cooperative relationship, many management decisions within the SGPA call for continued coordination with NDOW as the BLM implements the SGPA. This MOU reaffirms those interagency coordination commitments to sustain coordination between the BLM and NDOW.

The USFWS was also an active cooperating agency that assisted with the development of the SGPA. Many of the coordination commitments set forth in the SGPA with the USFWS are similar to those

outlined with NDOW. A separate MOU between BLM and the USFWS (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) includes the affirmation of these commitments.

## **II. Authorities**

The following authorities and policies apply to this MOU:

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.,
- Council on Environmental Quality, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500-1508 and 43 CFR Part 46,
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.,
- Federal regulations codified at 43 CFR Part 1600,
- The Nevada and Northeastern California Approved Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (September 2015),
- Secretarial Order Section 307(b) of the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976,
- Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management, and Restoration, and
- Nevada Revised Statutes, Sections 501.105, 501.331, 501.351, and 503.584-589.

## **III. Purpose**

This MOU commits the BLM and NDOW to continue and build on their existing collaborative working relationship to better meet the shared goal to conserve, enhance, and restore the sagebrush ecosystems upon which GRSG populations depend in an effort to maintain and/or increase their abundance and distribution. This goal is stated as Goal SSS-1 of the SGPA. Specifically, the two agencies commit to:

1. Supporting full and successful implementation of the management decisions in the BLM's SGPA, through coordination between the BLM and NDOW,
2. Identifying opportunities and overcoming challenges to fully implement the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
3. Establishing a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

## **IV. Implementing the SGPA - Commitments between the BLM and NDOW**

### **A. Seasonal Habitat Delineations and Modifications**

**SGPA, Management Decisions (MD) SSS 2-E and SSS 3-D state:**

*“Seasonal restrictions will be applied during the periods specified below to manage discretionary surface-disturbing activities and uses on public lands (i.e., anthropogenic disturbances) that are disruptive to GRSG, to prevent disturbances to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods.”*

*1. In breeding habitat within 4 miles of active and pending GRSG leks from March 1 through June 30*

*a. Lek—March 1 to May 15*

*b. Lek hourly restrictions—6 p.m. to 9 a.m.*

*c. Nesting—April 1 to June 30*

*2. Brood-rearing habitat from May 15 to September 15*

*a. Early—May 15 to June 15*

*b. Late—June 15 to September 15*

*3. Winter habitat from November 1 to February 28*

*The seasonal dates may be modified due to documented local variations (e.g., higher/lower elevations) or annual climatic fluctuations (e.g., early/late spring, long/heavy winter), in coordination with NDOW and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), in order to better protect GRSG and its habitat.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM receives an application or proposal for a discretionary surface-disturbing activity or use on public lands that may be disruptive to GRSG during seasonal life-cycle periods in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas (PHMA and GHMA), the BLM project lead or biologist (in coordination with their office's GIS specialist and/or wildlife biologist), will run an initial screening to identify GRSG seasonal habitats. The BLM will first develop a project analysis area by applying a 4-mile buffer around the proposed activity boundary. Once the proposed activity analysis area has been developed, the BLM will use the best available geospatial layers available and agreed upon by the BLM and NDOW to develop seasonal habitat maps. This process would include "clipping" the USGS geospatial layers for the following within the analysis area: nesting, summer/brood-rearing, and winter habitats.

Step 2: Once step 1 is completed and the BLM has a sufficient amount of information related to the proposed activity in GRSG Priority or General Habitat Management Areas, the BLM project lead or biologist will submit an email to their appropriate NDOW Habitat biologist with the following:

- i. Completed *Form for Proposed Activities in Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas* -"GRSG form,"

- ii. PDFs of the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area, as well as the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.(ESRI) shapefiles for these maps, and
- iii. [Optional] A request for feedback and comments from NDOW as to whether or not the seasonal timing restrictions associated with the GRSG seasonal life-cycle periods identified on the PDF maps should be modified based on local variations or annual climatic fluctuations. BLM may request a meeting between BLM, NDOW, and the proponent to explore proposed activity siting to avoid and minimize impacts to GRSG habitats.

Step 3: Upon receipt of the completed GRSG form, PDF maps of the seasonal habitats within the project analysis area and the shapefiles for these maps, the NDOW Habitat Biologist will confirm receipt of these files via email to the BLM personnel submitting the request. Within 14 business days of this acknowledgement, NDOW will complete a review of the GRSG form (proposed activity)<sup>2</sup> and the seasonal habitat maps clipped to the project analysis area. NDOW will then provide input regarding the following (note: this information can be placed within the “remarks” section of Part F of the GRSG form or within an email back to the BLM):

- i. Any initial comments regarding the proposed activity (as it relates to GRSG protections, specifically related to the management prescriptions set forth in the SGPA) understanding that further comment may be provided as more information comes forward in the NEPA process,
- ii. A statement concurring with the seasonal habitat maps provided by the BLM. If NDOW has recommendation for further refinement of these maps, they will summarize these changes and will attach modified shapefiles depicting these changes to the GRSG form, and
- iii. If applicable, feedback and comments regarding modifications to seasonal timing restriction dates.

Step 4: The BLM project lead or biologist will submit the proposed activity’s GRSG form to the GRSG Implementation Lead at the NVSO for tracking purposes (which will include the completed Part F of the GRSG form). Once the GRSG form is tracked at the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will continue the authorization and NEPA process for the proposed activity. If for any reason changes to the proposed activity occurs after the completed GRSG form is submitted to the NVSO, the BLM project lead or biologist will convey those changes to NDOW for additional review and commenting by providing NDOW with an updated GRSG form for review before a decision is made on the proposed activity.

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<sup>2</sup> In order for Field and District Offices to provide Emergency Stabilization and Restoration (ES&R) plans to the BLM Washington Office no later than 7 business days after the conclusion of a fire, NDOW has committed to coordinate on the application of seasonal timing restrictions in 7 days in order for BLM to meet the ES&R plan submittal deadline. If BLM does not receive any correspondence back from NDOW within 7 days for ES&R projects or within 14 days for all other proposed activities that may be disruptive to GRSG, the BLM will proceed with authorizing the proposed activity, applying seasonal habitat restrictions to the seasonal habitats identified in the USGS geospatial layers.

**B. Processing Requests for a Disturbance Cap Exception (applicable only to BLM managed lands in Nevada):**

**SGPA, MD SSS 2 states:**

*For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, the following disturbance management protocol (DMP) is intended to provide for a 3 percent limitation on disturbance, except in situations where a biological analysis indicates a net conservation gain to the species.*

- *Such discretionary activities that would cause disturbances in excess of 3 percent at the project or BSU scale (see Appendix E) will be prohibited, unless a technical team described below determines that new or site-specific information indicates the project can be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. Factors considered by the team will include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors*
- *Any exceptions to the 3 percent disturbance limitation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the NDOW, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that the proposed action satisfies the conditions stated in the above paragraph. Such finding shall initially be made by the technical team, which consists of a field biologist or other GRSG experts from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted (**Appendix E**).*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the 3 percent disturbance cap at the project or Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) scales, the BLM GRSG Implementation Lead (hereafter referred to as “BLM Implementation Lead”) will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity’s exception to the disturbance cap in GRSG PHMA. The BLM’s Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to identify new or site-specific information that would allow the project to be modified to result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level. The technical team shall consider the

following factors when developing its recommendation: GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its recommendation report to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation that with the exception, the proposed activity will provide a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not provide for a net conservation gain to the species, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official, who will deny the exception request and apply the 3 percent disturbance cap in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## **B. Qualified Biologist to Conduct GRSG Surveys:**

### **SGPA, MD SSS 8 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities (to the extent possible under existing law) and rights-of-way actions proposed in PHMAs and GHMAs, the proponent will use the services of a qualified biologist approved by the BLM to conduct surveys for GRSG breeding activity during the GRSG breeding season before project activities begin. The surveys must encompass all suitable GRSG habitats within a minimum of 4 miles of the proposed activities. Surveys will be conducted following protocols established by state fish and wildlife agencies during planning operations and during project activities. GRSG seasonal habitat delineations will also be required within a minimum of 4 miles of project activities.*

### **SGPA, MD SSS 22 states:**

*As determined by BLM in coordination with NDOW, for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions (with the possible exception of short*

*duration activities outside of seasonal GRSG habitats) BLM will require that active and pending leks be monitored annually within 4 miles of disturbance until the use terminates and all disturbances have been restored. The proponent will fund the services of an independent qualified biologist approved by the BLM, in coordination with NDOW or CDFW, consistent with applicable law.*

**Process (Roles and responsibilities):**

When the project analysis area for any surface-disturbing activities involving mineral activities and rights-of-way actions includes any active or pending leks within BLM managed PHMA or GHMA, the project proponent, in accordance with all existing and applicable laws, will be responsible for contracting the services of a qualified biologist to conduct lek activity surveys. BLM and NDOW will coordinate (as described in part A of this MOU) to review the minimum qualifications and project survey design. The results of surveys will be shared with both BLM and NDOW upon annual completion, but no later than June 15 of the year of survey.

**C. Revising GRSG Habitat Management Areas:**

**SGPA, MD SSS 17 states:**

*As site-specific GRSG data (habitat assessments, lek counts, telemetry, etc.) is collected, site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories. Through plan maintenance or plan amendment/revision, as appropriate, and in consultation with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and USFWS, based on the best scientific information, the updated modeling efforts may be adopted and appropriate allocation decisions and management actions will be applied to PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA. Future modeling efforts to incorporate site-specific GRSG data will utilize the same modeling methods (as described under Methods and Results in Coates et al. 2014) used to develop the current Nevada and Northeastern California Subregions' GRSG habitat management categories. The addition of site-specific GRSG data will allow for the refinement of the spatial representation of the GRSG habitat management categories.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities)**

The BLM will coordinate with the NDOW prior to formally adopting, either through plan maintenance or a plan amendment, any revised GRSG Habitat Management Area maps. NDOW will provide a recommendation to the BLM regarding the suitability of the updated maps for making land use level plan decisions in support of the SGPA's purpose to conserve and enhance GRSG habitat. The BLM and the USFWS understand that providing input to USGS during any future Habitat Management Area modeling and map revision process is the

responsibility primarily of NDOW and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (SETT) (as the responsible party for incorporating updates into the Nevada Conservation Credit System).

#### **D. Vegetation Restoration Activities and Fire and Fuels Management Strategy**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD VEG 12:** Continue to coordinate with NDOW, CDFW, and NRCS for all development or habitat restoration proposals in PHMAs and GHMAs. Also, coordinate with the Nevada SETT, tribes, and local working groups on projects proposed in sagebrush ecosystems.*

*BLM restoration project leads will coordinate with partner agencies as identified to develop habitat restoration proposals in PHMA and GHMA. The Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development will be the coordinating program for habitat restoration activities at NDOW.*

***MD FIRE 3:** BLM planning units, in coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies, will annually review the GRSG landscape wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments (FIAT). Based on this review, revised actions to ameliorate invasive species must be incorporated into the assessment.*

***MD FIRE 24:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), develop a fuels management strategy for the BLM with large blocks of GRSG habitat. The strategy shall include an up-to-date fuels profile, land use plan direction, current and potential habitat fragmentation, sagebrush and GRSG ecological factors, and active vegetation management steps to provide critical breaks in fuel continuity. When developing this strategy, consider the risk of increased habitat fragmentation from a proposed action versus the risk of large-scale fragmentation posed by wildfires if the action were not taken.*

***MD FIRE 26:** In coordination with the USFWS and relevant state agencies and in accordance with FIAT (see **Appendix H**), BLM will identify treatment needs for wildfire and invasive species management. Ongoing treatment needs will be coordinated on state and regional scales and across jurisdictional boundaries for long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.*

***MD FIRE 31:** Ensure proposed sagebrush treatments are planned with interdisciplinary input from the BLM and coordinated with USFWS and state fish and wildlife agencies to meet GRSG habitat objectives (**Table 2-2**).*

##### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

At the state office level, BLM and NDOW will coordinate, as outlined in the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT) process, to discuss BLM's strategy and progress towards implementing vegetation treatments in GRSG habitat in relation to the GRSG landscape

wildfire and invasive species habitat assessments, completed in 2015. The two agencies, with other partners, will identify research needs and research funding to support future vegetation treatment projects. Consideration will be given to seasonal habitat values and the need for implementing or avoiding projects within these seasonal habitats based upon local conditions and/or climatic fluctuations not analyzed through the FIAT tool.

Additional opportunities for addressing project level treatment needs that will provide a net conservation gain for GRSG in relation to wildfire and invasive species vegetation treatment projects may be developed through the Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network (i.e., local area working groups, field specialists, and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council). NDOW and the BLM will work with partners and other stakeholders to identify project level treatment needs.

NDOW will continue to have the opportunity to provide comment on NEPA documents related to vegetation treatment projects in PHMA and/or GHMA. The BLM will review NDOW feedback for recommendations on project design to achieve SGPA Table 2-2 habitat objectives.

#### **F. Fluid Mineral Stipulation Exception**

##### **The SGPA states:**

***MD MR 3:** In PHMAs outside of SFA, no waivers or modifications to an oil and gas lease no-surface occupancy stipulation will be granted. In PHMAs, the Authorized Officer may grant an exception to an oil and gas lease no-surface-occupancy stipulation only where the proposed action:*

- i. Will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or,*
- ii. Is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG.*

*Exceptions based on conservation gain (ii) may only be considered in (a) PHMAs of mixed ownership where federal minerals underlie less than fifty percent of the total surface, or (b) Areas of the public lands where the proposed exception is an alternative to an action occurring on a nearby parcel subject to a valid federal oil and gas lease existing as of the date of this RMP amendment. Exceptions based on conservation gain must also include measures, such as enforceable institutional controls and buffers, sufficient to allow the BLM to conclude that such benefits will endure for the duration of the proposed action's impacts (see **Appendix G**).*

*Any exceptions to this lease stipulation may be approved by the Authorized Officer only with the concurrence of the State Director. The Authorized Officer may not grant an exception unless the applicable state wildlife agency, the USFWS, and the BLM unanimously find that*

*the proposed action satisfies (i) or (ii). Such finding shall initially be made by a team of one field biologist or other GRSG expert from each respective agency. In the event the initial finding is not unanimous, the finding may be elevated to the appropriate BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director, and state wildlife agency head for final resolution. In the event their finding is not unanimous, the exception will not be granted. Approved exceptions will be made publicly available at least quarterly.*

**MD MR 4a:** *For BLM land in the state of Nevada only, in the portions of the PHMAs outside of SFA, geothermal projects may be considered for authorization if all of the following conditions are met:*

- *A team comprised of BLM, USFWS, and NDOW specialists advises the BLM State Director on appropriate mitigation measures for the project and its ancillary facilities, including lek buffer distances using the best available science;*
- *Mitigation actions are consistent with this Plan's mitigation strategy such as the Nevada Conservation Credit System, and;*
- *The footprint of the project is consistent with the disturbance management protocols identified in this plan (see MD SSS 2 and Appendix E)*

**Appendix G (p. G-2–3): Relief from Stipulations:** *With regards to fluid minerals, surface use stipulations could have exceptions, modifications, or waivers applied with approval by the authorized officer. Table G.1 specifies the types of habitat where these stipulations would/not apply:*

#### *Exception*

*An exception to this stipulation may be granted by the authorized officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), if the operator submits a plan that demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if the submitted plan demonstrates that impacts from the proposed action meet the net conservation gain threshold, are minimal, or have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed exception.*

#### *Modification*

*The boundaries of the stipulated area may be modified if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat or that the area*

*no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The dates for timing limitations may be modified if new information indicates the dates are not valid for the leasehold.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine if portions of the area can be occupied without adversely affecting GRSG population or habitat, or the area no longer contains GRSG use and habitat. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed modification.*

#### *Waiver*

*The stipulation may be waived if the Authorized Officer, in consultation with the appropriate state agency (NDOW, SETT, or CDFW), determines that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG.*

*For those leases on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service Authorized Officer would consult with the appropriate state agency to determine that the entire leasehold no longer contains suitable habitat nor is used by GRSG. The Forest Service Authorized Officer would recommend that the BLM Authorized Officer deny or accept the proposed waiver.*

#### **Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Step 1: When the BLM is notified of a request for an exception to the fluid mineral stipulation, the BLM Implementation Lead will schedule and convene a technical team (consisting of a BLM district/field biologist, a USFWS biologist, and a NDOW biologist/GRSG expert familiar with local conditions) to review the request for the proposed activity's no surface occupancy fluid mineral stipulation exception in GRSG PHMA. The BLM's Implementation Lead and the BLM district office project manager will provide the team with the details about the proposed activity one week before the team convenes or following a timeline agreed upon by all parties.

Step 2: The technical team will document in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* that it has made a good faith effort to come to a unanimous recommendation. The technical team will make its recommendation based on the criteria for approval of the exception as it is outlined in MD MR 3 and MD MR 4a for oil and gas and geothermal leasing, respectively.

It is expected that the technical team shall provide its completed *GRSG BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* to the BLM Implementation Lead within 14 business days, or as agreed upon by all impacted parties, but not to exceed 30 days, of its convening.

Step 3: If the technical team's recommendation report reflects a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official may approve the project with an exception if the BLM Nevada State Director approves.

If the technical team's unanimous recommendation states that the exception will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, with the exception, the proposed activity can be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, and will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat and will provide a clear conservation gain to GRSG, then the BLM Implementation lead will convey the recommendation from the report to the BLM's authorizing official. The authorizing official will then deny the exception, in conformance with the SGPA.

If the technical team cannot reach a unanimous recommendation, then the BLM Implementation Lead will arrange for a meeting of the BLM State Director, the USFWS Reno Field Supervisor, and the NDOW Director for final resolution. The leadership panel will record its decision in the *BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report (Attachment 1 of this MOU)* and return it to the BLM Implementation Lead, who will in turn transmit the request form to the appropriate BLM authorizing official.

## H. Mitigation

### The SGPA states:

**MD MIT 2:** *Identify compensatory mitigation areas in PHMAs and GHMAs with the potential to achieve GRSG habitat objectives (Table 2-2), in accordance with FIAT, the SFA prioritization, and the State of Nevada Strategic Action Plan.*

**Appendix I (p. I-2): Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate:** *In reviewing a proposal, determine if the project will have a direct and indirect impact on population or to the habitat (PHMA or GHMA). This can be done by:*

1. *Coordination with the appropriate State agencies such as Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team or Nevada Department of Wildlife,*
2. *Reviewing Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat maps,*
3. *Reviewing the 'Base Line Environment Report' (USGS), which identifies the area of direct and indirect effect for various anthropogenic activities,*
4. *Consultation with agency or State Wildlife Agency biologist,*
5. *Other methods.*

*If the proposal will not have a direct or indirect impact on either the habitat or population, proceed with the appropriate process for review, decision, and implementation of the project.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Per the Master Agreement (unnumbered Master MOU, 1970) between BLM and NDOW, the BLM project lead or biologist will coordinate with the NDOW Regional Habitat Supervisors to solicit input on a proposed project's potential impacts to GRSG within PHMA and GHMA. NDOW will work with project proponents and the BLM on avoidance and minimization of impacts to GRSG beginning in the early stages of project planning.

**I. Adaptive Management**

**The SGPA Appendix J (p. J-7) states:**

*The rate of GRSG population decline and the time frame over which populations are evaluated would be monitored and adjusted as understanding of GRSG population thresholds emerge. The BLM, Forest Service, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW would pursue a program to collect and incorporate additional demographic data into the GRSG space-use model.*

**Process (Roles and Responsibilities):**

Consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2016-140, the BLM is committed to coordinate with partners to evaluate population and habitat data to determine if the adaptive management soft and hard triggers, as defined in the SGPA, have been exceeded. Through an interagency agreement between the BLM Nevada State Office and USGS, the USGS will develop (and update on an annual basis) a state-space/IPM model that will incorporate Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) population data (provided to WAFWA by NDOW and CDFW) as the basis for evaluating whether population soft or hard triggers have been reached at each spatial scale referred to in Appendix J of the SGPA. Through the interagency agreement with USGS, the model results will be presented to the BLM on an annual basis. The BLM will analyze habitat triggers while the state-space/IPM model is being developed/updated annually. The BLM Implementation Lead will schedule a meeting with BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, NDOW, USGS, and CDFW to review the model results and habitat calculations prior to the BLM making the determination that a trigger has or has not been tripped at a lek, lek cluster, or BSU scale.

**V. Communication**

The BLM Implementation Lead will provide notification to NDOW (at the state level) as new policies, guidance, and tools for SGPA implementation, such as national or state-level Instruction Memorandums and policies, are produced. Additionally, NDOW state and regional staff will be engaged at both the BLM State and field office level and have opportunity to help provide consistent communication.

Tier One (Staff Level)

The BLM and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) will meet monthly (or quarterly, as appropriate) throughout the calendar year. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

- Ensure close and continuous coordination is occurring, to identify opportunities and challenges for fully implementing the conservation provisions of the SGPA,
- Establish a consistent process for elevating opportunities and issues within each agency so that they are supported or addressed in a joint manner.

Tier Two (Leadership Level)

At the request of BLM Nevada and NDOW leadership, the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW (at the appropriate staff level) shall jointly report to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director, identifying strengths and deficiencies in the cooperative implementation of the BLM SGPA and related GRSG conservation.

**VII. Conflict Resolution**

Any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU or to the SGPA that cannot be resolved at the staff level may be elevated to the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff for guidance or resolution. If needed, any disagreement, need for guidance or other issue relative to this MOU that cannot be resolved by the BLM Implementation Lead and NDOW leadership or designated staff may be elevated to the BLM State Director and NDOW Director.

**VIII. Administration**

1. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to limit or affect in any way the authority or legal responsibilities of the BLM or NDOW (Parties).
2. Nothing in this MOU binds the Parties to perform beyond their respective authorities.
3. Nothing in this MOU may be construed to obligate the BLM or the United States to any current or future expenditure of resources in advance of the availability of appropriations from Congress. Nor does this agreement obligate the BLM to spend funds on any particular project or purpose, even if funds are available.
4. The mission requirements, funding, personnel, and other priorities of the Parties may affect their ability to fully implement all the provisions identified in this MOU.

5. Specific activities that involve the transfer of money, services, or property between or among the Parties will require execution of separate agreements or contracts.
6. Nothing in this MOU is intended to or shall be construed to restrict the Parties from direct contact, or participating in similar activities or arrangements, with other public or private agencies, organizations, or individuals.
7. This MOU is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its Departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.
8. Any information furnished between the Parties under this MOU may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 et seq.
9. This MOU is subject to all applicable laws of the United States of America and the State of Nevada.
10. All cooperative work under the provisions of this MOU will be accomplished without discrimination against any employee because of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, or any other legally protected class as identified in Federal law or the United States Constitution, as applicable.

#### **IX. Termination**

Any of the Parties, in writing, may terminate this MOU in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration.

#### **X. Modifications**

Modifications within the scope of this MOU must be made by mutual consent of the Parties, by the issuance of a written modification signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials, prior to any changes being performed. Requests for modification should be made, in writing, at least 30 days prior to implementation of the requested change.

#### **XI. Commencement and Expiration**

This MOU is executed as of the date of the last signature and is effective until the SGPA coordination commitments between the BLM and NDOW are revised or amended, at which time it will expire, unless extended by an executed modification, signed and dated by all properly authorized, signatory officials.

#### **XII. Authorized Representatives**

Draft Document - Version: 6/21/17

By signature below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual Parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this MOU. In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

John Ruhs, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

Date

Jerome E. Perez, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, California

Date

Tony Wasley, Director  
Nevada Department of Fish and Wildlife

Date

**Attachment 1 - BLM Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Exception Recommendation Report for Disturbance Cap or No Surface Occupancy Exception in PHMA**

**Part A – Proposed Project Description**

What exception is this report related to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Disturbance Cap (MD SSS 2) \_\_\_\_\_ No Surface Occupancy Stipulation (MD MR 3 and 4a)

Proposed Project Title (as titled on the GRSG Form): \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please attach the project's "Form for Proposed Activities in GRSG Habitat Management Areas," that was developed consistent with BLM Nevada Instruction Memorandum 2016-038, if still applicable.]*

**Part B – Technical Team Members**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Technical Team Member and Position Title</b>
Bureau of Land Management	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
Nevada Department of Wildlife	

**Part C – GRSG Site-Specific Information**

**[For Disturbance Cap Variance only]** Describe the new or site-specific information that was used to evaluate if (or if not) the proposed project can be modified to a result in a net conservation gain at the BSU level (consistent with the BLM's Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage Grouse Plan Amendment Management Decision SSS 2a) - *"factors considered by the team should include GRSG abundance and trends, habitat amount and quality, extent of project disturbance, location and density of existing disturbance, project design options and other biological factors."*

*[Provide information here.]*

**[For a Fluid Mineral NSO Exception Variance only]** Describe how (or how not) the proposed project will not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat; or, if the project is proposed to be undertaken as an alternative to a similar action occurring on a nearby parcel, will the project provide a clear net conservation gain to GRSG.

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part C – Technical Team Recommendation**

Has the technical team reached a unanimous recommendation?

Yes       No

If yes, what is the unanimous recommendation?

Exception recommended as project achieves net conservation gain.

Exception not recommended because project does not achieve net conservation gain.

Provide a summary justifying why (or why not) the project with the exception will (or will not) achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral exception only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat.

*[Provide information here.]*

If no, what were the areas of disagreement (*Note: In the event that the technical team cannot come to a unanimous recommendation, the finding may be elevated to the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director for final resolution. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous consensus at this level, the exception will not be granted.*)

*[Provide information here.]*

**Part D-1 – BLM State Director Concurrence** (*only to be completed if the technical team has reached a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral exception, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat*).

I hereby concur with the recommendation made by this technical team and support the BLM’s authorizing official's approval of the variance:

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

**Part D-2 – Leadership Finding** *(only to be completed if the technical team cannot make a unanimous recommendation that with the disturbance cap/fluid mineral variance, the proposed project will achieve a net conservation gain for disturbance cap variance or (for a fluid mineral variance only), the proposed project will also not have direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on GRSG or its habitat. In the event that the BLM State Director, USFWS State Ecological Services Director and NDOW Director cannot come to a unanimous recommendation at this level, the exception will not be granted.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception can proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ We hereby come to a unanimous recommendation that the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_ No c unanimous recommendation has been reached, therefore the exception will not proceed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director  
Bureau of Land Management, Nevada

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director  
Nevada Department of Wildlife

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Field Supervisor  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Reno Field Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## SO 3353 Implementation Preliminary Actions List

### Organizational stuff

Put SO 3353 team together – August 25

- Identify lead – NTE 1 year
- Get USFS coordinator name(s)
- Identify USFWS/USGS roles
- Identify team members
- Identify reps from regions to help with policies
  - Leasing, WEMs, Maintenance and Production, Valid Existing Rights
  - Mitigation, net gain; Adaptive Management, Causal Factor
  - Habitat Objectives, HAF, AIM
  - Livestock Grazing
  - Exclusion/Avoidance areas, “de minimus”, RDFs, buffers
  - SFAs, Habitat Boundaries
- Confirm and clarify national/state/regional leadership and coordinator roles

Develop national and as needed state step down Comms plan & identify comms person – August 30 (and update as needed)

- Message from the Director
- Inreach
- Outreach

States to provide meeting schedules – August 25 (and update as needed)

Post workplan & schedule to BLM website – August 31

SO 3353 Weekly team meetings & regular coordination with SGTF POCs

- States to share new issues
- States to share new solutions
- WO to share policy updates
- WO to assist in answering questions, coordinating with SOL

Other tasks

- Develop timeline associated with Wildland Fire and Invasive Species additional steps
- Coordinate with FWS on Wildlife Management additional steps
- Coordinate with USGS on Science and Data additional steps

### Overall timeline

- Now-Sep. 15 or Oct 1 – state-by-state engagement; policy drafting; investigating & resolving questions, etc.
- Oct 1 -4 – review recommendations from streamlining exercises for pertinent items (O&G; planning/NEPA; big picture organizational stuff – let’s do it different)
- Week of Sep 19 or Oct 11 – BLM/FS meeting to discuss & prioritize, review draft IMs, identify proposed plan amendments

## SO 3353 Implementation Preliminary Actions List

- Oct 23-24 SGTF meeting
- November/December - issue draft IMs; do maintenance actions
- December/January - Issue NOI for remaining issues

### Report details

- Review and update the SGTF's charter as needed - WO
  - Determine need for MOUs with States for implementation and mitigation - SO
- Engage and coordinate with USFS to align recommendations and future actions – WO & SO - continual
- With SGTF initiate discussions with other externals to review issues in report and identify additional - SO
- Work to issue Spokane District draft plan – OR/WA
- Complete crosswalk analysis of SFA designations and GHMA/PHMA Stips – SO
- Evaluate GHMA stips vs incentive to develop outside PHMA - SO
- Determine if modification of WEM language is PM or PA - WO
- Provide clarification that all habitat types are open for leasing - WO
- crosswalk exploring density and disturbance process recognizing State specific issues – SO
- Define net conservation gain and how to utilize State standards - WO
- Issue IM's to provide clarification on Habitat Objectives to inform land health - WO
- Issue new HAF IM - WO
- Issue clarification that provides transparency and understanding of AIM - WO
- Provide policy clarifying intent, purpose and use of Habitat Objectives Tables and flexibility - WO
- Work with each State to complete process for Causal factor analysis - SO
- Modify Adaptive management IM or issue State specific to advance coordination - WO
- Work with states and partners to identify rapid assessment process to identify approaching trigger and management action
- Clarify triggers not related to SFA boundaries – Idaho
- Revise and clarify IM's related to grazing - WO
- Complete evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities for exclusion areas - SO
- IM to clarify maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses allowed - WO
- Conduct evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral materials sales - SO
- Provide clarification for valid existing rights and existing authorizations - WO
- Provide clarification on definition of avoidance area – WO
- Evaluate “de minimus” activities as defined in State plans against Federal - SO
- Clarify that plans provide flexibility to select appropriate RDFs and to use States if achieve equal or better - WO
- Provide clarification regarding use of lek buffers and justifiable departures - WO
- Determine habitat type and associated management actions applicable to SFAs - SO
- Evaluate ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries - SO
- Evaluate Federal plan to determine durability of conservation without GHMA – Utah
- Evaluate RNAs and closure; Ensure LG/RM 15 language consistency with State policy – OR/WA



## SO 3353 Implementation Preliminary Actions List

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**MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY**

**DATE:** August 4, 2017

**FROM:** Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary – BLM  
John F. Ruhs, BLM Acting Deputy Director  
Co-Leads, Department of the Interior Sage-Grouse Review Team

**SUBJECT:** Response to Secretarial Order 3353

The Department of the Interior Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) submits the attached report in response to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). The DOI Team has coordinated with the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF) and the U.S. Forest Service to identify short and long term actions to meet the purposes of the Order. Since there is variation among the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans and among the State plans and programs, as well as with the resource issues and concerns in each State, each State has expressed interest in pursuing action on a different subset of the items included in the report. The DOI Team requests the Secretary direct the appropriate DOI bureaus to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary. The DOI Team recommends continued collaboration with the States, initiation of stakeholder engagement, implementation of the short-term recommendations, and investigation of potential plan amendments, beginning with these actions:

- Identify options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas;
- Clarify mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs);
- Modify or issue new policy on fluid mineral leasing and development, including the prioritization policy;
- Issue or modify policy and provide training on use of assessment and monitoring data and tools, the habitat objectives table from the 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Plans and to increase flexibility in grazing management;
- Identify options for flexibility when applying adaptive management decisions;
- Investigate options to streamline use authorizations with little impact on GRSG;
- Clarify the appropriate use of compensatory mitigation and identify opportunities to increase consistency between the Federal and State plans;
- Work with States to improve techniques and methods to allow the States to set appropriate population objectives; and
- Investigate the removal or modification of Sage-grouse Focal Areas in certain States.

While this report does not address the ongoing litigation associated with the 2015 GRSG Plans, including the court order for a supplemental environmental impact statement in Nevada, the recommendations address many of the concerns raised and may help to resolve that litigation.

Attachment: Report in Response to Secretarial Order 3353

# REPORT IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). In response to the Order, the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage-Grouse Review Team (DOI Team)<sup>1</sup> to address the elements of the order and produce a report. In developing the report and recommendations, the DOI Team sought input from the Eleven Western States<sup>2</sup> identified in the Order and coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). The DOI Team respectfully requests the Secretary to direct the appropriate DOI bureaus to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary.

Together, the DOI Team, and managers and staff from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF)—made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the Eleven States—identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order. The DOI Team and the SGTF are committed to a balanced approach that provides both responsible economic development and long term conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG)<sup>3</sup>. This commitment includes an interest by most States in retaining the 2015 GRSG Plans—using policy and clarifications initially to better align them with State plans and programs and to meet the purposes of the Order, while continuing joint engagement to further define consideration of potential targeted plan amendments. The Federal agencies and States are also committed to continue to work with partners to prioritize staff and funding to implement on-the-ground actions to conserve and restore GRSG habitat.

The DOI Team and the SGTF affirm that the issues and options identified in this report do not apply to each State, are not consensus opinions from all States, and are not “one size fits all.” Pertinent issues and associated solutions should be tailored to each State’s needs while ensuring conservation of the species. Whenever possible, the options identified by the DOI Team provide near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the purpose of the Order, including development of policies, clarification, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and training, many of which can be completed within 6 months (see Section IV and Appendix A). The DOI Team also identified longer term options, including potential plan amendments, which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies (see Section IV and Appendix A).

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<sup>1</sup> The DOI Team consists of co-leads Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary - BLM; John Ruhs, BLM Deputy Director of Operations; Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary - Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; Gregory Sheehan, FWS Deputy Director; Anne Kinsinger, USGS Associate Director for Ecosystems; Cynthia Moses-Nedd, DOI Liaison to State and Local Government; Timothy Williams, DOI Deputy Director of External Affairs; Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary; and Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The Eleven States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the States of Idaho and Utah have pending challenges to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. While these States participated in identifying issues related to the Federal plans, these States do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments. The Nevada Attorney General also filed suit and does not waive or concede Nevada’s legal arguments. Similarly, the federal agencies do not waive or concede any of their legal arguments.

This report recommends continued collaboration with the States, including both through the SGTF and between each Governor's office and the respective Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director and USFS Regional Forester, as well as key BLM and USFS national-level Directors. This report also recommends engagement on the issues and options identified in this report with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as with ranchers, industry, conservation groups, and other stakeholders. This additional engagement would be used to refine the options and develop a plan for prioritized implementation of the options in this report.

The review conducted in response to the Order identified many opportunities, summarized in this report, to clarify the BLM's management under the 2015 GRSG Plans. Clarifications, policies, agreements, or training could: (1) address issues related to habitat assessment and monitoring, including the Habitat Assessment Framework, and grazing management; (2) take advantage of flexibility in the 2015 GRSG Plans to support energy, mineral, and other development; (3) increase consistency between the BLM and States on density and disturbance caps and mitigation; and (4) in some cases, allow adjustments to habitat boundaries and address issues with adaptive management.

The review also identified longer term options to consider some issues through a potential plan amendment process. This report recommends further investigation of potential plan amendments, including considering what combination of potential plan amendments would best balance continuing to conserve the GRSG and its habitat and supporting economic development, and whether to consider State-by-State or range-wide amendments. Potential plan amendments could be considered in some States to remove or modify sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations; address adjustments to habitat management boundaries; adjust responses to reaching adaptive management triggers; evaluate the compensatory mitigation standard; and provide additional flexibility in resource development.

The report identifies opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management develop MOUs, increase data sharing, initiate new research, and incorporate new information into plan implementation. The report also includes recommendations on captive breeding, translocations, predator control, and setting population targets.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

The GRSG is a State-managed species throughout its range with approximately half of its habitat managed by the BLM and USFS. State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950s. For the past two decades, State wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been coordinating efforts to conserve GRSG and its habitat.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that the GRSG was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing due to other species with higher listing priority. In the 2010 finding, the FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and lack of regulatory mechanisms as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to identify conservation objectives for GRSG and its

habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for 14 potential threats to the GRSG including: fire, nonnative invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, range management structures, wild horses and burros, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences.

The BLM and USFS initiated land use planning processes to provide regulatory certainty in addressing the threats of habitat loss and fragmentation on Federal lands to conserve the GRSG and its habitat, avoid further population declines, and avoid the need to list under the ESA. Early in the process, the BLM and USFS collaborated with the States to pursue State-by-State land use planning. These State-by-State approaches were supplemented with range-wide decisions to increase consistency between the 2015 GRSG Plans and to respond to the issues addressed in the FWS's 2010 listing determination. Several States identified instances in which they did not believe the final approved BLM 2015 GRSG Plan was consistent with the applicable State plan, particularly with regard to range-wide decisions. There were also concerns that the records of decision and final approved 2015 GRSG Plans included decisions from alternatives other than proposed alternative (as described in the proposed plans and final environmental impact statements) and therefore differed from the State's expectations based on the collaborative planning efforts.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 GRSG Plans) across the ten<sup>4</sup> Western States addressing, in part, GRSG and its habitat. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven instruction memoranda (IMs; IMs 2016-139 through 2016-145) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 GRSG Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 GRSG Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the GRSG did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, the FWS determined the 2015 GRSG Plans provided certain and effective measures for conservation of the species. The FWS also committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a GRSG status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the GRSG and its habitat.

The BLM, USFS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), FWS, State agencies, and other partners have been working collaboratively, to the extent practicable, to implement the Federal and State plans to conserve GRSG and its habitat. A particular focus has been placed on an all-lands approach, encompassing Federal, State, and private lands, to achieve habitat restoration, fire control, and fuels management. Through these efforts, hundreds of thousands of acres of sagebrush rangelands have been restored or are on their way to being restored.

### **III. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW**

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and DOI staff met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input on the items identified in the Order. The

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<sup>4</sup> While Washington is included in the review for the Order, the majority of the State was not part of the 2015 GRSG Plans. A BLM land use plan that will include GRSG conservation for the Spokane District in Washington is currently under development.

BLM, FWS, and USGS managers and staff also began working with each State to gather information related to the Order, including State-specific issues and potential options for actions with respect to the 2015 GRSG Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF developed an initial list of issues and refined those issues and options on a State-by-State basis while working with the respective BLM State Directors. In July 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met twice to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this report.

The following actions were also completed to address specific sections of the Order:

- Section 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) of the Order: Each BLM State Director worked with their Governor's office(s) to review State plans and programs and the 2015 GRSG Plans.
- Section 4b(ii): DOI staff worked with the SGTF and individual Governor's offices to further examine invasive species and wildland fire issues.
- Section 4b(v): The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) developed and submitted to SGTF white papers on each of the topics described in this provision of the Order.
- DOI staff also worked with the SGTF and the individual Governor's offices to gather further information on data and science.

In these reviews, the need for MOUs and other agreements and training, as called for in Section 4a of the Order, and cooperative management and collaborative partnerships, as called for in Section 5c of the Order were also considered. These individual reviews were then rolled-up for further discussion with the SGTF and the DOI Team and staff. Based on these reviews, the SGTF and DOI Team identified issues, potential options, and next steps to include in this report in response to Section 5d of the Order.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section provides an overview of the issues identified and potential options to address those issues (see Appendix A), as well as recommendations on the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science (see Appendices B through D). Appendix E contains other issues identified that are not directly related to the 2015 GRSG Plans and that are not addressed in this report but may warrant further coordination between the BLM and the States. Appendix F contains white papers developed by WAFWA related to wildlife topics.

In regard to Washington, a new BLM land use plan for the Spokane District has not yet been issued. Based on the Order and the recommendations included in this report for the 2015 GRSG Plans, Washington and the BLM will review the BLM's preliminary draft plan to identify any further opportunities to increase compatibility with the State plan, address the elements of the Order, and consider issues and options included in this report. The BLM will work to issue the Spokane District draft plan for public comment as soon as practicable after this review is complete.

In discussions with the SGTF, there is general consensus that all partners are committed to effective and durable measures to provide for the conservation of GRSG to ensure there is no need to list GRSG under the ESA in the future. There is agreement that monitoring and reporting on conservation actions, habitat condition and trends, and economic development are essential.

Such monitoring is key to demonstrate the effectiveness of State and Federal GRSG Plans in addressing the threats, including habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and fire, as well as support for local economic opportunities and development.

This report includes short and long term approaches to address issues of concern through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as investigating potential targeted plan amendments (long term). Certain options are prioritized for further work to begin immediately, including: identifying options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas; clarifying mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs); modifying the fluid mineral lease prioritization policy; issuing or modifying policy and providing training on use of the habitat objectives tables from the 2015 GRSG Plans; identifying options for addressing hard trigger responses when applying adaptive management decisions; and researching the ability to streamline authorizations for activities with little or no impact on GRSG.

**a. 2015 GRSG Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), and (iv) and 4a of the Order)**

**i. *Fluid Minerals (Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions, Modifications, Leasing Prioritization) and Density and Disturbance***

There are multiple opportunities to be responsive to the Executive Order on “Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth” and the Secretarial Order on “American Energy Independence,” while continuing a robust commitment to the conservation of GRSG. A cooperative DOI and State effort can provide the flexibility for responsible economic growth and at the same time ensure conservation of GRSG habitat.

The areas of leasing prioritization and the PHMA stipulation’s waiver, exception, and modification language are suggested issues of focus for the BLM subsequent to the submittal of this report. Leasing prioritization options include policy clarification while developing the approach to revise IMs for leasing prioritization either nationally or State-by-State. For waiver, exception, and modification language for PHMA stipulations, options include investigating opportunities to provide additional waivers, modifications, and exceptions through policy or potential plan amendments, while adequately addressing the threats in the area, avoiding habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensuring effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development.

For general habitat management areas (GHMAs), stipulations identified vary on a State-by-State basis. Options include developing State-specific policy or training to explain how to use existing flexibility or considering alternative stipulations.

For SFAs, longer term options include considering potential plan amendment(s) to modify or remove SFA fluid minerals stipulations.

The 2015 GRSG Plans define processes for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities. The 2015 GRSG Plans recognized State processes, if they were in place prior to the plans being approved and if the data could be accessed to meet reporting requirements for density of development and acres disturbed

and reclaimed. Some States have developed or are in the process of developing new tools for density and disturbance calculations. For some States, there may be differences between the State plans and the 2015 GRSG Plans in the list of disturbances to count and the appropriate scale (project and biologically significant unit) where the disturbance and density caps should apply. Options include the BLM and the States identifying State-specific inconsistencies and evaluating the various processes and tools for (1) consistency between Federal and State approaches for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities, (2) adequacy to conserve GRSG, and (3) the ability to report on disturbance associated with uses, as well as restoration actions that result in achieving conservation of the habitat.

ii. ***Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain***

There are concerns that the mitigation requirements in the 2015 GRSG Plans (including the net conservation gain standard and the need for a clear definition of that standard) may differ from requirements in some of the State plans. The States prefer consistency between State mitigation standards and the BLM mitigation standard and a definition that encompasses the various standards the States have adopted. The DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies and may issue revised policy, including consideration of various mitigation standards, such as one-to-one ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standards. It was recognized during the review that if the States have permitting authority that includes compensatory mitigation requirements, applicants for uses on public lands may need to meet both State and Federal compensatory mitigation requirements. The DOI Team and the SGTF agree that consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and compensate), including compensatory mitigation standards and other requirements between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures, is desirable. Additional coordination on the approach to mitigation and standards is a priority.

In 2015, the SGTF formed the Sage-Grouse Mitigation Workgroup to develop a report to provide for greater certainty of implementing mitigation across the range. The report, “Greater Sage-Grouse Compensatory Mitigation,” was delivered to the SGTF in December 2016. The report identifies the key principles for successful compensatory mitigation efforts. This report may be helpful to further coordinate on mitigation. States have demonstrated, or are confident that as their mechanism(s) become available, that their mitigation approaches are or will be adequate to meet the principles in this mitigation framework while supporting economic development. States have indicated that compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable impacts is an important tool, in addition to restrictions associated with avoid and minimize, to provide increased flexibility and options to authorize development and provide adequate conservation of the habitat.

In the short term, options identified to address concerns related to mitigation include defining “net conservation gain” and developing policy and MOUs with the States to ensure compensatory mitigation is commensurate with the project-specific residual impacts and coordinate and clarify options for use of each State’s approach when applying mitigation, including meeting the net conservation gain standard. Longer term options could include a potential plan amendment to consider changes to the Federal

compensatory mitigation standard. Options to consider could include investigating using the State standards; setting a Federal standard as a minimum and using the State standards if they are equal or higher than the Federal standard; or using the Federal standard on public land and the State standard on private or State lands.

**iii. *Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring***

The SGTF and DOI Team discussed issues relating to confusion on the use and inconsistent application of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF); Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; other data; and the habitat objectives table that is included in each of the 2015 GRSB Plans. Clarifications on how information is collected and used will improve the way the BLM evaluates GRSB habitat and applies the data and habitat objectives tables to management decisions on public lands.

In the short term, options include providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods; revising the policies on habitat assessment and effectiveness monitoring as needed to clarify their use; and issuing new policy explaining how to use habitat objectives. Other short term options include investigating tools and methods to streamline gathering and reporting on habitats in good condition and focusing increased attention and time on degraded habitats or habitats at risk. In the longer term, new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the habitat objectives tables in the 2015 GRSB Plans to reflect best available science.

**iv. *Adaptive Management***

The SGTF and DOI Team identified two main issues: (1) responses instituted to respond to tripping a hard trigger prior to causal factor analysis may not address the threat identified in the analysis; and (2) the inability to revert to previous management when conditions improve after tripping and responding to a trigger.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process, including conducting causal analysis when either a soft or hard trigger is reached. However, most concerns with adaptive management can likely not be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (1) removing automatic hard trigger management responses when population or habitat recovers above the original condition (the condition prior to a trigger being reached), and more restrictive hard trigger management responses are no longer required to conserve the GRSB or its habitat; and (2) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached, while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses.

**v. *Livestock Grazing***

The SGTF and the DOI Team recognize that improper grazing is a threat to the conservation of GRSB, while proper grazing management is compatible with conserving GRSB habitat and, in some situations, may support or benefit habitat management. There is a perception of undue emphasis on livestock grazing in general, instead of a focus on

improper grazing. Issues include how to prioritize and process grazing permits and monitoring actions and provide additional flexibility in applying management appropriate to on-the-ground conditions at the BLM field office level.

In the short term, options include revising policy to: incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal and to emphasize where there are known impacts to GRS habitat; clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see Section IV(a)(iii) of this report); and clarify that thresholds and responses can vary in different habitat types. Additional short term options include developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. Policies and training should clarify that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRS habitat and, in some cases, may be used to address threats to GRS (e.g., controlling invasive exotic annual grass species). In addition, the BLM will continue to pursue (1) targeted grazing pilot projects to investigate the use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks and (2) outcome-based grazing demonstration projects to investigate the use of flexible grazing permits to respond effectively to changing conditions while helping to improve habitat.

vi. ***Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way)***

These discussions centered on four distinct topics: (1) concerns that broad exclusions and closure areas may not address the uses and associated threats to GRS in a PHMA; (2) a need to clarify how to evaluate proposed actions in an avoidance area; (3) available flexibility on application of required design features (RDFs); and (4) lack of clarity on the application and size of lek buffers. The discussions varied according to the needs of each State, as there are complexities created by the various land ownership patterns (e.g., consolidated Federal ownership vs. scattered Federal ownership).

Options include evaluating each State's approach to identify how it differs from each 2015 GRS Plan and to consider whether the State's mechanism, including compensatory mitigation, could adequately address the threats in the area, avoid habitat loss or fragmentation, and ensure effective and durable conservation, while providing for economic development. For example, if gravel pits are in an area closed to that use, and the State's mechanisms for managing gravel pits, including compensatory mitigation, may provide equivalent assurance for conservation of the species and its habitat, then this topic should be further investigated.

The topics of how to implement land use authorizations in avoidance areas, the application of RDFs, and the use of lek buffers all share the need for additional clarity or training, including sharing lessons learned across jurisdictional boundaries. In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate proposed uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers. This includes the consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. The DOI Team also recommends additional research to (1)

evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs and (2) incorporation of new science into plan implementation as it becomes available.

**vii. *Habitat Boundaries - Sagebrush Focal Areas and Habitat Management Areas***

Concerns were identified with: (1) whether SFA designations and their associated decisions are necessary in some States or if underlying allocations (PHMAs, Important Habitat Management Areas, GHMAs, or others) and associated decisions are adequate to meet GRSG conservation, including effectiveness and durability; and (2) the BLM's ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States. States regularly refine habitat maps delineating GHMAs and PHMAs through on-the-ground verification and incorporation of new information, and the concern was expressed that the 2015 GRSG Plans may not provide the flexibility to incorporate these updates.

In the short term, options include investigating each 2015 GRSG Plan to determine if there is flexibility to adopt revised habitat maps from the States to adjust habitat management area boundaries and develop a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections, which may include considering potential plan amendments in some States. In the long term, options include potential plan amendments to evaluate the need to remove or modify SFAs allocations in some States, including whether to retain, modify, or remove associated SFA management actions to achieve effective and durable GRSG conservation.

**b. Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4b(ii) and 4a of the Order)**

Pursuant to the Order, the DOI Team examined the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy" (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and controlling the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. Recommended additional steps are outlined in Appendix B.

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity, and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The following recommendations will further enhance the implementation of the IRFMS:

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS; support ongoing State-led efforts, including the WAFWA "Sagebrush Conservation Strategy" and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) "Western Invasive Weed Action Plan"; implement the "National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration"; and implement action items from the Western Governors Association National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative.
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs),

establishment of wildfire protection agreements, and support for the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.”

- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Agency registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing.
- Work with the DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting.
- Enhance multijurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multiyear funding of projects to increase likelihood of success.
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in the DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high-risk/high-value areas, including increasing the BLM’s fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

**c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

As a State trust species, individual States exercise their authority to manage and conserve GRSG according to their own laws and policies. In response to the Order, the WAFWA developed four technical white papers (Appendix F) to summarize the current scientific literature and management experience on the issues of: (1) captive breeding, (2) population objectives, (3) predator control, and (4) hunting. As recognized by the Order, it is the prerogative of each individual State to conserve and manage State trust species and, thus, to determine whether a Statewide population target is appropriate and whether any of these management tools should be implemented within the respective States. In support of setting population targets, the DOI Team recommends support for developing tools and techniques to estimate and set population objectives, including (1) a State/Federal/academic partnership that is working to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations over the next two years; and (2) USGS-supported research to improve the ability to find new leks, understand the percent of leks not counted because they are unknown, and increasing the accuracy of counts once leks are detected.

- i. Captive breeding, as a wildlife management tool, is best suited to augmenting small, at-risk populations for short periods of time, while factors contributing to population declines are simultaneously addressed. Because captive breeding of GRSG has not yet proven effective, requires expenditures that would limit funding availability for other priority efforts and may require the removal of potentially viable eggs from the wild, further work is needed to fairly evaluate captive breeding. The DOI Team recommends that new captive breeding efforts continue to be investigated to improve effectiveness.
- ii. While State wildlife agencies set population objectives routinely for big game and/or large carnivores based on species biology, landowner tolerance, public safety, habitat availability, and social factors, most States do not routinely establish Statewide population targets for avian species like GRSG. GRSG populations respond to climate, weather, and habitat conditions at different and, often, very fine scales. Thus, GRSG numbers vary widely in a relatively short period of time, within individual States and

across the range. States manage GRSG, in part, based on male lek counts as an indicator of habitat availability, condition, and other factors. While States support efforts to estimate and explain populations, fluctuations, and trends, any such effort must recognize and account for the relationship between the species and its habitat. Further, any population metric would have to reflect the natural range of variability, include confidence intervals, and be tied to habitat availability. Ultimately, the best method for determining GRSG viability will be to assess a combination of habitat availability and populations, which are inseparable. The DOI Team recommends that establishing a Statewide or range-wide GRSG population objective or target should be pursued.

- iii. The primary issue relative to predation is the recent emergence of predation by species with which GRSG either did not evolve or did not confront in current numbers. Among these are corvid species, such as ravens. Excessive predation by avian and/or mammalian predators may be occurring in localized settings but is not a uniform pressure across the landscape or range-wide. Localized predation can be a significant threat for small, isolated, or reintroduced populations. Even in those circumstances, however, predator control should be simultaneous with efforts to address the underlying reasons for predator population growth or concentration in localized areas of concern for GRSG. Control of multiple factors that provide predator subsidies, such as open landfills or unneeded infrastructure that provides nesting or perching sites, is a low-cost, sustainable strategy. The SGTF requests the DOI work with the States to investigate options for corvid control, including streamlining approval and reporting requirements in compliance with current law and international treaties. It is important that predator control efforts be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future decisions about how to prioritize available funding.
- iv. Hunting is an adequately regulated activity managed by States to avoid additive mortality (above and beyond natural annual mortality) so that it does not contribute to population declines. Common techniques implemented by States include short seasons, low limits of take, and permit-only hunt systems. Harvest strategies in many States can be considered more conservative than guidelines suggest. In addition to these conservative strategies, providing hunting opportunities, when appropriate and sustainable, provides an avenue to better help support the use of Pittman-Robertson wildlife restoration grant funding. In turn, this supports a multitude of conservation efforts related to GRSG, including inventory and monitoring, local conservation planning and project implementation, and research, among other endeavors, that provides States with much needed information on the status of the species.

Appendix C provides a summary of potential next steps for wildlife management.

**d. Data Management and the Use of Science (Addressing Section 4a of the Order and Other Requests by the DOI Team)**

Addressing priority science needs of managers and sharing high-quality science and information, including locally collected monitoring and assessment data, among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of

GRSG and the sagebrush ecosystem. Continued development and integration of local data and information, peer-reviewed science, and other high-quality information forms the foundation for management decisions and identifies the need for new science and information. Attributes to assess the quality and reliability of new science and information include peer review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions.

Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for sharing science, information, and data can help facilitate ongoing GRSG and sagebrush management efforts. Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency agreements, and online data catalogs (both public and private). Updating information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can improve the use of new information, increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes, reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues, and provide opportunities for inclusion of local and traditional ecological knowledge.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D):

- Implement the “IRFMS Actionable Science Plan.”
- Coordinate research efforts among agencies and organizations, including science needs related to human dimensions and economics.
- Develop processes to use data from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journals, agency data, and locally collected partner information.
- Work to provide policymakers and managers with science and data in a form most useful to decision-making.
- Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant science and data to inform implementation of management actions.
- Establish data standards and data sharing agreements, resolve barriers to data sharing, and improve procedures for maintaining and updating data.
- Develop methods to gather and use local and traditional ecological knowledge.

## V. NEXT STEPS

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team recommends the following next steps:

- Reaffirm DOI and State commitments to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF’s charter as needed. Coordinate with individual States to determine the need for and, as appropriate, develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation.
- Work with the USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this report, considering the USFS’s unique plans and associated decisions and laws and regulations. Work to align recommendations and future actions to the maximum extent possible.
- Continue to work with the States to further refine the options in this report and identify multistate or State-specific solutions as needed.

- In coordination with the SGTF, initiate additional discussions with Congressional delegations, counties, local governments, and tribes, as well as ranchers, landowners, industries, conservation organizations, and other interested parties, to review the issues and recommendations included in this report, and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the report is submitted, continuing for approximately 2 months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short term options in this report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify other clarifications or policy approaches that could address and resolve issues. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate whether clarification and policy actions sufficiently address the issues identified by the States and other partners or if additional actions should be considered. For longer term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issues and potential solutions, including evaluating State-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of GRSG. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners, and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or November 2017).
- Review short term actions and evaluate the need for additional short or long term actions, including potential plan amendments as appropriate, in collaboration with the SGTF (estimated in January 2018).

**APPENDIX A – 2015 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANS AND STATE PLAN CONSISTENCY REVIEW**

<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) and no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each State to evaluate whether general habitat management area (GHMA) and priority habitat management area (PHMA) stipulations already provide for the durable and effective conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, potential plan amendment to consider eliminating or reducing the SFAs and changes to stipulations. May be State-specific outcome.	Multistate
General habitat management area (GHMA) stipulations (vary by State)	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of priority habitat management area (PHMA), and informs industry of expectations.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations, and issue State-specific policy as needed; determine if a controlled surface use (CSU) stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multistate (Utah in particular)
Priority habitat management area (PHMA) no surface occupancy (NSO) and waiver, exception, and modification (WEM) language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs, which recognizes the State’s mitigation hierarchy, maintains collaborative approach, and removes U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) role in approving WEMs.  Short term option to clarify which mechanism to modify WEMs is identified as an immediate action item. Then work with the States to engage with partners and stakeholders on the short term evaluation or potential adjustment process.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs, and work with the States to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short term recommendation, a potential plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Lease prioritization instruction memorandum (IM)	<p>Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.</p> <p>Short term option to clarify to staff leasing is not restricted in GRSG habitat. Identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Clarify that all habitat types are open for leasing. Modify and reissue IM to address other concerns</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
	<p>Rescind the national IM.</p> <p>Then issue State-level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and include State-specific solutions.</p> <p>Short term option identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Rescind the National IM, and develop BLM State-specific IMs that include all habitat types are open for leasing and other State-specific concerns.</p>	<p>If the BLM State-level IMs do not address the issues, then consider a potential plan amendment to address concerns.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
Density and disturbance	<p>There is variation between the States on what counts as a disturbance and towards a density cap, the level of disturbance that is allowed, and the scales the caps apply to (project or biologically significant unit - BSU). There is a need for a consolidated (BLM/State) process so industry knows where to start and the steps to follow.</p> <p>On a State-by-State basis, develop a crosswalk to explore the potential to develop a density and disturbance process that recognizes State-specific issues and needed flexibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based on science for the difference in calculation of the cap, or what counts for disturbance and density, and the appropriate scale (e.g., project or BSU).</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies, then solidify through BLM State-level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation.</p> <p>In cooperation with the State, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	<p>If inconsistencies, then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require future consideration of a plan amendment process.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Inconsistent mitigation standards</p>	<p>BLM plans have a net conservation gain standard while the State mechanisms have adopted differing standards. There is confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States wish to use the State mitigation approach to achieve a seamless mitigation standard and approach across State, private, and Federal lands. States have various definitions for their mitigation standard including net gain, habitat assurance, no net loss, no net loss with conservation benefit, and others. Many of the State standards also account for the risk of the action to achieve the desired environmental benefit.</p> <p>Removing the net conservation gain language creates issues for some States as they have adopted that language as the standard for their State mitigation mechanism.</p> <p>States want to apply mitigation actions on Federal lands while meeting the mitigation principles in the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) GRSG compensatory mitigation report.</p> <p>Recognize that Federal land users must also comply with State requirements, when applicable.</p> <p>Recognize that the DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, including the compensatory mitigation standards and may issue revised policy, including consideration of a 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard.</p>	<p>Define net conservation gain for the BLM plans.</p> <p>Evaluate and document each State’s mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of net conservation gain.</p> <p>Consider policy on options to use the State’s mitigation standard if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the GRSG plans.</p>	<p>If policy does not address the concern, then consider a potential plan amendment to change the net conservation gain standard. Options to further evaluate could include using each State’s standard (may vary by State), setting a minimum standard for public lands and using the State standard if it is higher, or setting a standard for public lands while the State standard applies to State and private lands.</p> <p>Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with DOI policy on mitigation.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
State mitigation plans	Use the State mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	<p>Complete an MOU with each State on application of the State mitigation approach if it is consistent with the BLM plans and meets the principles in the SGTF Mitigation Report and DOI policy</p> <p>If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach.</p>	None at this time	Multistate
Regional mitigation strategies	In coordination with the States, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>How are habitat objectives; plan effectiveness reporting; Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data; and Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) assessments related?</p>	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, land health standards, and land use plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the land health standards evaluation and management decisions.</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well.</p> <p>Issuance of policy identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Issue IMs to provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of land health standards; use habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness.</p> <p>Continue outreach and training on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF)</p>	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments (e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat).</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions, not just grazing.</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with the BLM, other agencies, and States, including the Department of Agriculture.</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF, as well as how these relate to the habitat objectives table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED				
Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) - Continued	<p>Explore use of and continue the development of tools to streamline habitat assessments (e.g., remote sensing) for rapid assessment of habitat conditions.</p> <p>Issuance of new HAF IM identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Continue to learn from the pilot studies (e.g., Oregon State and Transition Model) and other tools to streamline habitat assessments, and advance or integrate outcomes into BLM's approach to HAF and related work through IM or other policy clarification and training.	None at this time	Multistate
Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM)	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated.</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between the National Operations Center (NOC) and field offices.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	Issue clarification that addresses concerns; provide training.	None at this time	Multistate

<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Adjusting the habitat objectives tables	<p>Codify guidance issued on habitat objectives tables in an IM which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site.</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to habitat objectives tables as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in habitat objectives tables are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (e.g., Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (not all States have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives tables from the plans, and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement, as described in 43 CFR 4180.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on the intent, purpose, and use of habitat objectives tables, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential.</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans.</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for GRSG, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan. An amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis	Work with States to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each State to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers.	None at this time	Multistate
Reversion of trigger responses when conditions improve	Work with States on process to revert to previous management, or change the response based on positive habitat/population response.	Evaluate plans to determine which do not have a “reversion” clause and whether each plan provides any flexibility to address through policy.	Potential plan amendment to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger.	Multistate
Implementation of hard trigger responses	Work with States to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.  Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.	Work with States on development of the process in the recommendation.	Potential plan amendment to consider options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger, such as a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed, or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Multistate
Adaptive management policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM State-specific IM to address advance coordination with the States and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM.	Modify the current IM.	None at this time	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Research and data collection needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached. Identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement predefined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify multiprong impacts to populations.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data. Must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis.</p>	<p><i>Defer to "Data Management and the Use of Science" topic in the report for recommendation.</i></p>		
Sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) are inconsistent with the state plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way, and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFAs, as needed.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) habitat.</p>	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/fragmentation).</p> <p>Should not be spending a lot of time monitoring and inspecting allotments that are providing good quality sagebrush habitat.</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for GRSG.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage for quality GRSG habitat.</p> <p>Revise prioritization IM to develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome-based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition.</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow animal unit months (AUMs) to increase based on forage availability.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit.	Reinforce/offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance.	None at this time	Multistate
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process.	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs.	None at this time	Multistate
Removal of livestock grazing from research natural areas (RNAs)	The Oregon Approved Resource Management Plans and Amendments (ARMPA) identifies key RNAs that will be unavailable to livestock grazing. While the general issue of research within RNAs, including with varying levels of livestock use, is not something Oregon opposes, the State Action Plan does not include having RNAs unavailable for grazing. The State is concerned about potential loss of animal unit months (AUMs), economic losses, potential effects to habitat, and impacts to livestock operators on allotments containing RNAs that are subject to being unavailable for grazing, especially if unsupported by indications of adverse habitat impacts caused by livestock grazing management.	Work with Oregon to evaluate RNAs and grazing closures.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)

**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment and relationship to future grazing, grass banks, or other uses.	When grazing permits or leases are voluntarily relinquished or where allotments otherwise become vacant, current Oregon ARMPA language would make retirement of permits an option under these circumstances. The steps BLM takes pursuant to current and ARMPA-adopted language at the point in time following voluntary relinquishment or vacancy should not run counter to State interests in working lands and habitat health.	Ensure LG/RM 15 language in the Oregon ARMPA is consistent with regulation and as needed develop State-specific policy on its use.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)
Habitat objectives table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the West.	<i>See "Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Tables, and Effectiveness Monitoring" section in the report.</i>			
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See the "Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands" section in the report.</i>			

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the State's approach.	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with State partners, evaluate if the States' plans would provide durable and effective conservation while providing exceptions to activities.	On a State-by-State basis, complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities.	If short term flexibilities do not resolve concerns, evaluate a potential plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multistate
Maintenance and production activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multistate
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs) under the use of the State's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multistate
Valid existing rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognize valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Misinterpretation of “avoidance” in the field</p>	<p>Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see Colorado and Nevada for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.</p>	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue State-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses.</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	<p>Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a potential plan amendment.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>
<p>Plans do not recognize the State’s guidance that some activities are “de minimus” (negligible or no impact to GRSG).</p>	<p>Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to GRSG.</p> <p>Long term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate “de minimus” activities as defined in State plans, and evaluate against Federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in Federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>Development of programmatic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of categorical exclusions for “de minimus” activities.</p>	<p>Multistate</p>

<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g., TIMING AND TALL STRUCTURES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using State-developed required design features (RDFs).	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features, outside those identified in the current plans, can be used without further analysis by the BLM. Design features selected should help to encourage development in lower quality habitat (e.g., in general habitat management areas instead of priority habitat management areas).	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to project and to use other RDFs, including State RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time	Multistate
Requirement to include discussion on all required design features (RDFs) in the project-level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used.	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time	Multistate
Lack of consistent application of required design features (RDFs) in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use RDFs (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that RDFs are not a “one size fits all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, a plan amendment may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in State plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>Lek buffer distances are incompatible with State buffer distances for some types of development (e.g., range improvements).</p>	<p>Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat, which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.</p> <p>Suggest a two-step process of clarifying justifiable departures and then streamline the process using local information.</p> <p>Need to revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers ahead of initiating new science for buffers.</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures. Evaluate each plan to ensure adequate flexibility to address project-specific information is available.</p> <p>Revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers.</p>	<p>If needed, initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses, and identify any potential changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue, then evaluate a potential plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information.</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>
<p>Clarify how to apply lek buffers (e.g., distance for National Environmental Policy Act analysis vs. distance to restrict activities).</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and record of decision (ROD) description should be used and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project-specific information.</p>	<p>Develop policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation, and clarify language in ROD and plan.</p> <p>Evaluate need for templates, streamlined processes, and programmatic analysis to standardize the evaluation of lek buffers, including justifiable departures, in project-level analysis.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p align="center">Multistate</p>

TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS)				
Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
Sagebrush focal area (SFA) designations	<p>Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable and effective conservation of the species.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions, or change those SFA management actions as described elsewhere in this table.</p>	Multistate
Need flexibility to change priority habitat management area (PHMA)/general habitat management area (GHMA) boundaries.	<p>Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground surveys and improved understanding of GRSG habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes, such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.</p> <p>Short term option was identified as an immediate action item by some States.</p>	<p>Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.</p> <p>Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, waivers, exceptions, modifications, exclusion and avoidance, etc., in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.</p>	<p>Potential plan amendment to consider aligning PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc., and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground surveys, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.</p>	Multistate

**TOPIC AREA: HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SAGEBRUSH FOCAL AREAS) - CONTINUED**

Issue	Discussion	Short-Term Option	Long-Term Option	Scale
<p>General habitat management area (GHMA) is inconsistent with Utah's plan.</p>	<p>GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.</p>	<p>Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.</p> <p>Also, consider the application of the State mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.</p>	<p>Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a potential State-specific plan amendment.</p>	<p>Utah specific</p>

**APPENDIX B – WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES ISSUES**

<b>TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected States provided feedback.	Incorporate additional information received from States and other stakeholders.
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management, and provide recommendations to improve management.	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy” (IRFMS) action items.  Complete the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy.”	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the “Sagebrush Ecosystem Communications Framework” (SageWest).  Support development and implementation of WAFWA’s “Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.”  Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture’s (WASDA) “Western Invasive Weed Action Plan.”  Support implementation of the “National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration.”  Support the memorandum of understanding between the BLM, USFS, and NRCS to improve coordination with private landowners, and promote cross-boundary projects that address invasive species and wildland fire.
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators.	Reinstate grant authority and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators.  Address the General Services Administration policy that prevents excess Federal firefighting equipment (e.g., engines, radios) from going directly to partners, such as rangeland fire protection associations (RFPAs) and rural fire departments (RFDs).  Explore options for shared funded positions to enhance cooperative efforts (e.g., RFPA support).  Continue to support and develop additional RFPAs.

<b>TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Consider related Western Governors' Association (WGA) efforts that enhance implementation of the "Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy."	Further action items in the WGA's National Forest and Rangeland Management Initiative, such as: expanding good neighbor authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating Federal, State, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; and flexibilities in grazing management.
Improve coordination with States on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery.	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the "National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy."
Ensure funding for fire, fuels, and restoration projects.	Explore options for multijurisdictional funding, multiyear funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects.  Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the DOI. The risk-based funding modeling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding but is currently receiving only about 50%.
Streamline and improve restoration success.	Conduct research, testing, and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g., biopesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).  Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies.	Work with appropriate Departments, agencies, offices, and companies to gain approval of concurrent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration and field-testing of biopesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration

## APPENDIX C – WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already-available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop rangewide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess GRSG population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate GRSG population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

## APPENDIX D – SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES

<b>TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Address priority science needs, and increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts.</p>	<p>Implement the “Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan.” Actions include: coordination of research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among State and Federal agencies and other organizations; implementation of research efforts, as funding allows; and development of a tracking mechanism for publications and products.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts, identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions and economics in the sagebrush ecosystem, and address prioritized science needs, as funding allows.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data and other information from entities other than Federal or State agencies to ensure it meets quality, reliability, and relevance standards for use.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data to identify new potential science needs that can be addressed using formal experimental or other scientific investigations.</p> <p>Work to increase development of information products that translate and synthesize peer-reviewed science into more accessible formats for decision-makers, and improve access to peer-reviewed science journals for those who need that level of information.</p> <p>Continue to emphasize the need for locally relevant peer-reviewed science, high-quality information, and local on-the-ground data that is pertinent to implementation of management actions.</p> <p>Evaluate use of the Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) as the coordinating body for the intersection of science with policy and management and to identify priority science and data needs to inform management and policy.</p>

**TOPIC: SCIENCE AND DATA ISSUES**

<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing.</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multiagency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that nonproprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements for information included in shared data catalogs and information gathered by third party sources for potential inclusion in agency databases or use in decision-making.</p> <p>Identify multiscale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information, when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and tribes to explore options to improve or develop data sharing mechanisms for capturing observations of species, as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**APPENDIX E – OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS**

<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THE 2015 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short-Term Option</b>	<b>Long-Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Reserve common allotments	Reserve common allotments are a tool available on public lands that could be used to provide alternative locations for grazing permittees/leases when their allotment is unavailable due to fire, restoration activities, or other reasons. However, there are concerns that designation of allotments as reserve common allotments could take those allotments out of regular use and result in economic loss. Further investigation with the BLM, Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF), ranchers, and other stakeholders is warranted to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be considered.	Engage with the SGTF, counties, Public Lands Council, ranchers, and other stakeholders to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be used.		Multistate
Water rights	There is concern that the BLM may be managing water rights they do not own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. This may be a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressed in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate: Utah, Idaho, Nevada
Changes in grazing management following natural events	Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.  Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level.	Provide further investigation and clarification, as needed.		Multistate
Wild horse and burro: appropriate management level (AML) achievement	Verify that the BLM has the tools and funding to achieve AML across the West. Evaluate priorities (e.g., Priority given to sagebrush focal areas (SFAs) potentially limits funding and staff to initiate gathers in priority habitat management areas (PHMAs)).	BLM state offices reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with States. Elevate unresolved issue to management.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long term resolution.	Multistate
Herd management areas and associated appropriate management level (AML) may need to be analyzed for adjustments	Implement solutions for reaching current AML prior to reevaluating herd management areas and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML is reached.	Multistate

**APPENDIX F: TECHNICAL WHITE PAPERS FROM THE WESTERN ASSOCIATION  
OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**

**White Paper Titles**

1. Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means (3 pages)
2. Population and Habitat-Based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
3. Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse (2 pages)
4. Hunting Sage-Grouse, Impacts and Management (2 pages)
5. Literature Cited in WAFWA Tech. Committee White Papers on Predator Control, Captive Breeding and Population and Habitat Management

## AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS

### WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994; Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild,

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THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS**

however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1 September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Altwater's prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

**Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season (31 Mar)**

Method	Hatchability	Survival to release	Post-release survival to 31 Mar.	Number of birds or eggs needed	Net Removal from source population
Spring transplant	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

## AUGMENTING SAGE-GROUSE POPULATIONS THROUGH CAPTIVE BREEDING AND OTHER MEANS

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**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

### Conclusions

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

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Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse by *protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al.

## POPULATION AND HABITAT-BASED APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT OF SAGE-GROUSE

(2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

### Conclusions:

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*



WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

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Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boarman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boarman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that

## PREDATOR CONTROL AS A CONSERVATION MEASURE FOR SAGE-GROUSE

sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

### *Conclusions:*

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website.*



**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES**  
**HUNTING SAGE-GROUSE, IMPACTS AND MANAGEMENT**

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Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80-59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily,

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4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

### Conclusions:

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

*Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website*



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## REPORT IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). In response to the Order, the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage Grouse Review Team (DOI Team)<sup>1</sup> and sought input from the Eleven Western States<sup>2</sup> identified in the Order. The DOI Team also coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). The DOI Team respectfully requests the Secretary accept this report, and direct the agencies to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary.

Together, the DOI Team and the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF), made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the eleven States, identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order. The DOI Team and the SGTF are committed to a balanced approach that provides both responsible economic development and long term conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse). This commitment includes an interest in retaining the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, using policy and clarifications to better align them with State plans and programs and meet the purposes of the Order, while continuing joint engagement to further define consideration of potential targeted plan amendments. The federal agencies and States are also committed to continue to work with partners to prioritize staff and funding to implement the plans, particularly with respect to on-the-ground conservation and restoration actions.

The DOI Team and the SGTF affirm that the issues and options identified in this report are not “one size fits all” and should be further tailored to each State’s needs. Whenever possible, the options provide near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the purpose of the order, including development of policies, clarification, MOUs, and training, many of which can be completed within six months. The SGTF and the DOI Team also identified longer-term options, including potential plan amendments which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

This report recommends continued collaboration with the States, including both through the SGTF and between each Governor’s offices and the respective Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director and USFS Regional Director. This report also recommends engagement on the issues and options identified in this report with counties and tribes, as well as with ranchers, industry, conservation groups and other stakeholders. This additional engagement would be used to refine the options and develop a prioritized plan for implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The DOI Team consists of co-leads Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary - BLM, and John Ruhs, BLM Deputy Director-Operations, Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary – Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Gregory Sheehan, FWS Deputy Director, Anne Kinsinger, USGS Associate Director for Ecosystems, Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Liaison to State and Local Government, Timothy Williams, Deputy Director of External Affairs, Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary, and Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The eleven States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The review conducted in response to the Order identified many opportunities, summarized in this report, to clarify the BLM's management under the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans that could address the issues identified. Clarifications, policies, agreements, or training could largely address issues related to habitat assessment and monitoring, including the Habitat Assessment Framework, and grazing management; could take advantage of flexibility in the plan to support energy, mineral and other development; could increase consistency between the BLM and States on density and disturbance caps and mitigation; and might in some cases, based on a case-by-case review of each plan, allow adjustments to habitat boundaries and address issues with adaptive management.

The review also identified longer-term options to consider some issues through a plan amendment process. This report recommends further investigation and definition of potential plan amendments, including considering what combination of potential plan amendments would best balance continuing to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and supporting economic development, and whether to consider state-by-state or range-wide amendments. Potential plan amendments could be considered in some states to address adjustments to habitat management boundaries; to adjust responses to reaching adaptive management triggers; to evaluate the compensatory mitigation standard; and to provide additional flexibility in resource development.

The report identifies opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management; for MOUs, data sharing, new research, and incorporating new information into plan implementation. The report also includes recommendations from the States on captive breeding, translocations, predator control, and setting population targets.

## II. BACKGROUND

The Sage-Grouse is a State-managed species throughout its range with approximately half of its habitat managed by the BLM and USFS. State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950's. For the past two decades, the State wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been coordinating efforts to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitats.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that Sage-Grouse was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing by other species with higher listing priority. In the finding, FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and lack of regulatory mechanisms as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to identify conservation objectives for Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for fourteen potential threats facing the Sage-Grouse including: fire, non-native invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, wild horses and burros, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences.

The BLM and USFS initiated land use planning processes to provide regulatory certainty in addressing population declines, habitat loss, and the potential threats to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and avoid the need to list under the ESA. Early in the process, the BLM and USFS collaborated with the States to pursue state-by-state land use planning. These state-by-state approaches were supplemented with range-wide decisions to increase consistency between

the plans and to respond to the FWS 2010 listing determination. Several States identified instances where they did not believe the final approved BLM plan was consistent with the applicable State Plan, particularly with regards to range-wide decisions. There were also concerns that the records of decision and final approved plans included decisions from alternatives other than preferred alternative (as described in the proposed plans and final environmental impact statements) and therefore differed from what the States expected based on the collaborative planning efforts.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 Sage-Grouse Plans) across the ten<sup>3</sup> Western States addressing, in part, Sage-Grouse and its habitat. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven Instruction Memoranda (IMs) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS determined the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans provided certainty for conservation of the species and committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

The BLM, USFS, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), FWS, State agencies, and other partners have been working collaboratively to implement the federal and state plans to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitat. A particular focus has been placed on an all-lands approach, encompassing federal, state, and private lands, to achieve habitat restoration, fire control, and fuels management. Through these efforts, hundreds of thousands of acres of sagebrush rangelands have been restored or are on their way to being restored.

### III. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and the associated technical team met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input on the items identified in the Order. The BLM also began working with each State to gather information related to the Order, including State-specific issues and potential options for actions with respect to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF developed an initial list of issues and refined those issues and options on a state-by-state basis while working with the respective BLM State Directors. In July, 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF twice met to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this Report.

The following was completed to specifically address the following sections of the Order:

- Section 4(b)(i), (iii), and (iv) of the order, each BLM State Director worked with their Governor's office(s) to review State plans and programs and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

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<sup>3</sup> While Washington State is included in the review for this Order, the State was not part of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. A BLM land use plan which will include Sage-Grouse conservation in Washington is currently under development.

- Section 4(b)(ii), the DOI Team worked with the SGTF and individual Governor's offices to further examine invasive species and wildland fire issues.
- Section 4(b)(v), the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) developed and submitted to SGTF white papers on each of the topics.
- The DOI Team also worked with the SGTF and the individual Governor's offices to gather further information on data and science.

In each of these reviews, the need for memoranda of understanding and other agreements and training as called for in Section 4(a) of the Order and cooperative management and collaborative partnerships as called for in Section 5(c) of the Order were also considered. These individual reviews were then rolled up for further discussion with the SGTF and the DOI Team. Based on these reviews, the SGTF and DOI Team identified issues, potential options, and next steps to address those issues for inclusion in this report in response to Section 5(d) of the Order.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of the issues identified and potential options to address those issues (see Appendix A), as well as recommendations on the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science (see Appendices B-D). Appendix E contains other issues identified that are not directly related to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and are not addressed in this report, but may warrant further coordination between BLM and the States. Appendix F contains white papers developed by WAFWA related to wildlife topics.

With regards to Washington State, a new BLM plan has not yet been issued. Based on the Order and the recommendations included in this report for the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, Washington State and the BLM office will review the draft plan to identify any further opportunities to increase compatibility with the State plan and to address the elements of the Order and consider the options included in this report.

In discussions with the SGTF, there was general consensus that all partners were committed to ensuring durable conservation of Sage-Grouse that would ensure there was no need to list Sage-Grouse under the ESA in the future. There was agreement that monitoring and reporting on conservation actions, habitat condition and trend, and economic development are essential. Such monitoring is key to demonstrate the effectiveness of state and federal Sage-Grouse plans in addressing the threats, including habitat fragmentation, fire, and invasive species, as well as support for local economic opportunities and development.

This report includes short and long-term approaches to address issues of concern such as through policy, clarification, and training (short-term), as well as investigating potential targeted plan amendments (long-term). Certain options are prioritized for further work to begin immediately, including identifying options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas; to clarify mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA); to modify the Fluid Mineral Lease Prioritization policy; to issue or modify policy and provide training on use of the habitat objectives table from the 2015 Sage-Grouse plans; to identify options for addressing hard trigger responses when applying adaptive management decisions; and researching the ability to streamline authorizations for activities with little or no impact on Sage-Grouse.

a. **2015 Sage-Grouse Plan and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii) (iv) and 4(a) of the order)**

i. ***Fluid Minerals (Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions, Modifications, Leasing Prioritization) and Density and Disturbance***

There are multiple opportunities to be responsive to the Presidential Order on Promoting Energy Independence and the Secretarial Order on American Energy Independence, while continuing a robust commitment to the conservation of Sage-Grouse. A cooperative DOI and State effort can provide the flexibility for responsible economic growth and at the same time ensure conservation of Sage-Grouse habitat.

The areas of leasing prioritization and the PHMA stipulation's waivers, exception, and modification language were suggested areas for the BLM to start focusing on after the submittal of this report. Leasing prioritization options include policy clarification while investigating the approach to issue new IMs. For waiver, exception, and modification language for PHMA stipulations, investigate opportunities to provide additional waivers, modifications, and exceptions through policy or potential plan amendments. For GHMA, stipulations used vary on a state-by-state basis, options to develop state-specific policy or training to use existing flexibility or consider alternative stipulations will be evaluated. For SFA, longer-term options include considering a plan amendment to modify or remove stipulations.

The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans define processes for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities. The plans recognized State processes if they were in place prior to the plans being approved and if the data could be accessed to meet reporting requirements for density of development and acres disturbed and reclaimed. Some States have developed or are in the process of developing new tools for density and disturbance calculations. For some States there may be differences between the State plans and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans in the list of disturbances to count and the appropriate scale (project and Biologically Significant Unit) where the disturbance and density caps should apply. Options include the BLM and the States identifying state-specific inconsistencies and evaluating the various processes and tools for 1) consistency between Federal and State approaches, 2) conservation adequacy, and 3) the ability to report on disturbance associated with uses, and restoration actions that result in achieving conservation of the habitat.

ii. ***Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain***

There are concerns that the mitigation requirements in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans (including the net conservation gain standard) may be different from requirements in State plans and confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States prefer consistency between State mitigation standards and the BLM mitigation standard and a definition that encompasses the various standards the States have adopted. The Department is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, and may issue revised policy, including consideration of various mitigation standards, such as 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard. It was recognized that if the states have permitting authority that includes compensatory mitigation requirements, applicants for uses on

public lands would need to meet both State and Federal compensatory mitigation requirements. The DOI Team and the SGTF agree that consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and compensate) including compensatory mitigation standards, and other requirements between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures is desirable. Additional coordination on the approach to mitigation and standards is a priority.

In 2015, the SGTF formed the Sage-Grouse Mitigation Workgroup to develop a report to provide for greater certainty of implementing mitigation across the range. The report, Sage-Grouse Mitigation, was delivered to the SGTF in December of 2016. The report identifies the key principles for successful compensatory mitigation efforts. This report may be helpful to further coordinate on mitigation. States have demonstrated, or are confident that as their mechanism(s) become available, that their mitigation approaches are or will be adequate to meet the principles in this mitigation framework while supporting economic development. States have indicated that compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable impacts is an important tool, in addition to restrictions associated with avoid and minimize, to provide increased flexibility and options to authorize development and provide adequate conservation of the habitat.

In the short term, options to address concerns related to mitigation include defining “net conservation gain” and developing policy and MOUs with the states to coordinate and clarify options for use of each State’s approach when applying mitigation, including meeting the net conservation gain standard. Longer-term options could include a potential plan amendment to consider changes to the federal standard, options could include using the State standards, setting a Federal standard as a minimum and using the State standards if they are equal or higher than the Federal standard, or using the Federal standard on public land and the State standard on private or state lands.

**iii. *Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Table, and Effectiveness Monitoring***

The SGTF and DOI Team discussed issues relating to confusion on the use and inconsistent application of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF), Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data, other data, and the Habitat Objectives Table. Clarifications on how information is collected and used will improve the way BLM evaluates Sage-Grouse habitat and the application of the data and habitat objectives table to management decisions on public lands.

In the short term, options include revising the policies on Habitat Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring to address the concerns raised; issuing new policy explaining how to use habitat objectives; and providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods. Other short-term options include investigating tools and methods to streamline gathering and reporting on habitats in good condition and focusing increased attention and time on degraded habitats or habitats at risk. In the longer-term, new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the habitat objectives table in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans to reflect best available science.

iv. *Adaptive Management*

The SGTF and DOI Team identified two main issues: 1) responses instituted in response to tripping a hard trigger prior to causal factor analysis may not address the threat identified in the analysis and 2) the inability to revert back to previous management when conditions improve after tripping a trigger.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process, including conducting causal analysis when either a soft or hard trigger is reached. However, most concerns with adaptive management can likely not be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (a) reverting to previous management actions when population or habitat recovers above the original trigger and more restrictive management actions are not required; and (b) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses.

v. *Livestock Grazing*

The SGTF and the DOI team recognize that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans do not clearly articulate that improper grazing is a potential threat to the conservation of Sage-Grouse, while proper grazing management may be a benefit to habitat management. This lack of clarity has created the perception of undue emphasis on livestock grazing in general, instead of focusing on improper grazing and has created confusion on how to prioritize and process grazing permits and monitoring actions at the field office level. The Grazing Allotment Prioritization policy and the Grazing and Threshold Responses policy could also provide additional flexibility in applying management appropriate to on-the-ground conditions.

In the short term, options include revising and clarifying policy to incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal and to emphasize where there are known impacts to Sage-Grouse habitat; to clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see habitat section of this report), and to clarify that thresholds and responses can vary given differing habitat types. Additional short-term options include developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders; and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. In each policy and training, clarify that proper livestock grazing is compatible with Sage-Grouse habitat and can be used to address threats to Sage-Grouse and improve habitat conditions. Also, the BLM will continue to pursue targeted grazing pilot projects to demonstrate use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks and outcome-based grazing pilot projects to illustrate that flexible grazing permits can be used to respond effectively to changing conditions while helping to improve habitat conditions.

vi. *Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g. rights-of-way)*

The discussions centered on four distinct topics: 1) the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans identified broad exclusions and closure areas that may not address the specific uses and associated threats in the area; 2) a misunderstanding of how to evaluate proposed actions in an avoidance area; 3) available flexibility on application of required design features, and 4) lack of clarity on the purpose and application of lek buffers. The discussion varied according to the needs of each State, as there are complexities created by the various land ownership patterns (e.g. consolidated federal ownership vs. scattered federal ownership).

Options include evaluating each State's approach to identify inconsistencies and consider whether the State's mechanism, including compensatory mitigation, could provide appropriate conservation while providing for economic development. For example, if gravel pits are in an area closed to that use, and the State's mechanisms, including compensatory mitigation, for managing gravel pits may provide equivalent assurance for conservation of the species and its habitat then this topic should be further investigated.

The topics of how to implement an avoidance areas, the application of required design features (RDFs), and the use of lek buffers all share the need for additional clarity or training, including sharing lessons-learned across jurisdictional boundaries. In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate proposed uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers; this includes the consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers as well as local conditions and other factors. Additional research to evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs, and incorporation of new science into plan implementation as it becomes available is also recommended.

**vii. *Habitat Boundaries - Sagebrush Focal Area and Habitat Management Areas***

Concerns were identified with: 1) Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) designations and whether they are needed or if underlying PHMA or GHMA allocations and decisions are adequate to meet Sage-Grouse conservation and durability; and 2) BLM's ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States. States regularly refine habitat maps delineating GHMA and PHMA Sage-Grouse habitat through on the ground verification and incorporation of new information and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans may not provide the flexibility to incorporate these updates.

In the short-term, investigate each plan to determine if there is flexibility to adopt revised habitat maps from the States to adjust Habitat Management Area boundaries and develop a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections, which may include considering plan amendments in some States. In the long-term, options include potential plan amendments to evaluate the need for SFAs or reverting to the underlying habitat management areas (PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc.). This would also include evaluating associated management actions or alternative management actions needed to achieve durable Sage-Grouse conservation.

**b. Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4(b)(ii) and 4(a) of the Order)**

Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, the BLM led an examination of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. This feedback and BLM's internal review inform the Recommended Additional Steps outlined in Appendix B. Feedback was received from the States of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as from the WAFWA.

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The following recommendations will further enhance the IRFMS:

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS, support ongoing State-led efforts including the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) Western Invasives Weed Action Plan, implement the National Seed Strategy, and implement action items from the National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative;
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) and Rural Fire Departments (RFDs), establishment of wildlife fire protection agreements, and support for the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy
- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Administration registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing;
- Work with DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting;
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multi-year funding of projects to increase likelihood of success; and
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high risk/high value areas, including increasing BLM's fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

**c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)**

As a state trust species, individual states exercise their authority to manage and conserve Sage-grouse according to their own laws and policies. In response to Secretarial Order 3353, the WAFWA developed four technical white papers (Appendix F) to summarize the current scientific literature and management experience on the issues of: (1) captive breeding; (2) population objectives; (3) predator control, and (4) hunting. As recognized by Secretarial

Order 3353 and others, it is the prerogative of each individual state to conserve and manage state trust species, and thus to determine whether a statewide population target is appropriate, and whether any of these management tools should be implemented within the respective states. The Sage Grouse Task Force offered the following for consideration:

- i. Captive breeding, as a wildlife management tool, is best suited to augmenting small, at-risk populations for short periods of time, while factors contributing to population declines are simultaneously addressed. Because captive breeding of Sage-Grouse has not proven effective, requires expenditures that would limit funding availability for other priority efforts, and requires the removal of potentially viable eggs from the wild, new captive breeding efforts should not be initiated until present efforts can be fully evaluated.
- ii. While state wildlife agencies set population objectives routinely for big game and/or large carnivores based on species biology, landowner tolerance, public safety, habitat availability, and social factors, most states do not routinely establish statewide population targets for avian species like Sage-Grouse. Sage-Grouse populations respond to climate, weather, and habitat conditions at different, often very fine scales. Thus, Sage-Grouse numbers vary widely in a relatively short period of time, within individual states and across the range. States manage Sage-Grouse in part based on male lek counts as an indicator of habitat availability, condition, and other factors. While states support efforts to estimate and explain populations, fluctuations, and trends, any such effort must recognize and account for the relationship between the species and its habitat. Further, any population metric would have to reflect the natural range of variability, include confidence intervals, and be tied to habitat availability. Ultimately, the best method for determining Sage-Grouse viability will be combination of habitat availability and populations, which are inseparable. Therefore, establishing a statewide or range-wide Sage-Grouse population objective or target may have limited utility and may be further explored by some States or WAFWA.

The primary issue relative to predation is the recent emergence of predation by species that Sage-Grouse either did not evolve with, or did not confront in current numbers. Specifically, among these are Corvid species. Excessive predation by avian and/or mammalian predators may be occurring in localized settings, but is not a uniform pressure across the landscape or range-wide. Localized predation can be a significant threat for small, isolated, or reintroduced populations. Even in those circumstances, however, predator control should be simultaneous with efforts to address the underlying reasons for predator population growth or concentration in localized areas of concern for Sage-Grouse.

- iii. Management of multiple factors that provide predator subsidies, such as open landfills or unneeded infrastructure that provides nesting or perching sites is a low cost, sustainable strategy. It would be helpful if the DOI provided clear policy guidance, established a uniform process, and set out consistent reporting requirements for how states or their cooperators undertake avian predator control consistent with current law and international

treaties. It is important that predator control efforts be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future decisions about how to prioritize available funding.

- iv. Hunting is an adequately regulated activity managed by states to avoid additive mortality (above and beyond natural annual mortality) so that it does not contribute to population declines. Common techniques implemented by states include short seasons, low limits of take and permit only hunt systems. Harvest strategies in many states can be considered more conservative than guidelines suggest. In addition to these conservative strategies, providing hunting opportunities, when appropriate and sustainable, provides an avenue to obtain Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration grant funding for a multitude of conservation efforts related to Sage-Grouse including inventory and monitoring, local conservation planning and project implementation, and research, among other endeavors that provides states with much needed information on the status of the species.

Appendix C provides a summary of potential next steps.

**d. Data Management and the use of Science (Addressing Sections 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team**

Addressing priority science needs of managers and sharing high-quality science and information, including locally collected monitoring and assessment data, among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem. Continued integration of locally-collected, on-the-ground data with peer-reviewed science and other high-quality information helps to form the foundation for management decisions and an evaluation of new science and information. Attributes including peer-review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions can help determine quality and reliability of the information.

Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for sharing science, information, and data can help facilitate ongoing Sage-Grouse and sagebrush management efforts. Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency agreements, and online data catalogs (both public and private). Updating information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can improve the use of new information, increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes, reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues, and provide opportunities for inclusion of local and traditional ecological knowledge.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D):

- Implement the IRFMS Actionable Science Plan.
- Coordinate research efforts among agencies and organizations, including science needs related to human dimensions and economics.
- Develop processes to use data from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journals, agency data, and locally collected partner information.

- Work to provide policy-makers and managers with science and data in a form most useful to decision making.
- Continue to emphasize the need for locally-relevant science and data to inform implementation of management actions.
- Establish data standards and data sharing agreements, resolve barriers to data sharing, and improve procedures for maintaining and updating data.
- Develop methods to gather and use local and traditional ecological knowledge.

## V. NEXT STEPS

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team and SGTF recommend the following next steps:

- Reaffirm Department and State commitment to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF's charter as needed. Coordinate with individual States to determine the need for, and as appropriate, develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation.
- Work with USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this Report, considering the USFS's unique plans and associated decisions, and laws and regulations. Work to align recommendations and future actions to the maximum extent possible.
- Continue to work with the States to further refine the options in this report and identify multi-state or state-specific solutions as needed.
- Initiate additional discussions with counties, local governments, tribes, and other interested parties (such as ranchers, landowners, industries, and conservation organizations) to review the issues and recommendations included in this report and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the Report is approved by the Secretary and is expected to continue for approximately two months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short-term options in this Report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify other clarifications or policy approaches that could address and resolve issues. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate whether clarification and policy actions sufficiently address the issues identified by the States and other partners or if additional actions should be considered. For longer-term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issue and potential plan amendments, including evaluating state-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of Sage-Grouse. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or November).
- Review revised policies and evaluate potential plan amendments as appropriate. This work is recommended to occur during and after the January meeting of the SGTF.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA NSO Stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each state to evaluate whether GHMA and PHMA stipulations already provide for the durable conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, plan amendment to consider eliminating SFAs or reducing the size of SFAs with new stipulations. May be state-specific outcome.	Multi-state
GHMA Stipulations (vary by state)	On a state by state basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of PHMA, and informs industry what is expected from them.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations and issue state-specific policy as needed; determine if a CSU stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multi-state (UT in particular)
PHMA NSO WEM Language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs which recognizes the state's mitigation hierarchy, maintain collaborative approach, and remove FWS role in approving WEM.  Short-term option to clarify which mechanism to modify WEMs is identified as an immediate action item. Then work with the States to engage with partners and stakeholders on the short-term evaluation or potential adjustment process.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs and work with the states to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE-CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lease Prioritization IM Immediate Action Item	Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.  Short-term option to clarify to staff leasing is not restricted in GRSG Habitat identified as an immediate action item by some states.	Clarify that all habitat types open for leasing. Modify and Reissue IM to address other concerns	None at this time	Multi-state
	Rescind the National IM.  Then issue state level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and including state-specific solutions  Short-term option identified as an immediate action item by some states	Rescind the National IM and develop BLM state specific IMs that includes all habitat types are open for leasing and other state-specific concerns	If the BLM State Level IMs do not address the issues; then a plan amendment to consider addressing concerns.	Multi-State
Density and Disturbance	There is variation between the states on what counts as a disturbance and towards a density cap, the level of disturbance that is allowed, and the scales the caps apply to, project or BSU. There is a need for a consolidated (BLM/State) process so industry knows where to start and the steps to follow.  On a state-by-state basis develop a crosswalk to explore the potential to develop a density and disturbance process that recognizes State specific issues and needed flexibilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based in science for the difference in calculation of the cap or what counts for disturbance and density; and the appropriate scale, e.g., project or BSU.</li> </ul>	If no inconsistencies then solidify through BLM State Level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.  Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation  In cooperation with the state, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.	If inconsistencies then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require future consideration of a plan amendment process.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Inconsistent Mitigation Standards	<p>BLM plans have a net conservation gain standard while the state mechanisms have adopted differing standards. There is confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States wish to use the State mitigation approach to achieve a seamless mitigation standard and approach across state, private, and federal lands. States have various definitions for their mitigation standard including net gain, habitat assurance, no net loss, no net loss with conservation benefit, and others. Many of the State standards also account for the risk of the action to achieve the desired environmental benefit.</p> <p>Removing the net conservation gain language creates issues for some states as they have adopted that language as the standard for their state mitigation mechanism.</p> <p>States want to apply mitigation actions on federal lands while meeting the mitigation principles in the WGA report.</p> <p>Recognize that federal land users must also comply with state requirements, when applicable.</p> <p>Recognize that DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, including the compensatory mitigation standards and may issue revised policy, including consideration of a 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard.</p>	<p>Define net conservation gain for the BLM plans.</p> <p>Evaluate and document each State's mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of net conservation gain</p> <p>Consider policy on options to use the State's mitigation standard if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the GRSG plans</p>	<p>If policy does not address the concern then a plan amendment to consider changing the net conservation gain standard may be appropriate. Options to further evaluate could include using each State's standard (may vary by State), setting a minimum standard for public lands and using the State standard if it is higher, or setting a standard for public lands while the State standard applies to State and private lands.</p> <p>Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with Departmental policy on mitigation.</p>	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
State Mitigation Plans	Use the state mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	Complete a MOU with each state on application of the state mitigation approach if it is consistent with the BLM plans and meets the principles in the WGA Mitigation Report and DOI policy  If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach	None at this time	Multi-state
Regional Mitigation Strategies	In coordination with the states, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time.	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
How are habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM data and HAF assessments related?	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and Land Use Plan Effectiveness</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the Land Health Standards evaluation and management decisions</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well</p> <p>Issuance of policy identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Issue IMs to provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of Land Health Standards; using habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness</p> <p>Continue outreach and training to on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information</p>	None at this time	Multi-State
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions not just grazing</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with BLM, other agencies, and states, including the Department of Agriculture</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF as well as how these relate to the Habitat Objectives Table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	None at this time	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework - Continued	<p>Explore use of and continue the development of tools to streamline habitat assessments (e.g. remote sensing) for rapid assessment of habitat conditions.</p> <p>Issuance of new HAF IM identified as an immediate action item by some states</p>	Continue to learn from the pilot studies (e.g. Oregon State and Transition Model) and other tools to streamline habitat assessments, and advance or integrate outcomes into BLM's approach to HAF and related work through IM or other policy clarification and training.	None at this time	Multi-State
Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM).	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated.</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between NOC and FO.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	Issue clarification that addresses concerns; provide training	None at this time	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Adjusting the Habitat Objectives Table	<p>Codify guidance issued on Habitat Objectives Table in an Instruction Memorandum which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to Habitat Objectives Table as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in Habitat Objectives Table are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (Not all states have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives table from the plan and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement as described in 43 CFR. 4180.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on the intent, purpose, and use of habitat objectives table, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans.</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for sage-grouse, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan, an amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Causal Factor Analysis	Work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each state to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers	None at this time	Multi-state
Reversion of Trigger Responses when conditions improve	Work with states on process to revert back to previous management or change the response based on positive habitat/population response	Evaluate plans to determine which don't have a "reversion" clause and whether each plan provides any flexibility to address through policy.	Plan amendment process to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger	Multi-state
Implementation Of Hard Trigger Responses	Work with states to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.  Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.	Work with states on development of the process in the recommendation.	Plan amendment process considering options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger such as a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Multi-state
Adaptive Management Policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM state specific IM to address advance coordination with the states and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM	Modify the current IM	None at this time	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Research and Data Collection Needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached and identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement pre-defined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify what those multi-prong impacts to population are.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis</p>	<p><i>Defer to science and data sharing issue topic for recommendation.</i></p>		
SFAs are inconsistent with the State Plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Develop an informational bulletin (IB) to clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFAs.</p>	Idaho

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**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING**

Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
<p>Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat.</p>	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/ fragmentation).</p> <p>Should not be spending a lot of time monitoring and inspecting allotments that are providing good quality sagebrush habitat</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for sage grouse.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage for quality GRSG habitat.</p> <p>Revise prioritization IM to develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multi-state</p>
<p>Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.</p>	<p>Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit</p>	<p>Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance</p>	<p>None at this time.</p>	<p>Multi-state</p>

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TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED				
Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit	Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance	None at this time.	Multi-state
SFA prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs	None at this time	Multi-state
Creation of Research Natural Areas could result in loss of AUMs, economic losses and potential effects to habitat.	The Oregon ARMPA includes RNA designation. While the general issue of research and related designations--including with varying levels of livestock use--is not something Oregon opposes, the State Action Plan does not include RNA designations. The state is concerned over potential impacts to livestock operators on allotments made subject to RNA designations, especially if unsupported by indications of adverse habitat impacts caused by livestock grazing management.	Work with Oregon to evaluate RNAs and grazing closures.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single state (Oregon)
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment and relationship to future grazing, grass banks, or other uses.	When grazing permits or leases are voluntarily relinquished or where allotments otherwise become vacant, current Oregon ARMPA language would make retirement of permits an option under these circumstances. The steps BLM takes pursuant to current and ARMPA-adopted language at the point in time following voluntary relinquishment or vacancy should not run counter to state interests in working lands and habitat health.	Ensure LG / RM 15 language in the OR ARMPA is consistent with regulation and as needed develop state specific policy on its use	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)
Habitat Objectives Table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the west.	<i>See Habitat Objectives section</i>			
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See Lek Buffer section</i>			

**Appendix A - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the state's approach	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with state partners evaluate if the states plans would provide durable conservation while providing exceptions to activities so they can proceed while conserving the species.	On a state by state basis complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities	If short-term flexibilities don't resolve concerns, evaluate plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multi-State
Maintenance and Production Activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multi-State
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in PHMA under the use of the state's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multi-State
Valid Existing Rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognized valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multi-State

**Appendix A - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Misinterpretation of “avoidance” in the field.	Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see CO and NV for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue state-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a plan amendment.	Multi-State
Plans do not recognize the state’s guidance that some activities are “de minimus” - negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	<p>Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.</p> <p>Long-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Evaluate “de minimus” activities as defined in state plans and evaluate against federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>Development of programmatic NEPA documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of CXs for de minimus activities.</p>	Multi-State

**Appendix A - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g. TIMING AND TALL STRUCUTUES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using state developed required design features.	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features outside those identified as the current plans can be used without further analysis by the BLM. Design features selected should help to encourage development in lower quality habitat (e.g., in GHMA instead of PHMA).	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to project and to use other RDFs, including state RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time.	Multi-state
Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in the project level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time.	Multi-state
Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use required design features (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that required design features are not a “one-size-fit-all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, the plan amendments may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in state plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Multi-state

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**TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS**

Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
<p>Lek buffer distances are incompatible with state buffer distances for some types of development (e.g. range improvements).</p>	<p>Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat – which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.</p> <p>Suggest a two-step process of clarifying justifiable departures and then streamline the process using local information.</p> <p>Need to revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers ahead of initiating new science for buffers</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures. Evaluate each plan to ensure adequate flexibility to address project specific information is available.</p> <p>Revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers.</p>	<p>If needed, initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses and identify any potential changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue then evaluate a plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>
<p>Clarify regarding how to apply lek buffers (i.e. distance for NEPA analysis vs. a distance to restrict activities).</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and ROD description should be used, and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project specific information.</p>	<p>Development of policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation and clarify language in ROD and Plan.</p> <p>Evaluate need for templates, streamlined processes, and programmatic analysis to standardize the evaluation of lek buffers, including justifiable departures, in project level analysis.</p>	<p>None at this time.</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA Designations	<p>Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.</p> <p>Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable conservation of the species.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions or change those SFA management actions as described elsewhere in this table.</p>	Multi-state
Need flexibility to change PHMA/GHMA boundaries	<p>Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground survey and improved understanding of sage-grouse habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.</p> <p>Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.</p> <p>Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, WEMs, exclusion and avoidance, etc. in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.</p>	<p>Plan amendments to consider aligning PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc. and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground survey, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.</p>	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs) - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
GHMA is inconsistent with Utah's plan.	GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.	<p>Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.</p> <p>Also consider the application of the state mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.</p>	Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a state specific plan amendment.	Utah Specific

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected states provided feedback	Incorporate additional information received from states and other stakeholders
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management and provide recommendations to improve management	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing IRFMS Action Items Complete the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the IRFMS	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communication Framework (SAGE WEST) Support development and implementation of WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Department of Agriculture's (WASDA) Western Invasive Weed Action Plan Support implementation of the National Seed Strategy Support the Memorandum of Understanding between BLM, FS and the NRCS to improve coordination with private landowners and promote cross boundary projects that address invasive species and wildland fire.
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators (RFPAs, RFDs)	Reinstate grant authority, and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators Address the GSA policy which prevents excess federal firefighting equipment (e.g. Engines, radios) from going directly to RFPAs and RFDs Explore options for shared funded positions to enhance cooperative efforts (i.e. RFPA support). Continue to support and develop additional Rangeland Fire Protection Associations
Consider related WGA efforts that enhance implementation of the IRFMS	Further action items in the Western Governor's National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative (2017) such as: expanding Good Neighbor Authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating federal, state, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; flexibilities in grazing management
Improve coordination with states on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Ensure funding for fire, fuels and restoration projects	<p>Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding, multi-year funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects.</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the Department. The risk-based funding modelling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding, but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and Improve restoration success	<p>Conduct research, testing and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g. bio-pesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies	<p>Work with appropriate Departments, Agencies, Offices and companies to gain approval of concurrent (EPA) registration and field-testing of bio-pesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-agency specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use an pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration</p>

**Appendix C – Wildlife Management**  
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<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator Control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled and the short- and long-term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range-wide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess Greater Sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Address priority science needs and increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts</p>	<p>Implement the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan. Actions include: coordination of research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among state and federal agencies and other organizations, implementation of research efforts, as funding allows, and development of a tracking mechanism for publications and products.</p> <p>In collaboration with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts, identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions and economics in the sagebrush ecosystem, and address prioritized science needs, as funding allows.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data and other information from entities other than federal or state agencies to ensure it meets quality, reliability and relevance standards for use.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data to identify new potential science needs that can be addressed using formal experimental or other scientific investigations.</p> <p>Work to increase development of information products that translate and synthesize peer-reviewed science into more accessible formats for decision-makers and improve access to peer-reviewed science journals for those that need that level of information.</p> <p>Continue to emphasize the need for locally-relevant peer-reviewed science, high-quality information, and local on-the-ground data that is pertinent to implementation of management actions</p> <p>Evaluate use of Sage Grouse Task Force as coordinating body for the intersection of science with policy and management and to identify priority science and data needs to inform management and policy.</p>
<p>Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that non-proprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data from can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements for information included in shared data catalogs and information gathered by third party sources for potential inclusion in agency databases or use in decision-making.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing - Continued	<p>Identify multi-scale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information, when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and Tribes to explore options to improve or develop data-sharing mechanisms for capturing species observations as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**Appendix E - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT RELATED SPECIFCALLY TO THE 2105 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Reserve Common Allotments.	Reserve common allotments are a tool available on public lands that could be used to provide alternative locations for grazing permittees/leases when their allotment is unavailable due to fire, restoration activities, or other reasons. However, there are concerns that designation of allotments as reserve common allotments could take those allotments out of regular use and result in economic loss. Further investigation with BLM, SGTF, ranchers and other stakeholders is warranted to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be considered.	Engage with SGTF, Counties, Public Lands Council, ranchers, and other stakeholders to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be used.		Multi-state
Water Rights	Concern that BLM may be managing water rights they don't own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. May be a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressly in the sage-grouse plans.	Further investigation and clarification as needed		Multi-state. Utah, Idaho, Nevada
Changes in grazing management following natural events	Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.  Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level	Further investigation and clarification as needed		Multi-state
Wild Horse and Burro: Appropriate Management Level achievement	Verify that BLM has the tools and funding to get to AML across the west. Evaluate priorities, for example, priority given to SFAs potentially limits funding and staff to initiate gathers in PHMA	BLM states reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with states. Elevate unresolved issue to management.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long-term resolution.	Multi-state
Herd Management Areas and associated AML may need to be analyzed for adjustments.	Implement solutions for reaching current AML prior to reevaluating HMAs and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML has been reached.	Multi-state

**Appendix F - WAFWA Issue Papers**  
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**Augmenting Sage-grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and other Means**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994, Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild, however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1

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September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Attwater's prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

### **Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season {31 Mar}**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Hatchability</b>	<b>Survival to release</b>	<b>Post-release survival to 31 Mar.</b>	<b>Number of birds or eggs needed</b>	<b>Net Removal from source population</b>
<b>Spring transplant</b>	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
<b>Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old</b>	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
<b>Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old</b>	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
<b>Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old</b>	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
<b>Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old</b>	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private

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possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

### Conclusions

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*

**Appendix F - WAFWA Issue Papers**  
**FINAL DRAFT FOR REVIEW - NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED 07/28/17**  
**Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-grouse**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse *by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al. (2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number

## Appendix F - WAFWA Issue Papers

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of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

### **Conclusions:**

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

***Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at wafwa.org***

**Appendix F - WAFWA Issue Papers**  
**FINAL DRAFT FOR REVIEW - NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED 07/28/17**  
**Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-grouse**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boorman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boorman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

**Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

**Hunting Sage-grouse, Impacts and Management**  
**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily

and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily, 4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

**Conclusions:**

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## REPORT IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order). In response to the Order, the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage Grouse Review Team (DOI Team)<sup>1</sup> and sought input from the Eleven Western States<sup>2</sup> identified in the Order. The DOI Team also coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS). The DOI Team respectfully requests the Secretary accept this report, and direct the agencies to implement the recommendations and periodically report outcomes to the Deputy Secretary.

Together, the DOI Team and the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF), made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the eleven States, identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order. The DOI Team and the SGTF are committed to a balanced approach that provides both responsible economic development and long term conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse). This commitment includes an interest in retaining the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, using policy and clarifications to better align them with State plans and programs and meet the purposes of the Order, while continuing joint engagement to further define consideration of potential targeted plan amendments. The federal agencies and States are also committed to continue to work with partners to prioritize staff and funding to implement the plans, particularly with respect to on-the-ground conservation and restoration actions.

The DOI Team and the SGTF affirm that the issues and options identified in this report are not “one size fits all” and should be further tailored to each State’s needs. Whenever possible, the options provide near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the purpose of the order, including development of policies, clarification, MOUs, and training, many of which can be completed within six months. The SGTF and the DOI Team also identified longer-term options, including potential plan amendments which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies.

This report recommends continued collaboration with the States, including both through the SGTF and between each Governor’s offices and the respective Bureau of Land Management (BLM) State Director and USFS Regional Director. This report also recommends engagement on the issues and options identified in this report with counties and tribes, as well as with ranchers, industry, conservation groups and other stakeholders. This additional engagement would be used to refine the options and develop a prioritized plan for implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> The DOI Team consists of co-leads Kathleen Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary - BLM, and John Ruhs, BLM Deputy Director-Operations, Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary – Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Gregory Sheehan, FWS Deputy Director, Anne Kinsinger, USGS Associate Director for Ecosystems, Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Liaison to State and Local Government, Timothy Williams, Deputy Director of External Affairs, Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary, and Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The eleven States are California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

The review conducted in response to the Order identified many opportunities, summarized in this report, to clarify the BLM's management under the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans that could address the issues identified. Clarifications, policies, agreements, or training could largely address issues related to habitat assessment and monitoring, including the Habitat Assessment Framework, and grazing management; could take advantage of flexibility in the plan to support energy, mineral and other development; could increase consistency between the BLM and States on density and disturbance caps and mitigation; and might in some cases, based on a case-by-case review of each plan, allow adjustments to habitat boundaries and address issues with adaptive management.

The review also identified longer-term options to consider some issues through a plan amendment process. This report recommends further investigation and definition of potential plan amendments, including considering what combination of potential plan amendments would best balance continuing to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and supporting economic development, and whether to consider state-by-state or range-wide amendments. Potential plan amendments could be considered in some states to address adjustments to habitat management boundaries; to adjust responses to reaching adaptive management triggers; to evaluate the compensatory mitigation standard; and to provide additional flexibility in resource development.

The report identifies opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management; for MOUs, data sharing, new research, and incorporating new information into plan implementation. The report also includes recommendations from the States on captive breeding, translocations, predator control, and setting population targets.

## II. BACKGROUND

The Sage-Grouse is a State-managed species throughout its range with approximately half of its habitat managed by the BLM and USFS. State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950's. For the past two decades, the State wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been coordinating efforts to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitats.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that Sage-Grouse was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing by other species with higher listing priority. In the finding, FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and lack of regulatory mechanisms as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to identify conservation objectives for Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for fourteen potential threats facing the Sage-Grouse including: fire, non-native invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, wild horses and burros, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences.

The BLM and USFS initiated land use planning processes to provide regulatory certainty in addressing population declines, habitat loss, and the potential threats to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and avoid the need to list under the ESA. Early in the process, the BLM and USFS collaborated with the States to pursue state-by-state land use planning. These state-by-state approaches were supplemented with range-wide decisions to increase consistency between

the plans and to respond to the FWS 2010 listing determination. Several States identified instances where they did not believe the final approved BLM plan was consistent with the applicable State Plan, particularly with regards to range-wide decisions. There were also concerns that the records of decision and final approved plans included decisions from alternatives other than preferred alternative (as described in the proposed plans and final environmental impact statements) and therefore differed from what the States expected based on the collaborative planning efforts.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 Sage-Grouse Plans) across the ten<sup>3</sup> Western States addressing, in part, Sage-Grouse and its habitat. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven Instruction Memoranda (IMs) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS determined the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans provided certainty for conservation of the species and committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

The BLM, USFS, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), FWS, State agencies, and other partners have been working collaboratively to implement the federal and state plans to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitat. A particular focus has been placed on an all-lands approach, encompassing federal, state, and private lands, to achieve habitat restoration, fire control, and fuels management. Through these efforts, hundreds of thousands of acres of sagebrush rangelands have been restored or are on their way to being restored.

### III. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and the associated technical team met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for State input on the items identified in the Order. The BLM also began working with each State to gather information related to the Order, including State-specific issues and potential options for actions with respect to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and IMs to identify opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF developed an initial list of issues and refined those issues and options on a state-by-state basis while working with the respective BLM State Directors. In July, 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF twice met to further refine and validate the issues and options presented in this Report.

The following was completed to specifically address the following sections of the Order:

- Section 4(b)(i), (iii), and (iv) of the order, each BLM State Director worked with their Governor's office(s) to review State plans and programs and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

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<sup>3</sup> While Washington State is included in the review for this Order, the State was not part of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. A BLM land use plan which will include Sage-Grouse conservation in Washington is currently under development.

- Section 4(b)(ii), the DOI Team worked with the SGTF and individual Governor's offices to further examine invasive species and wildland fire issues.
- Section 4(b)(v), the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) developed and submitted to SGTF white papers on each of the topics.
- The DOI Team also worked with the SGTF and the individual Governor's offices to gather further information on data and science.

In each of these reviews, the need for memoranda of understanding and other agreements and training as called for in Section 4(a) of the Order and cooperative management and collaborative partnerships as called for in Section 5(c) of the Order were also considered. These individual reviews were then rolled up for further discussion with the SGTF and the DOI Team. Based on these reviews, the SGTF and DOI Team identified issues, potential options, and next steps to address those issues for inclusion in this report in response to Section 5(d) of the Order.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of the issues identified and potential options to address those issues (see Appendix A), as well as recommendations on the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science (see Appendices B-D). Appendix E contains other issues identified that are not directly related to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and are not addressed in this report, but may warrant further coordination between BLM and the States. Appendix F contains white papers developed by WAFWA related to wildlife topics.

With regards to Washington State, a new BLM plan has not yet been issued. Based on the Order and the recommendations included in this report for the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, Washington State and the BLM office will review the draft plan to identify any further opportunities to increase compatibility with the State plan and to address the elements of the Order and consider the options included in this report.

In discussions with the SGTF, there was general consensus that all partners were committed to ensuring durable conservation of Sage-Grouse that would ensure there was no need to list Sage-Grouse under the ESA in the future. There was agreement that monitoring and reporting on conservation actions, habitat condition and trend, and economic development are essential. Such monitoring is key to demonstrate the effectiveness of state and federal Sage-Grouse plans in addressing the threats, including habitat fragmentation, fire, and invasive species, as well as support for local economic opportunities and development.

This report includes short and long-term approaches to address issues of concern such as through policy, clarification, and training (short-term), as well as investigating potential targeted plan amendments (long-term). Certain options are prioritized for further work to begin immediately, including identifying options to incorporate updated habitat boundaries into habitat management areas; to clarify mechanisms to modify waivers, exceptions, and modifications in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA); to modify the Fluid Mineral Lease Prioritization policy; to issue or modify policy and provide training on use of the habitat objectives table from the 2015 Sage-Grouse plans; to identify options for addressing hard trigger responses when applying adaptive management decisions; and researching the ability to streamline authorizations for activities with little or no impact on Sage-Grouse.

a. **2015 Sage-Grouse Plan and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii) (iv) and 4(a) of the order)**

i. ***Fluid Minerals (Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions, Modifications, Leasing Prioritization) and Density and Disturbance***

There are multiple opportunities to be responsive to the Presidential Order on Promoting Energy Independence and the Secretarial Order on American Energy Independence, while continuing a robust commitment to the conservation of Sage-Grouse. A cooperative DOI and State effort can provide the flexibility for responsible economic growth and at the same time ensure conservation of Sage-Grouse habitat.

The areas of leasing prioritization and the PHMA stipulation's waivers, exception, and modification language were suggested areas for the BLM to start focusing on after the submittal of this report. Leasing prioritization options include policy clarification while investigating the approach to issue new IMs. For waiver, exception, and modification language for PHMA stipulations, investigate opportunities to provide additional waivers, modifications, and exceptions through policy or potential plan amendments. For GHMA, stipulations used vary on a state-by-state basis, options to develop state-specific policy or training to use existing flexibility or consider alternative stipulations will be evaluated. For SFA, longer-term options include considering a plan amendment to modify or remove stipulations.

The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans define processes for calculating the amount of surface disturbance and the density of energy and mining facilities. The plans recognized State processes if they were in place prior to the plans being approved and if the data could be accessed to meet reporting requirements for density of development and acres disturbed and reclaimed. Some States have developed or are in the process of developing new tools for density and disturbance calculations. For some States there may be differences between the State plans and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans in the list of disturbances to count and the appropriate scale (project and Biologically Significant Unit) where the disturbance and density caps should apply. Options include the BLM and the States identifying state-specific inconsistencies and evaluating the various processes and tools for 1) consistency between Federal and State approaches, 2) conservation adequacy, and 3) the ability to report on disturbance associated with uses, and restoration actions that result in achieving conservation of the habitat.

ii. ***Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain***

There are concerns that the mitigation requirements in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans (including the net conservation gain standard) may be different from requirements in State plans and confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States prefer consistency between State mitigation standards and the BLM mitigation standard and a definition that encompasses the various standards the States have adopted. The Department is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, and may issue revised policy, including consideration of various mitigation standards, such as 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard. It was recognized that if the states have permitting authority that includes compensatory mitigation requirements, applicants for uses on

public lands would need to meet both State and Federal compensatory mitigation requirements. The DOI Team and the SGTF agree that consistent application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, and compensate) including compensatory mitigation standards, and other requirements between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures is desirable. Additional coordination on the approach to mitigation and standards is a priority.

In 2015, the SGTF formed the Sage-Grouse Mitigation Workgroup to develop a report to provide for greater certainty of implementing mitigation across the range. The report, Sage-Grouse Mitigation, was delivered to the SGTF in December of 2016. The report identifies the key principles for successful compensatory mitigation efforts. This report may be helpful to further coordinate on mitigation. States have demonstrated, or are confident that as their mechanism(s) become available, that their mitigation approaches are or will be adequate to meet the principles in this mitigation framework while supporting economic development. States have indicated that compensatory mitigation to offset unavoidable impacts is an important tool, in addition to restrictions associated with avoid and minimize, to provide increased flexibility and options to authorize development and provide adequate conservation of the habitat.

In the short term, options to address concerns related to mitigation include defining “net conservation gain” and developing policy and MOUs with the states to coordinate and clarify options for use of each State’s approach when applying mitigation, including meeting the net conservation gain standard. Longer-term options could include a potential plan amendment to consider changes to the federal standard, options could include using the State standards, setting a Federal standard as a minimum and using the State standards if they are equal or higher than the Federal standard, or using the Federal standard on public land and the State standard on private or state lands.

**iii. *Habitat Assessment, Habitat Objectives Table, and Effectiveness Monitoring***

The SGTF and DOI Team discussed issues relating to confusion on the use and inconsistent application of the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF), Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data, other data, and the Habitat Objectives Table. Clarifications on how information is collected and used will improve the way BLM evaluates Sage-Grouse habitat and the application of the data and habitat objectives table to management decisions on public lands.

In the short term, options include revising the policies on Habitat Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring to address the concerns raised; issuing new policy explaining how to use habitat objectives; and providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods. Other short-term options include investigating tools and methods to streamline gathering and reporting on habitats in good condition and focusing increased attention and time on degraded habitats or habitats at risk. In the longer-term, new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the habitat objectives table in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans to reflect best available science.

iv. *Adaptive Management*

The SGTF and DOI Team identified two main issues: 1) responses instituted in response to tripping a hard trigger prior to causal factor analysis may not address the threat identified in the analysis and 2) the inability to revert back to previous management when conditions improve after tripping a trigger.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process, including conducting causal analysis when either a soft or hard trigger is reached. However, most concerns with adaptive management can likely not be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (a) reverting to previous management actions when population or habitat recovers above the original trigger and more restrictive management actions are not required; and (b) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses.

v. *Livestock Grazing*

The SGTF and the DOI team recognize that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans do not clearly articulate that improper grazing is a potential threat to the conservation of Sage-Grouse, while proper grazing management may be a benefit to habitat management. This lack of clarity has created the perception of undue emphasis on livestock grazing in general, instead of focusing on improper grazing and has created confusion on how to prioritize and process grazing permits and monitoring actions at the field office level. The Grazing Allotment Prioritization policy and the Grazing and Threshold Responses policy could also provide additional flexibility in applying management appropriate to on-the-ground conditions.

In the short term, options include revising and clarifying policy to incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal and to emphasize where there are known impacts to Sage-Grouse habitat; to clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see habitat section of this report), and to clarify that thresholds and responses can vary given differing habitat types. Additional short-term options include developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders; and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. In each policy and training, clarify that proper livestock grazing is compatible with Sage-Grouse habitat and can be used to address threats to Sage-Grouse and improve habitat conditions. Also, the BLM will continue to pursue targeted grazing pilot projects to demonstrate use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks and outcome-based grazing pilot projects to illustrate that flexible grazing permits can be used to respond effectively to changing conditions while helping to improve habitat conditions.

vi. *Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g. rights-of-way)*

The discussions centered on four distinct topics: 1) the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans identified broad exclusions and closure areas that may not address the specific uses and associated threats in the area; 2) a misunderstanding of how to evaluate proposed actions in an avoidance area; 3) available flexibility on application of required design features, and 4) lack of clarity on the purpose and application of lek buffers. The discussion varied according to the needs of each State, as there are complexities created by the various land ownership patterns (e.g. consolidated federal ownership vs. scattered federal ownership).

Options include evaluating each State's approach to identify inconsistencies and consider whether the State's mechanism, including compensatory mitigation, could provide appropriate conservation while providing for economic development. For example, if gravel pits are in an area closed to that use, and the State's mechanisms, including compensatory mitigation, for managing gravel pits may provide equivalent assurance for conservation of the species and its habitat then this topic should be further investigated.

The topics of how to implement an avoidance areas, the application of required design features (RDFs), and the use of lek buffers all share the need for additional clarity or training, including sharing lessons-learned across jurisdictional boundaries. In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate proposed uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers; this includes the consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers as well as local conditions and other factors. Additional research to evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs, and incorporation of new science into plan implementation as it becomes available is also recommended.

**vii. *Habitat Boundaries - Sagebrush Focal Area and Habitat Management Areas***

Concerns were identified with: 1) Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) designations and whether they are needed or if underlying PHMA or GHMA allocations and decisions are adequate to meet Sage-Grouse conservation and durability; and 2) BLM's ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States. States regularly refine habitat maps delineating GHMA and PHMA Sage-Grouse habitat through on the ground verification and incorporation of new information and the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans may not provide the flexibility to incorporate these updates.

In the short-term, investigate each plan to determine if there is flexibility to adopt revised habitat maps from the States to adjust Habitat Management Area boundaries and develop a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections, which may include considering plan amendments in some States. In the long-term, options include potential plan amendments to evaluate the need for SFAs or reverting to the underlying habitat management areas (PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc.). This would also include evaluating associated management actions or alternative management actions needed to achieve durable Sage-Grouse conservation.

**b. Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4(b)(ii) and 4(a) of the Order)**

Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, the BLM led an examination of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. This feedback and BLM's internal review inform the Recommended Additional Steps outlined in Appendix B. Feedback was received from the States of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as from the WAFWA.

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The following recommendations will further enhance the IRFMS:

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS, support ongoing State-led efforts including the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) Western Invasives Weed Action Plan, implement the National Seed Strategy, and implement action items from the National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative;
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) and Rural Fire Departments (RFDs), establishment of wildlife fire protection agreements, and support for the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy
- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Administration registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing;
- Work with DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting;
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multi-year funding of projects to increase likelihood of success; and
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high risk/high value areas, including increasing BLM's fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

**c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)**

As a state trust species, individual states exercise their authority to manage and conserve Sage-grouse according to their own laws and policies. In response to Secretarial Order 3353, the WAFWA developed four technical white papers (Appendix F) to summarize the current scientific literature and management experience on the issues of: (1) captive breeding; (2) population objectives; (3) predator control, and (4) hunting. As recognized by Secretarial

Order 3353 and others, it is the prerogative of each individual state to conserve and manage state trust species, and thus to determine whether a statewide population target is appropriate, and whether any of these management tools should be implemented within the respective states. The Sage Grouse Task Force offered the following for consideration:

- i. Captive breeding, as a wildlife management tool, is best suited to augmenting small, at-risk populations for short periods of time, while factors contributing to population declines are simultaneously addressed. Because captive breeding of Sage-Grouse has not proven effective, requires expenditures that would limit funding availability for other priority efforts, and requires the removal of potentially viable eggs from the wild, new captive breeding efforts should not be initiated until present efforts can be fully evaluated.
- ii. While state wildlife agencies set population objectives routinely for big game and/or large carnivores based on species biology, landowner tolerance, public safety, habitat availability, and social factors, most states do not routinely establish statewide population targets for avian species like Sage-Grouse. Sage-Grouse populations respond to climate, weather, and habitat conditions at different, often very fine scales. Thus, Sage-Grouse numbers vary widely in a relatively short period of time, within individual states and across the range. States manage Sage-Grouse in part based on male lek counts as an indicator of habitat availability, condition, and other factors. While states support efforts to estimate and explain populations, fluctuations, and trends, any such effort must recognize and account for the relationship between the species and its habitat. Further, any population metric would have to reflect the natural range of variability, include confidence intervals, and be tied to habitat availability. Ultimately, the best method for determining Sage-Grouse viability will be combination of habitat availability and populations, which are inseparable. Therefore, establishing a statewide or range-wide Sage-Grouse population objective or target may have limited utility and may be further explored by some States or WAFWA.

The primary issue relative to predation is the recent emergence of predation by species that Sage-Grouse either did not evolve with, or did not confront in current numbers. Specifically, among these are Corvid species. Excessive predation by avian and/or mammalian predators may be occurring in localized settings, but is not a uniform pressure across the landscape or range-wide. Localized predation can be a significant threat for small, isolated, or reintroduced populations. Even in those circumstances, however, predator control should be simultaneous with efforts to address the underlying reasons for predator population growth or concentration in localized areas of concern for Sage-Grouse.

- iii. Management of multiple factors that provide predator subsidies, such as open landfills or unneeded infrastructure that provides nesting or perching sites is a low cost, sustainable strategy. It would be helpful if the DOI provided clear policy guidance, established a uniform process, and set out consistent reporting requirements for how states or their cooperators undertake avian predator control consistent with current law and international

treaties. It is important that predator control efforts be evaluated for effectiveness to inform future decisions about how to prioritize available funding.

- iv. Hunting is an adequately regulated activity managed by states to avoid additive mortality (above and beyond natural annual mortality) so that it does not contribute to population declines. Common techniques implemented by states include short seasons, low limits of take and permit only hunt systems. Harvest strategies in many states can be considered more conservative than guidelines suggest. In addition to these conservative strategies, providing hunting opportunities, when appropriate and sustainable, provides an avenue to obtain Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration grant funding for a multitude of conservation efforts related to Sage-Grouse including inventory and monitoring, local conservation planning and project implementation, and research, among other endeavors that provides states with much needed information on the status of the species.

Appendix C provides a summary of potential next steps.

**d. Data Management and the use of Science (Addressing Sections 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team**

Addressing priority science needs of managers and sharing high-quality science and information, including locally collected monitoring and assessment data, among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem. Continued integration of locally-collected, on-the-ground data with peer-reviewed science and other high-quality information helps to form the foundation for management decisions and an evaluation of new science and information. Attributes including peer-review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions can help determine quality and reliability of the information.

Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for sharing science, information, and data can help facilitate ongoing Sage-Grouse and sagebrush management efforts. Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency agreements, and online data catalogs (both public and private). Updating information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can improve the use of new information, increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes, reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues, and provide opportunities for inclusion of local and traditional ecological knowledge.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D):

- Implement the IRFMS Actionable Science Plan.
- Coordinate research efforts among agencies and organizations, including science needs related to human dimensions and economics.
- Develop processes to use data from a variety of sources including peer-reviewed journals, agency data, and locally collected partner information.

- Work to provide policy-makers and managers with science and data in a form most useful to decision making.
- Continue to emphasize the need for locally-relevant science and data to inform implementation of management actions.
- Establish data standards and data sharing agreements, resolve barriers to data sharing, and improve procedures for maintaining and updating data.
- Develop methods to gather and use local and traditional ecological knowledge.

## V. NEXT STEPS

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team and SGTF recommend the following next steps:

- Reaffirm Department and State commitment to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF's charter as needed. Coordinate with individual States to determine the need for, and as appropriate, develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation.
- Work with USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this Report, considering the USFS's unique plans and associated decisions, and laws and regulations. Work to align recommendations and future actions to the maximum extent possible.
- Continue to work with the States to further refine the options in this report and identify multi-state or state-specific solutions as needed.
- Initiate additional discussions with counties, local governments, tribes, and other interested parties (such as ranchers, landowners, industries, and conservation organizations) to review the issues and recommendations included in this report and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the Report is approved by the Secretary and is expected to continue for approximately two months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short-term options in this Report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify other clarifications or policy approaches that could address and resolve issues. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate whether clarification and policy actions sufficiently address the issues identified by the States and other partners or if additional actions should be considered. For longer-term options that include potential plan amendments, further refine the issue and potential plan amendments, including evaluating state-specific solutions and assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of Sage-Grouse. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or November).
- Review revised policies and evaluate potential plan amendments as appropriate. This work is recommended to occur during and after the January meeting of the SGTF.

**Appendix A - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA NSO Stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each state to evaluate whether GHMA and PHMA stipulations already provide for the durable conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, plan amendment to consider eliminating SFAs or reducing the size of SFAs with new stipulations. May be state-specific outcome.	Multi-state
GHMA Stipulations (vary by state)	On a state by state basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of PHMA, and informs industry what is expected from them.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations and issue state-specific policy as needed; determine if a CSU stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multi-state (UT in particular)
PHMA NSO WEM Language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs which recognizes the state's mitigation hierarchy, maintain collaborative approach, and remove FWS role in approving WEM.  Short-term option to clarify which mechanism to modify WEMs is identified as an immediate action item. Then work with the States to engage with partners and stakeholders on the short-term evaluation or potential adjustment process.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs and work with the states to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE-CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lease Prioritization IM Immediate Action Item	Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.	Clarify that all habitat types open for leasing. Modify and Reissue IM to address other concerns	None at this time	Multi-state
	Short-term option to clarify to staff leasing is not restricted in GRSG Habitat identified as an immediate action item by some states.			
Lease Prioritization IM Immediate Action Item	Rescind the National IM.	Rescind the National IM and develop BLM state specific IMs that includes all habitat types are open for leasing and other state-specific concerns	If the BLM State Level IMs do not address the issues; then a plan amendment to consider addressing concerns.	Multi-State
	Then issue state level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and including state-specific solutions  Short-term option identified as an immediate action item by some states			
Density and Disturbance	<p>There is variation between the states on what counts as a disturbance and towards a density cap, the level of disturbance that is allowed, and the scales the caps apply to, project or BSU. There is a need for a consolidated (BLM/State) process so industry knows where to start and the steps to follow.</p> <p>On a state-by-state basis develop a crosswalk to explore the potential to develop a density and disturbance process that recognizes State specific issues and needed flexibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based in science for the difference in calculation of the cap or what counts for disturbance and density; and the appropriate scale, e.g., project or BSU.</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies then solidify through BLM State Level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation</p> <p>In cooperation with the state, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	<p>If inconsistencies then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require future consideration of a plan amendment process.</p>	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Inconsistent Mitigation Standards	<p>BLM plans have a net conservation gain standard while the state mechanisms have adopted differing standards. There is confusion on the definition of net conservation gain. The States wish to use the State mitigation approach to achieve a seamless mitigation standard and approach across state, private, and federal lands. States have various definitions for their mitigation standard including net gain, habitat assurance, no net loss, no net loss with conservation benefit, and others. Many of the State standards also account for the risk of the action to achieve the desired environmental benefit.</p> <p>Removing the net conservation gain language creates issues for some states as they have adopted that language as the standard for their state mitigation mechanism.</p> <p>States want to apply mitigation actions on federal lands while meeting the mitigation principles in the WGA report.</p> <p>Recognize that federal land users must also comply with state requirements, when applicable.</p> <p>Recognize that DOI is currently reviewing its mitigation policies, including the compensatory mitigation standards and may issue revised policy, including consideration of a 1:1 ratio, equivalent value, no net loss, or other standard.</p>	<p>Define net conservation gain for the BLM plans.</p> <p>Evaluate and document each State's mitigation approach to determine if it meets the intent of net conservation gain</p> <p>Consider policy on options to use the State's mitigation standard if it meets the intent of the mitigation standard in the GRSG plans</p>	<p>If policy does not address the concern then a plan amendment to consider changing the net conservation gain standard may be appropriate. Options to further evaluate could include using each State's standard (may vary by State), setting a minimum standard for public lands and using the State standard if it is higher, or setting a standard for public lands while the State standard applies to State and private lands.</p> <p>Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with Departmental policy on mitigation.</p>	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
State Mitigation Plans	Use the state mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	Complete a MOU with each state on application of the state mitigation approach if it is consistent with the BLM plans and meets the principles in the WGA Mitigation Report and DOI policy  If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach	None at this time	Multi-state
Regional Mitigation Strategies	In coordination with the states, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time.	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
How are habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM data and HAF assessments related?	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and Land Use Plan Effectiveness</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the Land Health Standards evaluation and management decisions</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well</p> <p>Issuance of policy identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Issue IMs to provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of Land Health Standards; using habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness</p> <p>Continue outreach and training to on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information</p>	None at this time	Multi-State
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions not just grazing</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with BLM, other agencies, and states, including the Department of Agriculture</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF as well as how these relate to the Habitat Objectives Table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	None at this time	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework - Continued	<p>Explore use of and continue the development of tools to streamline habitat assessments (e.g. remote sensing) for rapid assessment of habitat conditions.</p> <p>Issuance of new HAF IM identified as an immediate action item by some states</p>	Continue to learn from the pilot studies (e.g. Oregon State and Transition Model) and other tools to streamline habitat assessments, and advance or integrate outcomes into BLM's approach to HAF and related work through IM or other policy clarification and training.	None at this time	Multi-State
Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM).	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated.</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between NOC and FO.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	Issue clarification that addresses concerns; provide training	None at this time	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Adjusting the Habitat Objectives Table	<p>Codify guidance issued on Habitat Objectives Table in an Instruction Memorandum which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to Habitat Objectives Table as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in Habitat Objectives Table are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (Not all states have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives table from the plan and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement as described in 43 CFR. 4180.</p> <p>Clarification was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on the intent, purpose, and use of habitat objectives table, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans.</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for sage-grouse, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan, an amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Causal Factor Analysis	Work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each state to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers	None at this time	Multi-state
Reversion of Trigger Responses when conditions improve	Work with states on process to revert back to previous management or change the response based on positive habitat/population response	Evaluate plans to determine which don't have a "reversion" clause and whether each plan provides any flexibility to address through policy.	Plan amendment process to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger	Multi-state
Implementation Of Hard Trigger Responses	Work with states to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline.  Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.	Work with states on development of the process in the recommendation.	Plan amendment process considering options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger such as a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Multi-state
Adaptive Management Policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM state specific IM to address advance coordination with the states and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM	Modify the current IM	None at this time	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Research and Data Collection Needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached and identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement pre-defined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify what those multi-prong impacts to population are.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis</p>	<p><i>Defer to science and data sharing issue topic for recommendation.</i></p>		
SFAs are inconsistent with the State Plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Develop an informational bulletin (IB) to clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFAs.</p>	Idaho

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**TOPIC AREA: GRAZING**

Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
<p>Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat.</p>	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/ fragmentation).</p> <p>Should not be spending a lot of time monitoring and inspecting allotments that are providing good quality sagebrush habitat</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for sage grouse.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with and can be beneficial to manage for quality GRSG habitat.</p> <p>Revise prioritization IM to develop methods to quickly assess and report conditions on areas where proper grazing is occurring and supporting quality habitat, and focus on problem areas.</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multi-state</p>
<p>Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.</p>	<p>Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit</p>	<p>Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance</p>	<p>None at this time.</p>	<p>Multi-state</p>

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TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED				
Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit	Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance	None at this time.	Multi-state
SFA prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs	None at this time	Multi-state
Creation of Research Natural Areas could result in loss of AUMs, economic losses and potential effects to habitat.	The Oregon ARMPA includes RNA designation. While the general issue of research and related designations--including with varying levels of livestock use--is not something Oregon opposes, the State Action Plan does not include RNA designations. The state is concerned over potential impacts to livestock operators on allotments made subject to RNA designations, especially if unsupported by indications of adverse habitat impacts caused by livestock grazing management.	Work with Oregon to evaluate RNAs and grazing closures.	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single state (Oregon)
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment and relationship to future grazing, grass banks, or other uses.	When grazing permits or leases are voluntarily relinquished or where allotments otherwise become vacant, current Oregon ARMPA language would make retirement of permits an option under these circumstances. The steps BLM takes pursuant to current and ARMPA-adopted language at the point in time following voluntary relinquishment or vacancy should not run counter to state interests in working lands and habitat health.	Ensure LG / RM 15 language in the OR ARMPA is consistent with regulation and as needed develop state specific policy on its use	To be determined based on outcome of short term option.	Single State (Oregon)
Habitat Objectives Table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the west.	<i>See Habitat Objectives section</i>			
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See Lek Buffer section</i>			

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Designation of exclusion areas may sometimes differ from the state's approach	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with state partners evaluate if the states plans would provide durable conservation while providing exceptions to activities so they can proceed while conserving the species.	On a state by state basis complete an evaluation of State approaches and plan flexibilities	If short-term flexibilities don't resolve concerns, evaluate plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multi-State
Maintenance and Production Activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multi-State
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in PHMA under the use of the state's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multi-State
Valid Existing Rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognized valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Misinterpretation of “avoidance” in the field.	Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see CO and NV for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue state-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a plan amendment.	Multi-State
Plans do not recognize the state’s guidance that some activities are “de minimus” - negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	<p>Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.</p> <p>Long-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Evaluate “de minimus” activities as defined in state plans and evaluate against federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>Development of programmatic NEPA documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of CXs for de minimus activities.</p>	Multi-State

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<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g. TIMING AND TALL STRUCUTUES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using state developed required design features.	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features outside those identified as the current plans can be used without further analysis by the BLM. Design features selected should help to encourage development in lower quality habitat (e.g., in GHMA instead of PHMA).	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select RDFs appropriate to project and to use other RDFs, including state RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time.	Multi-state
Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in the project level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time.	Multi-state
Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use required design features (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that required design features are not a “one-size-fit-all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, the plan amendments may be considered to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in state plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Multi-state

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**TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS**

Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
<p>Lek buffer distances are incompatible with state buffer distances for some types of development (e.g. range improvements).</p>	<p>Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat – which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.</p> <p>Suggest a two-step process of clarifying justifiable departures and then streamline the process using local information.</p> <p>Need to revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers ahead of initiating new science for buffers</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers and justifiable departures. Evaluate each plan to ensure adequate flexibility to address project specific information is available.</p> <p>Revisit the scientific literature pertaining to lek buffers.</p>	<p>If needed, initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses and identify any potential changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue then evaluate a plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>
<p>Clarify regarding how to apply lek buffers (i.e. distance for NEPA analysis vs. a distance to restrict activities).</p>	<p>Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and ROD description should be used, and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project specific information.</p>	<p>Development of policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation and clarify language in ROD and Plan.</p> <p>Evaluate need for templates, streamlined processes, and programmatic analysis to standardize the evaluation of lek buffers, including justifiable departures, in project level analysis.</p>	<p>None at this time.</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>

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TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs)				
Issue	Discussion	Short Term Option	Long Term Option	Scale
SFA Designations	<p>Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.</p> <p>Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable conservation of the species.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions or change those SFA management actions as described elsewhere in this table.</p>	Multi-state
Need flexibility to change PHMA/GHMA boundaries	<p>Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground survey and improved understanding of sage-grouse habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.</p> <p>Short-term option was identified as an immediate action item by some states.</p>	<p>Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.</p> <p>Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, WEMs, exclusion and avoidance, etc. in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.</p>	<p>Plan amendments to consider aligning PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc. and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground survey, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.</p>	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs) - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
GHMA is inconsistent with Utah's plan.	GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.	<p>Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.</p> <p>Also consider the application of the state mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.</p>	Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a state specific plan amendment.	Utah Specific

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected states provided feedback	Incorporate additional information received from states and other stakeholders
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management and provide recommendations to improve management	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing IRFMS Action Items Complete the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the IRFMS	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communication Framework (SAGE WEST) Support development and implementation of WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Department of Agriculture's (WASDA) Western Invasive Weed Action Plan Support implementation of the National Seed Strategy Support the Memorandum of Understanding between BLM, FS and the NRCS to improve coordination with private landowners and promote cross boundary projects that address invasive species and wildland fire.
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators (RFPAs, RFDs)	Reinstate grant authority, and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators Address the GSA policy which prevents excess federal firefighting equipment (e.g. Engines, radios) from going directly to RFPAs and RFDs Explore options for shared funded positions to enhance cooperative efforts (i.e. RFPA support). Continue to support and develop additional Rangeland Fire Protection Associations
Consider related WGA efforts that enhance implementation of the IRFMS	Further action items in the Western Governor's National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative (2017) such as: expanding Good Neighbor Authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating federal, state, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; flexibilities in grazing management
Improve coordination with states on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Ensure funding for fire, fuels and restoration projects	<p>Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding, multi-year funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects.</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the Department. The risk-based funding modelling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding, but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and Improve restoration success	<p>Conduct research, testing and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g. bio-pesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Continue investigating the use of targeted grazing and other tools to manage fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies	<p>Work with appropriate Departments, Agencies, Offices and companies to gain approval of concurrent (EPA) registration and field-testing of bio-pesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-agency specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use an pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration</p>

**Appendix C – Wildlife Management**  
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<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator Control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled and the short- and long-term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range-wide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess Greater Sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**FINAL DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED – 07/28/2017**

<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
<p>Address priority science needs and increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts</p>	<p>Implement the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan. Actions include: coordination of research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among state and federal agencies and other organizations, implementation of research efforts, as funding allows, and development of a tracking mechanism for publications and products.</p> <p>In collaboration with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts, identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions and economics in the sagebrush ecosystem, and address prioritized science needs, as funding allows.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data and other information from entities other than federal or state agencies to ensure it meets quality, reliability and relevance standards for use.</p> <p>Develop processes to receive, aggregate, and review monitoring data to identify new potential science needs that can be addressed using formal experimental or other scientific investigations.</p> <p>Work to increase development of information products that translate and synthesize peer-reviewed science into more accessible formats for decision-makers and improve access to peer-reviewed science journals for those that need that level of information.</p> <p>Continue to emphasize the need for locally-relevant peer-reviewed science, high-quality information, and local on-the-ground data that is pertinent to implementation of management actions</p> <p>Evaluate use of Sage Grouse Task Force as coordinating body for the intersection of science with policy and management and to identify priority science and data needs to inform management and policy.</p>
<p>Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing</p>	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that non-proprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data from can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements for information included in shared data catalogs and information gathered by third party sources for potential inclusion in agency databases or use in decision-making.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing - Continued	<p>Identify multi-scale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data to increase opportunities for use of information when raw data contains sensitive or proprietary information, when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States and other partners to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and Tribes to explore options to improve or develop data-sharing mechanisms for capturing species observations as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**Appendix E - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review**  
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<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED NOT RELATED SPECIFCALLY TO THE 2105 SAGE-GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Option</b>	<b>Long Term Option</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Reserve Common Allotments.	Reserve common allotments are a tool available on public lands that could be used to provide alternative locations for grazing permittees/leases when their allotment is unavailable due to fire, restoration activities, or other reasons. However, there are concerns that designation of allotments as reserve common allotments could take those allotments out of regular use and result in economic loss. Further investigation with BLM, SGTF, ranchers and other stakeholders is warranted to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be considered.	Engage with SGTF, Counties, Public Lands Council, ranchers, and other stakeholders to determine if and how reserve common allotments should be used.		Multi-state
Water Rights	Concern that BLM may be managing water rights they don't own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. May be a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressly in the sage-grouse plans.	Further investigation and clarification as needed		Multi-state. Utah, Idaho, Nevada
Changes in grazing management following natural events	Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.  Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level	Further investigation and clarification as needed		Multi-state
Wild Horse and Burro: Appropriate Management Level achievement	Verify that BLM has the tools and funding to get to AML across the west. Evaluate priorities, for example, priority given to SFAs potentially limits funding and staff to initiate gathers in PHMA	BLM states reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with states. Elevate unresolved issue to management.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long-term resolution.	Multi-state
Herd Management Areas and associated AML may need to be analyzed for adjustments.	Implement solutions for reaching current AML prior to reevaluating HMAs and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML has been reached.	Multi-state

**Appendix F - WAFWA Issue Papers**  
**FINAL DRAFT FOR REVIEW - NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED 07/28/17**  
**Augmenting Sage-grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and other Means**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994, Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild, however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1

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September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Attwater's prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

#### Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season {31 Mar}

Method	Hatchability	Survival to release	Post-release survival to 31 Mar.	Number of birds or eggs needed	Net Removal from source population
Spring transplant	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private

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possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

### Conclusions

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

*Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)*

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**Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-grouse**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse *by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al. (2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number

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of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

### **Conclusions:**

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

***Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)***

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**Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-grouse**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boorman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boorman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

**Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

**Hunting Sage-grouse, Impacts and Management**

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily

and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily, 4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

**Conclusions:**

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## SEC TALKING POINTS - SECRETARIAL ORDER 3353

*Note: The Department of Interior is currently working on a set of consistent talking points for the States and BLM State Offices to use for outreach events that will occur prior to the release of the report.*

### Background (Purpose of the Secretarial Order)

- On June 7, 2017, Department of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3353, titled: *Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States*. The Secretarial Order called for the organization of a "Sage Grouse Review Team," composed of land managers and other professional from the BLM, USFWS, and USGS. This team was directed to engage with the appropriate States, through the Western Governors Associations' Sage Grouse Task Force to:
  1. Review existing BLM sage grouse planning documents and policies to ensure they are complementary of state efforts to conserve the species and then identify provisions that may require clarifications, policy changes, or plan modifications.
  2. Examine the Department's Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy.
  3. Provide recommendations with regard to captive breeding, opportunities to enhance State involvement, efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis, and additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve current population levels and habitat conditions.

### 60-Day Recommendation Report Development Process

- June 30: BLM Nevada, the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest, and Governor Sandoval's Office worked together to identify inconsistencies and plan/policy issues between the BLM Nevada Sage Grouse Plan Amendment and the State's Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy. The issues largely reflected the same concerns that the State of Nevada elevated to the Department of Interior in 2015 during the Sage Grouse Plan Amendment's Governor's Consistency Review. In summary, these issues included:
  - BLM's failure to adopt the most recent Habitat Management Area Maps
  - Sagebrush Focal Areas
  - Disturbance Caps
  - Land Use Plan Allocations (Exclusion and Closed Area)
  - Habitat Objectives
  - Monitoring
  - Mitigation and Consistent Sage Grouse Habitat Baseline Conditions
  - Wild Horse and Burro Management
  - Adaptive Management
  - Seasonal Timing Restrictions
- July 13-14: Members of the Western Governors Associations' Sage Grouse Task Force, BLM, USFWS, USGS, and the Forest Service met in Denver to summarize the issues identified by each state during their review process and identified the appropriate path forwards to address the issue in the Secretary's recommendation report.
- July 24-25: The Sage Grouse Task Force met again in Denver to review the draft recommendation report formulated by the DOI Sage Grouse Review Team appointed by the Secretary.
- August 4: The Final Recommendation Report will be submitted to the Secretary.

### Discussion

How would the SEC like the State of Nevada and the BLM to engage the SEC and local stakeholders as we move forward with developing/implementing some of the clarification, policy, and/or plan changes that the Secretary will agree to after he takes action on the 60-day recommendation report?

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  - Habitat Objectives
  - Monitoring
  - Mitigation and Consistent Sage Grouse Habitat Baseline Conditions
  - Wild Horse and Burro Management
  - Adaptive Management
  - Seasonal Timing Restrictions
- July 13-14: Members of the Western Governors Associations' Sage Grouse Task Force, BLM, USFWS, USGS, and the Forest Service met in Denver to summarize the issues identified by each state during their review process and identified the appropriate path forwards to address the issue in the Secretary's recommendation report.
- July 24-25: The Sage Grouse Task Force met again in Denver to review the draft recommendation report formulated by the DOI Sage Grouse Review Team appointed by the Secretary.
- August 4: The Final Recommendation Report will be submitted to the Secretary.

### Discussion

How would the SEC like the State of Nevada and the BLM to engage the SEC and local stakeholders as we move forward with developing/implementing some of the clarification, policy, and/or plan changes that the Secretary will agree to after he takes action on the 60-day recommendation report?

## **MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY**

**FROM:**

**SUBJECT:** Report Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353

### **I. SUMMARY**

In accordance with Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order), the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) consisting of DOI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) leaders, and sought input from the Eleven Western States identified in the Order. The DOI Team also coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Together, the Federal agencies and the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF), made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the eleven States, have identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order, including recommendations for:

- Increasing coordination and collaboration with the eleven Western States, including development of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and other agreements;
- Clarifying or amending the BLM’s and USFS’s 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans (the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans or Plans) and associated policies;
- Pursuing additional wildlife management actions;
- Improving actions to address the threats of fire and invasive species; and
- Incorporating new science and data into the ongoing evaluation and implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In order to receive this input, the BLM led the DOI Team and an associated technical team to engage the SGTF in meeting the purposes of the Order. Three meetings were held with the SGTF. The SGTF reiterated a commitment to ensuring the durability of conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse and an interest in retaining the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while considering targeted changes to the plans and policies to improve management and flexibility. In developing recommendations, the SGTF and the DOI Team identified near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the goals of the order, including development of policies, clarification, MOUs, and training, many of which can be completed within six months. The SGTF and the DOI Team also identified longer-term options to achieve the goals of the Order, including potential plan amendments which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Some of the key topics discussed are summarized below.

One of the most significant areas of concern was the designation of Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. SFAs are a subset of PHMAs and correspond to the areas identified by the FWS as Sage-Grouse “strongholds” and represent habitat most vital to the species persistence within which the strongest levels of protection are required. SFAs are areas

of highest habitat value for Sage-Grouse and are managed to avoid new surface disturbance. Concerns were expressed that SFAs, while providing increased regulatory certainty, provide little flexibility to authorize new development when project-specific information indicates that conservation goals can be achieved. Potential plan amendments to consider removing or adjusting SFAs and their associated decisions (e.g., NSO stipulations) are likely to be the appropriate tool to address these concerns.

For energy, minerals, and lands (e.g., rights-of-way) development concerns were raised that these uses were being overly restricted. Near-term, the development of additional policy to identify existing flexibility in how the Plans can be implemented can address many of these concerns. In some cases, additional research may be needed to better refine use restrictions based on the impacts of different types of uses (e.g., lek buffers). After completing these tasks, the need for targeted plan amendments would be reassessed, for example if changes to allocation boundaries or waivers, modifications, or exceptions are considered.

For habitat management, monitoring, and grazing management, policy, clarification and training are identified to address the issues and concerns. In some cases, additional research may be conducted to further understand Sage-Grouse habitat needs and based on the outcomes of this research, plan amendments may be appropriate in the future.

For adaptive management and the compensatory mitigation net conservation gain standard, some opportunities for policy, clarification, and coordination to increase compatibility were identified. However, potential plan amendments are likely to be the appropriate tool to fully address concerns. Additional research needs were also identified.

For addressing concerns that Habitat Management Area boundaries do not match new State habitat maps, a potential plan amendment is likely to be the appropriate solution. The DOI Team is continuing to investigate whether any short-term options are available to incorporate this information either into the plans or on a project-by-project basis.

In addition to these topics, several State-specific issues were raised that will be further investigated and resolved on a state-by-state basis.

The DOI Team identified additional opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management, including increasing coordination and jointly funding habitat restoration and fuels projects, investigating options to allow Federal agencies to transfer equipment to local firefighting resources in support of stopping fires, and additional research and pilot projects to streamline and improve habitat restoration activities. The DOI Team also identified several potential opportunities for MOUs, data sharing, new research, and incorporating new science and other information into plan implementation. The DOI Team further discussed continuing research into captive breeding to improve its effectiveness, continued use of translocations when needed to augment small or at risk populations; targeted use of predator control particularly during translocations or for small populations in poor quality habitat; and continued development of tools to better identify population goals.

Finally, the DOI Team identified next steps to engage counties, tribes, and local governments, as well as other partners, to continue to work with SGTF to further refine the recommendations included in this report, and based on the refined recommendations develop a prioritized plan to implement the recommendations.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On June 7, 2017, the Secretary of the Interior issued Secretarial Order 3353. As required by the Order, the DOI Team and associated technical team, engaged with the SGTF in order to undertake the review required by the Order and to provide a report with recommendations and additional steps the Department should take to address issues identified as a result of the review. In addition, the DOI Team was to closely coordinate with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS).

The Order directs the DOI to enhance cooperation with the States identified in the Order, to identify the need to develop memoranda of understanding and other agreements, to identify needed training, and for the DOI Team to conduct:

- (i) a review of the plans and programs that States already have in place to ensure that the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans adequately complement State efforts to conserve the species;
- (ii) a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-grouse habitat;
- (iii) an examination of the impact on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands within their borders, recognizing that those lands are important to resource use and development, and to the conservation of Sage-grouse;
- (iv) a review of the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans and associated policies, including seven BLM IM issued in September 2016. The review will include (1) identification of provisions that may require modification or rescission, as appropriate, in order to give appropriate weight to the value of energy and other development of public lands within BLM's overall multiple-use mission and to be consistent with the policy set forth in Secretary's Order 3349, "American Energy Independence," implementing the Executive Order signed by the President on March 28, 2017, "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth"; and (2) opportunities to conserve the Sage-grouse and its habitat without inhibiting job creation and local economic growth;
- (v) as appropriate, the team should provide recommendations with regard to (1) captive breeding; (2) opportunities to enhance State involvement; (3) efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis; and (4) additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve the current population levels and habitat conditions.

In further discussions with members of the DOI Team, recommendations in regard to

predator control and methods to incorporate new data and science, including information available from third parties, such as industry are included in this report.

### III. BACKGROUND

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that Greater Sage-Grouse was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing by other species with higher listing priority. In the finding, FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and the lack of regulatory mechanisms to address habitat loss as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to clarify the conservation objectives for Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for fourteen threats facing the Greater-Sage grouse including: fire, non-native invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, free-roaming equid management, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences. The BLM and USFS pursued land use planning to provide regulatory certainty to address population declines, habitat loss, and the identified threats; with the goal of providing for the conservation of the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and to avoid the need to list the Sage-Grouse under the ESA.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 Sage-Grouse Plans) across the ten<sup>1</sup> Western States addressing, in part, Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans govern management of approximately 67 million acres of BLM-administered Federal lands. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven Instruction Memoranda (IMs) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS determined the Sage-grouse plans provided certainty for conservation of the species and committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

### IV. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and the associated technical team met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for seeking State input on the items identified in the Order. The BLM also began working with each State to gather information related to the elements of the Order, including State-specific issues and recommended actions with respect to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF identified an initial list of issues and refined those issues and recommendations while working with the respective BLM State Directors.

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<sup>1</sup> While Washington State is included in the review for this Order, the State was not part of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. A BLM land use plan which will include Sage-Grouse conservation in Washington is currently under development.

In mid-July, 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met to further refine and validate the issues and proposed recommendations presented in this Report. The mid-July meeting was attended by seven out of the Eleven Western States with Sage-Grouse habitat<sup>2</sup>. In late-July, the DOI Team met with the SGTF to review and discuss the proposed recommendations included in this Report.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of potential plan or policy changes, and actions to address the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science. Appendices A-D contain additional information on issues and recommendations. The DOI Team and SGTF also identified next steps which are described in Section VI.

In discussions with the SGTF, there was general consensus that all partners were committed to ensuring durable conservation of Sage-Grouse that would ensure that there would be no need to list Greater Sage-Grouse under the ESA in the future. In addition, there was interest in short- and long-term approaches to address issues of concern such as through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as targeted plan amendments that retain the framework of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while complementing the State plans (long term).

### **a. 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), (iv) and 4(a) of the Order)**

#### **i. Fluid Minerals – Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions and Modifications and Density and Disturbance and associated policy:**

Multiple States have raised concerns that the oil and gas management actions in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, including the oil and gas leasing and development prioritization requirement, unnecessarily limit the economic potential of mineral development on public lands. Specifically, States expressed concerns with the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, including the limited criteria for granting an exception, in addition to the requirement that leasing and development be prioritized in certain habitat management areas. The States have asked BLM to reduce any undue burden on mineral development and rely more on the States' mitigation hierarchies. The objective of the recommendations is to encourage responsible energy production and provide for economic growth, including the opportunity for the creation of jobs.

To address these concerns short term options include modification or replacement of the existing prioritization policy, working with the States to determine if SFA and GHMA stipulations need to be removed or modified; and developing appropriate waivers, modifications, and exceptions (including removal of FWS approval authority)

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<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the States of California, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota were not able to attend the meeting. However, members of the SGTF were in frequent conversation with the State of Montana SGTF representative during the meeting. Outreach to the other three States continued during this review time period

to the PHMA stipulation. In the long term options include a plan amendment to manage the SFA according to the underlying habitat type stipulations; alter the GHMA stipulation, and possibly modify the waivers, exception, and modification language for the PHMA stipulation.

Since the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans were approved, several States have established varying density and disturbance cap processes for development. In the short term, BLM will work with the States on an individual basis to evaluate if their processes provide the scientific basis for the conservation of the species. If discrepancies are identified, long term options include a potential plan amendment to evaluate modifications to the current caps.

ii. Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain:

Multiple States have raised concerns that the mitigation requirements in the Sage-Grouse Plans (including the net conservation gain standard) may be different than the requirements of State plans. Consistent application of mitigation between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures is desired. The States have asked BLM to consider clarifications or policy changes that will ensure consistent and coordinated application of mitigation policies and procedures and provide durable conservation. Several States have indicated that their mitigation approaches may be adequate to meet a net conservation gain standard. Others have indicated that a net conservation gain is unnecessary and should be changed to no net loss. States also indicated that mitigation should be used in place of broad scale plan restrictions to allow development and provide comparable conservation through the mitigation of impacts.

In the short term, options include developing MOUs and policies to coordinate and clarify options for using each State's approach when applying mitigation, including meeting net conservation gain standards. Longer term options include a potential plan amendment process to consider removing or changing the net conservation gain standard requirement.

iii. Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives Table, and Effectiveness Monitoring:

Multiple States have identified issues related to using the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF), Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data, other data, and the Habitat Objectives Table set forth in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. Most States have asked BLM to focus on further clarifications or policy changes to ensure consistent application in the field. This will improve the way BLM evaluates its Greater Sage-Grouse habitat and applies the data and assessments to management decisions on public lands. Some States requested further clarification or new policy confirming the ability to utilize habitat objectives that correspond with differing habitat types across the range or removal of the Habitat Objectives Table through a plan amendment.

In the short term, options include revising the policies on Habitat Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring to address the concerns raised; issuing new policy explaining

how to use habitat objectives; and providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods. In the long term new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the Habitat Objectives Table.

iv. Adaptive Management:

Multiple States have identified the need for a clear causal factor analysis process with timeframes for completion and application of management responses for both soft and hard adaptive management triggers. States want to avoid BLM implementing management actions that do not respond to the cause of the decline of a population or habitat in a specific area. States also called for flexible methods and timeframes to “untrip” triggers and reverse hard trigger responses once population or habitat trends in a certain area improve or there is evidence that a management response is not addressing the causal factor.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process. However, most concerns with adaptive management cannot be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (a) reverting to previous management actions when population or habitat recovers above the original trigger and more restrictive management actions are not required; and (b) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses. In addition, research is recommended to better identify when populations or habitats are trending downward and to implement management actions that correct the problem before a hard trigger is tripped.

v. Livestock Grazing and Wild Horses/Burros Management :

Some States raised concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans do not clearly articulate the compatibility of grazing with the conservation of Sage-Grouse habitat and therefore placing too much emphasis on grazing management when grazing is not a major threat. Additionally, concerns were expressed that standard BLM grazing management processes are not being used. States also raised concerns that current policy provides inadequate flexibility to field offices to make local decisions on how to prioritize grazing-related work. States have asked BLM to make clarifications to the Grazing Allotment Prioritization policy and the Grazing and Threshold Responses policy to provide more flexibility in applying management based on on-the-ground conditions. States have also expressed concern regarding the ability of land management agencies to achieve appropriate management level for wild horse and burro (WHB) management.

In the short term, options include revising and clarifying policy to incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal, to allow for priorities where there are known impacts to Sage-Grouse habitat, to clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see habitat section of this report), and to clarify that thresholds and responses can vary

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given differing habitat types; developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders; and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. In each policy, clarify that proper grazing is compatible with sage-grouse habitat and can be used to address threats to Sage-Grouse and improve habitat conditions. Also, the BLM will continue to pursue targeted grazing pilot projects to demonstrate use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks, and outcome-based grazing pilot projects to illustrate that flexible grazing permits can be used to respond to changing conditions effectively while helping to improve habitat conditions.

With regards to WHBs, States expressed concern that impacts from WHB to Sage-Grouse habitat may be greater outside of SFAs and expressed a desire for BLM to retain flexibility to prioritize achieving AML in Sage-Grouse habitat where the need is greatest. BLM's existing WHB gather plan is to achieve appropriate management levels (AML) within 5 years in SFAs, but with current funding and holding capacity AML is unlikely to be reached in other sage-grouse habitats in the foreseeable future. An option is to continue to work with the States and other partners to assess and complete gathers in the highest priorities areas, however increased funding and legislative action is likely required for a long-term solution. In addition, the Department has proposed a strategy to achieve AML on public lands in the FY18 budget proposal and is awaiting congressional action.

- vi. Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way), including Exclusion, Avoidance, Required Design Features, Lek Buffers, Timing, Rights-of-way: There are concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans included blanket restrictions on development through exclusion and closure without taking into consideration different impacts from different types of uses and the ability of State mechanisms to manage those uses using compensatory mitigation while conserving Sage-Grouse and its habitat. Of particular concern are mineral materials closures in PHMA, due to the economic impact of transporting materials for long distances to complete road repairs and other actions. States also raised concerns regarding the interpretation of avoidance areas and timing restrictions; Required Design Features (RDFs) that are unclear or require unnecessary documentation; and the lack of a definition for tall structures. Lastly, States have raised concerns regarding whether the lek buffers are appropriate and are being applied correctly.

In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate authorizing uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers, including consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. Additional research to evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs, and to incorporate the new science into plan implementation as it becomes available is also recommended. In the long term, options include a potential plan amendment process to adjust exclusion boundaries to provide increased flexibility while meeting conservation

goals, as well as to provide additional flexibility to authorize mineral material sites in PHMA to meet the needs of local communities.

- vii. **Habitat Boundaries – Sagebrush Focal Area and Habitat Management Areas:** Multiple States have identified concerns with: 1) Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) designations and whether they are needed or if underlying PHMA or GHMA allocations and decisions are adequate to meet sage-grouse conservation and durability; 2) BLM’s ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States; and 3) Utah specific concerns that GHMAs are not needed or appropriate and are inconsistent with the State Plan.

Few short term options have been identified, however, a State and Federal work-teams can continue to explore options to address interim clarifications. In the long-term, options include plan amendments to consider removing SFAs and reverting to the underlying habitat management areas (PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc.) and management actions or alternative management actions if needed to achieve durable sage-grouse conservation; and adopting revised habitat maps from the States and developing a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections without requiring additional plan amendments. To address the State of Utah’s mapping concerns, the BLM could work with the State to further examine the GHMA areas and determine how best to remove or adjust the GHMA to achieve durable conservation of sage-grouse while coming into closer alignment with the State plan, including whether initiation of a State-specific plan amendment is appropriate.

- b. ***Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4(b)(ii) and 4(a) of the Order)*** Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, the BLM led an examination of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. This feedback and BLM’s internal review inform the Recommended Additional Steps outlined in Appendix B. Feedback was received from the States of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The DOI Team makes the following recommendations to further enhance the IRFMS (see also Appendix B for more information):

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS, support ongoing State-led efforts including the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) Western Invasives Weed Action Plan, implement the National Seed Strategy, and implement action items from the National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative;
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for Rural Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) and Rural Fire Departments (RFDs), establishment of wildlife fire protection agreements, and support for the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy
- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Administration registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing;
- Work with DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting;
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multi-year funding of projects to increase likelihood of success; and
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high risk/high value areas, including increasing BLM's fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

***c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a State-managed species throughout its range and the majority of its habitat is managed by the Federal government. Decisions regarding captive breeding, population objectives, predator control, and hunting are generally at the discretion of each individual State within the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse. It is a State-protected species in Washington and protected by Federal law in Canada.

State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950's. In particular, in 2006, WAFWA developed the Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy with an overall goal "to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations."

For the past two decades, the State wildlife agencies and many others in the range of the species have been leading efforts to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitats and to achieve the overarching objective in the 2006 WAFWA strategy, including collecting and analyzing data on breeding males, researching captive rearing techniques and approaches, translocating birds and augmenting declining populations, studying the efficacy of predator control, and managing populations for sport hunting.

In response to the Order, WAFWA developed four issue papers that summarize the scientific information available regarding: “Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse”; “Hunting Sage-Grouse: Impacts and Management”; “Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse”; and “Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means.” These four issue papers and discussions at the July 12-13 meeting led to the development of recommended additional steps (Appendix C).

Techniques are currently being developed but are not yet available to establish State-by-State or range-wide population targets. The DOI Team recommends continued support for collaborative efforts with the States to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations and completion of a framework to assess Greater Sage-Grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat. When these techniques and data are available, the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans can be reevaluated to determine if population targets should be included in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans in conjunction with habitat targets.

States actively manage the species for sport-hunting, including setting harvest limits and seasons based on the best science available. This active monitoring provides the flexibility for each State to respond to unforeseen circumstances if hunting may add mortality to depressed populations or areas (i.e. can immediately end the season). Sage-Grouse hunting, as managed, is not likely to increase overall mortality rates beyond natural rates. It is important to States and sportsmen and -women to maintain sport-hunting opportunities. The DOI Team recommends the development of a strategy, in cooperation with the States, to communicate the value of maintaining and improving habitat conditions to support populations of Sage-Grouse that can sustain continued sport-hunting of Sage-Grouse and other game species.

Augmentation of Sage-Grouse populations through the use of translocations is a management strategy that has been used by State wildlife agencies in limited circumstances to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historical habitats, or to establish new populations. These augmentation efforts have generally produced low success rates and require that the factor that caused the population declines be addressed prior to the reintroduction efforts. The preferred approach would be to maintain large contiguous habitats in good conditions -- eliminating the need for augmentation efforts. The DOI Team recommends continued support to State efforts to continue research to improve upon existing techniques and to understand the causes of population declines.

Captive breeding research conducted to date has established some protocols and techniques to aid in future efforts if the species and its habitat diminish so significantly from its current condition such that captive breeding is needed to rescue populations. The preferred approach of the States is to maintain adequate habitat to prevent the need for captive breeding, since captive breeding is financially burdensome and has low rates of success. Further investigation of captive rearing may be helpful to identify methods to

increase long-term success rates and to be prepared in the event of a catastrophic population loss that cannot be addressed through translocation. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they take an experimental design approach that builds on available information and data to address knowledge and data gaps and to improve techniques for effectively rearing Sage-Grouse in captivity so that they can be successfully released or reintroduced into the wild.

Predator control to benefit Sage-Grouse populations is an area of active research and has been used on a limited basis at local scales. While predation is the cause of mortality for most Sage-Grouse, any population improvements due to predator control come at a substantial cost and cease if the control efforts stop. Predator control efforts should generally proceed in parallel with improving habitat condition, particularly improved cover and decreased fragmentation, and addressing the underlying causes of increased predators including the removal of attractants such as garbage and implementation of perch deterrents. Targeted predator control efforts have been used as a tool to temporarily improve conditions in conjunction with translocation areas or areas of poor habitat with declining populations. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they continue investigation on the outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long-term results, as well as further research into non-lethal and lethal control techniques to better define when and how to use predator control to support conservation efforts.

**d. *Data Management and the use of Science (Addressing Section 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

Management of Sage-Grouse and its habitat relies upon continued development of new science and gathering high quality information to best inform management decisions. This information is obtained through multiple sources including Federal, State and local agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, industry, and other entities. An evaluation of science and information for attributes including peer-review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions can help determine quality and reliability of the information. Sharing high-quality information among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem.

As new science and information becomes available, DOI and the States need clear mechanisms for sharing and incorporating that information into the decision-making process. Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners, as well as stakeholders including ranchers, industries, conservation organizations, and the public produce information. Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for data sharing can help facilitate ongoing Sage-Grouse management efforts.

Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency data sharing agreements (such as the data sharing agreement between WAFWA, BLM and USFS), and online data catalogs (both public and private). Maintaining lines of communication as staff changes and updating data catalogs as new data becomes available is crucial to continued data sharing. Updating

information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes and reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D).

#### Use of Science

- Implement the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan as currently written and funding allows.
- Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among agencies and organizations, implement research efforts, and develop a tracking mechanism for publications and products
- Identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions in the sagebrush ecosystem and implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs in coordination with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts.
- Develop a process to receive, aggregate, and review information from multiple disparate sources, including entities other than Federal or State agencies, that could highlight potential future science needs

#### Data Sharing

- Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities, improve data sharing mechanisms, and resolve barriers to data sharing.
- Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities.
- Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s) so data can be shared and accessed.
- Increase awareness of new information through the use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange,
- Establish common minimum data standards and information requirements.

## **VI. NEXT STEPS**

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team and SGTF recommend the following next steps:

- Reaffirm Department and State commitment to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF's charter. Work with individual States to develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation as requested by each State.
- Work with USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this Report, considering the USFS's unique plans and associated decisions, and laws and regulations. Work to align policy and potential plan amendments to the maximum extent possible.

- Initiate additional discussions with counties, local governments, tribes, and other interested parties (such as ranchers, landowners, industries, and conservation organizations) to review the issues and recommendations included in this report and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the Report is approved by the Secretary and is expected to continue for approximately two months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short-term options in this Report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate the need to initiate plan amendment processes, including assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of Sage-Grouse. Determine if initiation of the plan amendment process is appropriate. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or January).
- Review revised policies and initiate the plan amendment process as appropriate. The DOI Team recommends that this take place during and after the January meeting of the SGTF.

**Appendix A - 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and State Plan Consistency Review  
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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
<b>Oil and Gas Stipulations</b>				
SFA NSO Stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each state to evaluate whether GHMA and PHMA stipulations already provide for the durable conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, plan amendment to consider eliminating SFAs or reducing the size of SFAs with new stipulations. May be state-specific outcome.	Range-wide
GHMA Stipulations (vary by state)	On a state by state basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of PHMA, and informs industry what is expected from them.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations and issue state-specific policy as needed; determine if a CSU stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multi-state (UT in particular)
<b>Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications</b>				
PHMA NSO WEM Language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs which recognizes the state's mitigation hierarchy, maintain collaborative approach, and remove FWS role in approving WEM.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs and work with the states to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multi-state
<b>Oil and Gas Leasing Prioritization IM - Two options to choose from:</b>				
Leasing Prioritization IM	Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.	Clarify, Modify and Reissue IM ensuring that it is stressed all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	None at this time	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE-continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lease Prioritization IM - Continued	<p>If possible, rescind the National IM.</p> <p>Then issue state level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and including state-specific solutions</p>	Rescind the National IM and develop BLM state specific IMs that includes all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	If the BLM State Level IMs do not address the issues; then a plan amendment to consider addressing concerns.	Multi-State
<b>Density and Disturbance</b>				
Density and Disturbance	<p>There is variation between the states on what counts as a disturbance, towards a density cap, and the level of disturbance that is allowed.</p> <p>On a state-by-state basis develop a crosswalk to identify and resolve inconsistencies between States and the BLM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based in science for the difference in calculation of the cap or what counts for disturbance and density; and the appropriate scale, e.g., project or BSU</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies then solidify through BLM State Level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation</p> <p>In cooperation with the state, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	If inconsistencies then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require the initiation of plan amendment process.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Net Conservation Gain	Replace or define a net conservation gain standard with a standard more consistent with the state plans (e.g. use no net loss vs. net conservation gain)	Evaluate and document each State's mitigation approach to determine if it provides net conservation gain; Issue policy on options to use the State's mitigation approach.	If policy does not address the concern then a plan amendment to consider net conservation gain concerns may be appropriate.  Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with Departmental policy on mitigation.	Range-wide
State Mitigation Plans	Use the state mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	Complete a MOU with each state on application of the state mitigation approach.  If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach	None at this time	Range-wide
Regional Mitigation Strategies.	In coordination with the states, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
How are habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM data and HAF assessments related?	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and Land Use Plan Effectiveness</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the Land Health Standards evaluation and management decisions</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well</p>	<p>Revise IMs as needed and provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of Land Health Standards; using habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness</p> <p>Continue outreach and training to on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information</p>	None at this time	Multi-State
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework.	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions not just grazing</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with BLM, other agencies, and states, including the Department of Agriculture</p> <p>Consider incorporating remote sensed vegetation maps like the Oregon State and Transition model where available</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF as well as how these relate to the Habitat Objectives Table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	Continue to conduct pilot studies on the use of the OR State and Transition Model and other tools to streamline habitat assessments	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE - Continued</b>				
<p>Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM).</p>	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporate</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between NOC and FO.</p>	<p>Issue clarification that addresses concerns provide training</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>
<p>Adjusting the Habitat Objectives Table</p>	<p>Codify guidance issued on Habitat Objectives Table in an instruction Memorandum which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to Habitat Objectives Table as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in Habitat Objectives Table are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (Not all states have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives table from the plan and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement as described in 43 CFR. 4180.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on use of habitat objectives table, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for sage-grouse, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan, an amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Causal Factor Analysis	Work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each state to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers	None at this time	Range-wide
Reversion of Trigger Responses when conditions improve	Work with states on process to revert back to previous management or change the response based on positive habitat/population response	Evaluate plans to determine which don't have a "reversion" clause	Plan amendment process to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger	Range-wide
Implementation Of Hard Trigger Responses	Work with states to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline	Work with states on development of the process in the recommendation.	Consider plan amendment considering options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger including a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Range-wide
Adaptive Management Policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM state specific IM to address advance coordination with the states and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM	Modify the current IM	None at this time	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Research and Data Collection Needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached and identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement pre-defined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify what those multi-prong impacts to population are.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis</p>	<p><i>Defer to science and data sharing issue topic for recommendation.</i></p>		
SFAs are inconsistent with the State Plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Develop an informational bulletin (IB) to clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFAs.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat.	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/ fragmentation).</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for sage grouse.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</p>	Evaluate need for plan amendment to include language regarding compatibility of grazing as a vegetation management tool (Note: this is not a plan level decision)	Range-wide.
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit	Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance	None at this time.	Range-wide.
Habitat Objectives Table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the west.	<i>See Habitat Objectives section</i>			

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Creation of Research Natural Areas results in loss of AUMs, economic losses and potential effects to habitat.	Need additional clarification from Oregon. Review or modify extent of RNAs proposed for grazing withdrawal.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single state (Oregon)
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment could result in excess grass banks that could be used by another permittee	Need additional clarification from affected states- especially Oregon.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single State (Oregon)
SFA prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs	None at this time	Range-wide.
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See Lek Buffer section</i>			
Wild Horse and Burro: Appropriate Management Level achievement in SFAs	Verify that BLM has the tools and funding to get to AML	BLM states reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with states. Elevate unresolved issue to management.  Priority given to SFAs- potentially limits ability to initiate gathers outside the SFA.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long-term resolution.	Range-wide.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Designation of exclusion areas area misalign with the state's approach	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with state partners evaluate if the states plans would provide durable conservation while providing exceptions to activities so they can proceed while conserving the species.	On a state by state basis complete an evaluation as provided in the recommendation.	If short-term flexibilities don't resolve concerns, evaluate plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multi-State
Maintenance and Production Activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multi-State
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in PHMA under the use of the state's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multi-State
Valid Existing Rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognized valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - Continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Misinterpretation of "avoidance" in the field.	Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see CO and NV for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue state-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a plan amendment.	Multi-State
Plans do not recognize the state's guidance that some activities are "de minimus" - negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	<p>Evaluate "de minimus" activities as defined in state plans and evaluate against federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects</p>	Development of programmatic NEPA documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects. Identification of CXs for de minimus activities.	Multi-State

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<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g. TIMING AND TALL STRUCUTUES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using state developed required design features.	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features outside those identified as the current plans can be used without further analysis by the BLM.	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select appropriate RDFs and to use other RDFs, including state RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in the project level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use required design features (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that required design features are not a “one-size-fit-all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, the plans may need to be changed to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in state plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lek buffer distances are incompatible with state buffer distances for some types of development (e.g. range improvements).	Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat – which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers.	Initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses and identify any needed changes to plans.  If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue then evaluate a plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information	Multi-State
Clarify regarding how to apply lek buffers (i.e. distance for NEPA analysis vs. a distance to restrict activities).	Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project specific information.	Development of policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA Designations	Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.	Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable conservation of the species.	Plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions or change those SFA management actions as described in this table.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV support this recommendation. Oregon still discussing
Need flexibility to change PHMA/GHMA boundaries	Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground survey and improved understanding of sage-grouse habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.	Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.  Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, WEMs, exclusion and avoidance, etc. in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.	Modify the plans to align PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc. and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground survey, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV, MT, and OR support this recommendation.
GHMA is inconsistent with Utah's plan.	GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.	Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.  Also consider the application of the state mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.	Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a state specific plan amendment.	Utah Specific Recommendations

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<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED BUT NOT RELATED TO THE 2105 SAGE GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
BLM may be managing water rights they don't own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. Often a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressly in the sage-grouse plans.			Work with partners toward state-legislative fix where appropriate.	Multi-state. Utah, Idaho, Nevada- but verify with other states to determine in additional changes are needed.
Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.	Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level			Range-wide.
Herd Management Areas and associated AML may need to be analyzed for adjustments.	Implement solutions for reach current AML prior to reevaluating HMAs and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML has been reached.	Range-wide

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected states provided feedback	Incorporate additional information received from states and other stakeholders
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management and provide recommendations to improve management	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing IRFMS Action Items Complete the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the IRFMS	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communication Framework (SAGE WEST) Support development and implementation of WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Department of Agriculture's (WASDA) Western Invasive Weed Action Plan Support implementation of the National Seed Strategy
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators (RFPAs, RFDs)	Reinstate grant authority, and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators Address the GSA policy which prevents excess federal firefighting equipment (e.g. Engines, radios) from going directly to RFPAs and RFDs Continue to support and develop additional Rural Fire Protection Associations
Consider related WGA efforts that enhance implementation of the IRFMS	Further action items in the Western Governor's National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative (2017) such as: expanding Good Neighbor Authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating federal, state, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; flexibilities in grazing management
Improve coordination with states on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Ensure funding for fire, fuels and restoration projects	<p>Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding, multi-year funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the Department. The risk-based funding modelling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding, but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and Improve restoration success	<p>Conduct research, testing and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g. bio-pesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Use targeted grazing and other tools to manage fine fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies	<p>Work with appropriate Departments, Agencies, Offices and companies to gain approval of concurrent (EPA) registration and field-testing of bio-pesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-agency specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration</p>

**Appendix C – Wildlife Management  
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<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator Control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled and the short- and long-term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range-wide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess Greater Sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**

<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts	<p>Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among state and federal agencies and other organizations.</p> <p>In collaboration with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative, implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs.</p> <p>Reduce barriers to information use from entities other than federal or state agencies for identifying additional science needs.</p>
Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that non-proprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data from can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements.</p> <p>Identify multi-scale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data and provide additional opportunities for use of sensitive or proprietary information when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and Tribes to explore options to improve or develop data-sharing mechanisms for capturing species observations as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**

## **MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY**

**FROM:**

**SUBJECT:** Report Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353

### **I. SUMMARY**

In accordance with Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order), the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) consisting of DOI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) leaders, and sought input from the Eleven Western States identified in the Order. The DOI Team also coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Together, the Federal agencies and the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF), made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the eleven States, have identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order, including recommendations for:

- Increasing coordination and collaboration with the eleven Western States, including development of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and other agreements;
- Clarifying or amending the BLM’s and USFS’s 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans (the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans or Plans) and associated policies;
- Pursuing additional wildlife management actions;
- Improving actions to address the threats of fire and invasive species; and
- Incorporating new science and data into the ongoing evaluation and implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In order to receive this input, the BLM led the DOI Team and an associated technical team to engage the SGTF in meeting the purposes of the Order. Three meetings were held with the SGTF. The SGTF reiterated a commitment to ensuring the durability of conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse and an interest in retaining the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while considering targeted changes to the plans and policies to improve management and flexibility. In developing recommendations, the SGTF and the DOI Team identified near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the goals of the order, including development of policies, clarification, MOUs, and training, many of which can be completed within six months. The SGTF and the DOI Team also identified longer-term options to achieve the goals of the Order, including potential plan amendments which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Some of the key topics discussed are summarized below.

One of the most significant areas of concern was the designation of Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. SFAs are a subset of PHMAs and correspond to the areas identified by the FWS as Sage-Grouse “strongholds” and represent habitat most vital to the species persistence within which the strongest levels of protection are required. SFAs are areas

of highest habitat value for Sage-Grouse and are managed to avoid new surface disturbance. Concerns were expressed that SFAs, while providing increased regulatory certainty, provide little flexibility to authorize new development when project-specific information indicates that conservation goals can be achieved. Potential plan amendments to consider removing or adjusting SFAs and their associated decisions (e.g., NSO stipulations) are likely to be the appropriate tool to address these concerns.

For energy, minerals, and lands (e.g., rights-of-way) development concerns were raised that these uses were being overly restricted. Near-term, the development of additional policy to identify existing flexibility in how the Plans can be implemented can address many of these concerns. In some cases, additional research may be needed to better refine use restrictions based on the impacts of different types of uses (e.g., lek buffers). After completing these tasks, the need for targeted plan amendments would be reassessed, for example if changes to allocation boundaries or waivers, modifications, or exceptions are considered.

For habitat management, monitoring, and grazing management, policy, clarification and training are identified to address the issues and concerns. In some cases, additional research may be conducted to further understand Sage-Grouse habitat needs and based on the outcomes of this research, plan amendments may be appropriate in the future.

For adaptive management and the compensatory mitigation net conservation gain standard, some opportunities for policy, clarification, and coordination to increase compatibility were identified. However, potential plan amendments are likely to be the appropriate tool to fully address concerns. Additional research needs were also identified.

For addressing concerns that Habitat Management Area boundaries do not match new State habitat maps, a potential plan amendment is likely to be the appropriate solution. The DOI Team is continuing to investigate whether any short-term options are available to incorporate this information either into the plans or on a project-by-project basis.

In addition to these topics, several State-specific issues were raised that will be further investigated and resolved on a state-by-state basis.

The DOI Team identified additional opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management, including increasing coordination and jointly funding habitat restoration and fuels projects, investigating options to allow Federal agencies to transfer equipment to local firefighting resources in support of stopping fires, and additional research and pilot projects to streamline and improve habitat restoration activities. The DOI Team also identified several potential opportunities for MOUs, data sharing, new research, and incorporating new science and other information into plan implementation. The DOI Team further discussed continuing research into captive breeding to improve its effectiveness, continued use of translocations when needed to augment small or at risk populations; targeted use of predator control particularly during translocations or for small populations in poor quality habitat; and continued development of tools to better identify population goals.

Finally, the DOI Team identified next steps to engage counties, tribes, and local governments, as well as other partners, to continue to work with SGTF to further refine the recommendations included in this report, and based on the refined recommendations develop a prioritized plan to implement the recommendations.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On June 7, 2017, the Secretary of the Interior issued Secretarial Order 3353. As required by the Order, the DOI Team and associated technical team, engaged with the SGTF in order to undertake the review required by the Order and to provide a report with recommendations and additional steps the Department should take to address issues identified as a result of the review. In addition, the DOI Team was to closely coordinate with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS).

The Order directs the DOI to enhance cooperation with the States identified in the Order, to identify the need to develop memoranda of understanding and other agreements, to identify needed training, and for the DOI Team to conduct:

- (i) a review of the plans and programs that States already have in place to ensure that the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans adequately complement State efforts to conserve the species;
- (ii) a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-grouse habitat;
- (iii) an examination of the impact on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands within their borders, recognizing that those lands are important to resource use and development, and to the conservation of Sage-grouse;
- (iv) a review of the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans and associated policies, including seven BLM IM issued in September 2016. The review will include (1) identification of provisions that may require modification or rescission, as appropriate, in order to give appropriate weight to the value of energy and other development of public lands within BLM's overall multiple-use mission and to be consistent with the policy set forth in Secretary's Order 3349, "American Energy Independence," implementing the Executive Order signed by the President on March 28, 2017, "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth"; and (2) opportunities to conserve the Sage-grouse and its habitat without inhibiting job creation and local economic growth;
- (v) as appropriate, the team should provide recommendations with regard to (1) captive breeding; (2) opportunities to enhance State involvement; (3) efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis; and (4) additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve the current population levels and habitat conditions.

In further discussions with members of the DOI Team, recommendations in regard to

predator control and methods to incorporate new data and science, including information available from third parties, such as industry are included in this report.

### III. BACKGROUND

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that Greater Sage-Grouse was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing by other species with higher listing priority. In the finding, FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and the lack of regulatory mechanisms to address habitat loss as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to clarify the conservation objectives for Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for fourteen threats facing the Greater-Sage grouse including: fire, non-native invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, free-roaming equid management, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences. The BLM and USFS pursued land use planning to provide regulatory certainty to address population declines, habitat loss, and the identified threats; with the goal of providing for the conservation of the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and to avoid the need to list the Sage-Grouse under the ESA.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 Sage-Grouse Plans) across the ten<sup>1</sup> Western States addressing, in part, Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans govern management of approximately 67 million acres of BLM-administered Federal lands. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven Instruction Memoranda (IMs) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS determined the Sage-grouse plans provided certainty for conservation of the species and committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

### IV. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and the associated technical team met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for seeking State input on the items identified in the Order. The BLM also began working with each State to gather information related to the elements of the Order, including State-specific issues and recommended actions with respect to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF identified an initial list of issues and refined those issues and recommendations while working with the respective BLM State Directors.

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<sup>1</sup> While Washington State is included in the review for this Order, the State was not part of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. A BLM land use plan which will include Sage-Grouse conservation in Washington is currently under development.

In mid-July, 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met to further refine and validate the issues and proposed recommendations presented in this Report. The mid-July meeting was attended by seven out of the Eleven Western States with Sage-Grouse habitat<sup>2</sup>. In late-July, the DOI Team met with the SGTF to review and discuss the proposed recommendations included in this Report.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of potential plan or policy changes, and actions to address the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science. Appendices A-D contain additional information on issues and recommendations. The DOI Team and SGTF also identified next steps which are described in Section VI.

In discussions with the SGTF, there was general consensus that all partners were committed to ensuring durable conservation of Sage-Grouse that would ensure that there would be no need to list Greater Sage-Grouse under the ESA in the future. In addition, there was interest in short- and long-term approaches to address issues of concern such as through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as targeted plan amendments that retain the framework of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while complementing the State plans (long term).

### **a. 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), (iv) and 4(a) of the Order)**

#### **i. Fluid Minerals – Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions and Modifications and Density and Disturbance and associated policy:**

Multiple States have raised concerns that the oil and gas management actions in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, including the oil and gas leasing and development prioritization requirement, unnecessarily limit the economic potential of mineral development on public lands. Specifically, States expressed concerns with the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, including the limited criteria for granting an exception, in addition to the requirement that leasing and development be prioritized in certain habitat management areas. The States have asked BLM to reduce any undue burden on mineral development and rely more on the States' mitigation hierarchies. The objective of the recommendations is to encourage responsible energy production and provide for economic growth, including the opportunity for the creation of jobs.

To address these concerns short term options include modification or replacement of the existing prioritization policy, working with the States to determine if SFA and GHMA stipulations need to be removed or modified; and developing appropriate waivers, modifications, and exceptions (including removal of FWS approval authority)

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<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the States of California, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota were not able to attend the meeting. However, members of the SGTF were in frequent conversation with the State of Montana SGTF representative during the meeting. Outreach to the other three States continued during this review time period

to the PHMA stipulation. In the long term options include a plan amendment to manage the SFA according to the underlying habitat type stipulations; alter the GHMA stipulation, and possibly modify the waivers, exception, and modification language for the PHMA stipulation.

Since the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans were approved, several States have established varying density and disturbance cap processes for development. In the short term, BLM will work with the States on an individual basis to evaluate if their processes provide the scientific basis for the conservation of the species. If discrepancies are identified, long term options include a potential plan amendment to evaluate modifications to the current caps.

ii. Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain:

Multiple States have raised concerns that the mitigation requirements in the Sage-Grouse Plans (including the net conservation gain standard) may be different than the requirements of State plans. Consistent application of mitigation between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures is desired. The States have asked BLM to consider clarifications or policy changes that will ensure consistent and coordinated application of mitigation policies and procedures and provide durable conservation. Several States have indicated that their mitigation approaches may be adequate to meet a net conservation gain standard. Others have indicated that a net conservation gain is unnecessary and should be changed to no net loss. States also indicated that mitigation should be used in place of broad scale plan restrictions to allow development and provide comparable conservation through the mitigation of impacts.

In the short term, options include developing MOUs and policies to coordinate and clarify options for using each State's approach when applying mitigation, including meeting net conservation gain standards. Longer term options include a potential plan amendment process to consider removing or changing the net conservation gain standard requirement.

iii. Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives Table, and Effectiveness Monitoring:

Multiple States have identified issues related to using the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF), Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data, other data, and the Habitat Objectives Table set forth in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. Most States have asked BLM to focus on further clarifications or policy changes to ensure consistent application in the field. This will improve the way BLM evaluates its Greater Sage-Grouse habitat and applies the data and assessments to management decisions on public lands. Some States requested further clarification or new policy confirming the ability to utilize habitat objectives that correspond with differing habitat types across the range or removal of the Habitat Objectives Table through a plan amendment.

In the short term, options include revising the policies on Habitat Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring to address the concerns raised; issuing new policy explaining

how to use habitat objectives; and providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods. In the long term new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the Habitat Objectives Table.

iv. Adaptive Management:

Multiple States have identified the need for a clear causal factor analysis process with timeframes for completion and application of management responses for both soft and hard adaptive management triggers. States want to avoid BLM implementing management actions that do not respond to the cause of the decline of a population or habitat in a specific area. States also called for flexible methods and timeframes to “untrip” triggers and reverse hard trigger responses once population or habitat trends in a certain area improve or there is evidence that a management response is not addressing the causal factor.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process. However, most concerns with adaptive management cannot be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (a) reverting to previous management actions when population or habitat recovers above the original trigger and more restrictive management actions are not required; and (b) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses. In addition, research is recommended to better identify when populations or habitats are trending downward and to implement management actions that correct the problem before a hard trigger is tripped.

v. Livestock Grazing and Wild Horses/Burros Management :

Some States raised concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans do not clearly articulate the compatibility of grazing with the conservation of Sage-Grouse habitat and therefore placing too much emphasis on grazing management when grazing is not a major threat. Additionally, concerns were expressed that standard BLM grazing management processes are not being used. States also raised concerns that current policy provides inadequate flexibility to field offices to make local decisions on how to prioritize grazing-related work. States have asked BLM to make clarifications to the Grazing Allotment Prioritization policy and the Grazing and Threshold Responses policy to provide more flexibility in applying management based on on-the-ground conditions. States have also expressed concern regarding the ability of land management agencies to achieve appropriate management level for wild horse and burro (WHB) management.

In the short term, options include revising and clarifying policy to incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal, to allow for priorities where there are known impacts to Sage-Grouse habitat, to clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see habitat section of this report), and to clarify that thresholds and responses can vary

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given differing habitat types; developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders; and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. In each policy, clarify that proper grazing is compatible with sage-grouse habitat and can be used to address threats to Sage-Grouse and improve habitat conditions. Also, the BLM will continue to pursue targeted grazing pilot projects to demonstrate use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks, and outcome-based grazing pilot projects to illustrate that flexible grazing permits can be used to respond to changing conditions effectively while helping to improve habitat conditions.

With regards to WHBs, States expressed concern that impacts from WHB to Sage-Grouse habitat may be greater outside of SFAs and expressed a desire for BLM to retain flexibility to prioritize achieving AML in Sage-Grouse habitat where the need is greatest. BLM's existing WHB gather plan is to achieve appropriate management levels (AML) within 5 years in SFAs, but with current funding and holding capacity AML is unlikely to be reached in other sage-grouse habitats in the foreseeable future. An option is to continue to work with the States and other partners to assess and complete gathers in the highest priorities areas, however increased funding and legislative action is likely required for a long-term solution. In addition, the Department has proposed a strategy to achieve AML on public lands in the FY18 budget proposal and is awaiting congressional action.

- vi. Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way), including Exclusion, Avoidance, Required Design Features, Lek Buffers, Timing, Rights-of-way: There are concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans included blanket restrictions on development through exclusion and closure without taking into consideration different impacts from different types of uses and the ability of State mechanisms to manage those uses using compensatory mitigation while conserving Sage-Grouse and its habitat. Of particular concern are mineral materials closures in PHMA, due to the economic impact of transporting materials for long distances to complete road repairs and other actions. States also raised concerns regarding the interpretation of avoidance areas and timing restrictions; Required Design Features (RDFs) that are unclear or require unnecessary documentation; and the lack of a definition for tall structures. Lastly, States have raised concerns regarding whether the lek buffers are appropriate and are being applied correctly.

In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate authorizing uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers, including consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. Additional research to evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs, and to incorporate the new science into plan implementation as it becomes available is also recommended. In the long term, options include a potential plan amendment process to adjust exclusion boundaries to provide increased flexibility while meeting conservation

goals, as well as to provide additional flexibility to authorize mineral material sites in PHMA to meet the needs of local communities.

- vii. **Habitat Boundaries – Sagebrush Focal Area and Habitat Management Areas:** Multiple States have identified concerns with: 1) Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) designations and whether they are needed or if underlying PHMA or GHMA allocations and decisions are adequate to meet sage-grouse conservation and durability; 2) BLM’s ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States; and 3) Utah specific concerns that GHMAs are not needed or appropriate and are inconsistent with the State Plan.

Few short term options have been identified, however, a State and Federal work-teams can continue to explore options to address interim clarifications. In the long-term, options include plan amendments to consider removing SFAs and reverting to the underlying habitat management areas (PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc.) and management actions or alternative management actions if needed to achieve durable sage-grouse conservation; and adopting revised habitat maps from the States and developing a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections without requiring additional plan amendments. To address the State of Utah’s mapping concerns, the BLM could work with the State to further examine the GHMA areas and determine how best to remove or adjust the GHMA to achieve durable conservation of sage-grouse while coming into closer alignment with the State plan, including whether initiation of a State-specific plan amendment is appropriate.

- b. ***Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4(b)(ii) and 4(a) of the Order)*** Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, the BLM led an examination of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. This feedback and BLM’s internal review inform the Recommended Additional Steps outlined in Appendix B. Feedback was received from the States of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The DOI Team makes the following recommendations to further enhance the IRFMS (see also Appendix B for more information):

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS, support ongoing State-led efforts including the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) Western Invasives Weed Action Plan, implement the National Seed Strategy, and implement action items from the National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative;
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for Rural Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) and Rural Fire Departments (RFDs), establishment of wildlife fire protection agreements, and support for the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy
- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Administration registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing;
- Work with DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting;
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multi-year funding of projects to increase likelihood of success; and
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high risk/high value areas, including increasing BLM's fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

***c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a State-managed species throughout its range and the majority of its habitat is managed by the Federal government. Decisions regarding captive breeding, population objectives, predator control, and hunting are generally at the discretion of each individual State within the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse. It is a State-protected species in Washington and protected by Federal law in Canada.

State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950's. In particular, in 2006, WAFWA developed the Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy with an overall goal "to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations."

For the past two decades, the State wildlife agencies and many others in the range of the species have been leading efforts to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitats and to achieve the overarching objective in the 2006 WAFWA strategy, including collecting and analyzing data on breeding males, researching captive rearing techniques and approaches, translocating birds and augmenting declining populations, studying the efficacy of predator control, and managing populations for sport hunting.

In response to the Order, WAFWA developed four issue papers that summarize the scientific information available regarding: “Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse”; “Hunting Sage-Grouse: Impacts and Management”; “Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse”; and “Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means.” These four issue papers and discussions at the July 12-13 meeting led to the development of recommended additional steps (Appendix C).

Techniques are currently being developed but are not yet available to establish State-by-State or range-wide population targets. The DOI Team recommends continued support for collaborative efforts with the States to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations and completion of a framework to assess Greater Sage-Grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat. When these techniques and data are available, the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans can be reevaluated to determine if population targets should be included in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans in conjunction with habitat targets.

States actively manage the species for sport-hunting, including setting harvest limits and seasons based on the best science available. This active monitoring provides the flexibility for each State to respond to unforeseen circumstances if hunting may add mortality to depressed populations or areas (i.e. can immediately end the season). Sage-Grouse hunting, as managed, is not likely to increase overall mortality rates beyond natural rates. It is important to States and sportsmen and -women to maintain sport-hunting opportunities. The DOI Team recommends the development of a strategy, in cooperation with the States, to communicate the value of maintaining and improving habitat conditions to support populations of Sage-Grouse that can sustain continued sport-hunting of Sage-Grouse and other game species.

Augmentation of Sage-Grouse populations through the use of translocations is a management strategy that has been used by State wildlife agencies in limited circumstances to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historical habitats, or to establish new populations. These augmentation efforts have generally produced low success rates and require that the factor that caused the population declines be addressed prior to the reintroduction efforts. The preferred approach would be to maintain large contiguous habitats in good conditions -- eliminating the need for augmentation efforts. The DOI Team recommends continued support to State efforts to continue research to improve upon existing techniques and to understand the causes of population declines.

Captive breeding research conducted to date has established some protocols and techniques to aid in future efforts if the species and its habitat diminish so significantly from its current condition such that captive breeding is needed to rescue populations. The preferred approach of the States is to maintain adequate habitat to prevent the need for captive breeding, since captive breeding is financially burdensome and has low rates of success. Further investigation of captive rearing may be helpful to identify methods to

increase long-term success rates and to be prepared in the event of a catastrophic population loss that cannot be addressed through translocation. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they take an experimental design approach that builds on available information and data to address knowledge and data gaps and to improve techniques for effectively rearing Sage-Grouse in captivity so that they can be successfully released or reintroduced into the wild.

Predator control to benefit Sage-Grouse populations is an area of active research and has been used on a limited basis at local scales. While predation is the cause of mortality for most Sage-Grouse, any population improvements due to predator control come at a substantial cost and cease if the control efforts stop. Predator control efforts should generally proceed in parallel with improving habitat condition, particularly improved cover and decreased fragmentation, and addressing the underlying causes of increased predators including the removal of attractants such as garbage and implementation of perch deterrents. Targeted predator control efforts have been used as a tool to temporarily improve conditions in conjunction with translocation areas or areas of poor habitat with declining populations. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they continue investigation on the outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long-term results, as well as further research into non-lethal and lethal control techniques to better define when and how to use predator control to support conservation efforts.

**d. *Data Management and the use of Science (Addressing Section 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

Management of Sage-Grouse and its habitat relies upon continued development of new science and gathering high quality information to best inform management decisions. This information is obtained through multiple sources including Federal, State and local agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, industry, and other entities. An evaluation of science and information for attributes including peer-review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions can help determine quality and reliability of the information. Sharing high-quality information among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem.

As new science and information becomes available, DOI and the States need clear mechanisms for sharing and incorporating that information into the decision-making process. Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners, as well as stakeholders including ranchers, industries, conservation organizations, and the public produce information. Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for data sharing can help facilitate ongoing Sage-Grouse management efforts.

Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency data sharing agreements (such as the data sharing agreement between WAFWA, BLM and USFS), and online data catalogs (both public and private). Maintaining lines of communication as staff changes and updating data catalogs as new data becomes available is crucial to continued data sharing. Updating

information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes and reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D).

#### Use of Science

- Implement the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan as currently written and funding allows.
- Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among agencies and organizations, implement research efforts, and develop a tracking mechanism for publications and products
- Identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions in the sagebrush ecosystem and implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs in coordination with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts.
- Develop a process to receive, aggregate, and review information from multiple disparate sources, including entities other than Federal or State agencies, that could highlight potential future science needs

#### Data Sharing

- Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities, improve data sharing mechanisms, and resolve barriers to data sharing.
- Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities.
- Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s) so data can be shared and accessed.
- Increase awareness of new information through the use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange,
- Establish common minimum data standards and information requirements.

## **VI. NEXT STEPS**

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team and SGTF recommend the following next steps:

- Reaffirm Department and State commitment to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF's charter. Work with individual States to develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation as requested by each State.
- Work with USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this Report, considering the USFS's unique plans and associated decisions, and laws and regulations. Work to align policy and potential plan amendments to the maximum extent possible.

- Initiate additional discussions with counties, local governments, tribes, and other interested parties (such as ranchers, landowners, industries, and conservation organizations) to review the issues and recommendations included in this report and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the Report is approved by the Secretary and is expected to continue for approximately two months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short-term options in this Report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate the need to initiate plan amendment processes, including assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of Sage-Grouse. Determine if initiation of the plan amendment process is appropriate. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or January).
- Review revised policies and initiate the plan amendment process as appropriate. The DOI Team recommends that this take place during and after the January meeting of the SGTF.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
<b>Oil and Gas Stipulations</b>				
SFA NSO Stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each state to evaluate whether GHMA and PHMA stipulations already provide for the durable conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, plan amendment to consider eliminating SFAs or reducing the size of SFAs with new stipulations. May be state-specific outcome.	Range-wide
GHMA Stipulations (vary by state)	On a state by state basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of PHMA, and informs industry what is expected from them.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations and issue state-specific policy as needed; determine if a CSU stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multi-state (UT in particular)
<b>Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications</b>				
PHMA NSO WEM Language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs which recognizes the state's mitigation hierarchy, maintain collaborative approach, and remove FWS role in approving WEM.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs and work with the states to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multi-state
<b>Oil and Gas Leasing Prioritization IM - Two options to choose from:</b>				
Leasing Prioritization IM	Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.	Clarify, Modify and Reissue IM ensuring that it is stressed all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	None at this time	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE-continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lease Prioritization IM - Continued	<p>If possible, rescind the National IM.</p> <p>Then issue state level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and including state-specific solutions</p>	Rescind the National IM and develop BLM state specific IMs that includes all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	If the BLM State Level IMs do not address the issues; then a plan amendment to consider addressing concerns.	Multi-State
<b>Density and Disturbance</b>				
Density and Disturbance	<p>There is variation between the states on what counts as a disturbance, towards a density cap, and the level of disturbance that is allowed.</p> <p>On a state-by-state basis develop a crosswalk to identify and resolve inconsistencies between States and the BLM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based in science for the difference in calculation of the cap or what counts for disturbance and density; and the appropriate scale, e.g., project or BSU</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies then solidify through BLM State Level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation</p> <p>In cooperation with the state, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	If inconsistencies then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require the initiation of plan amendment process.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Net Conservation Gain	Replace or define a net conservation gain standard with a standard more consistent with the state plans (e.g. use no net loss vs. net conservation gain)	Evaluate and document each State's mitigation approach to determine if it provides net conservation gain; Issue policy on options to use the State's mitigation approach.	If policy does not address the concern then a plan amendment to consider net conservation gain concerns may be appropriate.  Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with Departmental policy on mitigation.	Range-wide
State Mitigation Plans	Use the state mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	Complete a MOU with each state on application of the state mitigation approach.  If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach	None at this time	Range-wide
Regional Mitigation Strategies.	In coordination with the states, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
How are habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM data and HAF assessments related?	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and Land Use Plan Effectiveness</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the Land Health Standards evaluation and management decisions</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well</p>	<p>Revise IMs as needed and provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of Land Health Standards; using habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness</p> <p>Continue outreach and training to on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information</p>	None at this time	Multi-State
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework.	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions not just grazing</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with BLM, other agencies, and states, including the Department of Agriculture</p> <p>Consider incorporating remote sensed vegetation maps like the Oregon State and Transition model where available</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF as well as how these relate to the Habitat Objectives Table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	Continue to conduct pilot studies on the use of the OR State and Transition Model and other tools to streamline habitat assessments	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE - Continued</b>				
<p>Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM).</p>	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporate</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between NOC and FO.</p>	<p>Issue clarification that addresses concerns provide training</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>
<p>Adjusting the Habitat Objectives Table</p>	<p>Codify guidance issued on Habitat Objectives Table in an instruction Memorandum which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to Habitat Objectives Table as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in Habitat Objectives Table are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (Not all states have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives table from the plan and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement as described in 43 CFR. 4180.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on use of habitat objectives table, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for sage-grouse, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan, an amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Causal Factor Analysis	Work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each state to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers	None at this time	Range-wide
Reversion of Trigger Responses when conditions improve	Work with states on process to revert back to previous management or change the response based on positive habitat/population response	Evaluate plans to determine which don't have a "reversion" clause	Plan amendment process to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger	Range-wide
Implementation Of Hard Trigger Responses	Work with states to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline	Work with states on development of the process in the recommendation.	Consider plan amendment considering options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger including a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Range-wide
Adaptive Management Policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM state specific IM to address advance coordination with the states and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM	Modify the current IM	None at this time	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Research and Data Collection Needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached and identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement pre-defined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify what those multi-prong impacts to population are.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis</p>	<p><i>Defer to science and data sharing issue topic for recommendation.</i></p>		
SFAs are inconsistent with the State Plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Develop an informational bulletin (IB) to clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFAs.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat.	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/ fragmentation).</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for sage grouse.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</p>	Evaluate need for plan amendment to include language regarding compatibility of grazing as a vegetation management tool (Note: this is not a plan level decision)	Range-wide.
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit	Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance	None at this time.	Range-wide.
Habitat Objectives Table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the west.	<i>See Habitat Objectives section</i>			

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Creation of Research Natural Areas results in loss of AUMs, economic losses and potential effects to habitat.	Need additional clarification from Oregon. Review or modify extent of RNAs proposed for grazing withdrawal.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single state (Oregon)
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment could result in excess grass banks that could be used by another permittee	Need additional clarification from affected states- especially Oregon.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single State (Oregon)
SFA prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs	None at this time	Range-wide.
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See Lek Buffer section</i>			
Wild Horse and Burro: Appropriate Management Level achievement in SFAs	Verify that BLM has the tools and funding to get to AML	BLM states reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with states. Elevate unresolved issue to management.  Priority given to SFAs- potentially limits ability to initiate gathers outside the SFA.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long-term resolution.	Range-wide.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Designation of exclusion areas area misalign with the state's approach	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with state partners evaluate if the states plans would provide durable conservation while providing exceptions to activities so they can proceed while conserving the species.	On a state by state basis complete an evaluation as provided in the recommendation.	If short-term flexibilities don't resolve concerns, evaluate plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multi-State
Maintenance and Production Activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multi-State
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in PHMA under the use of the state's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multi-State
Valid Existing Rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognized valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - Continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Misinterpretation of "avoidance" in the field.	Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see CO and NV for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue state-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a plan amendment.	Multi-State
Plans do not recognize the state's guidance that some activities are "de minimus" - negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	<p>Evaluate "de minimus" activities as defined in state plans and evaluate against federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects</p>	Development of programmatic NEPA documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects. Identification of CXs for de minimus activities.	Multi-State

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<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g. TIMING AND TALL STRUCUTUES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using state developed required design features.	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features outside those identified as the current plans can be used without further analysis by the BLM.	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select appropriate RDFs and to use other RDFs, including state RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in the project level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use required design features (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that required design features are not a “one-size-fit-all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, the plans may need to be changed to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in state plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lek buffer distances are incompatible with state buffer distances for some types of development (e.g. range improvements).	Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat – which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers.	Initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses and identify any needed changes to plans.  If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue then evaluate a plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information	Multi-State
Clarify regarding how to apply lek buffers (i.e. distance for NEPA analysis vs. a distance to restrict activities).	Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project specific information.	Development of policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA Designations	Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.	Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable conservation of the species.	Plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions or change those SFA management actions as described in this table.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV support this recommendation. Oregon still discussing
Need flexibility to change PHMA/GHMA boundaries	Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground survey and improved understanding of sage-grouse habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.	Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.  Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, WEMs, exclusion and avoidance, etc. in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.	Modify the plans to align PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc. and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground survey, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV, MT, and OR support this recommendation.
GHMA is inconsistent with Utah's plan.	GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.	Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.  Also consider the application of the state mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.	Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a state specific plan amendment.	Utah Specific Recommendations

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<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED BUT NOT RELATED TO THE 2105 SAGE GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
BLM may be managing water rights they don't own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. Often a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressly in the sage-grouse plans.			Work with partners toward state-legislative fix where appropriate.	Multi-state. Utah, Idaho, Nevada- but verify with other states to determine in additional changes are needed.
Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.	Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level			Range-wide.
Herd Management Areas and associated AML may need to be analyzed for adjustments.	Implement solutions for reach current AML prior to reevaluating HMAs and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML has been reached.	Range-wide

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected states provided feedback	Incorporate additional information received from states and other stakeholders
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management and provide recommendations to improve management	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing IRFMS Action Items Complete the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the IRFMS	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communication Framework (SAGE WEST) Support development and implementation of WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Department of Agriculture's (WASDA) Western Invasive Weed Action Plan Support implementation of the National Seed Strategy
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators (RFPAs, RFDs)	Reinstate grant authority, and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators Address the GSA policy which prevents excess federal firefighting equipment (e.g. Engines, radios) from going directly to RFPAs and RFDs Continue to support and develop additional Rural Fire Protection Associations
Consider related WGA efforts that enhance implementation of the IRFMS	Further action items in the Western Governor's National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative (2017) such as: expanding Good Neighbor Authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating federal, state, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; flexibilities in grazing management
Improve coordination with states on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Ensure funding for fire, fuels and restoration projects	<p>Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding, multi-year funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the Department. The risk-based funding modelling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding, but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and Improve restoration success	<p>Conduct research, testing and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g. bio-pesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Use targeted grazing and other tools to manage fine fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies	<p>Work with appropriate Departments, Agencies, Offices and companies to gain approval of concurrent (EPA) registration and field-testing of bio-pesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-agency specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration</p>

**Appendix C – Wildlife Management  
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<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator Control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled and the short- and long-term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range-wide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess Greater Sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts	<p>Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among state and federal agencies and other organizations.</p> <p>In collaboration with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative, implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs.</p> <p>Reduce barriers to information use from entities other than federal or state agencies for identifying additional science needs.</p>
Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that non-proprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data from can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements.</p> <p>Identify multi-scale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data and provide additional opportunities for use of sensitive or proprietary information when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and Tribes to explore options to improve or develop data-sharing mechanisms for capturing species observations as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**

## **MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY**

**FROM:**

**SUBJECT:** Report Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353

### **I. SUMMARY**

In accordance with Secretarial Order 3353, “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States” (June 7, 2017) (the Order), the Department of the Interior (DOI) appointed a DOI Sage Grouse Review Team (DOI Team) consisting of DOI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) leaders, and sought input from the Eleven Western States identified in the Order. The DOI Team also coordinated with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Together, the Federal agencies and the Sage Grouse Task Force (SGTF), made up of representatives of the Governors of each of the eleven States, have identified issues, options to address those issues, and next steps to implement the Order, including recommendations for:

- Increasing coordination and collaboration with the eleven Western States, including development of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and other agreements;
- Clarifying or amending the BLM’s and USFS’s 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans (the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans or Plans) and associated policies;
- Pursuing additional wildlife management actions;
- Improving actions to address the threats of fire and invasive species; and
- Incorporating new science and data into the ongoing evaluation and implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In order to receive this input, the BLM led the DOI Team and an associated technical team to engage the SGTF in meeting the purposes of the Order. Three meetings were held with the SGTF. The SGTF reiterated a commitment to ensuring the durability of conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse and an interest in retaining the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while considering targeted changes to the plans and policies to improve management and flexibility. In developing recommendations, the SGTF and the DOI Team identified near-term opportunities to resolve concerns and issues and achieve the goals of the order, including development of policies, clarification, MOUs, and training, many of which can be completed within six months. The SGTF and the DOI Team also identified longer-term options to achieve the goals of the Order, including potential plan amendments which would be completed in accordance with applicable laws and policies. Some of the key topics discussed are summarized below.

One of the most significant areas of concern was the designation of Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs) in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. SFAs are a subset of PHMAs and correspond to the areas identified by the FWS as Sage-Grouse “strongholds” and represent habitat most vital to the species persistence within which the strongest levels of protection are required. SFAs are areas

of highest habitat value for Sage-Grouse and are managed to avoid new surface disturbance. Concerns were expressed that SFAs, while providing increased regulatory certainty, provide little flexibility to authorize new development when project-specific information indicates that conservation goals can be achieved. Potential plan amendments to consider removing or adjusting SFAs and their associated decisions (e.g., NSO stipulations) are likely to be the appropriate tool to address these concerns.

For energy, minerals, and lands (e.g., rights-of-way) development concerns were raised that these uses were being overly restricted. Near-term, the development of additional policy to identify existing flexibility in how the Plans can be implemented can address many of these concerns. In some cases, additional research may be needed to better refine use restrictions based on the impacts of different types of uses (e.g., lek buffers). After completing these tasks, the need for targeted plan amendments would be reassessed, for example if changes to allocation boundaries or waivers, modifications, or exceptions are considered.

For habitat management, monitoring, and grazing management, policy, clarification and training are identified to address the issues and concerns. In some cases, additional research may be conducted to further understand Sage-Grouse habitat needs and based on the outcomes of this research, plan amendments may be appropriate in the future.

For adaptive management and the compensatory mitigation net conservation gain standard, some opportunities for policy, clarification, and coordination to increase compatibility were identified. However, potential plan amendments are likely to be the appropriate tool to fully address concerns. Additional research needs were also identified.

For addressing concerns that Habitat Management Area boundaries do not match new State habitat maps, a potential plan amendment is likely to be the appropriate solution. The DOI Team is continuing to investigate whether any short-term options are available to incorporate this information either into the plans or on a project-by-project basis.

In addition to these topics, several State-specific issues were raised that will be further investigated and resolved on a state-by-state basis.

The DOI Team identified additional opportunities to improve coordination on fire, fuels, and invasive species management, including increasing coordination and jointly funding habitat restoration and fuels projects, investigating options to allow Federal agencies to transfer equipment to local firefighting resources in support of stopping fires, and additional research and pilot projects to streamline and improve habitat restoration activities. The DOI Team also identified several potential opportunities for MOUs, data sharing, new research, and incorporating new science and other information into plan implementation. The DOI Team further discussed continuing research into captive breeding to improve its effectiveness, continued use of translocations when needed to augment small or at risk populations; targeted use of predator control particularly during translocations or for small populations in poor quality habitat; and continued development of tools to better identify population goals.

Finally, the DOI Team identified next steps to engage counties, tribes, and local governments, as well as other partners, to continue to work with SGTF to further refine the recommendations included in this report, and based on the refined recommendations develop a prioritized plan to implement the recommendations.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

On June 7, 2017, the Secretary of the Interior issued Secretarial Order 3353. As required by the Order, the DOI Team and associated technical team, engaged with the SGTF in order to undertake the review required by the Order and to provide a report with recommendations and additional steps the Department should take to address issues identified as a result of the review. In addition, the DOI Team was to closely coordinate with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS).

The Order directs the DOI to enhance cooperation with the States identified in the Order, to identify the need to develop memoranda of understanding and other agreements, to identify needed training, and for the DOI Team to conduct:

- (i) a review of the plans and programs that States already have in place to ensure that the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans adequately complement State efforts to conserve the species;
- (ii) a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-grouse habitat;
- (iii) an examination of the impact on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands within their borders, recognizing that those lands are important to resource use and development, and to the conservation of Sage-grouse;
- (iv) a review of the 2015 Sage-grouse Plans and associated policies, including seven BLM IM issued in September 2016. The review will include (1) identification of provisions that may require modification or rescission, as appropriate, in order to give appropriate weight to the value of energy and other development of public lands within BLM's overall multiple-use mission and to be consistent with the policy set forth in Secretary's Order 3349, "American Energy Independence," implementing the Executive Order signed by the President on March 28, 2017, "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth"; and (2) opportunities to conserve the Sage-grouse and its habitat without inhibiting job creation and local economic growth;
- (v) as appropriate, the team should provide recommendations with regard to (1) captive breeding; (2) opportunities to enhance State involvement; (3) efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis; and (4) additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve the current population levels and habitat conditions.

In further discussions with members of the DOI Team, recommendations in regard to

predator control and methods to incorporate new data and science, including information available from third parties, such as industry are included in this report.

### III. BACKGROUND

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that Greater Sage-Grouse was warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) but precluded from listing by other species with higher listing priority. In the finding, FWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation and the lack of regulatory mechanisms to address habitat loss as the primary threats. In 2012, the FWS, in collaboration with the States, led an effort to clarify the conservation objectives for Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The Conservation Objectives Team report, released in 2013, identified objectives for fourteen threats facing the Greater-Sage grouse including: fire, non-native invasive plants, energy development, sagebrush removal, improper grazing, free-roaming equid management, pinyon-juniper expansion, agricultural conversion, mining, recreation, urbanization, infrastructure, and fences. The BLM and USFS pursued land use planning to provide regulatory certainty to address population declines, habitat loss, and the identified threats; with the goal of providing for the conservation of the Sage-Grouse and its habitat and to avoid the need to list the Sage-Grouse under the ESA.

In September 2015, the BLM and the USFS adopted amendments and revisions to 98 land use plans (2015 Sage-Grouse Plans) across the ten<sup>1</sup> Western States addressing, in part, Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat. The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans govern management of approximately 67 million acres of BLM-administered Federal lands. In September 2016, the BLM issued seven Instruction Memoranda (IMs) to provide guidance on certain elements of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans.

In October 2015, relying upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the FWS published its determination that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS determined the Sage-grouse plans provided certainty for conservation of the species and committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years to determine if plan implementation was indeed conserving the Sage-Grouse and its habitat.

### IV. PROCESS UTILIZED FOR REVIEW

In June 2017, the Acting BLM Director, the DOI Team, and the associated technical team met with the SGTF to discuss the Order and establish a process for seeking State input on the items identified in the Order. The BLM also began working with each State to gather information related to the elements of the Order, including State-specific issues and recommended actions with respect to the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and opportunities to promote consistency with State plans. The SGTF identified an initial list of issues and refined those issues and recommendations while working with the respective BLM State Directors.

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<sup>1</sup> While Washington State is included in the review for this Order, the State was not part of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. A BLM land use plan which will include Sage-Grouse conservation in Washington is currently under development.

In mid-July, 2017, the Federal agencies and the SGTF met to further refine and validate the issues and proposed recommendations presented in this Report. The mid-July meeting was attended by seven out of the Eleven Western States with Sage-Grouse habitat<sup>2</sup>. In late-July, the DOI Team met with the SGTF to review and discuss the proposed recommendations included in this Report.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides an overview of potential plan or policy changes, and actions to address the topics of wildland fire and invasive species, wildlife management, and data and science. Appendices A-D contain additional information on issues and recommendations. The DOI Team and SGTF also identified next steps which are described in Section VI.

In discussions with the SGTF, there was general consensus that all partners were committed to ensuring durable conservation of Sage-Grouse that would ensure that there would be no need to list Greater Sage-Grouse under the ESA in the future. In addition, there was interest in short- and long-term approaches to address issues of concern such as through policy, clarification, and training (short term), as well as targeted plan amendments that retain the framework of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans while complementing the State plans (long term).

### **a. 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and Policies (Addressing Sections 4b(i), (iii), (iv) and 4(a) of the Order)**

#### **i. Fluid Minerals – Stipulations, Waivers, Exceptions and Modifications and Density and Disturbance and associated policy:**

Multiple States have raised concerns that the oil and gas management actions in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, including the oil and gas leasing and development prioritization requirement, unnecessarily limit the economic potential of mineral development on public lands. Specifically, States expressed concerns with the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations, including the limited criteria for granting an exception, in addition to the requirement that leasing and development be prioritized in certain habitat management areas. The States have asked BLM to reduce any undue burden on mineral development and rely more on the States' mitigation hierarchies. The objective of the recommendations is to encourage responsible energy production and provide for economic growth, including the opportunity for the creation of jobs.

To address these concerns short term options include modification or replacement of the existing prioritization policy, working with the States to determine if SFA and GHMA stipulations need to be removed or modified; and developing appropriate waivers, modifications, and exceptions (including removal of FWS approval authority)

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<sup>2</sup> Representatives of the States of California, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota were not able to attend the meeting. However, members of the SGTF were in frequent conversation with the State of Montana SGTF representative during the meeting. Outreach to the other three States continued during this review time period

to the PHMA stipulation. In the long term options include a plan amendment to manage the SFA according to the underlying habitat type stipulations; alter the GHMA stipulation, and possibly modify the waivers, exception, and modification language for the PHMA stipulation.

Since the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans were approved, several States have established varying density and disturbance cap processes for development. In the short term, BLM will work with the States on an individual basis to evaluate if their processes provide the scientific basis for the conservation of the species. If discrepancies are identified, long term options include a potential plan amendment to evaluate modifications to the current caps.

ii. Mitigation and Net Conservation Gain:

Multiple States have raised concerns that the mitigation requirements in the Sage-Grouse Plans (including the net conservation gain standard) may be different than the requirements of State plans. Consistent application of mitigation between State and Federal plans, policies, and procedures is desired. The States have asked BLM to consider clarifications or policy changes that will ensure consistent and coordinated application of mitigation policies and procedures and provide durable conservation. Several States have indicated that their mitigation approaches may be adequate to meet a net conservation gain standard. Others have indicated that a net conservation gain is unnecessary and should be changed to no net loss. States also indicated that mitigation should be used in place of broad scale plan restrictions to allow development and provide comparable conservation through the mitigation of impacts.

In the short term, options include developing MOUs and policies to coordinate and clarify options for using each State's approach when applying mitigation, including meeting net conservation gain standards. Longer term options include a potential plan amendment process to consider removing or changing the net conservation gain standard requirement.

iii. Habitat Assessment Framework, Habitat Objectives Table, and Effectiveness Monitoring:

Multiple States have identified issues related to using the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF), Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) data, other data, and the Habitat Objectives Table set forth in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans. Most States have asked BLM to focus on further clarifications or policy changes to ensure consistent application in the field. This will improve the way BLM evaluates its Greater Sage-Grouse habitat and applies the data and assessments to management decisions on public lands. Some States requested further clarification or new policy confirming the ability to utilize habitat objectives that correspond with differing habitat types across the range or removal of the Habitat Objectives Table through a plan amendment.

In the short term, options include revising the policies on Habitat Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring to address the concerns raised; issuing new policy explaining

how to use habitat objectives; and providing additional training to field staff and partners on the use of HAF, AIM, other monitoring data, habitat objectives, and other tools and methods. In the long term new science and information may result in considering a potential plan amendment to revise the Habitat Objectives Table.

iv. Adaptive Management:

Multiple States have identified the need for a clear causal factor analysis process with timeframes for completion and application of management responses for both soft and hard adaptive management triggers. States want to avoid BLM implementing management actions that do not respond to the cause of the decline of a population or habitat in a specific area. States also called for flexible methods and timeframes to “untrip” triggers and reverse hard trigger responses once population or habitat trends in a certain area improve or there is evidence that a management response is not addressing the causal factor.

In the short term, an option is to develop policy to clarify the implementation of the adaptive management process. However, most concerns with adaptive management cannot be addressed through policy. Long term options include potential plan amendments to consider (a) reverting to previous management actions when population or habitat recovers above the original trigger and more restrictive management actions are not required; and (b) providing flexibility to identify appropriate management responses based on a causal analysis when a hard trigger is reached while still ensuring a rapid response to catastrophic population or habitat losses. In addition, research is recommended to better identify when populations or habitats are trending downward and to implement management actions that correct the problem before a hard trigger is tripped.

v. Livestock Grazing and Wild Horses/Burros Management :

Some States raised concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans do not clearly articulate the compatibility of grazing with the conservation of Sage-Grouse habitat and therefore placing too much emphasis on grazing management when grazing is not a major threat. Additionally, concerns were expressed that standard BLM grazing management processes are not being used. States also raised concerns that current policy provides inadequate flexibility to field offices to make local decisions on how to prioritize grazing-related work. States have asked BLM to make clarifications to the Grazing Allotment Prioritization policy and the Grazing and Threshold Responses policy to provide more flexibility in applying management based on on-the-ground conditions. States have also expressed concern regarding the ability of land management agencies to achieve appropriate management level for wild horse and burro (WHB) management.

In the short term, options include revising and clarifying policy to incorporate guidance on how to prioritize and complete grazing permit renewal, to allow for priorities where there are known impacts to Sage-Grouse habitat, to clarify that habitat objectives are not used directly in permit renewal but instead are used to help inform land health (see habitat section of this report), and to clarify that thresholds and responses can vary

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given differing habitat types; developing a more collaborative approach with grazing permittees and other stakeholders; and providing training to field staff and partners to ensure policy and existing procedures are correctly applied. In each policy, clarify that proper grazing is compatible with sage-grouse habitat and can be used to address threats to Sage-Grouse and improve habitat conditions. Also, the BLM will continue to pursue targeted grazing pilot projects to demonstrate use of grazing to address excessive fuels and create strategic fuels breaks, and outcome-based grazing pilot projects to illustrate that flexible grazing permits can be used to respond to changing conditions effectively while helping to improve habitat conditions.

With regards to WHBs, States expressed concern that impacts from WHB to Sage-Grouse habitat may be greater outside of SFAs and expressed a desire for BLM to retain flexibility to prioritize achieving AML in Sage-Grouse habitat where the need is greatest. BLM's existing WHB gather plan is to achieve appropriate management levels (AML) within 5 years in SFAs, but with current funding and holding capacity AML is unlikely to be reached in other sage-grouse habitats in the foreseeable future. An option is to continue to work with the States and other partners to assess and complete gathers in the highest priorities areas, however increased funding and legislative action is likely required for a long-term solution. In addition, the Department has proposed a strategy to achieve AML on public lands in the FY18 budget proposal and is awaiting congressional action.

- vi. Other Minerals, Energy, and Lands (e.g., rights-of-way), including Exclusion, Avoidance, Required Design Features, Lek Buffers, Timing, Rights-of-way: There are concerns that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans included blanket restrictions on development through exclusion and closure without taking into consideration different impacts from different types of uses and the ability of State mechanisms to manage those uses using compensatory mitigation while conserving Sage-Grouse and its habitat. Of particular concern are mineral materials closures in PHMA, due to the economic impact of transporting materials for long distances to complete road repairs and other actions. States also raised concerns regarding the interpretation of avoidance areas and timing restrictions; Required Design Features (RDFs) that are unclear or require unnecessary documentation; and the lack of a definition for tall structures. Lastly, States have raised concerns regarding whether the lek buffers are appropriate and are being applied correctly.

In the short term, options include providing clarifications and policy on how to evaluate authorizing uses in avoidance areas and how to use existing flexibility in applying RDFs and buffers, including consideration of State-proposed RDFs or buffers, as well as local conditions and other factors. Additional research to evaluate appropriate buffers for different uses and the effectiveness of various RDFs, and to incorporate the new science into plan implementation as it becomes available is also recommended. In the long term, options include a potential plan amendment process to adjust exclusion boundaries to provide increased flexibility while meeting conservation

goals, as well as to provide additional flexibility to authorize mineral material sites in PHMA to meet the needs of local communities.

- vii. **Habitat Boundaries – Sagebrush Focal Area and Habitat Management Areas:** Multiple States have identified concerns with: 1) Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) designations and whether they are needed or if underlying PHMA or GHMA allocations and decisions are adequate to meet sage-grouse conservation and durability; 2) BLM’s ability to adjust habitat management area boundaries and associated decisions to incorporate revised habitat mapping by States; and 3) Utah specific concerns that GHMAs are not needed or appropriate and are inconsistent with the State Plan.

Few short term options have been identified, however, a State and Federal work-teams can continue to explore options to address interim clarifications. In the long-term, options include plan amendments to consider removing SFAs and reverting to the underlying habitat management areas (PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc.) and management actions or alternative management actions if needed to achieve durable sage-grouse conservation; and adopting revised habitat maps from the States and developing a process and criteria for evaluating and adopting future habitat mapping corrections without requiring additional plan amendments. To address the State of Utah’s mapping concerns, the BLM could work with the State to further examine the GHMA areas and determine how best to remove or adjust the GHMA to achieve durable conservation of sage-grouse while coming into closer alignment with the State plan, including whether initiation of a State-specific plan amendment is appropriate.

- b. ***Wildland Fire and Invasive Species (Addressing Sections 4(b)(ii) and 4(a) of the Order)*** Pursuant to Secretarial Order 3353, the BLM led an examination of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) to identify issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, including seeking feedback from States. This feedback and BLM’s internal review inform the Recommended Additional Steps outlined in Appendix B. Feedback was received from the States of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, as well as from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).

The IRFMS provides a comprehensive approach to reduce the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, address the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species that exacerbate the threat of fire, position fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response, and restore burned rangelands to healthy landscapes. Feedback from the States and WAFWA demonstrated a strong history of Federal and State collaboration surrounding the goals and actions in the IRFMS.

The DOI Team makes the following recommendations to further enhance the IRFMS (see also Appendix B for more information):

- Continue to complete action items from the IRFMS, support ongoing State-led efforts including the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) Western Invasives Weed Action Plan, implement the National Seed Strategy, and implement action items from the National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative;
- Increase collaboration and outreach, including support for the SageWest communications initiative, joint prioritization and funding of projects, support for Rural Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) and Rural Fire Departments (RFDs), establishment of wildlife fire protection agreements, and support for the National Cohesive Wildlife Fire Management Strategy
- Conduct research and field trials to further streamline and increase success in restoration and fuels management activities, including pursuing new biocides and herbicides, accelerating Environmental Protection Administration registration and land management agency use of new tools, and investigation and use of targeted grazing;
- Work with DOI and Congress to reinstate authorities to provide equipment to State and local cooperators for firefighting;
- Enhance multi-jurisdictional funding of projects on public and private lands and commit to multi-year funding of projects to increase likelihood of success; and
- Complete risk-based budget allocation adjustments in DOI to ensure fire and fuels funding is allocated to high risk/high value areas, including increasing BLM's fire and fuels budget to be in line with identified fire risk to public lands.

***c. Wildlife Management (Addressing Sections 4b(v) and 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a State-managed species throughout its range and the majority of its habitat is managed by the Federal government. Decisions regarding captive breeding, population objectives, predator control, and hunting are generally at the discretion of each individual State within the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse. It is a State-protected species in Washington and protected by Federal law in Canada.

State-led efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950's. In particular, in 2006, WAFWA developed the Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy with an overall goal "to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations."

For the past two decades, the State wildlife agencies and many others in the range of the species have been leading efforts to conserve Sage-Grouse and its habitats and to achieve the overarching objective in the 2006 WAFWA strategy, including collecting and analyzing data on breeding males, researching captive rearing techniques and approaches, translocating birds and augmenting declining populations, studying the efficacy of predator control, and managing populations for sport hunting.

In response to the Order, WAFWA developed four issue papers that summarize the scientific information available regarding: “Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-Grouse”; “Hunting Sage-Grouse: Impacts and Management”; “Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-Grouse”; and “Augmenting Sage-Grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and Other Means.” These four issue papers and discussions at the July 12-13 meeting led to the development of recommended additional steps (Appendix C).

Techniques are currently being developed but are not yet available to establish State-by-State or range-wide population targets. The DOI Team recommends continued support for collaborative efforts with the States to develop and refine techniques to better estimate range-wide populations and completion of a framework to assess Greater Sage-Grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat. When these techniques and data are available, the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans can be reevaluated to determine if population targets should be included in the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans in conjunction with habitat targets.

States actively manage the species for sport-hunting, including setting harvest limits and seasons based on the best science available. This active monitoring provides the flexibility for each State to respond to unforeseen circumstances if hunting may add mortality to depressed populations or areas (i.e. can immediately end the season). Sage-Grouse hunting, as managed, is not likely to increase overall mortality rates beyond natural rates. It is important to States and sportsmen and -women to maintain sport-hunting opportunities. The DOI Team recommends the development of a strategy, in cooperation with the States, to communicate the value of maintaining and improving habitat conditions to support populations of Sage-Grouse that can sustain continued sport-hunting of Sage-Grouse and other game species.

Augmentation of Sage-Grouse populations through the use of translocations is a management strategy that has been used by State wildlife agencies in limited circumstances to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historical habitats, or to establish new populations. These augmentation efforts have generally produced low success rates and require that the factor that caused the population declines be addressed prior to the reintroduction efforts. The preferred approach would be to maintain large contiguous habitats in good conditions -- eliminating the need for augmentation efforts. The DOI Team recommends continued support to State efforts to continue research to improve upon existing techniques and to understand the causes of population declines.

Captive breeding research conducted to date has established some protocols and techniques to aid in future efforts if the species and its habitat diminish so significantly from its current condition such that captive breeding is needed to rescue populations. The preferred approach of the States is to maintain adequate habitat to prevent the need for captive breeding, since captive breeding is financially burdensome and has low rates of success. Further investigation of captive rearing may be helpful to identify methods to

increase long-term success rates and to be prepared in the event of a catastrophic population loss that cannot be addressed through translocation. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they take an experimental design approach that builds on available information and data to address knowledge and data gaps and to improve techniques for effectively rearing Sage-Grouse in captivity so that they can be successfully released or reintroduced into the wild.

Predator control to benefit Sage-Grouse populations is an area of active research and has been used on a limited basis at local scales. While predation is the cause of mortality for most Sage-Grouse, any population improvements due to predator control come at a substantial cost and cease if the control efforts stop. Predator control efforts should generally proceed in parallel with improving habitat condition, particularly improved cover and decreased fragmentation, and addressing the underlying causes of increased predators including the removal of attractants such as garbage and implementation of perch deterrents. Targeted predator control efforts have been used as a tool to temporarily improve conditions in conjunction with translocation areas or areas of poor habitat with declining populations. The DOI Team recommends continued support to the States as they continue investigation on the outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled, and the short- and long-term results, as well as further research into non-lethal and lethal control techniques to better define when and how to use predator control to support conservation efforts.

**d. *Data Management and the use of Science (Addressing Section 4(a) of the Order and other requests by the DOI Team)***

Management of Sage-Grouse and its habitat relies upon continued development of new science and gathering high quality information to best inform management decisions. This information is obtained through multiple sources including Federal, State and local agencies, universities, non-governmental organizations, industry, and other entities. An evaluation of science and information for attributes including peer-review, repeatability of methods and analyses, strength of evidence, and relevance to local conditions can help determine quality and reliability of the information. Sharing high-quality information among all entities can further the application of a data-driven approach to the conservation and management of Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem.

As new science and information becomes available, DOI and the States need clear mechanisms for sharing and incorporating that information into the decision-making process. Federal, State, Tribal, and local partners, as well as stakeholders including ranchers, industries, conservation organizations, and the public produce information. Increasing opportunities and reducing barriers for data sharing can help facilitate ongoing Sage-Grouse management efforts.

Data sharing currently is conducted through multiple mechanisms including one-on-one communication, agency-to-agency data sharing agreements (such as the data sharing agreement between WAFWA, BLM and USFS), and online data catalogs (both public and private). Maintaining lines of communication as staff changes and updating data catalogs as new data becomes available is crucial to continued data sharing. Updating

information sharing processes and procedures across organizations can increase the use of shared information during decision-making processes and reduce the potential for conflicting decisions for similar issues.

Following a review of submitted input and ongoing conversations with States, the DOI Team makes the following recommendations to increase the use of science and reduce barriers to data sharing (see also Appendix D).

#### Use of Science

- Implement the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy Actionable Science Plan as currently written and funding allows.
- Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among agencies and organizations, implement research efforts, and develop a tracking mechanism for publications and products
- Identify and prioritize science needs related to human dimensions in the sagebrush ecosystem and implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs in coordination with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative and other similar efforts.
- Develop a process to receive, aggregate, and review information from multiple disparate sources, including entities other than Federal or State agencies, that could highlight potential future science needs

#### Data Sharing

- Establish data sharing agreements between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities, improve data sharing mechanisms, and resolve barriers to data sharing.
- Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between Federal and State agencies, Tribes, and other entities.
- Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s) so data can be shared and accessed.
- Increase awareness of new information through the use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange,
- Establish common minimum data standards and information requirements.

## **VI. NEXT STEPS**

In addition to recommendations on specific actions, the DOI Team and SGTF recommend the following next steps:

- Reaffirm Department and State commitment to the SGTF to assist in coordination of State and Federal sagebrush conservation activities. Review and update the SGTF's charter. Work with individual States to develop MOUs for plan implementation and mitigation as requested by each State.
- Work with USFS to fully engage and evaluate the proposed recommendations in this Report, considering the USFS's unique plans and associated decisions, and laws and regulations. Work to align policy and potential plan amendments to the maximum extent possible.

- Initiate additional discussions with counties, local governments, tribes, and other interested parties (such as ranchers, landowners, industries, and conservation organizations) to review the issues and recommendations included in this report and identify any additional issues or recommendations for consideration. The DOI Team recommends that this outreach begin as soon as practicable after the Report is approved by the Secretary and is expected to continue for approximately two months.
- Develop the evaluations, policies, and clarifications identified as short-term options in this Report to address improvements that can be quickly implemented. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Further evaluate the need to initiate plan amendment processes, including assessing potential additive effects of the proposed changes and the continued ability to achieve conservation of Sage-Grouse. Determine if initiation of the plan amendment process is appropriate. This work is recommended to follow the public outreach phase.
- Review input from other partners and make any further adjustments to recommendations at the SGTF meeting scheduled after the public outreach phase (estimated October or January).
- Review revised policies and initiate the plan amendment process as appropriate. The DOI Team recommends that this take place during and after the January meeting of the SGTF.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
<b>Oil and Gas Stipulations</b>				
SFA NSO Stipulations	Determine if SFA designations are required through further work with each state to evaluate whether GHMA and PHMA stipulations already provide for the durable conservation of the species.	Complete a crosswalk analysis with the States.	If PHMA/GHMA provide needed durability, plan amendment to consider eliminating SFAs or reducing the size of SFAs with new stipulations. May be state-specific outcome.	Range-wide
GHMA Stipulations (vary by state)	On a state by state basis, complete an evaluation of the GHMA stipulation to determine if a stipulation provides for the conservation of the species, incentive to develop outside of PHMA, and informs industry what is expected from them.	Clarify management flexibility in applying stipulations and issue state-specific policy as needed; determine if a CSU stipulation could be changed without a plan amendment action.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the CSU may be appropriate.	Multi-state (UT in particular)
<b>Waivers, Exceptions, and Modifications</b>				
PHMA NSO WEM Language	Work with the States to develop new WEM language for PHMAs which recognizes the state's mitigation hierarchy, maintain collaborative approach, and remove FWS role in approving WEM.	Determine if the modification of WEMs are plan maintenance or a plan amendment.  Evaluate the efficacy of existing WEMs and work with the states to adjust or add as necessary.	Depending on outcome of short-term recommendation, a plan amendment to consider changing the WEMs may be appropriate.	Multi-state
<b>Oil and Gas Leasing Prioritization IM - Two options to choose from:</b>				
Leasing Prioritization IM	Clarify to BLM staff that the plans currently allow leasing in all Greater Sage-Grouse habitat categories using GRSG plan lease stipulations.	Clarify, Modify and Reissue IM ensuring that it is stressed all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	None at this time	Multi-state

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<b>TOPIC AREA: OIL AND GAS STIPULATIONS, LEASING IM, DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE-continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Long Term Recommendation</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lease Prioritization IM - Continued	<p>If possible, rescind the National IM.</p> <p>Then issue state level IMs to address recommended changes to national IM and including state-specific solutions</p>	Rescind the National IM and develop BLM state specific IMs that includes all habitat types are open for leasing and opportunities to use mitigation and other state-based tools to address development impacts.	If the BLM State Level IMs do not address the issues; then a plan amendment to consider addressing concerns.	Multi-State
<b>Density and Disturbance</b>				
Density and Disturbance	<p>There is variation between the states on what counts as a disturbance, towards a density cap, and the level of disturbance that is allowed.</p> <p>On a state-by-state basis develop a crosswalk to identify and resolve inconsistencies between States and the BLM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include recommendations based in science for the difference in calculation of the cap or what counts for disturbance and density; and the appropriate scale, e.g., project or BSU</li> </ul>	<p>If no inconsistencies then solidify through BLM State Level IMs and MOUs to share disturbance data.</p> <p>Clarify/train staff and partners on what types of disturbances are included in the calculation</p> <p>In cooperation with the state, investigate opportunity to accelerate restoration and recovery efforts in areas in which the caps are being approached.</p>	If inconsistencies then resolve through using best available science and/or initiate new research to further clarify disturbance and density requirements for different types of uses, which may require the initiation of plan amendment process.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: MITIGATION AND NET CONSERVATION GAIN</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Net Conservation Gain	Replace or define a net conservation gain standard with a standard more consistent with the state plans (e.g. use no net loss vs. net conservation gain)	Evaluate and document each State's mitigation approach to determine if it provides net conservation gain; Issue policy on options to use the State's mitigation approach.	If policy does not address the concern then a plan amendment to consider net conservation gain concerns may be appropriate.  Evaluate need for plan modifications to comply with Departmental policy on mitigation.	Range-wide
State Mitigation Plans	Use the state mechanisms that conform to the SGTF, Sage-Grouse Mitigation Report to ensure consistency and application of mitigation requirements including the use of debit and credit calculations.	Complete a MOU with each state on application of the state mitigation approach.  If MOUs do not address the issues, develop policy providing direction on how to use each State's mitigation approach	None at this time	Range-wide
Regional Mitigation Strategies.	In coordination with the states, determine where mitigation should occur based on what would be most beneficial for the species.	Include in the State Mitigation Plan MOU.	None at this time.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
How are habitat objectives, plan effectiveness reporting, AIM data and HAF assessments related?	<p>Clarify how to integrate habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and Land Use Plan Effectiveness</p> <p>Clarify how to use existing data, legacy data, and other monitoring efforts, specifically AIM and HAF during the Land Health Standards evaluation and management decisions</p> <p>Clarification on scales and the appropriate data for use at each scale.</p> <p>HAF and AIM are one piece of the puzzle; money and effort needs to be allotted to other monitoring as well</p>	<p>Revise IMs as needed and provide additional clarification and training on using habitat objectives to inform evaluation of Land Health Standards; using habitat objectives at the land use plan scale to evaluate plan effectiveness</p> <p>Continue outreach and training to on use of AIM data in conjunction with other data and monitoring information</p>	None at this time	Multi-State
Implementation of the Habitat Assessment Framework.	<p>Clarify how the field should prioritize HAF assessments e.g., areas that have hit soft or hard triggers, lesser quality habitat</p> <p>Clarify how to integrate relevant studies and supplemental data with AIM and HAF into land health standards.</p> <p>Clearly articulate the use of HAF for all resource decisions not just grazing</p> <p>Integrate training, including how to determine if adequate data is available, with BLM, other agencies, and states, including the Department of Agriculture</p> <p>Consider incorporating remote sensed vegetation maps like the Oregon State and Transition model where available</p>	<p>Issue new HAF IM to clarify the purpose of the HAF and the relationship between AIM and HAF as well as how these relate to the Habitat Objectives Table.</p> <p>Internal and external training once this relationship has been clarified.</p>	Continue to conduct pilot studies on the use of the OR State and Transition Model and other tools to streamline habitat assessments	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK, EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING, HABITAT OBJECTIVE TABLE - Continued</b>				
<p>Proper use of land use plan effectiveness data (AIM).</p>	<p>Provide transparency and ensure understanding of the intended use of AIM data. Review plan effectiveness policy to ensure that lessons learned are incorporate</p> <p>Clarify that additional funding is set aside for AIM data collection so it is not taking money away from other monitoring efforts.</p> <p>Improve coordination between NOC and FO.</p>	<p>Issue clarification that addresses concerns provide training</p>	<p>None at this time</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>
<p>Adjusting the Habitat Objectives Table</p>	<p>Codify guidance issued on Habitat Objectives Table in an instruction Memorandum which clarifies the appropriate use, scale, and importance of the ecological site and the current ecological state of the monitoring site</p> <p>Define a process to allow updates to Habitat Objectives Table as new information becomes available.</p> <p>Ensure objectives in Habitat Objectives Table are consistent with unique landscapes and habitat conditions (Utah captures variations through various delineations).</p> <p>Explore an option to match the habitat objectives with the States' plan, where available (Not all states have quantitative objectives).</p> <p>Explore the possibility to remove the habitat objectives table from the plan and determine what would be required to address the habitat requirement as described in 43 CFR. 4180.</p>	<p>Policy and clarification on use of habitat objectives table, and flexibility provided in the plan and BLM processes to adjust the habitat objectives based on ecological site potential</p> <p>Investigate opportunity for plan maintenance to further explain flexibility in plans</p>	<p>Continue research on habitat requirements for sage-grouse, if new science warrants changes in habitat objectives beyond flexibility currently provided in plan, an amendment to consider updating habitat objectives may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Multi-State</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Causal Factor Analysis	Work with states to identify a causal factor analysis process for both hard and soft triggers.	Work with each state to complete a process for causal factor analysis.  Clarify in IM that causal factor analysis is required for hard and soft triggers	None at this time	Range-wide
Reversion of Trigger Responses when conditions improve	Work with states on process to revert back to previous management or change the response based on positive habitat/population response	Evaluate plans to determine which don't have a "reversion" clause	Plan amendment process to consider allowing reversion to less restrictive decisions when habitat/population recovers to above original trigger	Range-wide
Implementation Of Hard Trigger Responses	Work with states to develop a process to ensure responses to hard triggers are pertinent to the cause of the population or habitat decline	Work with states on development of the process in the recommendation.	Consider plan amendment considering options for alternative approaches to hitting a hard trigger including a temporary suspension of authorizations while causal analysis occurs and responses are developed or implement hard trigger responses while causal analysis occurs and release those not needed to address the threat.	Range-wide
Adaptive Management Policy (IM 2016-140):	Modify IM 2016-140 or issue BLM state specific IM to address advance coordination with the states and partners beginning with Step 1 in the IM	Modify the current IM	None at this time	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: ADAPATIVE MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Research and Data Collection Needs	<p>Emphasize working with States and Federal partners to identify a rapid assessment process that could identify when a population or habitat trigger is being approached and identify appropriate management actions to be taken immediately to address the decline in population or habitat and avoid the need to implement pre-defined plan adaptive management responses. Research could help identify what those multi-prong impacts to population are.</p> <p>Clarify the requirements data must meet in order to be used to inform the causal factor analysis</p>	<p><i>Defer to science and data sharing issue topic for recommendation.</i></p>		
SFAs are inconsistent with the State Plan	<p>Clarify that adaptive management triggers should not be tied to SFAs in any way and reiterate the habitat management hierarchy set forth in the Idaho State Plan.</p>	<p>Develop an informational bulletin (IB) to clarify triggers are not related to SFA boundaries.</p>	<p>Plan amendment to consider removing SFAs.</p>	<p>Idaho</p>

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need to clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with enhancing or maintaining GRSG habitat.	<p>Modify language to communicate that properly managed grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat. Focus on identified threats (fire and invasive species/ fragmentation).</p> <p>Incorporate guidance for potential use of livestock grazing as a tool.</p> <p>Incentivize stewardship and grazing practices that result in improved conditions for sage grouse.</p>	<p>Revise and clarify IMs related to grazing. Clearly articulate that proper livestock grazing is compatible with GRSG habitat</p> <p>Continue to move forward with targeted grazing and outcome based grazing pilots to further demonstrate methods to use grazing to control fuels and improve habitat condition</p> <p>Clarify existing policy and regulations that allow AUMs to increase based on forage availability.</p>	Evaluate need for plan amendment to include language regarding compatibility of grazing as a vegetation management tool (Note: this is not a plan level decision)	Range-wide.
Causal factor analysis must be completed and grazing determined to be a causal factor prior to making changes to grazing permits.	Follow current process to complete a causal factor analysis prior to modifying grazing permit	Reinforce/ offer training on how to modify a permit as described in current guidance	None at this time.	Range-wide.
Habitat Objectives Table is too rigid and prescriptive to cover the broad range of landscapes in the west.	<i>See Habitat Objectives section</i>			

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<b>TOPIC AREA: GRAZING - CONTINUED</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Creation of Research Natural Areas results in loss of AUMs, economic losses and potential effects to habitat.	Need additional clarification from Oregon. Review or modify extent of RNAs proposed for grazing withdrawal.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single state (Oregon)
Voluntary grazing permit relinquishment could result in excess grass banks that could be used by another permittee	Need additional clarification from affected states- especially Oregon.	Continue discussions to clarify desired direction.	None at this time.	Single State (Oregon)
SFA prioritization strategy	Incorporate flexibility in the allotment prioritization process	Revise allotment prioritization IM.  Develop a strategy to use existing data for a rapid assessment in SFAs	None at this time	Range-wide.
Lek buffers for range improvements may be inconsistent with State plans.	<i>See Lek Buffer section</i>			
Wild Horse and Burro: Appropriate Management Level achievement in SFAs	Verify that BLM has the tools and funding to get to AML	BLM states reassess their 3-5 year gather plans to validate AML will be met. Collaborate with states. Elevate unresolved issue to management.  Priority given to SFAs- potentially limits ability to initiate gathers outside the SFA.	Legislative solution and additional increased funding is necessary for long-term resolution.	Range-wide.

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Designation of exclusion areas area misalign with the state's approach	States take various approaches to what activities to exclude from certain habitat types and in their exemption processes. Working with state partners evaluate if the states plans would provide durable conservation while providing exceptions to activities so they can proceed while conserving the species.	On a state by state basis complete an evaluation as provided in the recommendation.	If short-term flexibilities don't resolve concerns, evaluate plan amendment to consider adjusting exclusion boundaries and/or evaluate different restrictions for different uses based on threats and impacts.	Multi-State
Maintenance and Production Activities	Need to provide clarification that maintenance and production activities for already authorized uses are allowed in the plans.	Provide IM to allow for maintenance of existing development.	None at this time.	Multi-State
Mineral materials sales (sand and gravel)	Allow mineral material sales in PHMA under the use of the state's stipulations.	Conduct an evaluation of mechanisms to provide conservation while accommodating need for mineral material sales.	Based upon the evaluation, a plan amendment may be necessary.	Multi-State
Valid Existing Rights	Need to clarify under what circumstances or how the plans recognized valid existing rights.	Provide clarification to staff, partners, and industry so there is a clear and consistent understanding of application of plan actions to valid existing rights and existing authorizations.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA: EXCLUSION/AVOIDANCE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS - Continued</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Misinterpretation of "avoidance" in the field.	Need to develop training and policy to ensure consistent interpretation and approval of activities in an avoidance area (see CO and NV for examples) that allows activities with the application of the mitigation hierarchy.	<p>Provide clarification for the definition of avoidance area including resources that use different terminology.</p> <p>Issue state-specific policy as needed to explain avoidance criteria and how to evaluate the need to provide exceptions to allow uses</p> <p>Provide training for staff and partners for how to implement avoidance areas.</p>	Determine if existing management flexibility on avoidance areas are adequate without a plan amendment.	Multi-State
Plans do not recognize the state's guidance that some activities are "de minimus" - negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	Need to develop an approach that streamlines approvals for projects with negligible or no impact to sage-grouse.	<p>Evaluate "de minimus" activities as defined in state plans and evaluate against federal plans, laws, and regulations.</p> <p>Determine if any tools are available for use in federal processes to streamline approval of these activities.</p> <p>Possible development of templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of projects</p>	<p>Development of programmatic NEPA documents to analyze the impacts for tiering of future projects.</p> <p>Identification of CXs for de minimus activities.</p>	Multi-State

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<b>TOIPIC AREA: REQUIRED DESIGN FEATURES (e.g. TIMING AND TALL STRUCUTUES)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Need greater flexibility in using state developed required design features.	Need to streamline the process so that known and effective design features outside those identified as the current plans can be used without further analysis by the BLM.	Clarify that the plans provide flexibility to select appropriate RDFs and to use other RDFs, including state RDFs, if they achieve equal or better conservation purpose.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Requirement to include discussion on all RDFs in the project level NEPA document	Need to allow the flexibility to only apply those design features that are appropriate to a project without having to justify why other design features were not used	Evaluate need for templates and streamlined processes to standardize the evaluation of design features.	None at this time.	Range-wide
Lack of consistent application of RDFs in the field.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners when and how to use required design features (including timing and tall structures).	Provide guidance that required design features are not a “one-size-fit-all” and do not apply to all activities.	As evaluation of RDFs continues, the plans may need to be changed to reflect which RDFs are commonly used, to align with measures in state plans, and avoid repeated consideration of RDFs that are never used.	Range-wide

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<b>TOPIC AREA: LEK BUFFERS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
Lek buffer distances are incompatible with state buffer distances for some types of development (e.g. range improvements).	Use the best available information to inform decisions in habitat – which could include using the lek buffer science as well as adjusting the size of the buffer based on local data and information.	Provide clarification to staff and external partners regarding the use of lek buffers.	<p>Initiate additional research to evaluate lek buffer distance requirements for applicable uses and identify any needed changes to plans.</p> <p>If the developed policy does not provide the mechanism to address the issue then evaluate a plan amendment or maintenance action to consider adjusting lek buffers based on new science and high quality information</p>	Multi-State
Clarify regarding how to apply lek buffers (i.e. distance for NEPA analysis vs. a distance to restrict activities).	Provide clarification to staff and external partners for how the lek buffer appendix and to potentially adjust lek buffers noted in the plan based on project specific information.	Development of policy to ensure consistent application and interpretation.	None at this time.	Multi-State

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<b>TOPIC AREA : HABITAT MANAGEMENT BOUNDARIES (INCLUDING SFAs)</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
SFA Designations	Remove all SFAs and the management actions tied to SFAs.	Determine the habitat type and associated management actions that would be applicable to the area to ensure durable conservation of the species.	Plan amendment to consider removing SFA designation and either replace SFA management actions with the underlying habitat type (e.g., PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) and associated management actions or change those SFA management actions as described in this table.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV support this recommendation. Oregon still discussing
Need flexibility to change PHMA/GHMA boundaries	Habitat is being updated regularly based on additional on-the-ground survey and improved understanding of sage-grouse habitat needs. Plans do not provide the flexibility to adopt these new habitat areas and apply the appropriate management actions to those habitats. Add flexibility for future updates when new science would cause changes such as during the 5-year plan review cycle.	Evaluate the ability to adjust PHMA/GHMA boundaries and associated management decisions to match revised habitat maps without a plan amendment.  Develop policy on how to apply management decisions, such as stipulations, WEMs, exclusion and avoidance, etc. in areas where PHMA or GHMA plan allocations do not match habitat maps.	Modify the plans to align PHMA, GHMA, IHMA, etc. and associated management actions to revised habitat maps and develop criteria for making future adjustments (e.g., when habitat maps have been adjusted through on-the-ground survey, improved understanding of habitat needs, etc.) to habitat management area boundaries.	Multistate issue: WY, ID, NV, UT, NV, MT, and OR support this recommendation.
GHMA is inconsistent with Utah's plan.	GHMA is unnecessary in Utah because the areas have few birds and leks and are already heavily impacted by development.	Evaluate the Federal plan to determine if durability and conservation of the species can be achieved without GHMA designations and associated GHMA management actions or with revised GHMA boundaries.  Also consider the application of the state mitigation plan to address concerns with habitat impacts in areas currently allocated as GHMA.	Based upon the short term outcome, may need to pursue a state specific plan amendment.	Utah Specific Recommendations

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<b>OTHER ISSUES IDENTIFIED BUT NOT RELATED TO THE 2105 SAGE GROUSE PLANS</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Short Term</b>	<b>Long Term</b>	<b>Scale</b>
BLM may be managing water rights they don't own by limiting new water development projects and modifications to existing developments. Often a result of conflict between State water laws and BLM policy, but this issue is not expressly in the sage-grouse plans.			Work with partners toward state-legislative fix where appropriate.	Multi-state. Utah, Idaho, Nevada- but verify with other states to determine in additional changes are needed.
Clarify options for changes in grazing management following natural events if continuation of grazing would result in loss of habitat.	Provide flexibility at the state, district, or field level			Range-wide.
Herd Management Areas and associated AML may need to be analyzed for adjustments.	Implement solutions for reach current AML prior to reevaluating HMAs and AML.	Implement solutions to reach current AML.	Analyze boundaries and AML adjustments in the future once current AML has been reached.	Range-wide

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Not all affected states provided feedback	Incorporate additional information received from states and other stakeholders
Continue to address challenges and barriers to wildfire and/or invasive species management and provide recommendations to improve management	Continue work on unfinished/incomplete/ongoing IRFMS Action Items Complete the WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation and Restoration Strategy
Continue engaging other organizations in support of the IRFMS	Support Intermountain West Joint Venture and others to implement the Sagebrush Ecosystem Communication Framework (SAGE WEST) Support development and implementation of WAFWA Sagebrush Conservation Strategy Support the development and implementation of Western Association of State Department of Agriculture's (WASDA) Western Invasive Weed Action Plan Support implementation of the National Seed Strategy
Increase support to wildland fire cooperators (RFPAs, RFDs)	Reinstate grant authority, and authority to surplus excess equipment to cooperators Address the GSA policy which prevents excess federal firefighting equipment (e.g. Engines, radios) from going directly to RFPAs and RFDs Continue to support and develop additional Rural Fire Protection Associations
Consider related WGA efforts that enhance implementation of the IRFMS	Further action items in the Western Governor's National Forest and Rangelands Management Initiative (2017) such as: expanding Good Neighbor Authority use; developing comprehensive (wildland fire) protection agreements; applying consistent fire operations best management practices; coordinating federal, state, and local partners fire response in sagebrush rangelands; flexibilities in grazing management
Improve coordination with states on fuel/vegetation treatments, wildfire response, and post-fire recovery	Promote increased coordination and collaboration, including through the framework in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

**Appendix B - Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Issues**  
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<b>Topic: Wildland Fire and Invasive Species</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Ensure funding for fire, fuels and restoration projects	<p>Explore options for multi-jurisdictional funding, multi-year funding, and shared funding across jurisdictional boundaries, including private and public lands for fuels/vegetation and post-fire recovery projects</p> <p>Continue to move to a risk-based funding approach in the Department. The risk-based funding modelling shows that the BLM receives substantially less funding in fuels and fire preparedness than its fire risk warrants. The BLM should be receiving between 65-75% of fuels and fire preparedness funding, but is currently receiving only about 50%.</p>
Streamline and Improve restoration success	<p>Conduct research, testing and implementation, particularly restoration projects (e.g. bio-pesticides and herbicides, seed coating technology, prescribed fire use).</p> <p>Use targeted grazing and other tools to manage fine fuels and create fuels breaks.</p>
Expedite use of emerging weed treatment technologies	<p>Work with appropriate Departments, Agencies, Offices and companies to gain approval of concurrent (EPA) registration and field-testing of bio-pesticides and chemical herbicides to incorporate DOI-agency specific field testing needs into the early experimental testing conducted prior to registration. This would reduce the amount of time to use a pesticide or herbicide after receiving EPA registration</p>

**Appendix C – Wildlife Management  
DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**

<b>TOPIC: WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Issue or Need</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Captive breeding and population augmentation	<p>If captive rearing is pursued, efforts should use experimental design to build on already available information and data, including addressing knowledge and data gaps, to effectively rear sage-grouse in captivity for successful release or reintroduction into the wild.</p> <p>Adhere to all relevant State laws and other authorities for potential releases/reintroductions.</p>
Predator Control	<p>Continue to communicate outcomes of past predator control efforts, including methods, species controlled and the short- and long-term results.</p> <p>Conduct additional research into both lethal and non-lethal predator control techniques.</p>
Population targets and species management	<p>Continue to support collaborative efforts with the States to develop range-wide, state-level, and local population estimates.</p> <p>Support development of a framework to assess Greater Sage-grouse population trends, determine biological effectiveness of management actions, and identify emerging issues to adaptively conserve the species and its habitat.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with the States and Federal partners to develop new or improve existing processes to evaluate sage-grouse population information, habitat conditions, and conservation efforts.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**

<b>Topic: Science and Data Issues</b>	
<b>Issue/Comment</b>	<b>Recommended Additional Steps</b>
Increase opportunities for coordination and sharing of science and research efforts	<p>Coordinate research efforts (prioritization, funding, implementation, and analysis) among state and federal agencies and other organizations.</p> <p>In collaboration with the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative, implement research efforts, as funding allows, to address prioritized science needs.</p> <p>Reduce barriers to information use from entities other than federal or state agencies for identifying additional science needs.</p>
Increase opportunities and reduce barriers to data sharing	<p>Establish data sharing agreements between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a multi-agency directory of data stewards and technical experts to improve coordination and collaboration between federal and state agencies, Tribes, and other entities.</p> <p>Improve procedures for maintaining and updating data/information in a mutually developed data catalog(s), ensuring that non-proprietary/sensitive tabular or geospatial data from can be shared and accessed.</p> <p>Increase use of common communications tools, such as SageWest and Great Basin Fire Science Exchange, to increase awareness of new information.</p> <p>Establish and communicate minimum data standards and information requirements.</p> <p>Identify multi-scale spatial units that could be used to aggregate data and provide additional opportunities for use of sensitive or proprietary information when appropriate.</p> <p>Continue to work with the States to identify barriers to data sharing and options to remove those barriers.</p> <p>Work with the States and Tribes to explore options to improve or develop data-sharing mechanisms for capturing species observations as well as local and traditional ecological knowledge.</p>

**Appendix D - Data and Science Issues**  
**DRAFT FOR REVIEW – NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED**



# Barriers and Opportunities for Renewable Energy Development on Nevada Mining Lands

Nevada Mining Association  
July 13, 2017

John Zablocki – Mojave Program Director  
Nels Johnson – North America Energy Director

# What is The Nature Conservancy?

**65**

Years

**1M**

Members

**600**

Scientists

**100M**

Acres Conserved

**72**

Countries



Yangtze River (©A. Vitale)

- **Mission**  
*To conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends*
- **Vision**  
*A world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives*

# Nevada Chapter of TNC



# Current Engagements with Mining Industry in Nevada

- Partnered with Newmont and Barrick
- Tim Buchanan from Barrick a TNC Nevada Board Member
- Developing conservation and protection plans to offset impacts using scientific approaches that are:
  - Transparent
  - Quantitative
  - Landscape-Scale
- TNC science used by US Department of Interior and Barrick for the Bank Enabling Agreement



# \$70 Trillion in New Infrastructure by 2050

Urbanization



Agriculture



Conventional O&G



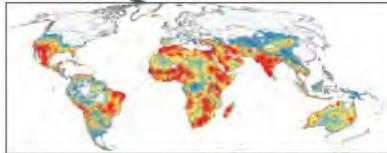
Shale Gas



Coal



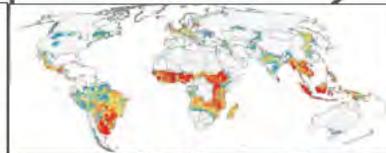
Solar



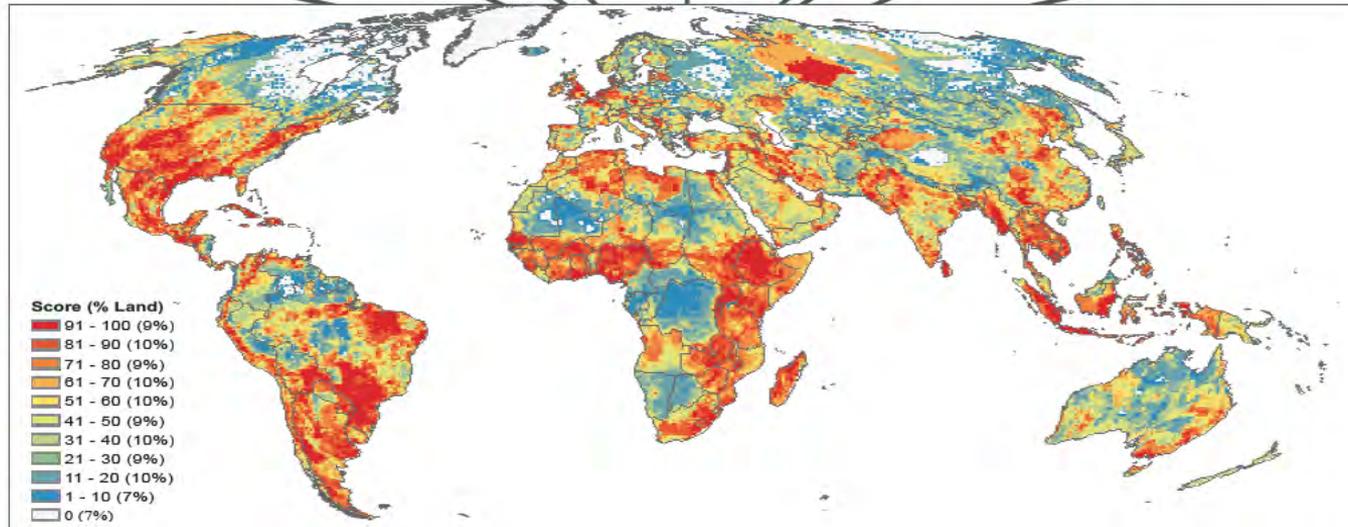
Wind



Biofuels



Mining

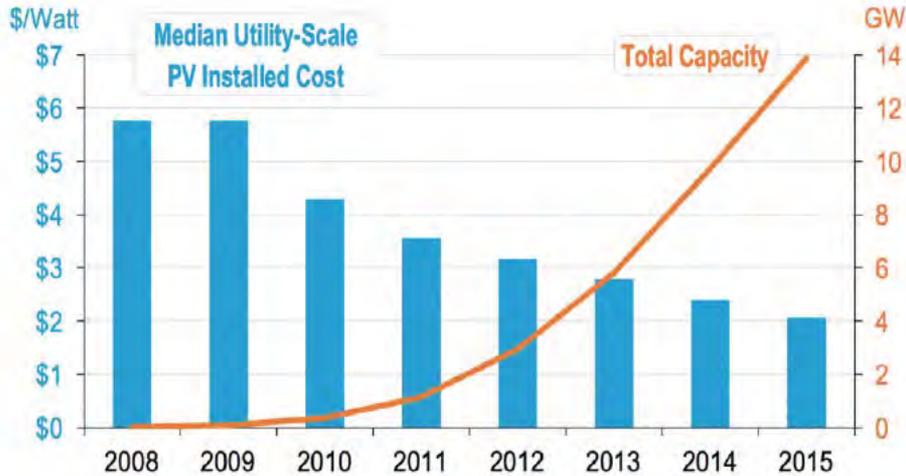




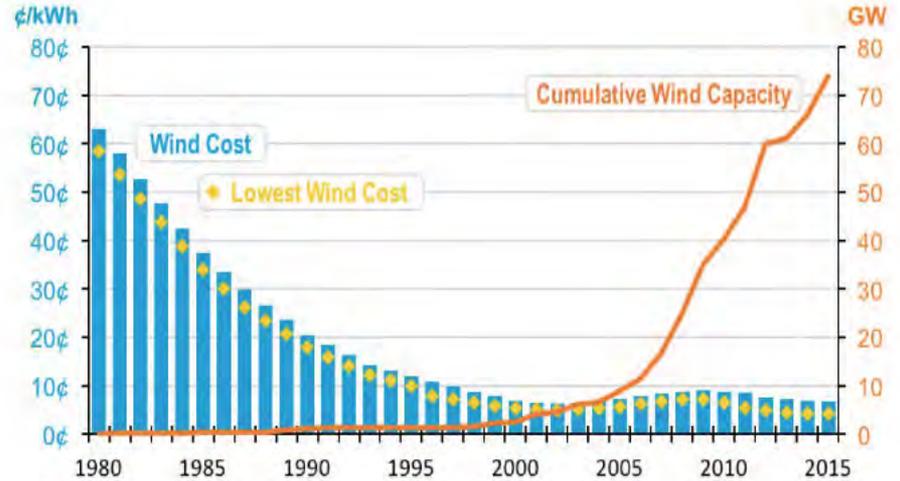
## **TNC Works On Infrastructure Planning Around The World**

- **Mining in Mongolia**
- **Hydropower in Colombia**
- **Transportation in California**
- **Shale Oil/Gas in Argentina**
- **Solar in Nevada**

# U.S. RENEWABLE ENERGY GROWTH



Utility Scale Solar



Wind

# ENERGY LEADING DRIVER OF U.S. LAND USE CHANGE

New energy technologies require more land:

- **Direct impact area by 2040 =**



- **Indirect impact area by 2040 =**



# TWO INTERRELATED CHALLENGES

- Advancing rapid and massive investments in low carbon energy
- Conserving intact lands for people and nature



# **MINING LANDS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY**

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**High potential for low conflict energy development**

**Opportunity for new revenue generation during and after mining ends**

**Opportunity for multi-purpose use of mining lands**

**Policy and legal barriers need to be addressed**

**Broad coalition of interest and support for this approach**

# Understanding the regulatory context in Nevada:



“Barriers to renewable energy projects can be multi-faceted and involve technical, regulatory, financial, and policy challenges. In order to overcome a range of barriers, a multi-tiered approach is warranted.”

-Matt McNerney and Cale Jaffe of  
University of Virginia  
Environmental and Regulatory Law  
Clinic

# Areas of interest in state law and policy:

## **Issue #1:**

State of Nevada's definition of "productive postmining use" does not explicitly include renewable energy development

Possible Solution → Redefine "productive postmining use" to specifically include renewable energy

## **Issue #2:**

Financial barriers exist for development of these sites relative to greenfield sites

Possible Solution → Explore tax incentives and recapitalization of Nevada Brownfield Program's revolving loan fund (state of Massachusetts serves as a potential model)

## **Issue #3:**

Liability issues, or the perception thereof, may hinder development of suitable sites

Possible Solution → State legislative changes to provide additional liability protections, similar to models used in Massachusetts and California

# Areas of interest in federal law and policy:

## **Issue #1:**

Funding for hardrock mine redevelopment

Possible Solution → Federal legislation to provide additional funding for hardrock mine redevelopment through RECLAIM Act or other avenues

## **Issue #2:**

Federal land use planning policies and procedures

Possible Solution → Explore opportunities for co-permitting of mining sites and renewable energy, as well as prioritization of mining areas for renewable energy development in federal land use plans. Connect across agencies and reactivate existing initiatives (e.g., EPA's RE-Powering America's Lands)

# Where to go from here?

- Develop vision statement with key stakeholders in state (e.g., mining industry, renewable developers, local communities, NGOs)
- Develop white papers to outline and bring clarity to key technical, regulatory, financial, and policy topics
- Work toward a roadmap for a shared agenda
- Conduct assessment to understand the technical potential for renewable energy development on mine lands in Nevada

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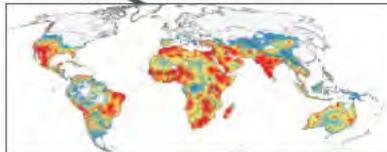
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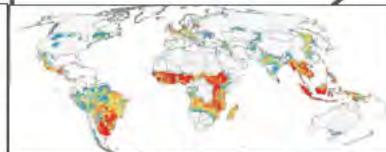
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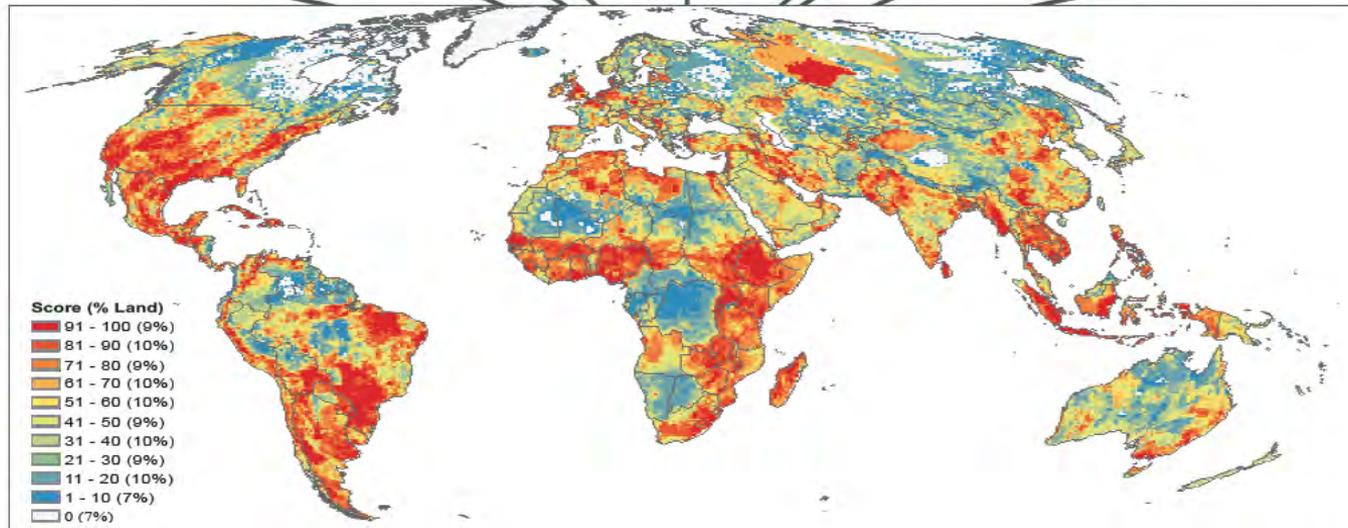
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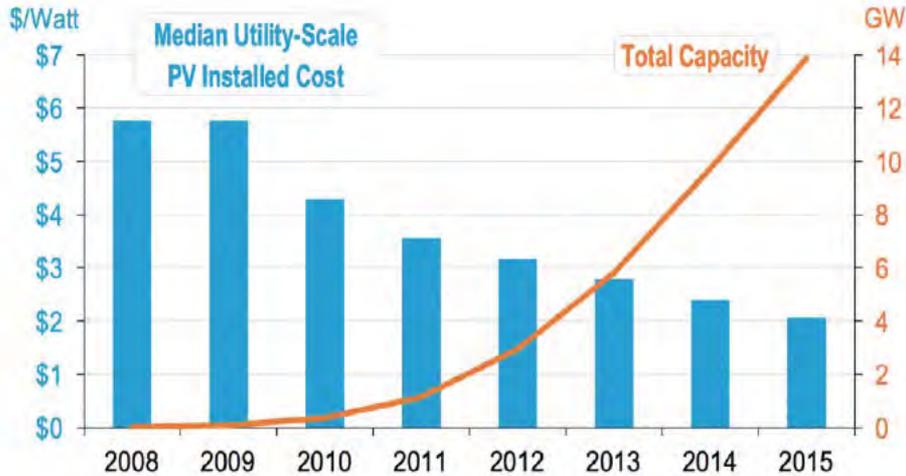




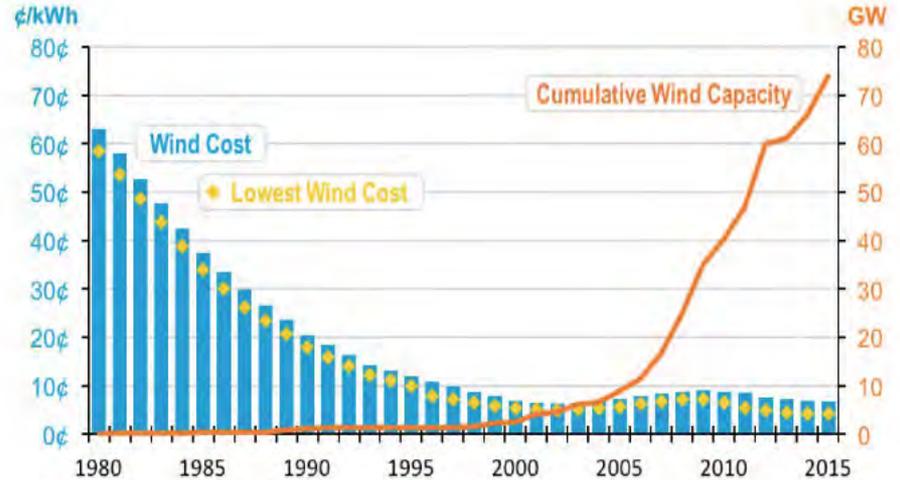
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## **Hunting Sage-grouse, Impacts and Management**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily

and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily, 4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

**Conclusions:**

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## **Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-grouse**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boorman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boorman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

**Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## Population and Habitat-based Approaches to Management of Sage-grouse

### Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Interest in establishment of population goals, and use of population-based approaches for management of sage-grouse is high, but raises questions about feasibility, efficacy, and authorities. Sage-grouse are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on sagebrush habitats (Strategy 2006). Management approaches must include conservation of seasonal sagebrush habitats to be successful, a point emphasized in the Range-wide Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: “The overall goal of the range-wide Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of sage-grouse *by protecting and improving sagebrush habitats and ecosystems that sustain these populations* (emphasis added).

When managing State or Federal trust species, a mix of habitat- and population-based approaches is typically employed. Population-based approaches are used in several situations. First, for species of economic importance where harvest is the predominant impact on populations: deer, elk, pronghorn, etc. Population objectives are typically set through some sort of public process and attempt to balance hunter demand with concerns relative to habitat or game damage. Population-based approaches are also used for many conservation reliant species, particularly endangered species with recovery plans. Typically, population and habitat goals are established, and potentially the full suite of habitat and population tools may be employed to overcome threats, including predator control and captive breeding. Attwater’s prairie chicken are a good example of this. Finally, population-based tools are employed by states when recreational demand exceeds or creates demand, for example state (or private) game farm production and release of native or non-native species such as pheasants, rainbow trout, walleyes, etc.

Sage-grouse have become a conservation reliant species, at least to deter listing under the Endangered Species Act. Setting and monitoring progress towards state-level (or other) population goals (if technically feasible) could be an effective way to:

1. Ensure (through state public processes) public participation in setting population objectives and a transparent view of real and opportunity costs these goals represent
2. Prioritize investment of conservation dollars (to areas below population goals)
3. Explicitly define when conservation goals will be met, quantitatively assess progress towards goals, and inform adaptive management constructs so course corrections can be made

If population goals are set, they should recognize state and federal authorities in management of state public trust species. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act: (16 U.S.C. §§ 2901-2911, September 29, 1980, as amended 1986, 1988, 1990 and 1992) states “Nothing in the Act should be construed as affecting: the authority, jurisdiction or responsibility of the states to manage, control or regulate fish and resident wildlife under state law...” (WAFWA 2011). Establishment of population goals for sage-grouse are the responsibility of states. However, realization of these goals cannot be achieved without habitat management and restoration on private lands and on Federal lands, so collaboration with local working groups and Federal land management agencies in goal setting is paramount.

Setting and managing to population goals is not realistic unless we have the capability to estimate sage-grouse population size. Breeding population size and trends have been modeled for the bi-state population of greater sage-grouse from lek count data and estimates of survival, nest success and other demographic parameters from telemetry data (Coates et al. 2015). Data for this type of model are not presently available range-wide, but McCaffery et al. (2016) have developed a modeling approach to correct for males not detected during peak counts and estimate total number

of male sage-grouse, and an integrated population model (IPM) to estimate total population (of males and females) using available data (McCaffery and Lukacs 2016). WAFWA is working with researchers from the University of Montana, USGS, FWS, and state agencies to develop a secure platform where state agencies can estimate sage-grouse population size and trends using the best available data. Initial estimates of minimum population size and trend at state and range-wide scales are feasible within the next year or two, but additional work will likely be needed to estimate total population size, refine demographic estimates that are input to models, and account for leks that are currently unknown and therefore not counted.

**Other Considerations.** While setting and working towards specific sage-grouse population goals has utility, the value of population-level strategies such as captive breeding, predator control, and eliminating hunting is less certain (see companion WAFWA white papers on these topics). Population-based management strategies employed to benefit sage-grouse would also fall under state, and not federal authority. Any, or all of these strategies can only be effective if sufficient quantity and quality of habitat is maintained.

Conservation efforts for sage-grouse, a large-landscape obligate of sagebrush habitats, also provide habitat for many of the 350 species that depend on sagebrush habitats (Rowland et al. 2006, Hanser and Knick 2011, Copeland et al. 2014). Sagebrush is a critical component of migration corridors and winter range for big game populations (Copeland et al. 2014) in much of the west. Population level management actions to benefit sage-grouse don't provide benefits to other sagebrush dependent species, particularly if they are used to mitigate for loss or degradation of habitat. For this reason, any significant retraction of habitat-based protections afforded in BLM Land Use Plan Amendments or Forest Plan Revisions may lead to additional petitions on sagebrush species of conservation concern such as pygmy rabbits. Effects of lethal control of sage-grouse predators on other sagebrush dependent species would be highly variable, uncertain, and potentially negative.

#### **Conclusions:**

- Establishment of sage-grouse population goals through a collaborative process led by states has utility to clearly delineate what success looks like and to aid in prioritization of investments in conservation. This will be technically feasible in the next year or two. Goals should be population ranges that recognize and account for the large population fluctuations (cycles) typical for this species.
- Efforts to enhance, restore, and protect habitats from conversion and degradation will be necessary to achieve population goals that are in aggregate sufficient to deter listing. Habitat efforts will benefit other sagebrush obligates and make petitions and listing of these species less likely.

***Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at [wafwa.org](http://wafwa.org)***

## **Augmenting Sage-grouse Populations through Captive Breeding and other Means**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Augmentation of sage-grouse populations has been a management strategy used by state wildlife agencies in limited circumstances since the 1930s. Augmentation has been employed to bolster small and isolated populations, to re-establish populations in historic habitats, or to establish new populations. Augmentation for these purposes has been conducted through transplants of adult and yearling birds, usually trapped on or near leks. Reese and Connelly (1997) reviewed published literature and unpublished reports describing 56 transplants of 7,200 individual sage-grouse conducted in seven states and one Canadian province prior to 1997. They concluded only transplants in Colorado, Idaho, and Utah appeared successful, and populations remained small. More recently, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has demonstrated some success enhancing genetic diversity of small populations by translocating Gunnison sage-grouse from a source population in the Gunnison Basin to smaller satellite populations. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources coupled predator control with a transplant of sage-grouse into a population near Strawberry Reservoir with some success (Baxter et al. 2007).

Reasons for relatively low success rates for transplants are complex and not well documented or necessarily understood. Commonly, large post-release movements can lead to high mortality, and hens may not breed or attempt to nest in the spring following release. In general, if environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have not been mitigated, transplants of additional and locally naïve birds is not likely to succeed. Refinements to transplant protocols to address these issues, such as supportive predator control (Baxter et al. 2007), artificial insemination prior to release (Mathews et al. 2016), and transplants of juveniles or yearlings are being incorporated in augmentations and will likely increase success rates.

Sage-grouse have been maintained, hatched and bred in captivity successfully, but only in research settings (Pyrah 1961; Johnson and Boyce 1990, 1991; Spurrier and Boyce 1994, Huwer 2004; Oesterle et al. 2005; Huwer et al. 2008; Thompson et al. 2015; Apa and Wiechman 2015, 2016). Sage-grouse captured in the wild do not adapt well to captive conditions (Ligon 1946, Pyrah 1961, Oesterle et al. 2005). Many adult, and to a lesser degree juvenile, sage-grouse brought into captivity are flighty and stressed, which leads to high mortality rates (Remington and Braun 1988, Oesterle et al. 2005, Apa and Wiechman 2015). Consequently, the most effective approach to establishing a captive breeding flock would start with collection and incubation of eggs from wild nests. Large-scale, programmatic captive breeding efforts have never been attempted for sage-grouse. Attwater's prairie-chicken, listed as endangered since 1967, are sustained through a captive breeding (at seven facilities) and release program facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have effectively been extirpated from almost all of their former range and persist on about 200,000 fragmented acres.

There has only been one published study that evaluated survival of sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity and released to the wild (Thompson et al. 2015). In this study, 1-10 day-old sage-grouse chicks produced in captivity from wild-collected eggs were released to radio-marked hens with an existing brood. Adoption rates overall were 89%; releases in the evening and of chicks younger than 5 days were the most likely to result in successful adoption. Survival of adopted chicks was comparable to that of wild chicks. Although successful, this technique is limited to situations where surrogate hens with broods are available and locatable at short notice (i.e., radio-marked). A more generally applicable approach would be to raise chicks to 12-16 weeks old and release them when they are capable of surviving without a brood hen. There has been no research conducted on survival rates of juvenile (12-16 week old) sage-grouse raised in captivity and released to the wild. Colorado Division of Wildlife did successfully rear Gunnison sage-grouse chicks in captivity to 5- and 7- weeks post-hatch when they were released to the wild, however, none survived (T. Apa, pers. comm.). Survival of male and female wild juvenile sage-grouse in two study areas in Colorado was only 61% from 1

September to 31 March (calculated from Apa et al. 2017). Based on literature related to survival of juvenile ring-necked pheasant over-winter, survival of captive-bred juvenile sage-grouse is likely to be much lower than that of wild juveniles.

The number of sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to provide 50 sage-grouse for augmentation purposes (a relatively small number) at the beginning of the breeding season from translocation and captive rearing, and the number of birds or eggs required from source populations for each method can be estimated for illustrative and comparative purposes using published estimates of survival, hatchability, and re-nesting rates of wild hens (Table 1). A captive flock of 50 to 150 hens would be required to produce the 429-1,286 eggs needed to produce enough juveniles for release at 12 weeks of age that would result in 50 birds alive and able to breed in March. This estimate assumes post-release survival rates between 10% (based on experiences with game farm pheasants) and 30% (best case; based on Attwater’s prairie-chicken long-term average survival given extended soft release protocol and supportive predator control). Establishing a captive flock of this size would require collecting 123 to 369 eggs from the wild, under the simplifying assumption that all birds surviving to 12 weeks survive to lay clutches (this likely greatly overestimates contribution of captive-reared birds to reproduction as Leif (1994) found that captive-reared hen pheasants contributed less than 10% of the reproductive output that wild hens did given much lower survival during the nesting and brood-rearing period and lower nest initiation/incubation rates. There is potential for impacts to source populations in the establishment of a captive flock large enough to provide the number of eggs needed (Table 1). This would be an initial impact that would not recur, although additional removals from source populations would be expected to offset inbreeding depression and loss of genetic diversity in captive flocks.

**Number of Sage-grouse or sage-grouse eggs needed to result in 50 sage-grouse at start of breeding season {31 Mar}**

Method	Hatchability	Survival to release	Post-release survival to 31 Mar.	Number of birds or eggs needed	Net Removal from source population
Spring transplant	NA	0.95	0.50	105 birds	105 birds
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.745	0.792	0.22	378 eggs	239 eggs
Collect wild eggs, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.745	0.52	0.1-0.3	429-1,286 eggs	272-816 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ≤ 10 days old	0.565	0.792	0.22	498 eggs	443 eggs
Eggs from captive flock, release progeny ~ 12 weeks old	0.565	0.52	0.1-0.3	565-1696 eggs	503-1508 eggs

It is likely that with experience, hatchability and chick survival in captive-rearing facilities could be improved, which would reduce the number of eggs needed somewhat. Sage-grouse are determinate layers, meaning each individual female will contribute only about 7-10 eggs per year. That, along with relatively high chick mortality and juvenile mortality following release suggests relatively large breeding flocks would need to be maintained and periodically augmented.

**Other Considerations.** Collection of eggs and/or adult sage-grouse would require permits from state wildlife agencies and, if taken from Federal land, from land management agencies. State regulations, laws and attitudes about private

possession of wildlife vary, so this may or may not require regulatory change or legislative approval based on the state. Sage-grouse of all ages are very susceptible to West Nile Virus (WNV), so if a captive flock is established precautions should be taken to prevent exposure of birds to mosquitoes that may carry the WNV by physical enclosures or placement of the facility in areas where WNV is not prevalent. Captive sage-grouse also seem susceptible to salmonella, aspergillosis, and other bacterial, fungal, and viral diseases, so precautions should be taken to prevent introduction of these diseases into wild populations if captive birds are released. Captive breeding facilities for Attwater's prairie-chicken have experienced outbreaks of Reticulendotheliosis viruses (REV), which has resulted in transmission to wild birds upon release (Morrow 2017).

## **Conclusions**

- Sage-grouse can be artificially incubated, hatched, reared, maintained, and bred, and will produce viable eggs in captivity.
- Relatively low hatchability and survival rates in captivity suggest egg collections from wild clutches could be substantial to produce a sizable captive flock for captive egg production.
- Release of 1-5-day old captive-reared chicks to existing brood hens is effective, but is not likely to be a strategy that could be scaled up. Survival of sage-grouse juveniles released at 8-12 weeks has not been evaluated but should be evaluated if releases at this age are contemplated.
- Techniques for captive rearing of sage-grouse are still in their infancy although significant strides have been made in the last 10 years. Methods associated with artificial insemination, controlling bacterial disease, disease prevention and control, and other aspects of husbandry need additional research. Zoos or other conservation partners with a similar mission, in collaboration with state or provincial wildlife agencies, may be in the best position to fund and staff this kind of research.
- Pending refinement and demonstration of the effectiveness of captive breeding and release of sage-grouse, other approaches to augmentation appear to be more certain and likely to be less costly and impactful to source populations.
- Sage-grouse population size varies substantially over time in response to environmental stochasticity. Augmentations by any means are not necessary for recovery from declines in relatively large contiguous habitats in good conditions. Augmentations are unlikely to have any success in small and isolated populations until and unless the environmental conditions that precipitated sage-grouse declines have been mitigated.

***Literature cited can be found under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at wafwa.org***

## **Hunting Sage-grouse, Impacts and Management**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Ten of 11 states where Greater Sage-grouse occur allow hunting of sage-grouse. Sage-grouse have been state-listed as Threatened in Washington since 1998, and have not been hunted since 1990. Although sage-grouse were found not warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2015 (FR 80:59858-59942), concern over the potential consequences of a Federal listing have raised questions about the potential impact of hunting on sage-grouse populations. It is important to note that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in their assessment of threats in the 2015 not-warranted listing decision, did not view regulated hunting as a significant threat to the species, but described the need for continued close attention by state wildlife agencies to monitor population trends and adjust seasons if needed (FR 80:59924). This paper reviews scientific information pertaining to impacts of regulated hunting on sage-grouse populations and describes measures states have taken to minimize potential impacts of sage-grouse hunting.

Dinkins and Beck (personal comm.) analyzed sage-grouse lek data and harvest estimates from 1995-2013 provided by states and two Canadian provinces in an attempt to elucidate patterns between relative harvest and lek trends. While analysis of these data continues, they have concluded that discontinuing harvest in smaller populations did not result in positive lek trends; however, discontinuing hunting seasons with relatively higher harvest pressure in the largest population in their analyses resulted in higher population growth rates. They also concluded that State and provincial wildlife agencies were adept in changing harvest regulations to prevent hunting sage-grouse populations facing significant lek trend declines.

Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily

and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily, 4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

**Conclusions:**

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## **Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-grouse**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boorman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boorman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

**Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## **Sage Grouse Task Force – July 24-25<sup>th</sup> Meeting – Logistical Details**

### **Date and Time**

July 24, 2017

a.m. or p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

July 25, 2017

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### **Meeting Location**

DoubleTree by Hilton Denver-**Stapleton North**

*(Please do not confuse this location with the DoubleTree at 3203 Quebec Street)*

4040 Quebec Street

Denver, CO 80216

Phone: (303) 321-6666

### **Hotel Room Block**

A room block has been reserved at the DoubleTree by Hilton Denver-**Stapleton North** for the night of Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>. Reservations can be made by calling the DoubleTree-**Stapleton North** at 303-321-6666.

Please reference the “Sage Grouse Task Force - Western Governors’ Association” room block, in order to receive the contracted rate of \$138/night (*below federal per diem of \$178*). The DoubleTree Stapleton North is a full service hotel. Rooms will be held in the block until **Friday, July 14**.

### **Transportation and Parking**

The DoubleTree does not provide transportation to/from the airport. Transportation options are: Uber, Lift, Taxi’s or SuperShuttle. The hotel is located approx. 18 miles from the airport. Estimated travel time is 30 min.

For those choosing to drive, the DoubleTree offers complimentary parking.

### **WGA Logistical Coordinator**

For any questions or problems with the hotel, please contact:

Deb Kinsley

Western Governors’ Association

P: 303.623.9378 / e: [dkinsley@westgov.org](mailto:dkinsley@westgov.org)

## **Hunting Sage-grouse, Impacts and Management**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

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Historically, sport harvest of sage-grouse and other upland birds was viewed as compensatory mortality (meaning it replaced natural mortality and was not additive to it), and had little or no impact on subsequent population sizes (Connelly and Reese 2008). Recently the idea that all harvest of sage-grouse or other upland birds is compensatory has been replaced by the idea that low levels of harvest may be compensatory, but higher levels of harvest may be at least partially additive to natural mortality (Connelly et al. 2003, Reese and Connelly 2011). Based on a review of the literature, Connelly et al. (2000) suggested that no more than 10% of the autumn population be removed through harvest, and that populations of fewer than 300 birds (100 males counted on leks) should not be hunted. Sedinger et al. (2010), based on an analysis of 18 years of band recovery data in Colorado, found strong evidence that harvest rates near 10% were compensatory and not additive.

States have responded to concern about sage-grouse status and to declining populations by adopting more conservative approaches to regulating hunting based on the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines (responses through 2007 reviewed in Reese and Connelly 2008). All states now evaluate sage-grouse seasons annually and make modifications, if needed, based on trends in counts of males on leks. Wyoming, which has more birds over larger areas than any other state, has shifted opening dates later, reduced season length from 31 to 11 days, and reduced bag limits from 3 birds daily and 6 in possession to 2 birds daily and 4 in possession in an effort to reduce potential impacts to sage-grouse. Wyoming also closes areas with fewer than 300 birds, and recommends more conservative seasons ranging from closures to reduced season lengths and bag limits if populations are declining. Colorado evaluates 3-year moving average high male counts (HMC) against triggers in local conservation plans to recommend closure or modifications of hunting seasons and bags, with a maximum season length of 7 days and bag of 2 and 4 compared to historical season lengths of 30 days and bags of 3 daily

and 9 in possession. Idaho uses an explicit Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach where season length and bag limits are either: Closed, Restrictive (7-day season, bag of 1 and 2), or Standard (21-day season, bag of 2 and 4) based on how 3-year average trends in HMC within each of 14 management zones relate to a baseline. Montana reduced sage-grouse season length from 62 to 30 days in 2014, and has implemented their conservative bag limit (2 daily, 4 in possession) since 2007. Hunting is closed in any unit where average HMC is 45% or more below the long-term average for 3 or more consecutive years. Oregon establishes a maximum harvest of 5% of a management unit population estimate, then issues limited tags to maintain harvest below the 5% threshold. California has closed hunting in the Bi-State population of sage-grouse, hunting permit numbers in other areas are adjusted based on male counts and fall population estimates. The California Fish and Game Commission responded to low lek counts this Spring and closed seasons for 2017 based on a recommendation from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Nevada has also closed hunting to Bi-State sage-grouse, seasons in other areas are adjusted to conform to the Connelly et al. (2000) guidelines. Nevada estimates statewide harvest of sage-grouse has been between 2% and 6% of the estimated fall population annually, and has closed sage-grouse seasons in five counties including 23 separate hunt units since 1997 in response to local, short-term declines. South Dakota issues limited permits with a bag and possession limit of 1, and closes hunting seasons when less than 250 males are counted on leks in the spring. The sage-grouse hunting season will be closed in 2017 in South Dakota. North Dakota has also closed sage-grouse hunting seasons for the past several years because the number of males on leks has fallen below levels that will support hunting.

**Other Considerations.** Sage-grouse hunters and sportsmen in general represent a constituency of sage-grouse and sagebrush advocates. Hunting license fees and matching Federal aid dollars are used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and restoration activities on sagebrush rangelands that benefit sage-grouse, sagebrush dependent wildlife and grazing interests. Sage-grouse hunting also represents an economic boost to local communities. In addition, sex and age-ratios obtained from hunter-collected wings provide information that will be critical to estimation of sage-grouse population size and trends now and in the future. State wildlife agencies have thresholds and other means to close hunting seasons when necessary to prevent impacts to sage-grouse populations which increases public confidence; widespread closures of hunting when not needed may send a message that populations are far more imperiled than they are, which could lead to further land use restrictions.

**Conclusions:**

- Sage-grouse hunting is managed conservatively by state wildlife agencies consistent with established and scientifically supported guidelines, including closures when populations decline below levels that can support hunting.
- Sage-grouse hunting, as currently regulated, is likely compensatory in most areas and therefore not likely to increase overall mortality rates.
- State wildlife agencies continue to support research on effects of hunting and will continue to incorporate new information into hunting season recommendations in the future.
- Sage-grouse hunters have been, and remain an important ally in sage-grouse conservation efforts with a vested interest in insuring populations remain not warranted for listing.

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## **Predator Control as a Conservation Measure for Sage-grouse**

### **Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**

Predator control is a technique that has been applied in research settings and on a limited basis at local scales as a tool to benefit sage-grouse populations. The cause of mortality for most sage-grouse is predation (Bergerud 1988), whether as an egg, chick, juvenile or adult. What is relevant to the long-term sustainability of sage-grouse populations is not how birds die, but rather the rate at which mortality including predation occurs and whether recruitment exceeds mortality.

Sage-grouse are not the primary prey for any predator, but instead predators that typically prey on rodents, rabbits, and hares also take sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 1999, Hagen 2011). Eggs, chicks, and males on leks are most vulnerable to predation (Hagen 2011). Females have their highest mortality during the breeding season (Davis et al. 2014). Predators of chicks and adult sage-grouse include coyotes, red fox, badgers, bobcats, and several species of raptors, while egg depredation is frequently attributed to weasels, raccoon, common ravens, black-billed magpies, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and snakes (Baxter et al. 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Coates and Delehanty 2010, Hagen 2011, Lockyer et al. 2013, Orning 2014).

Sage-grouse have co-evolved with the normal complement of predators in sagebrush habitats. However, populations that are isolated due to habitat fragmentation or those in degraded habitats (Baxter et al. 2007) may be more vulnerable to predation. Predation on nests and chicks can be high where habitat is depleted or where predators are over abundant (Gregg et al. 1994, Aldridge and Brigham 2001, Schroeder and Baydack 2001, Coates 2007, Coates et al. 2008, Lockyer et al. 2013). Altered habitats influence distribution and abundance of predator populations in the following ways:

- Predators benefit from human-supplied food and water, such as road-killed carrion, artificial water sources, landfills, livestock carcasses, and cereal crops (Boorman et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Bui et al. 2010, Esque et al. 2010, Newsome et al. 2013, Coates et al. 2016).
- Human structures provide denning, roosting, nesting, and perching sites that did not previously exist for predators in sagebrush landscapes (Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Predators achieve greater hunting efficiency in fragmented or degraded landscapes (Vander Haegen et al. 2002, Coates et al. 2014a;b, Howe et al. 2014).
- Human subsidies are linked to increased raven populations which have increased an estimated  $\geq 4$ -fold in the western U.S. over the last 40 years (Boorman et al. 2006, Sauer et al. 2011, Howe et al. 2014).
- Increases in red fox and raccoon have also been attributed to human-induced landscape changes and subsidies (Fichter and Williams 1967, Bunnell 2000, Connelly et al. 2000, Baxter et al. 2007).

Predator control activities to benefit sage-grouse have been implemented and evaluated on a limited basis by management agencies, usually in a small-scale research setting or to support a reintroduction or augmentation effort. Some significant sage-grouse predators are protected by Federal law and cannot be (easily) lethally controlled, such as great horned owls, golden eagles, and other raptors. Results of predator control efforts have varied. Coyote removal in Wyoming improved hen survival during the nesting period; however, annual hen survival remained unchanged and nest success was higher in untreated sites (Orning 2014). In another study in southwest Wyoming, there was no measurable effects on nest and chick survival between coyote removal and non-removal areas (Slater 2003). Sage-grouse reproductive success and survival improved during an 8-year study which removed both terrestrial (primarily red fox) and avian (corvid) predators in Strawberry Valley, Utah (Baxter et al. 2007). Several studies have evaluated raven control because of concern over increasing raven populations in sage-grouse habitats. Increased sage-grouse nest success has been documented after raven removal in some studies, but they lacked a comparison to control areas (Batterson and Morse 1948, Coates and Delehanty 2004, Baxter et al. 2007). In Wyoming, sage-grouse nest success was higher in areas of raven removal than in non-treatment areas, but raven numbers rebounded once control efforts ceased (Dinkins et al. 2014). A separate Wyoming study found that sustained raven removal at high levels increased nest success and may increase sage-grouse populations (Peebles 2015).

**Other Considerations.** Lethal removal of predators is controversial and likely to engender local and broader opposition. Non-lethal control efforts such as aversive conditioning (Conover and Lyons 2003), hazing, or contraception are likely to have greater public acceptance but we are not aware of any studies that evaluated efficacy of any of these methods in reducing depredation on sage-grouse. Lethal removal of predators in large landscapes is not likely to be practical or cost effective (Willis et al. 1993), and complete removal of the target predator is unlikely. Predator populations are capable of rebounding quickly once removal stops (Gregg et al. 1994, Witmer et al. 1996, Côté and Sutherland 1997, Crooks and Soule 1999, Mezquita et al. 2006, Baxter et al. 2007, Clark 2014, Orning 2014, Dinkins et al. 2014, Dinkins et al. 2016), so control efforts must be sustained if benefits are to persist. Lethal removal may result in unintended consequences such as increases in other, potentially more effective predator species (Mezquida et al. 2006) which may shift predation to other predators or life stages rather than reducing it.

A predator management approach that could achieve long-term conservation goals would include; 1) addressing habitat conditions that ultimately limit sage-grouse production (e.g. hiding cover, food resources) and that provide advantages to predators (e.g. fragmented habitat, non-native vegetation); and 2) eliminating human subsidies that artificially support predator populations. Predator removal, in conjunction with habitat improvement and elimination of predator subsidies could be an appropriate short-term management action to address localized and critical population declines or during sage-grouse translocation programs.

**Conclusions:**

- Large-scale, sustained lethal predator control programs for sage-grouse are likely to engender significant public opposition (Messmer et al. 1999), will be very expensive, and unlikely to be effective unless habitat deficiencies are corrected. In areas where seasonal habitats are in good condition, predator control is not likely to be needed to sustain desirable densities of sage-grouse.
- Predator removal programs can achieve short-term benefits, but their ultimate utility as a long-term conservation tool to increase sage-grouse populations is less well established (Côté and Sutherland 1997, Dinkins et al. 2014, Orning 2014, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- Predator removal may be useful as a short-term management tool to increase nest success and survival when localized sage-grouse populations are declining and have reached a critically low level (Baxter et al. 2007, Conover and Roberts 2017).
- In degraded habitats, sustained predator control and removal of predator subsidies may increase nest success and chick survival to prevent further population declines allowing time for habitat improvement (USFWS 2013).
- Lethal predator control prior to and after releases of sage-grouse may increase survival of translocated sage-grouse in reintroductions or augmentations of local populations. Translocated birds are more vulnerable to predation (Musil et al. 1993, Stephenson et al. 2011).

***Literature Cited is available under the Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative tab at the WAFWA website***

## Sage Grouse Task Force – July 24-25<sup>th</sup> Meeting – Logistical Details

### Date and Time

July 24, 2017

a.m. or p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

July 25, 2017

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### Meeting Location

DoubleTree by Hilton Denver-**Stapleton North**

*(Please do not confuse this location with the DoubleTree at 3203 Quebec Street)*

4040 Quebec Street

Denver, CO 80216

Phone: (303) 321-6666

### Hotel Room Block

A room block has been reserved at the DoubleTree by Hilton Denver-**Stapleton North** for the night of Monday, July 24<sup>th</sup>. Reservations can be made by calling the DoubleTree-**Stapleton North** at 303-321-6666.

Please reference the “Sage Grouse Task Force - Western Governors’ Association” room block, in order to receive the contracted rate of \$138/night (*below federal per diem of \$178*). The DoubleTree Stapleton North is a full service hotel. Rooms will be held in the block until **Friday, July 14**.

### Transportation and Parking

The DoubleTree does not provide transportation to/from the airport. Transportation options are: Uber, Lift, Taxi’s or SuperShuttle. The hotel is located approx. 18 miles from the airport. Estimated travel time is 30 min.

For those choosing to drive, the DoubleTree offers complimentary parking.

### WGA Logistical Coordinator

For any questions or problems with the hotel, please contact:

Deb Kinsley

Western Governors’ Association

P: 303.623.9378 / e: [dkinsley@westgov.org](mailto:dkinsley@westgov.org)

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## **BLM LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES – COMMUNICATION MATERIALS**

The Washington Office and State and Center Directors have been working together to align the BLM mission with the Administration's priorities, overcoming the challenges posed by hiring limitations and adapting to the prospects of a declining budget.

The BLM, through its mission of multiple-use and sustained yield, is well positioned to play a key role in the areas that are important to the Secretary, who has outlined five broad themes that illustrate how the Department of the Interior will support the President's goals. Those themes are: 1) Making America Safe Through Energy Independence (encouraging environmentally-responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands); 2) Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands); 3) Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues); 4) Getting America Back to Work (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and 5) Serving the American Family (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities).

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities (Leadership Priorities), consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration. The priorities are intended to aid the BLM in deciding how best to invest our available resources to accomplish our mission. This document will assist BLM leadership in communicating the Priority Work to employees during this transition time so that we can maintain our stride as the robust and vital agency that we are for the American people.

### **CONTENTS**

- Talking points
- Qs & As
- Rollout schedule

**What are we asking people to do:** To learn what the Leadership Priorities are, understand how they can help us accomplish the BLM's mission, to be flexible and adaptable, and to know that we can work through this transition if we're all in this together.

### **KEY MESSAGES:**

- 1) We will use the BLM Leadership Priorities to focus our work for the remainder of FY2017, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- 2) We will invest our resources efficiently, in this order, by:
  - 1) Focusing on our Priority Work;

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- 2) Reviewing and prioritizing other work, not captured above, that is required by law and regulation;
- 3) Assessing the lower-priority work and accomplishing as resources allow.

**TALKING POINTS:**

- One challenge of any transition is aligning our agency work with the priorities of the incoming Administration.
- This year, DOI has been clear that the BLM will work on the following five themes:
  - 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands)
  - 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands)
  - 3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues)
  - 4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes)
  - 5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.
- The result is a comprehensive list of priority assignments that will help us focus our limited resources strategically through the rest of this fiscal year, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- These shifts in priorities are consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield. We're still the Federal government's premier land management agency, full of the professional challenges and personal rewards that come when you manage 245 million acres of land and 700 million acres of mineral estate that are integral to the lives and livelihoods of communities and families across the country.

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- We are asked to change the way we do some things, and the order in which we do them. To that end, we are looking at streamlining certain processes, working with our partners more closely on conservation and other issues, and looking for efficiencies that will allow us to better serve the American people.
- We need to focus on identifying the things that we *can* do with the available resource, rather than highlight what can't be done with declining budgets and staff. Our Leadership Priorities will serve as a guide in the process.
- This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities. Our Leadership Priorities provide the certainty we need to move forward.
- Each employee can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently and you can always send your creative and innovative ideas to the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can keep our eyes focused on our priorities and on our mission. We can support each other.
- During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, "We're BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together."

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What are the Leadership Priorities?

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration and our guiding legislation, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The priorities are organized along five themes:

- 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands);
- 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands);

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3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues);

4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and

5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

**What does this focus on priority work mean to me?**

For some of us, it will mean analyzing our work processes to be more efficient. For others it will be following new guidance on how to do a particular task. For all us, it will mean continuing to work together to look for efficiencies, creative solutions, and better ways in everything we do.

Across the Bureau this effort will help us invest our available resources on our priority work. If a manager has a choice between doing Project A or Project B, our leadership priorities will help him or her know which project to take on first. We can all look to our leadership priorities to guide us in the process of aligning and focusing our work.

Change is an opportunity for BLM to focus on its mission and to do what we do best. It's also a time to look forward, find new and creative solutions, and improve how we serve the American people.

**How will the new priorities change my day-to-day work?**

Everyone will notice an increased emphasis on promoting multiple-use on public lands, consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. There could be shifts in projects you are working on, depending on your local line officer's priority focus. You may be asked to work on new or different projects based on your office's needs and staffing.

This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities.

**Are the Leadership Priorities meant to capture all the work we do?**

The Leadership Priorities represent a way to focus our work on the Administration's themes and goals. We realize that we do other important work that isn't identified here.

We've taken the approach of dividing the BLM workload into three categories or buckets. The first bucket is the priority workload that we are discussing here and that would be most responsive to the Leadership Priorities. The second bucket includes the work we must do by law

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or regulation that is not already in the first bucket. Leadership will review and prioritize the work in this second bucket and allocate resources accordingly. The third bucket includes any remaining low-priority work that leadership will review and assess, using any remaining funds available.

The Leadership Priorities provide the framework for how we will approach the work in all three buckets. The priorities will help us invest our resources efficiently so we can maximize the quality and quantity of our work, focusing on the first bucket and then the others in step. We can't do everything, but we can do more if we work efficiently and if we support each other along the way.

**How does this mesh with BLM's work force planning and reorganization efforts?**

Depending on the budget that is passed, we could have fewer dollars and fewer people to do the work we do. That is why it is critical to define top priorities to focus the work of our agency, and that is what BLM leadership has done.

The Leadership Priorities will help direct efforts to review the BLM's current alignment of functions, organizational structure, and workforce. The goal is to develop a more efficient structure that allows us to focus on the BLM's core mission, to better serve the American people, and to identify gaps where resources should be redirected to align with the FY 2018 budget.

The Leadership Priorities will also help guide efforts to identify the skills, training, and resources that our work force needs in order to accomplish our work.

**Will there be workforce opportunities at BLM during this time of transition?**

At BLM, we've long supported continued employee growth and development. One effective way for employees to develop is through detail assignments. The *BLM Daily* maintains a home page where announcements for [detail and temporary promotion opportunities](#) are posted. You can even sign up for email alerts when new opportunities are posted.

Because of the various hiring controls that are currently in place that limit our ability to recruit new employees from outside BLM, there is a growing number of detail and temporary promotion opportunities being posted to temporarily fill important vacancies. Additionally, as we strive to orient and re-shape the BLM's workforce to align to the Leadership Priorities, there will be an increasing number of lateral reassignment opportunities posted to this same site.

We encourage employees who would like to explore new career opportunities within BLM to monitor the site and to consider lateral reassignments to vacant positions.

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**How should I approach all this change and uncertainty?**

We can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently. We can share our creative and innovative ideas via the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can support each other and help maintain a healthy work-life balance.

During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, “We’re BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together.”

**What can I do to help with this effort?**

Leaders throughout the Bureau are looking for your open and honest feedback, and we’re counting on you to help move this agency forward during this transition by focusing on the Leadership Priorities. We ask each employee to learn about the priorities and understand how they help us accomplish BLM’s multiple-use and sustained-yield mission. We ask that you speak up to share ideas to streamline the work you’re involved with, to offer creative solutions to challenges you face, and to identify ways to enhance partnerships to work with communities and stakeholders you serve.

We can work through this transition if we stay engaged and support each other. We are stronger when we’re all in this together.

**What do I say to partners or the public who have questions about the new priorities?**

It is common with any change of Administration for government entities, including the BLM, to re-examine how we do our work for the American people. To provide new direction, the Administration has defined its five priority themes for the BLM, and they can be simplified for the public as follows: 1) Energy Independence, 2) Shared Conservation Stewardship, 3) Safe Borders, 4) Job Creation, and 5) Serving America. These shifts in priorities are consistent with BLM’s mission, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield.

Public lands belong to the American people so it is important we address any questions or concerns that partners or the public may have. Employees are on the front line with serving the American people. By having a solid understanding of our new priorities, our mission, and FLPMA, we can provide a consistent message to interested citizens and stakeholders.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or want to learn more about these priorities?**

In the upcoming weeks, there will be an internal communication campaign to help inform all employees about the priorities, workforce planning efforts, budget, and organizational review. The Washington Office and State and Center Directors will be sharing information on the *BLM*

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Daily, at employee meetings, and state leadership teams. A special intranet site will be developed to provide access to current information and updates. Throughout the process, feel free to contact your local line managers and your public affairs specialists to ask questions and keep the dialog going.

**ROLL OUT SCHEDULE**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTIES</b>
June 12, 2017	Distribute materials to ELT	WO100
Week of June 12	All-employee message	WO-600 / WO-100 / Acting Director or Deputy Director for Operations
Week of June 12	WO Directorates and State Leadership Teams Briefed	Assistant Directors and State Directors
Weeks of June 19, 26	Staff meetings throughout the organization	Assistant Directors/State Directors and SLTs
Week of June 26	Launch BLM Daily intranet page with BLM Daily article	WO100 and WO610
Week of July 3	Follow up Discussion with Field Committee	Field Committee Members

## ***Making America Safe through Energy Independence***

### **Make additional lands available for “all of the above” energy development**

- Prioritize the completion of environmental analyses, new planning efforts, RMP revisions, and amendments to maximize lands available for energy and minerals development.
- Evaluate existing and proposed withdrawals, and consider appropriate adjustments to support energy and minerals development.
- Support implementation of planning decisions that aim to increase energy and minerals development.
- Undertake geospatial analysis, data management, and land surveying to support planning and implementation efforts for energy and mineral development.
- Support multiple-uses on National Conservation Lands units consistent with Congressional/Presidential Designation.

### **Streamline oil and gas leasing and permitting while addressing backlog of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) and Expressions of Interest (EOIs)**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3349 on American Energy Independence.
- Initiate the BLM Energy and Minerals Task Force to assist BLM state and field offices with expediting the leasing and permitting of energy and minerals.
- Establish performance standards and metrics for energy and mineral development, and incorporate into State Annual Work Plans.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of APDs and EOIs.
- Use Memoranda of Agreement to streamline permitting and Communitization Agreements to ensure proper royalty distribution.
- Work closely with state and other agency partners to develop process, technology, and NEPA training and mentoring programs for staff, and education programs for applicants and the public.
- Continue to develop geospatial resources for APDs and EOIs, including updating surface and sub-surface data layers and Public Lands Survey System data.

### **Streamline rights-of-way processing for pipelines, transmission lines, and solar/wind projects**

- Use National Project Support Team to expedite processing of large, national rights-of-way applications.
- Coordinate with Energy and Minerals Task Force to prioritize rights-of way processing and permitting of energy generation facilities including pipelines and renewables.
- Review Resource Management Plans to identify impacts to issuing rights-of-way in order to support timely and defensible project decisions.
- Expedite completion of Section 368 Energy Corridor studies and subsequent development of user guidebook to streamline transmission of energy resources across the U.S.
- Utilize workforce across BLM field and district boundaries to provide staff support as

needed, including state and national project managers, for timely processing of ROW applications.

**Streamline leasing and permitting for Federal coal and hardrock mining while addressing backlog of mining applications**

- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of coal applications, and to efficiently process new applications for coal and hardrock mining.
- Provide Federal coal streamlining recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Coordinate with Energy Task Force and begin implementing recommendations for streamlining Federal coal leasing and permitting and permitting of hardrock mines.
- Enhance coordination with other agencies involved in the coal leasing and permitting process on opportunities to maximize efficiencies.
- Develop and increase commercial availability of ecologically appropriate plant materials for coal and hardrock mining reclamation in order to streamline operator ability to meet State reclamation requirements.
- Enhance coordination with states, tribes, and other agencies to streamline review and approval of NEPA documents related to coal, other leasable minerals, and hardrock mining.
- Improve agency geospatial sub-surface data and standardize mineral resource data to expedite resource analysis and decision-making.

## ***Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship***

### **Pursue all options to achieve appropriate management levels (AMLs) for the Wild Horse and Burro Program**

- Work with Congress to re-introduce legislative flexibility that would allow the BLM to use all management tools Congress provided for in the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
- Strengthen Federal/Private partnerships to reduce herd sizes through fertility control application and research, gather operations, adoptions, and sales in order to improve the health of public rangelands.
- Decrease reliance on long-term holding facilities by transferring more animals to private care through adoptions or sales. Increase adoption rates by:
  - Expanding relationships with correctional facilities and other relevant partner organizations to train more wild horses and burros to make them more desirable.
  - Developing a new internet adoption website that is more responsive and user-friendly.

### **Work with partners to develop and implement priority habitat monitoring and improvement projects**

- Collaborate with state and local partners to identify priority work, conduct appropriate training, and complete essential projects that:
  - Ensure the health and safety of public lands through hazardous fuels reduction.
  - Improve rangeland health by removing or preventing the spread of invasive plants species.
  - Protect federally listed and other priority species through restoration efforts that enhance habitat connectivity and resiliency.
  - Support multiple-use opportunities on BLM managed public lands.
- Establish new Memorandums of Understanding with State and local governments and communities that promote training, education, and on-the-ground habitat improvement work that will help the BLM better meet the public's demand for access and diverse recreation opportunities.
- Develop and strengthen local, state, and national partnerships to manage and prevent the spread of invasive species to protect public lands and water resources.

### **Enhance opportunities for volunteer service and youth engagement on public lands**

- Create opportunities to engage at least 25,000 volunteers annually by providing meaningful projects that directly support the BLM's multiple-use mission.
- Maximize the impact of national programs that engage youth, families, and local communities (i.e. National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, Every Kid in a Park, etc.) by hosting local events and providing adequate financial support at the national level.

**Emphasize BLM's multiple-use mandate through strategic communication efforts and educational outreach**

- Launch a national BLM multiple-use campaign to engage the public, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups through increased activity on new media platforms, and by hosting a variety of education and outreach events at the local level.
- Expand BLM's communication and education outreach efforts to emphasize the variety of ways the public can access, enjoy, and benefit from BLM lands as a result of our multiple-use mandate.

## ***Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty***

### **Direct agency law enforcement assets and efforts on BLM administered lands on or near the Southern border in a way that increases the safety of our visitors and employees, and the protection of public lands**

- Develop and implement the three-State Law Enforcement Border Strategy Plan with the following components:

#### *Coordination*

- Maintain constant collaboration between BLM California, Arizona, and New Mexico; local partners; and the U.S. Border Patrol to support enforcement initiatives on our borderlands.
- Collaborate closely with state, tribal, and local governments to increase joint decision-making, and
- Develop decision support tools that address the needs of local communities and partners.

#### *Operations*

- Provide increased resources along BLM's borderlands, as appropriate, including hiring law enforcement rangers and K9 teams.
- Enhance and expand partnership projects such as Operation Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments (ROAM) on BLM-administered lands in California and New Mexico.
- Continue the ROAM surges with the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT). This results in a near-continuous law enforcement presence on public lands during the surges.

#### *Communications*

- Continue to improve signage on public lands and provide additional information at public access points and websites.
- Increase interactions with visitors through high-visibility law enforcement patrols.
- Enhance use and connectivity of the Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) to improve border security operations.
- Form agreements with federal, state, and local partners to increase use of Centralized Administrative Dispatch Offices for priority operations.

### **Fully deploy security and communications systems to enhance employee safety, emergency notification, and accountability**

- Complete the initiative to improve physical security and related safety training at offices bureau-wide, including security cameras and Active Shooter training.
- Standardize Emergency Management templates and plans, and implement them bureau-wide.
- Fully roll out ROSS/IQCS program for identification of personnel with needed skills for emergency deployment.
- Ensure oversight of Radio infrastructure which continues to change as a result of emerging technology and reallocation of radio spectrum (by the Federal Communications Commission and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration).

- Increase use of modern emergency notification systems including satellite phones, spot locators, Send Word Now, ShoutNano, and satellite communicators.
- Transfer to Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) to allow for digital communication that can be encrypted and dispatched from anywhere, and multiband radio to give law enforcement the capability to communicate with other Federal, state, and local agencies on their radio systems.
- Enhance vehicle tracking protocols to incorporate priority fire and resource vehicles.

**Coordinate with the Department of Defense to ensure that public lands and resources are available to support the mission of our military**

- Improve early coordination efforts with DOD related to land withdrawals that support military training and operations, and streamline the processing of withdrawal applications.
- Increase advanced coordination efforts with DOD on BLM actions that could encroach on the mission of the military.
- Increase coordination efforts with DOD to remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) on BLM-administered land.
- Continue to provide cadastral and fire services to military lands, as needed.
- Review current agreements between the BLM and the DOD, and revise where necessary to improve coordination and communication.

**Support agencies of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of the Interior in all border security actions.**

- Coordinate with the DHS and other law enforcement agencies to provide needed support for deployment of border security infrastructure to include pedestrian and vehicle fencing and other technologies.
- Continue participation in intelligence sharing and operational support activities with the DHS through the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT), an organization which is comprised of more than 60 Federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.

## ***Getting America Back to Work***

### **Improve and streamline land use planning to support energy and minerals development and other priority initiatives**

- Decrease time to completion for priority Resource Management Plan revisions by using third-party contractors when appropriate, and coordinating with the Washington Office early and often on key management decisions.
- Modernize land use planning efforts by incorporating the best available information and changes associated with relevant technologies. Conduct a thorough review of existing court decisions and make the necessary changes in current planning documents to limit re-litigation of similar issues.
- Strengthen planning documents by allocating staff resources to ensure GIS data and land records are up-to-date and accurate, and that critical data (national, statewide, and local) is accessible to BLM employees and decision makers.
- Establish flexible leasing and permitting teams to augment local BLM teams during times of high-workload or low staffing.
- Complete programmatic analyses and comprehensive modeling efforts when possible to minimize the need for multiple, smaller scale studies and planning documents.

### **Streamline NEPA processes to achieve efficiencies and decrease time to completion**

- Create templates from prior NEPA documents to use for Categorical Exclusions and Determinations of NEPA Adequacy when appropriate. Determine whether categorical exclusions can be done for coal permitting, energy and mineral development, and vegetation treatment projects.
- Prioritize completion of programmatic analyses for large-scale projects and/or projects of a repetitive nature in order to streamline subsequent, project-specific planning documents.
- Develop state-specific mitigation strategies in coordination with State agencies to support energy and minerals development and associated rights-of-way activities (i.e. roads, transmission lines).
- Develop new databases for digital data collection to ensure that the most common information required to complete NEPA analysis is available and in a format that is suitable for analysis.

### **Modernize critical information systems**

- Enhance web-based public access to resource and geospatial data related to energy and minerals, grazing permit processing, recreation, and other BLM programs.
- Enhance use of electronic systems (e.g., eErmds, eGIS, and other systems) for energy and minerals, lands, fire, FOIA and litigation workload, and other areas to increase efficiency, supplement workforce needs, continue operations remotely in the event of an emergency or incident, and increase communication throughout the Bureau.
- Provide equipment and data management expertise in real-time data collection, database creation, and establishment of data-sharing agreements with partners to efficiently process NEPA documents.

- Enhance the capacity of Network Attached Storage (NAS) servers to strengthen continuity of operations and offsite data backups.

**Pursue maintenance and capital improvement projects that address infrastructure needs**

- Prioritize Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement projects emphasizing projects that create jobs in local communities, improve recreation access, and enhance visitor safety.
- Review BLM’s inventory of office and other physical facilities to identify and implement efficiencies and cost-savings, whether through energy efficiency audits, economic analyses (government-owned versus leasing options), and use of other analytical tools.
- Increase environmental resistance and resilience to disasters by supporting commercial production of native plant materials and working with local partners to create jobs for habitat restoration.
- Work closely with Federal Highways on Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), Federal Lands Access Programs (FLAP), and Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) to accomplish high-priority projects in order to increase public access to BLM lands.
- Develop a 5-year strategy to address priority sites in the Abandoned Mine Lands Program to clean up hazardous materials and abandoned mines on Federal land and increase public safety.

**Provide employment opportunities for veterans, youth, and others to work on public lands**

- Maximize use of existing hiring authorities to strengthen the Bureau’s diversity, including veterans, youth, and individuals with disabilities.
- Strengthen recruitment, outreach efforts, and partnerships with local stakeholder groups to promote employment opportunities for local tribes and other underrepresented communities.

**Increase efficiency of compliance with other agencies authorities (e.g., ESA, NHPA, CWA)**

- Enhance effective working relationships with state government, including State Historic Preservation Offices, Departments of Environmental Quality, and Departments of Wildlife.
- Produce decision support tools and processes that increase the efficiency of compliance activities.
- Develop new tools and technology to make data collection and validation more efficient. Make data more available to use to support energy development and grazing permit renewal compliance actions.
- Engage in informal consultation with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity for actions that trigger compliance with the NEPA process. This reduces the amount of time it takes to engage in formal consultation on those same actions.
- Review and revise, as necessary, the Memorandum of Agreement among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Marines Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Forest Service signed in 2000, which facilitates interagency cooperation to streamline ESA Section 7 consultations.

## *Serving the American Family*

### **Maintain a capable, ethical, and diverse professional workforce and an inclusive and motivating work culture that drives high productivity**

- Implement the Human Resources Modernization Project to streamline and improve the BLM hiring process and related HR functions (staffing, classification, processing, security operations/on boarding, systems and benefits).
- Strengthen BLM's Work Culture bureau-wide to increase employee engagement, productivity, and retention; increase diversity and inclusion; and foster trust, efficiencies in the workplace, and a healthy work-life balance.
- Assess and improve BLM's leadership development programs, technical training (e.g., Lands and Realty Academy, energy and minerals-related coursework), the Employee Performance Plan and incentive award process, and course offerings at the National Training Center to align with national priorities.
- Demonstrate leadership accountability, commitment, and involvement regarding diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Enhance the future workforce by engaging a diverse cadre of youth in meaningful internship or service-learning programs.

### **Enhance our relationships with States and local communities**

- Actively engage the public, local communities, and Resource Advisory Councils in decisions that may affect local public land resources, including economic opportunities, responsible development, recreational access, cultural sites, habitat management, and subsistence issues.
- Enhance Alaska Land Conveyance to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Corporations to increase development opportunities.
- Expand outreach and education efforts with States and local communities (across diverse social, ethnic, and cultural settings) to increase awareness and appreciation of BLM's multiple-use mission and the public lands.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of BLM's public rooms across the agency, and establish benchmarks and milestones to improve their functionality and customer service to local communities.
- Develop county level metrics of socio-economic benefits from activities on public lands including energy and mineral development and National Conservation Lands. Develop annual economic contribution estimates associated with BLM activities and programs at a state and national level.
- Finalize and implement BLM Travel and Tourism Action Plans to increase economic opportunities, jobs, and recreational access in local communities.

### **Fulfill our trust responsibilities to tribal communities**

- Implement the BLM 1780 Tribal Relations Manual and Handbook to improve and sustain meaningful consultation with federally recognized tribes (American Indians and Alaska Natives) on resources and issues of concern to tribes, including those related to the

agency's trust responsibilities. Provide "Effective Tribal Consultation" classes, as well as state-specific training on the new 1780 Tribal Relations Manual.

- Fully utilize cooperative management agreements and collaborative partnerships with local tribes to foster strong relationships, facilitate coordination, and effectively address matters of mutual interest.
- Provide cadastral and boundary management consultation with tribal communities for their full enjoyment of land rights, resource use, and protection of cultural resources.
- Promote outreach with local tribal communities to enhance and protect subsistence resources.
- Act diligently and proactively in pursuing designations of Traditional Cultural Properties under the National Historic Preservation Act, thereby ensuring continuity of tribal traditions and support for indigenous ways of life.
- Continue to work with tribes in suppressing unwanted fires that threaten tribal communities and resources.

**Protect life, critical infrastructure, and natural/cultural resources through BLM's Fire and Aviation Program.**

- Utilize Mitigation, Education, and Community Assistance programs to partner with local entities, homeowners, and business owners on projects to protect homes and the public in and near wildland areas.
- Partner with Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and/or rural fire departments to protect livelihoods, working landscapes, and local economies.
- Conduct fuels management projects and collaborative efforts to create fuel breaks and reduce flammable vegetation to protect homes, communities, and the public in wildland-urban interface areas.
- Enhance partnerships with state and local governments, non-government organizations, private landowners, permittees, and other parties to improve habitat conditions through fuels management, rangeland improvements, and other conservation efforts.

**Expand recreational, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3347 to enhance conservation stewardship, increase outdoor recreation, and improve the management of habitat, including for game species.
- Assess and improve BLM's recreation-related websites, including Rec.gov, to identify local opportunities for families to access and enjoy public lands; streamline trip planning and reservation services; and offer updated, engaging, and relevant visitor information.
- Continue developing Resource Management Plans to increase the focus on providing access, recreation, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities through designation of recreation management areas and consideration of Backcountry Conservation Areas.
- Collaborate with State, Tribal, county, local and Federal agencies, as well as other partners, to identify and secure opportunities for increased recreation access to public lands.
- Enhance opportunities for sustainable Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation by continuing to apply for OHV State Grants for Development, Restoration, Acquisition, Education and Law Enforcement.

- Strengthen local and national partnerships to improve access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities and to enhance wildlife habitat, including for game species and migratory birds.
- Offer access to the public for critical resource and geospatial data by increasing the number of national data sets available, and providing data to show recreation, hunting, and fishing opportunities.

**Enhance State and local law enforcement partnerships to increase safety and improve the visitor experience on public lands**

- Continue to develop Memoranda of Understanding with local law enforcement to improve incident response, conduct cross-training, and address illegal activity on public land in support of public safety and resource management goals.
- Provide resources, as needed, to law enforcement to address public safety and resource protection, including drug trafficking, border issues, wildland interface fires, vehicle crashes, search and rescue, high use recreation areas, and oil field crimes.

**Streamline the grazing permit process and provide more flexibility to the American rancher**

- Review the livestock grazing permit process and determine where efficiencies can be made. Develop an action plan with metrics and milestones to implement identified streamlining actions and needed policy updates.
- Improve grazing permitting processes using geospatial technology and providing Public Land Survey System data in publication form.
- Continue incorporating flexible terms and conditions into permit renewals when fully processing grazing permit and lease renewals. Pursue categorical exclusion authority and/or programmatic NEPA when possible.
- Determine availability of common reserve allotments to provide alternative grazing for ranchers affected by drought, fire, and other disasters. Work with Public Lands Council (PLC) and other partners to develop recommendations.
- Work with permittees and stakeholders to develop options for targeted grazing (fuel breaks), outcome-based grazing pilot projects, and long-term formal guidance.

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## **BLM LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES – COMMUNICATION MATERIALS**

The Washington Office and State and Center Directors have been working together to align the BLM mission with the Administration's priorities, overcoming the challenges posed by hiring limitations and adapting to the prospects of a declining budget.

The BLM, through its mission of multiple-use and sustained yield, is well positioned to play a key role in the areas that are important to the Secretary, who has outlined five broad themes that illustrate how the Department of the Interior will support the President's goals. Those themes are: 1) Making America Safe Through Energy Independence (encouraging environmentally-responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands); 2) Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands); 3) Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues); 4) Getting America Back to Work (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and 5) Serving the American Family (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities).

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities (Leadership Priorities), consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration. The priorities are intended to aid the BLM in deciding how best to invest our available resources to accomplish our mission. This document will assist BLM leadership in communicating the Priority Work to employees during this transition time so that we can maintain our stride as the robust and vital agency that we are for the American people.

### **CONTENTS**

- Talking points
- Qs & As
- Rollout schedule

**What are we asking people to do:** To learn what the Leadership Priorities are, understand how they can help us accomplish the BLM's mission, to be flexible and adaptable, and to know that we can work through this transition if we're all in this together.

### **KEY MESSAGES:**

- 1) We will use the BLM Leadership Priorities to focus our work for the remainder of FY2017, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- 2) We will invest our resources efficiently, in this order, by:
  - 1) Focusing on our Priority Work;

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- 2) Reviewing and prioritizing other work, not captured above, that is required by law and regulation;
- 3) Assessing the lower-priority work and accomplishing as resources allow.

**TALKING POINTS:**

- One challenge of any transition is aligning our agency work with the priorities of the incoming Administration.
- This year, DOI has been clear that the BLM will work on the following five themes:
  - 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands)
  - 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands)
  - 3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues)
  - 4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes)
  - 5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.
- The result is a comprehensive list of priority assignments that will help us focus our limited resources strategically through the rest of this fiscal year, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- These shifts in priorities are consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield. We're still the Federal government's premier land management agency, full of the professional challenges and personal rewards that come when you manage 245 million acres of land and 700 million acres of mineral estate that are integral to the lives and livelihoods of communities and families across the country.

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- We are asked to change the way we do some things, and the order in which we do them. To that end, we are looking at streamlining certain processes, working with our partners more closely on conservation and other issues, and looking for efficiencies that will allow us to better serve the American people.
- We need to focus on identifying the things that we *can* do with the available resource, rather than highlight what can't be done with declining budgets and staff. Our Leadership Priorities will serve as a guide in the process.
- This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities. Our Leadership Priorities provide the certainty we need to move forward.
- Each employee can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently and you can always send your creative and innovative ideas to the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can keep our eyes focused on our priorities and on our mission. We can support each other.
- During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, "We're BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together."

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What are the Leadership Priorities?

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration and our guiding legislation, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The priorities are organized along five themes:

- 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands);
- 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands);

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3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues);

4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and

5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

**What does this focus on priority work mean to me?**

For some of us, it will mean analyzing our work processes to be more efficient. For others it will be following new guidance on how to do a particular task. For all us, it will mean continuing to work together to look for efficiencies, creative solutions, and better ways in everything we do.

Across the Bureau this effort will help us invest our available resources on our priority work. If a manager has a choice between doing Project A or Project B, our leadership priorities will help him or her know which project to take on first. We can all look to our leadership priorities to guide us in the process of aligning and focusing our work.

Change is an opportunity for BLM to focus on its mission and to do what we do best. It's also a time to look forward, find new and creative solutions, and improve how we serve the American people.

**How will the new priorities change my day-to-day work?**

Everyone will notice an increased emphasis on promoting multiple-use on public lands, consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. There could be shifts in projects you are working on, depending on your local line officer's priority focus. You may be asked to work on new or different projects based on your office's needs and staffing.

This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities.

**Are the Leadership Priorities meant to capture all the work we do?**

The Leadership Priorities represent a way to focus our work on the Administration's themes and goals. We realize that we do other important work that isn't identified here.

We've taken the approach of dividing the BLM workload into three categories or buckets. The first bucket is the priority workload that we are discussing here and that would be most responsive to the Leadership Priorities. The second bucket includes the work we must do by law

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or regulation that is not already in the first bucket. Leadership will review and prioritize the work in this second bucket and allocate resources accordingly. The third bucket includes any remaining low-priority work that leadership will review and assess, using any remaining funds available.

The Leadership Priorities provide the framework for how we will approach the work in all three buckets. The priorities will help us invest our resources efficiently so we can maximize the quality and quantity of our work, focusing on the first bucket and then the others in step. We can't do everything, but we can do more if we work efficiently and if we support each other along the way.

**How does this mesh with BLM's work force planning and reorganization efforts?**

Depending on the budget that is passed, we could have fewer dollars and fewer people to do the work we do. That is why it is critical to define top priorities to focus the work of our agency, and that is what BLM leadership has done.

The Leadership Priorities will help direct efforts to review the BLM's current alignment of functions, organizational structure, and workforce. The goal is to develop a more efficient structure that allows us to focus on the BLM's core mission, to better serve the American people, and to identify gaps where resources should be redirected to align with the FY 2018 budget.

The Leadership Priorities will also help guide efforts to identify the skills, training, and resources that our work force needs in order to accomplish our work.

**Will there be workforce opportunities at BLM during this time of transition?**

At BLM, we've long supported continued employee growth and development. One effective way for employees to develop is through detail assignments. The *BLM Daily* maintains a home page where announcements for [detail and temporary promotion opportunities](#) are posted. You can even sign up for email alerts when new opportunities are posted.

Because of the various hiring controls that are currently in place that limit our ability to recruit new employees from outside BLM, there is a growing number of detail and temporary promotion opportunities being posted to temporarily fill important vacancies. Additionally, as we strive to orient and re-shape the BLM's workforce to align to the Leadership Priorities, there will be an increasing number of lateral reassignment opportunities posted to this same site.

We encourage employees who would like to explore new career opportunities within BLM to monitor the site and to consider lateral reassignments to vacant positions.

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**How should I approach all this change and uncertainty?**

We can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently. We can share our creative and innovative ideas via the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can support each other and help maintain a healthy work-life balance.

During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, “We’re BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together.”

**What can I do to help with this effort?**

Leaders throughout the Bureau are looking for your open and honest feedback, and we’re counting on you to help move this agency forward during this transition by focusing on the Leadership Priorities. We ask each employee to learn about the priorities and understand how they help us accomplish BLM’s multiple-use and sustained-yield mission. We ask that you speak up to share ideas to streamline the work you’re involved with, to offer creative solutions to challenges you face, and to identify ways to enhance partnerships to work with communities and stakeholders you serve.

We can work through this transition if we stay engaged and support each other. We are stronger when we’re all in this together.

**What do I say to partners or the public who have questions about the new priorities?**

It is common with any change of Administration for government entities, including the BLM, to re-examine how we do our work for the American people. To provide new direction, the Administration has defined its five priority themes for the BLM, and they can be simplified for the public as follows: 1) Energy Independence, 2) Shared Conservation Stewardship, 3) Safe Borders, 4) Job Creation, and 5) Serving America. These shifts in priorities are consistent with BLM’s mission, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield.

Public lands belong to the American people so it is important we address any questions or concerns that partners or the public may have. Employees are on the front line with serving the American people. By having a solid understanding of our new priorities, our mission, and FLPMA, we can provide a consistent message to interested citizens and stakeholders.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or want to learn more about these priorities?**

In the upcoming weeks, there will be an internal communication campaign to help inform all employees about the priorities, workforce planning efforts, budget, and organizational review. The Washington Office and State and Center Directors will be sharing information on the *BLM*

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*Daily*, at employee meetings, and state leadership teams. A special intranet site will be developed to provide access to current information and updates. Throughout the process, feel free to contact your local line managers and your public affairs specialists to ask questions and keep the dialog going.

**ROLL OUT SCHEDULE**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTIES</b>
June 12, 2017	Distribute materials to ELT	WO100
Week of June 12	All-employee message	WO-600 / WO-100 / Acting Director or Deputy Director for Operations
Week of June 12	WO Directorates and State Leadership Teams Briefed	Assistant Directors and State Directors
Weeks of June 19, 26	Staff meetings throughout the organization	Assistant Directors/State Directors and SLTs
Week of June 26	Launch BLM Daily intranet page with BLM Daily article	WO100 and WO610
Week of July 3	Follow up Discussion with Field Committee	Field Committee Members

## ***Making America Safe through Energy Independence***

### **Make additional lands available for “all of the above” energy development**

- Prioritize the completion of environmental analyses, new planning efforts, RMP revisions, and amendments to maximize lands available for energy and minerals development.
- Evaluate existing and proposed withdrawals, and consider appropriate adjustments to support energy and minerals development.
- Support implementation of planning decisions that aim to increase energy and minerals development.
- Undertake geospatial analysis, data management, and land surveying to support planning and implementation efforts for energy and mineral development.
- Support multiple-uses on National Conservation Lands units consistent with Congressional/Presidential Designation.

### **Streamline oil and gas leasing and permitting while addressing backlog of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) and Expressions of Interest (EOIs)**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3349 on American Energy Independence.
- Initiate the BLM Energy and Minerals Task Force to assist BLM state and field offices with expediting the leasing and permitting of energy and minerals.
- Establish performance standards and metrics for energy and mineral development, and incorporate into State Annual Work Plans.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of APDs and EOIs.
- Use Memoranda of Agreement to streamline permitting and Communitization Agreements to ensure proper royalty distribution.
- Work closely with state and other agency partners to develop process, technology, and NEPA training and mentoring programs for staff, and education programs for applicants and the public.
- Continue to develop geospatial resources for APDs and EOIs, including updating surface and sub-surface data layers and Public Lands Survey System data.

### **Streamline rights-of-way processing for pipelines, transmission lines, and solar/wind projects**

- Use National Project Support Team to expedite processing of large, national rights-of-way applications.
- Coordinate with Energy and Minerals Task Force to prioritize rights-of-way processing and permitting of energy generation facilities including pipelines and renewables.
- Review Resource Management Plans to identify impacts to issuing rights-of-way in order to support timely and defensible project decisions.
- Expedite completion of Section 368 Energy Corridor studies and subsequent development of user guidebook to streamline transmission of energy resources across the U.S.
- Utilize workforce across BLM field and district boundaries to provide staff support as

needed, including state and national project managers, for timely processing of ROW applications.

**Streamline leasing and permitting for Federal coal and hardrock mining while addressing backlog of mining applications**

- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of coal applications, and to efficiently process new applications for coal and hardrock mining.
- Provide Federal coal streamlining recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Coordinate with Energy Task Force and begin implementing recommendations for streamlining Federal coal leasing and permitting and permitting of hardrock mines.
- Enhance coordination with other agencies involved in the coal leasing and permitting process on opportunities to maximize efficiencies.
- Develop and increase commercial availability of ecologically appropriate plant materials for coal and hardrock mining reclamation in order to streamline operator ability to meet State reclamation requirements.
- Enhance coordination with states, tribes, and other agencies to streamline review and approval of NEPA documents related to coal, other leasable minerals, and hardrock mining.
- Improve agency geospatial sub-surface data and standardize mineral resource data to expedite resource analysis and decision-making.

## ***Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship***

### **Pursue all options to achieve appropriate management levels (AMLs) for the Wild Horse and Burro Program**

- Work with Congress to re-introduce legislative flexibility that would allow the BLM to use all management tools Congress provided for in the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
- Strengthen Federal/Private partnerships to reduce herd sizes through fertility control application and research, gather operations, adoptions, and sales in order to improve the health of public rangelands.
- Decrease reliance on long-term holding facilities by transferring more animals to private care through adoptions or sales. Increase adoption rates by:
  - Expanding relationships with correctional facilities and other relevant partner organizations to train more wild horses and burros to make them more desirable.
  - Developing a new internet adoption website that is more responsive and user-friendly.

### **Work with partners to develop and implement priority habitat monitoring and improvement projects**

- Collaborate with state and local partners to identify priority work, conduct appropriate training, and complete essential projects that:
  - Ensure the health and safety of public lands through hazardous fuels reduction.
  - Improve rangeland health by removing or preventing the spread of invasive plants species.
  - Protect federally listed and other priority species through restoration efforts that enhance habitat connectivity and resiliency.
  - Support multiple-use opportunities on BLM managed public lands.
- Establish new Memorandums of Understanding with State and local governments and communities that promote training, education, and on-the-ground habitat improvement work that will help the BLM better meet the public's demand for access and diverse recreation opportunities.
- Develop and strengthen local, state, and national partnerships to manage and prevent the spread of invasive species to protect public lands and water resources.

### **Enhance opportunities for volunteer service and youth engagement on public lands**

- Create opportunities to engage at least 25,000 volunteers annually by providing meaningful projects that directly support the BLM's multiple-use mission.
- Maximize the impact of national programs that engage youth, families, and local communities (i.e. National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, Every Kid in a Park, etc.) by hosting local events and providing adequate financial support at the national level.

**Emphasize BLM's multiple-use mandate through strategic communication efforts and educational outreach**

- Launch a national BLM multiple-use campaign to engage the public, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups through increased activity on new media platforms, and by hosting a variety of education and outreach events at the local level.
- Expand BLM's communication and education outreach efforts to emphasize the variety of ways the public can access, enjoy, and benefit from BLM lands as a result of our multiple-use mandate.

## ***Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty***

### **Direct agency law enforcement assets and efforts on BLM administered lands on or near the Southern border in a way that increases the safety of our visitors and employees, and the protection of public lands**

- Develop and implement the three-State Law Enforcement Border Strategy Plan with the following components:

#### *Coordination*

- Maintain constant collaboration between BLM California, Arizona, and New Mexico; local partners; and the U.S. Border Patrol to support enforcement initiatives on our borderlands.
- Collaborate closely with state, tribal, and local governments to increase joint decision-making, and
- Develop decision support tools that address the needs of local communities and partners.

#### *Operations*

- Provide increased resources along BLM's borderlands, as appropriate, including hiring law enforcement rangers and K9 teams.
- Enhance and expand partnership projects such as Operation Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments (ROAM) on BLM-administered lands in California and New Mexico.
- Continue the ROAM surges with the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT). This results in a near-continuous law enforcement presence on public lands during the surges.

#### *Communications*

- Continue to improve signage on public lands and provide additional information at public access points and websites.
- Increase interactions with visitors through high-visibility law enforcement patrols.
- Enhance use and connectivity of the Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) to improve border security operations.
- Form agreements with federal, state, and local partners to increase use of Centralized Administrative Dispatch Offices for priority operations.

### **Fully deploy security and communications systems to enhance employee safety, emergency notification, and accountability**

- Complete the initiative to improve physical security and related safety training at offices bureau-wide, including security cameras and Active Shooter training.
- Standardize Emergency Management templates and plans, and implement them bureau-wide.
- Fully roll out ROSS/IQCS program for identification of personnel with needed skills for emergency deployment.
- Ensure oversight of Radio infrastructure which continues to change as a result of emerging technology and reallocation of radio spectrum (by the Federal Communications Commission and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration).

- Increase use of modern emergency notification systems including satellite phones, spot locators, Send Word Now, ShoutNano, and satellite communicators.
- Transfer to Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) to allow for digital communication that can be encrypted and dispatched from anywhere, and multiband radio to give law enforcement the capability to communicate with other Federal, state, and local agencies on their radio systems.
- Enhance vehicle tracking protocols to incorporate priority fire and resource vehicles.

**Coordinate with the Department of Defense to ensure that public lands and resources are available to support the mission of our military**

- Improve early coordination efforts with DOD related to land withdrawals that support military training and operations, and streamline the processing of withdrawal applications.
- Increase advanced coordination efforts with DOD on BLM actions that could encroach on the mission of the military.
- Increase coordination efforts with DOD to remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) on BLM-administered land.
- Continue to provide cadastral and fire services to military lands, as needed.
- Review current agreements between the BLM and the DOD, and revise where necessary to improve coordination and communication.

**Support agencies of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of the Interior in all border security actions.**

- Coordinate with the DHS and other law enforcement agencies to provide needed support for deployment of border security infrastructure to include pedestrian and vehicle fencing and other technologies.
- Continue participation in intelligence sharing and operational support activities with the DHS through the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT), an organization which is comprised of more than 60 Federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.

## ***Getting America Back to Work***

### **Improve and streamline land use planning to support energy and minerals development and other priority initiatives**

- Decrease time to completion for priority Resource Management Plan revisions by using third-party contractors when appropriate, and coordinating with the Washington Office early and often on key management decisions.
- Modernize land use planning efforts by incorporating the best available information and changes associated with relevant technologies. Conduct a thorough review of existing court decisions and make the necessary changes in current planning documents to limit re-litigation of similar issues.
- Strengthen planning documents by allocating staff resources to ensure GIS data and land records are up-to-date and accurate, and that critical data (national, statewide, and local) is accessible to BLM employees and decision makers.
- Establish flexible leasing and permitting teams to augment local BLM teams during times of high-workload or low staffing.
- Complete programmatic analyses and comprehensive modeling efforts when possible to minimize the need for multiple, smaller scale studies and planning documents.

### **Streamline NEPA processes to achieve efficiencies and decrease time to completion**

- Create templates from prior NEPA documents to use for Categorical Exclusions and Determinations of NEPA Adequacy when appropriate. Determine whether categorical exclusions can be done for coal permitting, energy and mineral development, and vegetation treatment projects.
- Prioritize completion of programmatic analyses for large-scale projects and/or projects of a repetitive nature in order to streamline subsequent, project-specific planning documents.
- Develop state-specific mitigation strategies in coordination with State agencies to support energy and minerals development and associated rights-of-way activities (i.e. roads, transmission lines).
- Develop new databases for digital data collection to ensure that the most common information required to complete NEPA analysis is available and in a format that is suitable for analysis.

### **Modernize critical information systems**

- Enhance web-based public access to resource and geospatial data related to energy and minerals, grazing permit processing, recreation, and other BLM programs.
- Enhance use of electronic systems (e.g., eErmds, eGIS, and other systems) for energy and minerals, lands, fire, FOIA and litigation workload, and other areas to increase efficiency, supplement workforce needs, continue operations remotely in the event of an emergency or incident, and increase communication throughout the Bureau.
- Provide equipment and data management expertise in real-time data collection, database creation, and establishment of data-sharing agreements with partners to efficiently process NEPA documents.

- Enhance the capacity of Network Attached Storage (NAS) servers to strengthen continuity of operations and offsite data backups.

**Pursue maintenance and capital improvement projects that address infrastructure needs**

- Prioritize Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement projects emphasizing projects that create jobs in local communities, improve recreation access, and enhance visitor safety.
- Review BLM's inventory of office and other physical facilities to identify and implement efficiencies and cost-savings, whether through energy efficiency audits, economic analyses (government-owned versus leasing options), and use of other analytical tools.
- Increase environmental resistance and resilience to disasters by supporting commercial production of native plant materials and working with local partners to create jobs for habitat restoration.
- Work closely with Federal Highways on Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), Federal Lands Access Programs (FLAP), and Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) to accomplish high-priority projects in order to increase public access to BLM lands.
- Develop a 5-year strategy to address priority sites in the Abandoned Mine Lands Program to clean up hazardous materials and abandoned mines on Federal land and increase public safety.

**Provide employment opportunities for veterans, youth, and others to work on public lands**

- Maximize use of existing hiring authorities to strengthen the Bureau's diversity, including veterans, youth, and individuals with disabilities.
- Strengthen recruitment, outreach efforts, and partnerships with local stakeholder groups to promote employment opportunities for local tribes and other underrepresented communities.

**Increase efficiency of compliance with other agencies authorities (e.g., ESA, NHPA, CWA)**

- Enhance effective working relationships with state government, including State Historic Preservation Offices, Departments of Environmental Quality, and Departments of Wildlife.
- Produce decision support tools and processes that increase the efficiency of compliance activities.
- Develop new tools and technology to make data collection and validation more efficient. Make data more available to use to support energy development and grazing permit renewal compliance actions.
- Engage in informal consultation with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity for actions that trigger compliance with the NEPA process. This reduces the amount of time it takes to engage in formal consultation on those same actions.
- Review and revise, as necessary, the Memorandum of Agreement among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Marines Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Forest Service signed in 2000, which facilitates interagency cooperation to streamline ESA Section 7 consultations.

## *Serving the American Family*

### **Maintain a capable, ethical, and diverse professional workforce and an inclusive and motivating work culture that drives high productivity**

- Implement the Human Resources Modernization Project to streamline and improve the BLM hiring process and related HR functions (staffing, classification, processing, security operations/on boarding, systems and benefits).
- Strengthen BLM's Work Culture bureau-wide to increase employee engagement, productivity, and retention; increase diversity and inclusion; and foster trust, efficiencies in the workplace, and a healthy work-life balance.
- Assess and improve BLM's leadership development programs, technical training (e.g., Lands and Realty Academy, energy and minerals-related coursework), the Employee Performance Plan and incentive award process, and course offerings at the National Training Center to align with national priorities.
- Demonstrate leadership accountability, commitment, and involvement regarding diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Enhance the future workforce by engaging a diverse cadre of youth in meaningful internship or service-learning programs.

### **Enhance our relationships with States and local communities**

- Actively engage the public, local communities, and Resource Advisory Councils in decisions that may affect local public land resources, including economic opportunities, responsible development, recreational access, cultural sites, habitat management, and subsistence issues.
- Enhance Alaska Land Conveyance to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Corporations to increase development opportunities.
- Expand outreach and education efforts with States and local communities (across diverse social, ethnic, and cultural settings) to increase awareness and appreciation of BLM's multiple-use mission and the public lands.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of BLM's public rooms across the agency, and establish benchmarks and milestones to improve their functionality and customer service to local communities.
- Develop county level metrics of socio-economic benefits from activities on public lands including energy and mineral development and National Conservation Lands. Develop annual economic contribution estimates associated with BLM activities and programs at a state and national level.
- Finalize and implement BLM Travel and Tourism Action Plans to increase economic opportunities, jobs, and recreational access in local communities.

### **Fulfill our trust responsibilities to tribal communities**

- Implement the BLM 1780 Tribal Relations Manual and Handbook to improve and sustain meaningful consultation with federally recognized tribes (American Indians and Alaska Natives) on resources and issues of concern to tribes, including those related to the

agency's trust responsibilities. Provide "Effective Tribal Consultation" classes, as well as state-specific training on the new 1780 Tribal Relations Manual.

- Fully utilize cooperative management agreements and collaborative partnerships with local tribes to foster strong relationships, facilitate coordination, and effectively address matters of mutual interest.
- Provide cadastral and boundary management consultation with tribal communities for their full enjoyment of land rights, resource use, and protection of cultural resources.
- Promote outreach with local tribal communities to enhance and protect subsistence resources.
- Act diligently and proactively in pursuing designations of Traditional Cultural Properties under the National Historic Preservation Act, thereby ensuring continuity of tribal traditions and support for indigenous ways of life.
- Continue to work with tribes in suppressing unwanted fires that threaten tribal communities and resources.

**Protect life, critical infrastructure, and natural/cultural resources through BLM's Fire and Aviation Program.**

- Utilize Mitigation, Education, and Community Assistance programs to partner with local entities, homeowners, and business owners on projects to protect homes and the public in and near wildland areas.
- Partner with Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and/or rural fire departments to protect livelihoods, working landscapes, and local economies.
- Conduct fuels management projects and collaborative efforts to create fuel breaks and reduce flammable vegetation to protect homes, communities, and the public in wildland-urban interface areas.
- Enhance partnerships with state and local governments, non-government organizations, private landowners, permittees, and other parties to improve habitat conditions through fuels management, rangeland improvements, and other conservation efforts.

**Expand recreational, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3347 to enhance conservation stewardship, increase outdoor recreation, and improve the management of habitat, including for game species.
- Assess and improve BLM's recreation-related websites, including Rec.gov, to identify local opportunities for families to access and enjoy public lands; streamline trip planning and reservation services; and offer updated, engaging, and relevant visitor information.
- Continue developing Resource Management Plans to increase the focus on providing access, recreation, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities through designation of recreation management areas and consideration of Backcountry Conservation Areas.
- Collaborate with State, Tribal, county, local and Federal agencies, as well as other partners, to identify and secure opportunities for increased recreation access to public lands.
- Enhance opportunities for sustainable Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation by continuing to apply for OHV State Grants for Development, Restoration, Acquisition, Education and Law Enforcement.

- Strengthen local and national partnerships to improve access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities and to enhance wildlife habitat, including for game species and migratory birds.
- Offer access to the public for critical resource and geospatial data by increasing the number of national data sets available, and providing data to show recreation, hunting, and fishing opportunities.

**Enhance State and local law enforcement partnerships to increase safety and improve the visitor experience on public lands**

- Continue to develop Memoranda of Understanding with local law enforcement to improve incident response, conduct cross-training, and address illegal activity on public land in support of public safety and resource management goals.
- Provide resources, as needed, to law enforcement to address public safety and resource protection, including drug trafficking, border issues, wildland interface fires, vehicle crashes, search and rescue, high use recreation areas, and oil field crimes.

**Streamline the grazing permit process and provide more flexibility to the American rancher**

- Review the livestock grazing permit process and determine where efficiencies can be made. Develop an action plan with metrics and milestones to implement identified streamlining actions and needed policy updates.
- Improve grazing permitting processes using geospatial technology and providing Public Land Survey System data in publication form.
- Continue incorporating flexible terms and conditions into permit renewals when fully processing grazing permit and lease renewals. Pursue categorical exclusion authority and/or programmatic NEPA when possible.
- Determine availability of common reserve allotments to provide alternative grazing for ranchers affected by drought, fire, and other disasters. Work with Public Lands Council (PLC) and other partners to develop recommendations.
- Work with permittees and stakeholders to develop options for targeted grazing (fuel breaks), outcome-based grazing pilot projects, and long-term formal guidance.

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## **BLM LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES – COMMUNICATION MATERIALS**

The Washington Office and State and Center Directors have been working together to align the BLM mission with the Administration's priorities, overcoming the challenges posed by hiring limitations and adapting to the prospects of a declining budget.

The BLM, through its mission of multiple-use and sustained yield, is well positioned to play a key role in the areas that are important to the Secretary, who has outlined five broad themes that illustrate how the Department of the Interior will support the President's goals. Those themes are: 1) Making America Safe Through Energy Independence (encouraging environmentally-responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands); 2) Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands); 3) Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues); 4) Getting America Back to Work (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and 5) Serving the American Family (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities).

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities (Leadership Priorities), consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration. The priorities are intended to aid the BLM in deciding how best to invest our available resources to accomplish our mission. This document will assist BLM leadership in communicating the Priority Work to employees during this transition time so that we can maintain our stride as the robust and vital agency that we are for the American people.

### **CONTENTS**

- Talking points
- Qs & As
- Rollout schedule

**What are we asking people to do:** To learn what the Leadership Priorities are, understand how they can help us accomplish the BLM's mission, to be flexible and adaptable, and to know that we can work through this transition if we're all in this together.

### **KEY MESSAGES:**

- 1) We will use the BLM Leadership Priorities to focus our work for the remainder of FY2017, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- 2) We will invest our resources efficiently, in this order, by:
  - 1) Focusing on our Priority Work;

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- 2) Reviewing and prioritizing other work, not captured above, that is required by law and regulation;
- 3) Assessing the lower-priority work and accomplishing as resources allow.

**TALKING POINTS:**

- One challenge of any transition is aligning our agency work with the priorities of the incoming Administration.
- This year, DOI has been clear that the BLM will work on the following five themes:
  - 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands)
  - 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands)
  - 3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues)
  - 4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes)
  - 5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.
- The result is a comprehensive list of priority assignments that will help us focus our limited resources strategically through the rest of this fiscal year, into FY 2018, and beyond.
- These shifts in priorities are consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield. We're still the Federal government's premier land management agency, full of the professional challenges and personal rewards that come when you manage 245 million acres of land and 700 million acres of mineral estate that are integral to the lives and livelihoods of communities and families across the country.

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- We are asked to change the way we do some things, and the order in which we do them. To that end, we are looking at streamlining certain processes, working with our partners more closely on conservation and other issues, and looking for efficiencies that will allow us to better serve the American people.
- We need to focus on identifying the things that we *can* do with the available resource, rather than highlight what can't be done with declining budgets and staff. Our Leadership Priorities will serve as a guide in the process.
- This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities. Our Leadership Priorities provide the certainty we need to move forward.
- Each employee can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently and you can always send your creative and innovative ideas to the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can keep our eyes focused on our priorities and on our mission. We can support each other.
- During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, "We're BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together."

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### What are the Leadership Priorities?

BLM leadership has developed a set of high-level priorities consistent with the themes and related goals of the Administration and our guiding legislation, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. The priorities are organized along five themes:

- 1) **Making America Safe Through Energy Independence** (encouraging environmentally responsible development of energy and minerals on public lands);
- 2) **Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship** (by working with our partners to promote multiple-use on public lands);

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3) **Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty** (through effective management of the borderlands and cooperation with the Department of Defense on public land issues);

4) **Getting America Back to Work** (by promoting job creation and supporting working landscapes); and

5) **Serving the American Family** (by being good neighbors, supporting traditional land uses such as grazing, and providing access to hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

**What does this focus on priority work mean to me?**

For some of us, it will mean analyzing our work processes to be more efficient. For others it will be following new guidance on how to do a particular task. For all us, it will mean continuing to work together to look for efficiencies, creative solutions, and better ways in everything we do.

Across the Bureau this effort will help us invest our available resources on our priority work. If a manager has a choice between doing Project A or Project B, our leadership priorities will help him or her know which project to take on first. We can all look to our leadership priorities to guide us in the process of aligning and focusing our work.

Change is an opportunity for BLM to focus on its mission and to do what we do best. It's also a time to look forward, find new and creative solutions, and improve how we serve the American people.

**How will the new priorities change my day-to-day work?**

Everyone will notice an increased emphasis on promoting multiple-use on public lands, consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. There could be shifts in projects you are working on, depending on your local line officer's priority focus. You may be asked to work on new or different projects based on your office's needs and staffing.

This is a time of change, and it may not be easy for some. But the BLM has a history of rising to the challenge of getting the job done with the available resources, through innovation and creative solutions, and by partnering with local communities.

**Are the Leadership Priorities meant to capture all the work we do?**

The Leadership Priorities represent a way to focus our work on the Administration's themes and goals. We realize that we do other important work that isn't identified here.

We've taken the approach of dividing the BLM workload into three categories or buckets. The first bucket is the priority workload that we are discussing here and that would be most responsive to the Leadership Priorities. The second bucket includes the work we must do by law

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or regulation that is not already in the first bucket. Leadership will review and prioritize the work in this second bucket and allocate resources accordingly. The third bucket includes any remaining low-priority work that leadership will review and assess, using any remaining funds available.

The Leadership Priorities provide the framework for how we will approach the work in all three buckets. The priorities will help us invest our resources efficiently so we can maximize the quality and quantity of our work, focusing on the first bucket and then the others in step. We can't do everything, but we can do more if we work efficiently and if we support each other along the way.

**How does this mesh with BLM's work force planning and reorganization efforts?**

Depending on the budget that is passed, we could have fewer dollars and fewer people to do the work we do. That is why it is critical to define top priorities to focus the work of our agency, and that is what BLM leadership has done.

The Leadership Priorities will help direct efforts to review the BLM's current alignment of functions, organizational structure, and workforce. The goal is to develop a more efficient structure that allows us to focus on the BLM's core mission, to better serve the American people, and to identify gaps where resources should be redirected to align with the FY 2018 budget.

The Leadership Priorities will also help guide efforts to identify the skills, training, and resources that our work force needs in order to accomplish our work.

**Will there be workforce opportunities at BLM during this time of transition?**

At BLM, we've long supported continued employee growth and development. One effective way for employees to develop is through detail assignments. The *BLM Daily* maintains a home page where announcements for [detail and temporary promotion opportunities](#) are posted. You can even sign up for email alerts when new opportunities are posted.

Because of the various hiring controls that are currently in place that limit our ability to recruit new employees from outside BLM, there is a growing number of detail and temporary promotion opportunities being posted to temporarily fill important vacancies. Additionally, as we strive to orient and re-shape the BLM's workforce to align to the Leadership Priorities, there will be an increasing number of lateral reassignment opportunities posted to this same site.

We encourage employees who would like to explore new career opportunities within BLM to monitor the site and to consider lateral reassignments to vacant positions.

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**How should I approach all this change and uncertainty?**

We can approach this time of change by being flexible and adaptable. We can speak up when we see something that we can do better or more efficiently. We can share our creative and innovative ideas via the BLM's Reform Team mail box at [blm\\_wo\\_workingsmarter@blm.gov](mailto:blm_wo_workingsmarter@blm.gov). We can support each other and help maintain a healthy work-life balance.

During this time of transition, we especially need to be mindful of safety—in the office and in the field. This can be a stressful and uncertain time, so it is important to take care of ourselves and one another. As Acting Director Mike Nedd says, “We’re BLM Strong and we can get through this transition if we work together.”

**What can I do to help with this effort?**

Leaders throughout the Bureau are looking for your open and honest feedback, and we’re counting on you to help move this agency forward during this transition by focusing on the Leadership Priorities. We ask each employee to learn about the priorities and understand how they help us accomplish BLM’s multiple-use and sustained-yield mission. We ask that you speak up to share ideas to streamline the work you’re involved with, to offer creative solutions to challenges you face, and to identify ways to enhance partnerships to work with communities and stakeholders you serve.

We can work through this transition if we stay engaged and support each other. We are stronger when we’re all in this together.

**What do I say to partners or the public who have questions about the new priorities?**

It is common with any change of Administration for government entities, including the BLM, to re-examine how we do our work for the American people. To provide new direction, the Administration has defined its five priority themes for the BLM, and they can be simplified for the public as follows: 1) Energy Independence, 2) Shared Conservation Stewardship, 3) Safe Borders, 4) Job Creation, and 5) Serving America. These shifts in priorities are consistent with BLM’s mission, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the dual mandate of multiple use and sustained yield.

Public lands belong to the American people so it is important we address any questions or concerns that partners or the public may have. Employees are on the front line with serving the American people. By having a solid understanding of our new priorities, our mission, and FLPMA, we can provide a consistent message to interested citizens and stakeholders.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or want to learn more about these priorities?**

In the upcoming weeks, there will be an internal communication campaign to help inform all employees about the priorities, workforce planning efforts, budget, and organizational review. The Washington Office and State and Center Directors will be sharing information on the *BLM*

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Daily, at employee meetings, and state leadership teams. A special intranet site will be developed to provide access to current information and updates. Throughout the process, feel free to contact your local line managers and your public affairs specialists to ask questions and keep the dialog going.

**ROLL OUT SCHEDULE**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE PARTIES</b>
June 12, 2017	Distribute materials to ELT	WO100
Week of June 12	All-employee message	WO-600 / WO-100 / Acting Director or Deputy Director for Operations
Week of June 12	WO Directorates and State Leadership Teams Briefed	Assistant Directors and State Directors
Weeks of June 19, 26	Staff meetings throughout the organization	Assistant Directors/State Directors and SLTs
Week of June 26	Launch BLM Daily intranet page with BLM Daily article	WO100 and WO610
Week of July 3	Follow up Discussion with Field Committee	Field Committee Members

## ***Making America Safe through Energy Independence***

### **Make additional lands available for “all of the above” energy development**

- Prioritize the completion of environmental analyses, new planning efforts, RMP revisions, and amendments to maximize lands available for energy and minerals development.
- Evaluate existing and proposed withdrawals, and consider appropriate adjustments to support energy and minerals development.
- Support implementation of planning decisions that aim to increase energy and minerals development.
- Undertake geospatial analysis, data management, and land surveying to support planning and implementation efforts for energy and mineral development.
- Support multiple-uses on National Conservation Lands units consistent with Congressional/Presidential Designation.

### **Streamline oil and gas leasing and permitting while addressing backlog of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) and Expressions of Interest (EOIs)**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3349 on American Energy Independence.
- Initiate the BLM Energy and Minerals Task Force to assist BLM state and field offices with expediting the leasing and permitting of energy and minerals.
- Establish performance standards and metrics for energy and mineral development, and incorporate into State Annual Work Plans.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of APDs and EOIs.
- Use Memoranda of Agreement to streamline permitting and Communitization Agreements to ensure proper royalty distribution.
- Work closely with state and other agency partners to develop process, technology, and NEPA training and mentoring programs for staff, and education programs for applicants and the public.
- Continue to develop geospatial resources for APDs and EOIs, including updating surface and sub-surface data layers and Public Lands Survey System data.

### **Streamline rights-of-way processing for pipelines, transmission lines, and solar/wind projects**

- Use National Project Support Team to expedite processing of large, national rights-of-way applications.
- Coordinate with Energy and Minerals Task Force to prioritize rights-of way processing and permitting of energy generation facilities including pipelines and renewables.
- Review Resource Management Plans to identify impacts to issuing rights-of-way in order to support timely and defensible project decisions.
- Expedite completion of Section 368 Energy Corridor studies and subsequent development of user guidebook to streamline transmission of energy resources across the U.S.
- Utilize workforce across BLM field and district boundaries to provide staff support as

needed, including state and national project managers, for timely processing of ROW applications.

**Streamline leasing and permitting for Federal coal and hardrock mining while addressing backlog of mining applications**

- Ensure adequate resources are available to address backlog of coal applications, and to efficiently process new applications for coal and hardrock mining.
- Provide Federal coal streamlining recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Coordinate with Energy Task Force and begin implementing recommendations for streamlining Federal coal leasing and permitting and permitting of hardrock mines.
- Enhance coordination with other agencies involved in the coal leasing and permitting process on opportunities to maximize efficiencies.
- Develop and increase commercial availability of ecologically appropriate plant materials for coal and hardrock mining reclamation in order to streamline operator ability to meet State reclamation requirements.
- Enhance coordination with states, tribes, and other agencies to streamline review and approval of NEPA documents related to coal, other leasable minerals, and hardrock mining.
- Improve agency geospatial sub-surface data and standardize mineral resource data to expedite resource analysis and decision-making.

## ***Making America Great Through Shared Conservation Stewardship***

### **Pursue all options to achieve appropriate management levels (AMLs) for the Wild Horse and Burro Program**

- Work with Congress to re-introduce legislative flexibility that would allow the BLM to use all management tools Congress provided for in the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.
- Strengthen Federal/Private partnerships to reduce herd sizes through fertility control application and research, gather operations, adoptions, and sales in order to improve the health of public rangelands.
- Decrease reliance on long-term holding facilities by transferring more animals to private care through adoptions or sales. Increase adoption rates by:
  - Expanding relationships with correctional facilities and other relevant partner organizations to train more wild horses and burros to make them more desirable.
  - Developing a new internet adoption website that is more responsive and user-friendly.

### **Work with partners to develop and implement priority habitat monitoring and improvement projects**

- Collaborate with state and local partners to identify priority work, conduct appropriate training, and complete essential projects that:
  - Ensure the health and safety of public lands through hazardous fuels reduction.
  - Improve rangeland health by removing or preventing the spread of invasive plants species.
  - Protect federally listed and other priority species through restoration efforts that enhance habitat connectivity and resiliency.
  - Support multiple-use opportunities on BLM managed public lands.
- Establish new Memorandums of Understanding with State and local governments and communities that promote training, education, and on-the-ground habitat improvement work that will help the BLM better meet the public's demand for access and diverse recreation opportunities.
- Develop and strengthen local, state, and national partnerships to manage and prevent the spread of invasive species to protect public lands and water resources.

### **Enhance opportunities for volunteer service and youth engagement on public lands**

- Create opportunities to engage at least 25,000 volunteers annually by providing meaningful projects that directly support the BLM's multiple-use mission.
- Maximize the impact of national programs that engage youth, families, and local communities (i.e. National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, Every Kid in a Park, etc.) by hosting local events and providing adequate financial support at the national level.

**Emphasize BLM's multiple-use mandate through strategic communication efforts and educational outreach**

- Launch a national BLM multiple-use campaign to engage the public, academia, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups through increased activity on new media platforms, and by hosting a variety of education and outreach events at the local level.
- Expand BLM's communication and education outreach efforts to emphasize the variety of ways the public can access, enjoy, and benefit from BLM lands as a result of our multiple-use mandate.

## ***Making America Safe – Restoring Our Sovereignty***

### **Direct agency law enforcement assets and efforts on BLM administered lands on or near the Southern border in a way that increases the safety of our visitors and employees, and the protection of public lands**

- Develop and implement the three-State Law Enforcement Border Strategy Plan with the following components:

#### *Coordination*

- Maintain constant collaboration between BLM California, Arizona, and New Mexico; local partners; and the U.S. Border Patrol to support enforcement initiatives on our borderlands.
- Collaborate closely with state, tribal, and local governments to increase joint decision-making, and
- Develop decision support tools that address the needs of local communities and partners.

#### *Operations*

- Provide increased resources along BLM's borderlands, as appropriate, including hiring law enforcement rangers and K9 teams.
- Enhance and expand partnership projects such as Operation Reclaim Our Arizona Monuments (ROAM) on BLM-administered lands in California and New Mexico.
- Continue the ROAM surges with the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT). This results in a near-continuous law enforcement presence on public lands during the surges.

#### *Communications*

- Continue to improve signage on public lands and provide additional information at public access points and websites.
- Increase interactions with visitors through high-visibility law enforcement patrols.
- Enhance use and connectivity of the Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) to improve border security operations.
- Form agreements with federal, state, and local partners to increase use of Centralized Administrative Dispatch Offices for priority operations.

### **Fully deploy security and communications systems to enhance employee safety, emergency notification, and accountability**

- Complete the initiative to improve physical security and related safety training at offices bureau-wide, including security cameras and Active Shooter training.
- Standardize Emergency Management templates and plans, and implement them bureau-wide.
- Fully roll out ROSS/IQCS program for identification of personnel with needed skills for emergency deployment.
- Ensure oversight of Radio infrastructure which continues to change as a result of emerging technology and reallocation of radio spectrum (by the Federal Communications Commission and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration).

- Increase use of modern emergency notification systems including satellite phones, spot locators, Send Word Now, ShoutNano, and satellite communicators.
- Transfer to Radio over Internet Protocol (RoIP) to allow for digital communication that can be encrypted and dispatched from anywhere, and multiband radio to give law enforcement the capability to communicate with other Federal, state, and local agencies on their radio systems.
- Enhance vehicle tracking protocols to incorporate priority fire and resource vehicles.

**Coordinate with the Department of Defense to ensure that public lands and resources are available to support the mission of our military**

- Improve early coordination efforts with DOD related to land withdrawals that support military training and operations, and streamline the processing of withdrawal applications.
- Increase advanced coordination efforts with DOD on BLM actions that could encroach on the mission of the military.
- Increase coordination efforts with DOD to remediate Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) on BLM-administered land.
- Continue to provide cadastral and fire services to military lands, as needed.
- Review current agreements between the BLM and the DOD, and revise where necessary to improve coordination and communication.

**Support agencies of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of the Interior in all border security actions.**

- Coordinate with the DHS and other law enforcement agencies to provide needed support for deployment of border security infrastructure to include pedestrian and vehicle fencing and other technologies.
- Continue participation in intelligence sharing and operational support activities with the DHS through the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT), an organization which is comprised of more than 60 Federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.

## ***Getting America Back to Work***

### **Improve and streamline land use planning to support energy and minerals development and other priority initiatives**

- Decrease time to completion for priority Resource Management Plan revisions by using third-party contractors when appropriate, and coordinating with the Washington Office early and often on key management decisions.
- Modernize land use planning efforts by incorporating the best available information and changes associated with relevant technologies. Conduct a thorough review of existing court decisions and make the necessary changes in current planning documents to limit re-litigation of similar issues.
- Strengthen planning documents by allocating staff resources to ensure GIS data and land records are up-to-date and accurate, and that critical data (national, statewide, and local) is accessible to BLM employees and decision makers.
- Establish flexible leasing and permitting teams to augment local BLM teams during times of high-workload or low staffing.
- Complete programmatic analyses and comprehensive modeling efforts when possible to minimize the need for multiple, smaller scale studies and planning documents.

### **Streamline NEPA processes to achieve efficiencies and decrease time to completion**

- Create templates from prior NEPA documents to use for Categorical Exclusions and Determinations of NEPA Adequacy when appropriate. Determine whether categorical exclusions can be done for coal permitting, energy and mineral development, and vegetation treatment projects.
- Prioritize completion of programmatic analyses for large-scale projects and/or projects of a repetitive nature in order to streamline subsequent, project-specific planning documents.
- Develop state-specific mitigation strategies in coordination with State agencies to support energy and minerals development and associated rights-of-way activities (i.e. roads, transmission lines).
- Develop new databases for digital data collection to ensure that the most common information required to complete NEPA analysis is available and in a format that is suitable for analysis.

### **Modernize critical information systems**

- Enhance web-based public access to resource and geospatial data related to energy and minerals, grazing permit processing, recreation, and other BLM programs.
- Enhance use of electronic systems (e.g., eErmds, eGIS, and other systems) for energy and minerals, lands, fire, FOIA and litigation workload, and other areas to increase efficiency, supplement workforce needs, continue operations remotely in the event of an emergency or incident, and increase communication throughout the Bureau.
- Provide equipment and data management expertise in real-time data collection, database creation, and establishment of data-sharing agreements with partners to efficiently process NEPA documents.

- Enhance the capacity of Network Attached Storage (NAS) servers to strengthen continuity of operations and offsite data backups.

**Pursue maintenance and capital improvement projects that address infrastructure needs**

- Prioritize Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement projects emphasizing projects that create jobs in local communities, improve recreation access, and enhance visitor safety.
- Review BLM’s inventory of office and other physical facilities to identify and implement efficiencies and cost-savings, whether through energy efficiency audits, economic analyses (government-owned versus leasing options), and use of other analytical tools.
- Increase environmental resistance and resilience to disasters by supporting commercial production of native plant materials and working with local partners to create jobs for habitat restoration.
- Work closely with Federal Highways on Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP), Federal Lands Access Programs (FLAP), and Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) to accomplish high-priority projects in order to increase public access to BLM lands.
- Develop a 5-year strategy to address priority sites in the Abandoned Mine Lands Program to clean up hazardous materials and abandoned mines on Federal land and increase public safety.

**Provide employment opportunities for veterans, youth, and others to work on public lands**

- Maximize use of existing hiring authorities to strengthen the Bureau’s diversity, including veterans, youth, and individuals with disabilities.
- Strengthen recruitment, outreach efforts, and partnerships with local stakeholder groups to promote employment opportunities for local tribes and other underrepresented communities.

**Increase efficiency of compliance with other agencies authorities (e.g., ESA, NHPA, CWA)**

- Enhance effective working relationships with state government, including State Historic Preservation Offices, Departments of Environmental Quality, and Departments of Wildlife.
- Produce decision support tools and processes that increase the efficiency of compliance activities.
- Develop new tools and technology to make data collection and validation more efficient. Make data more available to use to support energy development and grazing permit renewal compliance actions.
- Engage in informal consultation with stakeholders at the earliest opportunity for actions that trigger compliance with the NEPA process. This reduces the amount of time it takes to engage in formal consultation on those same actions.
- Review and revise, as necessary, the Memorandum of Agreement among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Marines Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Forest Service signed in 2000, which facilitates interagency cooperation to streamline ESA Section 7 consultations.

## *Serving the American Family*

### **Maintain a capable, ethical, and diverse professional workforce and an inclusive and motivating work culture that drives high productivity**

- Implement the Human Resources Modernization Project to streamline and improve the BLM hiring process and related HR functions (staffing, classification, processing, security operations/on boarding, systems and benefits).
- Strengthen BLM's Work Culture bureau-wide to increase employee engagement, productivity, and retention; increase diversity and inclusion; and foster trust, efficiencies in the workplace, and a healthy work-life balance.
- Assess and improve BLM's leadership development programs, technical training (e.g., Lands and Realty Academy, energy and minerals-related coursework), the Employee Performance Plan and incentive award process, and course offerings at the National Training Center to align with national priorities.
- Demonstrate leadership accountability, commitment, and involvement regarding diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Enhance the future workforce by engaging a diverse cadre of youth in meaningful internship or service-learning programs.

### **Enhance our relationships with States and local communities**

- Actively engage the public, local communities, and Resource Advisory Councils in decisions that may affect local public land resources, including economic opportunities, responsible development, recreational access, cultural sites, habitat management, and subsistence issues.
- Enhance Alaska Land Conveyance to the State of Alaska and Alaska Native Corporations to increase development opportunities.
- Expand outreach and education efforts with States and local communities (across diverse social, ethnic, and cultural settings) to increase awareness and appreciation of BLM's multiple-use mission and the public lands.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of BLM's public rooms across the agency, and establish benchmarks and milestones to improve their functionality and customer service to local communities.
- Develop county level metrics of socio-economic benefits from activities on public lands including energy and mineral development and National Conservation Lands. Develop annual economic contribution estimates associated with BLM activities and programs at a state and national level.
- Finalize and implement BLM Travel and Tourism Action Plans to increase economic opportunities, jobs, and recreational access in local communities.

### **Fulfill our trust responsibilities to tribal communities**

- Implement the BLM 1780 Tribal Relations Manual and Handbook to improve and sustain meaningful consultation with federally recognized tribes (American Indians and Alaska Natives) on resources and issues of concern to tribes, including those related to the

agency's trust responsibilities. Provide "Effective Tribal Consultation" classes, as well as state-specific training on the new 1780 Tribal Relations Manual.

- Fully utilize cooperative management agreements and collaborative partnerships with local tribes to foster strong relationships, facilitate coordination, and effectively address matters of mutual interest.
- Provide cadastral and boundary management consultation with tribal communities for their full enjoyment of land rights, resource use, and protection of cultural resources.
- Promote outreach with local tribal communities to enhance and protect subsistence resources.
- Act diligently and proactively in pursuing designations of Traditional Cultural Properties under the National Historic Preservation Act, thereby ensuring continuity of tribal traditions and support for indigenous ways of life.
- Continue to work with tribes in suppressing unwanted fires that threaten tribal communities and resources.

**Protect life, critical infrastructure, and natural/cultural resources through BLM's Fire and Aviation Program.**

- Utilize Mitigation, Education, and Community Assistance programs to partner with local entities, homeowners, and business owners on projects to protect homes and the public in and near wildland areas.
- Partner with Rangeland Fire Protection Associations and/or rural fire departments to protect livelihoods, working landscapes, and local economies.
- Conduct fuels management projects and collaborative efforts to create fuel breaks and reduce flammable vegetation to protect homes, communities, and the public in wildland-urban interface areas.
- Enhance partnerships with state and local governments, non-government organizations, private landowners, permittees, and other parties to improve habitat conditions through fuels management, rangeland improvements, and other conservation efforts.

**Expand recreational, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities**

- Implement Secretarial Order 3347 to enhance conservation stewardship, increase outdoor recreation, and improve the management of habitat, including for game species.
- Assess and improve BLM's recreation-related websites, including Rec.gov, to identify local opportunities for families to access and enjoy public lands; streamline trip planning and reservation services; and offer updated, engaging, and relevant visitor information.
- Continue developing Resource Management Plans to increase the focus on providing access, recreation, hunting, and wildlife conservation opportunities through designation of recreation management areas and consideration of Backcountry Conservation Areas.
- Collaborate with State, Tribal, county, local and Federal agencies, as well as other partners, to identify and secure opportunities for increased recreation access to public lands.
- Enhance opportunities for sustainable Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation by continuing to apply for OHV State Grants for Development, Restoration, Acquisition, Education and Law Enforcement.

- Strengthen local and national partnerships to improve access for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities and to enhance wildlife habitat, including for game species and migratory birds.
- Offer access to the public for critical resource and geospatial data by increasing the number of national data sets available, and providing data to show recreation, hunting, and fishing opportunities.

**Enhance State and local law enforcement partnerships to increase safety and improve the visitor experience on public lands**

- Continue to develop Memoranda of Understanding with local law enforcement to improve incident response, conduct cross-training, and address illegal activity on public land in support of public safety and resource management goals.
- Provide resources, as needed, to law enforcement to address public safety and resource protection, including drug trafficking, border issues, wildland interface fires, vehicle crashes, search and rescue, high use recreation areas, and oil field crimes.

**Streamline the grazing permit process and provide more flexibility to the American rancher**

- Review the livestock grazing permit process and determine where efficiencies can be made. Develop an action plan with metrics and milestones to implement identified streamlining actions and needed policy updates.
- Improve grazing permitting processes using geospatial technology and providing Public Land Survey System data in publication form.
- Continue incorporating flexible terms and conditions into permit renewals when fully processing grazing permit and lease renewals. Pursue categorical exclusion authority and/or programmatic NEPA when possible.
- Determine availability of common reserve allotments to provide alternative grazing for ranchers affected by drought, fire, and other disasters. Work with Public Lands Council (PLC) and other partners to develop recommendations.
- Work with permittees and stakeholders to develop options for targeted grazing (fuel breaks), outcome-based grazing pilot projects, and long-term formal guidance.

**Greater Sage-Grouse Secretarial Order 3353 – Collaborative Response Meeting**  
**Location: Crowne Plaza - Denver Airport Convention Center**

**July 12, 2017**

<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Room</i>	<i>Presenter/Lead</i>	<i>Expected Outcome</i>
7:30am – 8:00am	Registration			
8:00am – 8:15am	Logistics Discussion/Agenda Review		TBD	
8:15am – 8:30am	Welcome		Bob Budd/Dusting Miller, SGTF Karen Kelleher, BLM	
8:30am – 10:00am	BLM Plans Response Summary		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify if item is Clarification, Training, Coordination/ Policy Change/ Plan Change</li> <li>Identify Rangewide/ Region/ State</li> </ul>
10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 11:00am	BLM Plans Response Summary Continued			
11:00am – 12:00pm	BLM Existing/New Policy Response Summary		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any existing or new policy not discussed as part of plan issues</li> </ul>
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch			
1:00pm – 1:40pm	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Response Summary		SGTF Rick Belger, BLM	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
1:40pm – 2:20pm	Biological Metrics Response Summary		SGTF Nicole Alt, USFWS	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
2:20pm – 3:00pm	Data and Science Review Response Summary		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Break			
<b>Session Working Group Break Outs – Number TBD</b>				
3:15pm – 5:00pm	Topic 1		TBD	Topics may include grazing; oil and gas; tracking disturbance and reclamation, adaptive management, etc.
	Topic 2		TBD	
	Topic 3		TBD	
	Topic 4		TBD	For topic identified bring forth potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
	Topic 5		TBD	
	Topic 6		TBD	
5:00pm – 5:30pm	Day 1 Wrap Up, Day 2 Planning and Feedback		SGTF Karen Kelleher, BLM	Identify issues for further discussion for Day 2 topics

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<i>Time</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Room</i>	<i>Presenter/Lead</i>	<i>Expected Outcome</i>
<b><i>Outstanding Topic Sessions Working Group Break Outs</i></b>				
8:00am – 10:00am	Topic 1 (topics not discussed the previous day)		TBD	Identify issues and potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
	Topic 2 (topics not discussed the previous day)		TBD	
	Topic 3 (topics not discussed the previous day)		TBD	
10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 10:35am	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
10:35am – 10:55am	Biological Metrics		SGTF TBD Nicole Alt, USFWS	
10:55am – 11:15am	Data and Science		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	
11:15am – 11:45am	Report out on Topic 1		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Present the information from the work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
11:45am – 1:00pm	Lunch			
1:00pm – 1:30pm	Report out on Topic 2		TBD	Each topic lead will present the information from their work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
1:30pm – 2:00pm	Report out on Topic 3		TBD	
2:00pm – 2:30pm	Report out on Topic 4		TBD	
2:30pm – 3:00pm	Report out on Topic 5		TBD	
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Next Steps – Main Meeting Closing Comments		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	
<b><i>Conclusion of Main Meeting</i></b>				
<b><i>Topic Area Product Finalization Breakout</i></b>				
3:30pm – 5:00pm	BLM Plan/Policy Session (Consistency reporting for 3 morning groups)		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Prepare Documents for incorporation into the response for SO3353
	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	
	Biological Metrics Session		SGTF Nicole Alt, USFWS	
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10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 11:00am	BLM Plans Response Summary Continued			
11:00am – 12:00pm	BLM Existing/New Policy Response Summary		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any existing or new policy not discussed as part of plan issues</li> </ul>
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch			
1:00pm – 1:40pm	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Response Summary		SGTF Rick Belger, BLM	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
1:40pm – 2:20pm	Biological Metrics Response Summary		SGTF Nicole Alt, USFWS	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
2:20pm – 3:00pm	Data and Science Review Response Summary		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Clarifications or Inclusions</li> </ul>
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Break			
<b>Session Working Group Break Outs – Number TBD</b>				
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	Topic 2		TBD	
	Topic 3		TBD	
	Topic 4		TBD	For topic identified bring forth potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
	Topic 5		TBD	
	Topic 6		TBD	
5:00pm – 5:30pm	Day 1 Wrap Up, Day 2 Planning and Feedback		SGTF Karen Kelleher, BLM	Identify issues for further discussion for Day 2 topics

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<b><i>Outstanding Topic Sessions Working Group Break Outs</i></b>				
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	Topic 2 (topics not discussed the previous day)		TBD	
	Topic 3 (topics not discussed the previous day)		TBD	
10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 10:35am	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
10:35am – 10:55am	Biological Metrics		SGTF TBD Nicole Alt, USFWS	
10:55am – 11:15am	Data and Science		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	
11:15am – 11:45am	Report out on Topic 1		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Present the information from the work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
11:45am – 1:00pm	Lunch			
1:00pm – 1:30pm	Report out on Topic 2		TBD	Each topic lead will present the information from their work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
1:30pm – 2:00pm	Report out on Topic 3		TBD	
2:00pm – 2:30pm	Report out on Topic 4		TBD	
2:30pm – 3:00pm	Report out on Topic 5		TBD	
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Next Steps – Main Meeting Closing Comments		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	
<b><i>Conclusion of Main Meeting</i></b>				
<b><i>Topic Area Product Finalization Breakout</i></b>				
3:30pm – 5:00pm	BLM Plan/Policy Session (Consistency reporting for 3 morning groups)		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Prepare Documents for incorporation into the response for SO3353
	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	
	Biological Metrics Session		SGTF Nicole Alt, USFWS	
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8:30am – 10:00am	BLM Plans Response Summary		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify if item is Clarification/ Policy/ Modification</li> <li>• Identify Rangewide/ State</li> <li>• Capture Lexicon (vocabulary issues)</li> </ul>
10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 11:00am	BLM Plans Response Summary Continued			
11:00am – 12:00pm	BLM Existing/New Policy Response Summary		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Report on the submitted data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting stage for discussion from 3 - 5 pm (6 groups)</li> </ul>
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Lunch			
<b>Session Working Group Break Outs</b>				
1:00pm – 3:00pm	Minerals – Stipulations, NSO, CSU, Exceptions, Waivers, and Modifications, Density, Disturbance			For topic identified bring forth potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
	Habitat Assessment Framework and Habitat Objective Table; Effectiveness Monitoring			
	Mitigation/Net Conservation Gain			
	Adaptive Management			
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Break			
3:15pm – 3:45pm	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Response Summary			For topic identified bring forth potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
3:45pm – 4:15pm	Biological Metrics Response Summary			
4:15pm – 4:45pm	Data and Science Review Response Summary			
4:45pm – 5:30pm	Day 1 Wrap Up, Day 2 Planning and Feedback		SGTF Karen Kelleher, BLM	Identify issues for further discussion for Day 2 topics

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<b><i>Outstanding Topic Sessions Working Group Break Outs</i></b>				
8:00am – 10:00am	Grazing, WHB, Reserve Common Allotments			For topic identified bring forth potential solutions through no action; policy clarifications, modifications or rescissions; training; MOUs; plan modifications; etc.
	Exclusion, Avoidance, Required Design Features, Lek Buffers, Timing, Tall Structures			
	Habitat Boundaries (SFA, GHMA, PHMA) Modifications etc.			
10:00am – 10:15am	Break			
10:15am – 10:35am	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
10:35am – 10:55am	Biological Metrics		SGTF TBD Nicole Alt, USFWS	
10:55am – 11:15am	Data and Science		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	
11:15am – 11:35am	Minerals – Stipulations, NSO, CSU, Exceptions, Waivers, and Modifications, Density, Disturbance		SGTF & BLM Breakout Leads	Present the information from the work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
11:35am - 11:55am	Habitat Assessment Framework and Habitat Objective Table			
11:55am – 1:00pm	Lunch			
1:00pm – 1:20pm	Mitigation/Net Conservation Gain		SGTF & BLM Breakout Leads	Each topic lead will present the information from their work group. Participants will provide additional thoughts/ suggestions on report content.
1:20pm – 1:40pm	Adaptive Management			
1:40pm – 2:00pm	Grazing, WHB, Reserve Common Allotments			
	Grazing, WHB, Reserve Common Allotments			
2:00pm – 2:20pm	Exclusion, Avoidance, Required Design Features, Lek Buffers, Timing, Tall Structures			
2:20pm – 2:40pm	Habitat Boundaries (SFA, GHMA, PHMA) Modifications etc.			
2:40pm – 3:00pm	Next Steps – Main Meeting Closing Comments			
<b><i>Conclusion of Main Meeting</i></b>				
<b><i>Topic Area Product Finalization Breakout</i></b>				
3:00pm – 5:00pm	BLM Plan Session (Consistency reporting for 3 morning groups)		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	Prepare Documents for incorporation into the response for SO3353
	Wildland Fire and Invasive Species		SGTF TBD Rick Belger, BLM	
	BLM Policy Session (IMs)		SGTF TBD BLM TBD	

	Biological Metrics Session		SGTF Nicole Alt, USFWS	
	Data and Science Review		SGTF Steve Hanser, USGS	

## Talking Points for Secretary on SO 3353 – Sage Grouse

- DOI & BLM are working cooperatively with states through Sage Grouse Task Force
- Very productive and positive Sage Grouse Task Force meeting yesterday (Monday) to chart a path forward that includes
  - Ensuring States having an equal seat at the table to identify issues and recommendations
  - Recognizing that some issues effect all plans while others require state-specific solutions
  - Looking for opportunities to make immediate improvements by taking advantage of flexibilities in the plans, by clarifying decisions, or through training
  - Completing targeted plan amendments when necessary
  - Providing opportunities for local governments and tribes to be part of the process, as well as other stakeholders, including ranchers, industry, and conservation groups
  - Ensuring sagebrush and sage-grouse are conserved for the long-term while supporting strong local economies and jobs
- DOI and Sage Grouse Task Force will continue to meet and work together throughout this review
  - To identify opportunities for greater collaboration
  - to better align federal and state plans for sage-grouse
  - to support strong local economies and jobs
  - to consider new and innovate ways to conserve sage-grouse for the long-term
- DOI Sage Grouse Review Team from the Department, BLM, FWS, and USGS has been appointed oversee this review
- BLM State Directors have already begun working with the Governors offices to identify issues and recommendations

- I want to hear your concerns and your ideas to improve the federal plans to conserve the sage-grouse and build strong local economies in the West
- I look forward to receiving the recommendations from the team
- Thank you for working with me to improve our coordination and collaboration on these important issues

### **Key Issues of Interest raised at SGTF Meeting**

- Ensure Federal plans are durable and achieve sage-grouse protections needed to remain “not warranted” under ESA;
- Prefer to avoid wholesale rewrite of plans; Look for opportunities to use existing flexibilities in the plan through clarification or additional guidance to increase compatibility/consistency with State plans;
- Strengthen communications and training to promote consistency in policy application among partners;
- Evaluate Sagegrouse Focal Areas (SFAs);
- Review the use of net conservation gain; mitigation coordination with States;
- Incorporate habitat boundary corrections as States continue to map habitat;
- Coordinate science and research among states and federal agencies;
- Address impacts from wild horses and burros on habitat;
- Provide funding for continued implementation, particularly restoration projects;
- Consider the effect of disturbance caps on development.

## Background – Progress to date

- DOI Sage Grouse Review Team appointed and up and running
- Four Teams made up of BLM, FWS, USGS, FS have been formed and are working to gather information and coordinate with States
  - Plans and policy
  - Data and Science
  - Biological metrics (population targets and captive breeding)
  - Fire and Invasive Species
- First meeting held with WGA Sage Grouse Task Force on Monday June 26 (yesterday)
- BLM State Directors are already meeting with their individual states to discuss issues and recommendations for the plans and policies
- States in the process of appointing members to the teams working on responding to the SO 3353
- SGTF and DOI Sage Grouse Review Team are committed to working together to identify recommendations to improve the plans and support a strong economy
- Teams will be meeting in the first part of July
- On schedule to deliver report to Secretary on August 4.

State Contacts for SO 3353:

Please find attached a template we are asking you to use to gather information on policy/plan issues and concerns as you talk with your states – to include ensuring the 2015 BLM sage-grouse plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species.

Please work with your Governor's office appointed person to identify these issues and options to address them. Please provide your completed templates to the core team by June 23. We are working to schedule a face-to-face meeting of BLM, FWS, USGS, and SGTF/state team members on June 27-29, more information to follow shortly. This meeting will use the information you gather by June 23 to inform the development of recommendations to the Secretary.

The template is set up to gather key information on the topic and issue of concern, an early assessment of the extent of the concern (range-wide, state specific), and potential short-term and/or long-term ways to address the concern. We encourage you to particularly put thought into options for "quick fix"/short term solutions that we can address while allowing you to continue to move forward with your collaborative implementation work. Please fill out as much of the template as possible and feel free to add additional information at the bottom as needed.

The template includes Short Term recommendations that we can implement quickly to help address concerns/issues

- 1) Clarification—this should include all things less than policy, e.g., training, instructions, MOUs, and could be completed in a relatively short timeline
- 2) Policy—suggestions for new policy, rescinding policies, or change to existing policy that would better align the BLM plans/policy with the state plans or otherwise improve the BLM plans

And, Longer-term recommendations

- 3) Potential Plan Changes—are there decisions in the plans that would require a plan amendment.

Due to WO on June 23, 2017

Please limit template to one topical area but complete as many topical areas as necessary.

<b>Topical Area: Sage Grouse Habitat Management Area Boundary Adjustments</b>	
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>	
<b>Scope: Nevada and NE California Sub-region</b>	<b>State: Nevada and California</b>
<b>Describe the Issue</b>	
<p>Since the release of BLM Nevada and California’s Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA), the State of Nevada (in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr. Pete Coates et. al) updated GRSG habitat maps in 2016 for the Nevada and Northeastern California subregion. The State of Nevada (specifically NDOW and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) are already actively using the 2016 maps to implement their 2014 Sage Grouse Conservation Plan while BLM Nevada and California’s sage grouse land use plan amendment goals, objectives, and management decisions are tied to an older version of GRSG habitat maps that generated the GRSG habitat management areas, as defined in the 2015 ARMPA.</p>	
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>	
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted (i.e. use the maps the 2016 maps as best available science when conducting site specific (project) NEPA in GRSG habitat).
Policy	N/A
Plan Changes	The BLM needs to amend the plans to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes.

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United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
<http://www.blm.gov>



JUN 20 2017

To: James C. Cason, Acting Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Through: Katharine S. MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary  
Land and Minerals Management *Katharine MacGregor*

From: Michael D. Nedd, Acting Director – Bureau of Land Management *M. Nedd*

Subject: Recommended Members for the Sage Grouse Review Team

Secretarial Order 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States, establishes a Sage-Grouse Review Team to be made up of members from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), United States Geological Survey (USGS) and others as needed. The team is tasked with coordinating with United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) and the Western Governors Association Sage Grouse Task Force to complete the tasks identified in the Order. I have conferred with counterparts in the Department of the Interior (DOI) and make the following recommendations for the Sage-Grouse Review Team:

- Kathy Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary, BLM (Co-Lead)
- John Ruhs, Acting Deputy Director, Operations, BLM (Co-Lead)
- Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary – Fish Wildlife and Parks
- Greg Sheehan, Deputy Director, FWS
- Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director for Ecosystems, USGS
- Tim Williams, Deputy Director of External Affairs, DOI
- Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary, DOI
- Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary, DOI
- Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Liaison to State and Local Government, DOI

I am conferring with the USFS to identify an individual to coordinate with the Sage Grouse Review Team. I have also identified Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director-Resources and Planning, BLM as the Coordinator for this effort. She will report through John Ruhs and Kathy Benedetto to the Review Team.

Concur: \_\_\_\_\_

Do not concur: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative appointments: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*James C. Cason*  
James C. Cason

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*6/20/17*



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

ORDER NO. 3353

Subject: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States

**Sec. 1 Purpose.** The purposes of the Order are to: (1) enhance cooperation between the Department of the Interior (Department) and the States of Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado (the Eleven Western States) in the management and conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse) and its habitat; (2) support a partnership with clearly defined objectives and roles for Federal and State entities responsible for Sage-Grouse management and conservation in order to sustain healthy populations of the species; and (3) establish a team to review the Federal land management agencies' Sage-Grouse plan amendments and revisions completed on or before September 2015.

**Sec. 2 Authorities.** This Order is issued under the authority of section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat. 1262), as amended, and pursuant to the land management and programmatic authorities of the bureaus identified below in section 4b.

**Sec. 3 Background.** The Department has broad responsibilities to manage Federal lands and resources for the public's benefit, including, but not limited to, permitting authorized uses; managing habitat to support fish, wildlife, and other resources; protecting cultural resources; and providing recreational and educational opportunities on Federal lands and waters.

The State agencies responsible for fish and wildlife management possess broad powers for the protection and management of fish, wildlife, and plants within their borders, except where preempted by Federal law. State agencies are at the forefront of efforts to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations and to conserve at-risk species to ensure that protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not required.

The State-Federal Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) was established in 2011 as a forum for high-level State and Federal representatives to meet and evaluate policies, programs, management actions, data sharing, and other actions affecting conservation of the Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem, as well as the health of the communities and economies of the American West.

In September 2015, the Department and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adopted amendments and revisions to 98 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land use plans across the Eleven Western States addressing, in part, the Sage-Grouse and its habitat (the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans). The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans govern management of 67 million acres of Federal lands. More than half of remaining Sage-Grouse habitat is on land managed by BLM and USFS. As the Department moves forward in the management of Sage-Grouse habitat, it is imperative that it does so in a manner that allows both

wildlife and local economies to thrive and incorporate the expertise of Federal employees in the field, local conditions, and proven State and local approaches.

In October 2015, in reliance upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in Federal land use plan amendments and revisions and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years.

#### Sec. 4 **Policy.**

##### a. Cooperation with the Eleven Western States on Sage-Grouse Conservation Efforts.

Consistent with governing laws, regulations, and policies, the Department will implement a multifaceted strategy to enhance cooperation with the Eleven Western States primarily responsible for the management and conservation of Sage-Grouse. The strategy will include supporting a partnership that allows the Department and the Eleven Western States to maintain healthy populations of Sage-Grouse and improve collaboration and integration of State and local concerns and approaches into sagebrush management and conservation on Federal lands. Accordingly, and subject to paragraph 4b, below, the BLM Director, working with other heads of bureaus and offices within the Department, USFS, and affected States through the SGTF, shall develop:

- (i) memorandums of understanding and other agreements with states and other partners regarding implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans;
- (ii) training for BLM staff regarding implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, including direction to consider state and local information, as appropriate; and
- (iii) memorandums of understanding and other agreements with States and other partners regarding integration of information on Sage-Grouse populations into Federal land management decisions.

##### b. Department of the Interior Sage-Grouse Review Team.

This Order establishes the Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team). The Team will be made up of land managers and other professionals from bureaus and offices, including BLM, FWS, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The Team will closely coordinate with USDA and USFS. The Team will engage with appropriate State agencies through the SGTF to coordinate its work. The Team is hereby directed to conduct:

- (i) a review of the plans and programs that States already have in place to ensure that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species;

(ii) a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-Grouse habitat;

(iii) an examination of the impact on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands within their borders, recognizing that those lands are important to resource use and development, and to the conservation of the Sage-Grouse;

(iv) a review of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and associated polices, including seven BLM Instruction Memoranda (IM) issued in September 2016. The review will include (1) identification of provisions that may require modification or rescission, as appropriate, in order to give appropriate weight to the value of energy and other development of public lands within BLM's overall multiple-use mission and to be consistent with the policy set forth in Secretary's Order 3349, "American Energy Independence," implementing the Executive Order signed by the President on March 28, 2017, "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth"; and (2) opportunities to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat without inhibiting job creation and local economic growth;

(v) as appropriate, the Team should provide recommendations with regard to (1) captive breeding; (2) opportunities to enhance State involvement; (3) efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis; and (4) additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve the current population levels and habitat conditions.

#### **Sec. 5. Implementation.**

a. Within 10 days of the signing of this Order, the Deputy Secretary will designate individuals from within the Department to serve on the Team.

b. The BLM Director will designate an individual to coordinate all activities by and within the Department with respect to implementation of this Order.

c. All bureaus and offices are directed to immediately begin implementing section 4 of this Order by identifying opportunities for cooperative management agreements and collaborative partnerships with the Eleven Western States and by outlining any specific steps to be undertaken.

d. Within 60 days of the date of this Order, the Team shall provide a report to the Secretary summarizing the review set forth in section 4b of this Order and provide recommendations regarding additional steps the Department should take to address any issues identified as a result of that review.

**Sec. 6 Effect of Order.** This Order is intended to improve the internal management of the Department. This Order and any resulting reports or recommendations are not intended to and

do not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this Order and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

**Sec. 7 Expiration Date.** This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until its provisions are accomplished, amended, superseded, or revoked, whichever occurs first.



Secretary of the Interior

Date: June 7, 2017



June 20, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As active participants in the Federal-State Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force), we stand ready to engage with the federal Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team) created by your Secretarial Order 3353 "Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (S.O. 3353/Order). To that end, we invite members of the federal Team to initiate coordination with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Task Force by attending a formal Task Force meeting on June 26 held in conjunction with the WGA Annual Meeting in Whitefish, Montana. The purpose of the Task Force meeting will be to:

- Establish the role of the Task Force in implementation of S.O. 3353;
- Determine the process and timeline for how the review will be conducted, how the Task Force will assist the Team in completing the state plan reviews, and identify proper channels of communication to aid in their timely completion;
- Identify what steps will be taken to ensure the Team is coordinating its work with the Task Force and not duplicating the work the Task Force; and
- Determine the process for completion of the Team's report and how the Department of Interior will implement the Team's recommendations to ensure durability for state and federal agencies and that protections of the federal Endangered Species Act remain "not warranted."

Honorable Ryan Zinke

June 20, 2017

Page 2

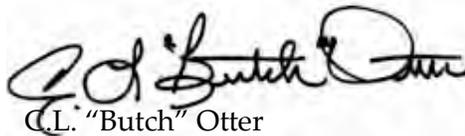
In announcing S.O. 3353, you indicated that the spirit of the Order is to work hand in hand with states and ensure that their efforts in conserving the greater sage-grouse are fully recognized. We appreciate your acknowledgement of the western states' considerable role in conserving greater sage-grouse and would further emphasize the importance of including state officials as substantive participants in any federal review of current land use plans.

The states possess the local knowledge and expertise necessary to address the provisions that need improvement and can identify strategic ways to address problematic provisions in the land use plan amendments. The collective efforts of the Task Force represent a model of state-federal cooperation. We assert that such a model will be essential in realizing the goals put forth in S.O. 3353.

Respectfully,



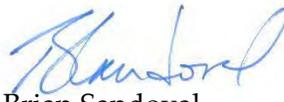
John Hickenlooper  
Governor of Colorado  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force



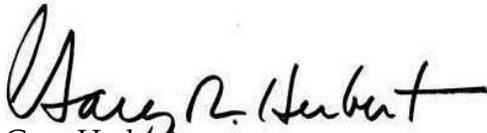
C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana



Brian Sandoval  
Governor of Nevada



Gary Herbert  
Governor of Utah



Matt Mead  
Governor of Wyoming  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force

cc: Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land  
Management  
Greg Sheehan, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## **Organization Structure**

This effort is being led for the BLM by Karen Kelleher with support from a team comprised of BLM, USGS, and FWS specialists. The team is from all organizational levels and includes skills in project management, public affairs, regional/national perspectives, and science. For effective communication, it would be desired to have a SGTF member as a primary contact to work directly with Karen.

## **General Workplan**

We have identified 4 major tasks (each co-led by a Federal appointee & desire a SGTF appointee):

- a. plan & policy comparisons for each state (each BLM SD leads for their state)
- b. Science/Data – including getting and using new data including non-government data (USGS led – Steve Hanser)
- c. Biological Metrics - to include State target population numbers, captive breeding, translocations, and other “things to help the bird” (FWS led – Nicole Alt)
- d. ways to further address fire and invasive species and IRFMS (WO-200/FA led – Rick Belger)

We envision the first task, plan and policy comparisons, to be conducted on a state-by-state basis, led by the BLM State Director and State SGTF member and then consolidated over the range. The remaining 4 tasks (b-d) would be conducted range-wide, with membership from both the Great Basin & Rocky Mountain regions, but may not require membership from every state. We have also requested USFS participation and expect they will provide team members.

For each task, teams should identify additional training requirements and additional opportunities for improved collaboration (MOUs, other tools). Emphasis should be on flexibility to respond to local conditions and assessment of issues of concern.

**Policies & Plans:** Assess options that are less than policy (clarifications, training, MOUs, etc.) that can help improve implementation and provide flexibility; policy changes (rescind or modify existing policies; develop new policies) that could provide additional guidance on how to implement plans; and plan changes/amendments. Where possible, consider multiple options for solutions and provide rationale for the change. A preliminary template to gather information has been developed (see attached).

**Fire & invasives:** Consider work already underway such as recommendations from invasives meeting in fall 2016; WAFWA Conservation & Restoration Strategy. A preliminary set of questions has been developed (see attached).

**Science & Data:** Consider work already underway such as Actionable Science Plan, Science Framework, National Science Strategy; State & Federal policies and procedures on using 3<sup>rd</sup> party data. Preliminary questions to consider are being developed and will be provided for review.

**Biological Metrics:** consider work already done on topics by WAFWA, State agencies, others. Preliminary questions to consider are being developed and will be provided for review.

**Face to face meeting:** gather issues identified state-by-state and discuss range-wide, regional, or state-specific recommendations; identify common issues; consider information from range-wide teams and

how those recommendations should be incorporated; and generally cross-pollinate to minimize risk that something is missed.

### **General timeline**

- Currently underway/starting – June 30 – Gather 1<sup>st</sup> round information and provide to core team
- June 26 – SGTF meeting
- July 5-7 – Core team to synthesize information
- July 8 – EOC meeting
- Week of July 11 (July 8 or July 12-13) – 1-1.5 day face to face meeting
- July 14-19 – Core team to Draft Report
- July 20-25 – SGTF, BLM State Directors, DOI Sage Grouse Review Team comment on draft report
- July 26-28 – Core team to Modify report
- July 29-Aug 1 – Department Review
- August 2 – finalize report
- August 4 – Deliver to Secretary

### **Post-Report Potential Next Steps**

- August-September:
  - collect other issues/concerns - it would be inadvisable to proceed without letting others weigh in:
    - follow on meetings with tribes & counties
    - follow on public meetings with industry, ranching, conservation group, others
- October and beyond:
  - Identify and Resolve Changes (include state review of new policies, normal process for plans); develop fed/state teams in each region to develop, review policies & plans:
  - x, y, z clarifications & policy rescission - 60 days after approval of report
  - new MOUs drafted - 90 days after approval of report
  - m, n, o new/revised policy – drafted 120 days after approval of report
  - a, b, c plan amendments (may want to consider breaking apart EA level changes and EIS level changes) - start within 120-180 days (2-4 year window depending on complexity)
  - develop training for BLM staff and partners on policies and procedures

### **Questions**

- Is workplan complete? Are there other topics of discussion that should be added?
- Is timeline manageable?
- Are there tasks likely to require additional discussion into August/September?
- How do we best engage counties and tribes, as well as other stakeholders?
- Where can we identify less than plan amendment actions that would help address issues and can be put into place quickly?
- Identify POCs to represent SGTF
- What else should we be doing that we aren't doing?

## Outline for Report: Secretarial Order 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States

### Summary

High level summary of the reason for the report and entities that contributed to the report

High-level summary of interim recommendations

- Includes summary of future actions

### Introduction and Purpose

Summary of SO 3353 required actions and timeframes

### Results of the Review

- BLM and State Plan Consistency
  - Identification of consistency issue
    - Scope of Identified for issue
      - State Specific
      - Regional
      - Range-Wide
- Review of BLM Policy (Including the 7 BLM Instruction Memorandums)
  - Identification of which of the 7 BLM IMs needs to be maintained, modified, or rescinded:
    - Grazing Thresholds and Responses
    - Grazing Allotment Prioritization
    - Oil and Gas Leasing Prioritization
    - Adaptive Management Hard/Soft Triggers
    - Habitat Assessment Policy
    - Effectiveness Monitoring
  - Identification of any new policy needs
- Data and Science Review
  - For all partners and sources (private, state, and federal)
    - Preliminary Evaluation of existing data sharing network (accessing, sharing, inputting)
    - Preliminary methodology for recognizing and sharing new science findings or recommendations and level of applicability in the decision making process
- Biological Metrics Evaluations
  - Captive Breeding
  - State-by-State Target Populations

- Wildland Fire and Invasive Species
  - Review of the effectiveness of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy including suggestions for modifications

### Interim Recommendations

- Summary of actions that could be implemented immediately to maintain or improve habitat or populations level
- BLM and State Plan Consistency
  - Preliminary Resolution Level of Identified Issue
    - No action needed issue is inconsequential
    - Clarification through training, modification/revoking of existing policy, or issuance of new policy
    - Clarification of a direction in the BLM Plans through maintenance
    - Clarification through analysis of a new alternative in the BLM Plans through a plan amendment process
    - Issue identified, but more time required for coordination
- Review of BLM Policy (Including the 7 BLM Instruction Memorandums)
  - Preliminary rationale for course of action each of the BLM IMs
- Data and Science Review Preliminary Recommendations
  - Preliminary identification of efficiencies or development of new processes for:
    - data sharing network
    - recognizing and sharing new science
- Biological Metrics Preliminary Recommendations
  - Captive Breeding
  - State-by-State Target Populations
- Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Preliminary Recommendations
  - Review of the effectiveness of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy including suggestions for modifications
- Identification of next steps with suggested timeframe
  - Inclusions of needed outreach and coordination

#### State Contacts for SO 3353:

Please find attached a template we are asking you to use to gather information on policy/plan issues and concerns as you talk with your states – to include ensuring the 2015 BLM sage-grouse plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species.

Please work with your Governor's office appointed person to identify these issues and options to address them. Please provide your completed templates to the core team by June 23. We are working to schedule a face-to-face meeting of BLM, FWS, USGS, and SGTF/state team members on June 27-29, more information to follow shortly. This meeting will use the information you gather by June 23 to inform the development of recommendations to the Secretary.

The template is set up to gather key information on the topic and issue of concern, an early assessment of the extent of the concern (range-wide, state specific), and potential short-term and/or long-term ways to address the concern. We encourage you to particularly put thought into options for "quick fix"/short term solutions that we can address while allowing you to continue to move forward with your collaborative implementation work. Please fill out as much of the template as possible and feel free to add additional information at the bottom as needed.

The template includes Short Term recommendations that we can implement quickly to help address concerns/issues

- 1) Clarification—this should include all things less than policy, e.g., training, instructions, MOUs, and could be completed in a relatively short timeline
- 2) Policy—suggestions for new policy, rescinding policies, or change to existing policy that would better align the BLM plans/policy with the state plans or otherwise improve the BLM plans

And, Longer-term recommendations

- 3) Potential Plan Changes—are there decisions in the plans that would require a plan amendment.

Below is a preliminary list of topics that may warrant discussion with the states. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive nor will all of these topics be pertinent in all states – feel free to add or delete topics as needed. All we ask is you put one topic per template so we can readily group them when we get to the analysis and then report writing phase. Keep in mind that there are also three subgroups developing suggestions for incorporating other data and new science, dealing with fire and invasive species, and augmenting populations. If you have suggestions that are pertinent to these areas, please forward them to the core team so they can be provided to the appropriate subgroup.

#### Potential Topics:

Habitat boundary adjustments

Thresholds/responses approach (grazing)

NSO/CSU for oil and gas

Sagebrush Focal Areas

Habitat objectives

Compensatory mitigation – net gain requirement

Exclusion areas vs. avoidance areas

Mineral withdrawal

Adaptive management, hard and soft triggers

Buffers

Disturbance Cap

Items in Governor's consistency review

Training needs

MOU needs

IFRMS

Data incorporation

Changes that States would consider in their plan or the federal plans that would help to conserve Sage-grouse and its habitat but not specifically to avoid listing under the ESA.

Due to WO on June 23, 2017

Please limit template to one topical area but complete as many topical areas as necessary

Topical Area	Habitat Boundary Adjustments		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	<b>Rangewide</b>	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Habitat boundaries were developed with the best available information at the time of the plan development. New and additional information is now available and new information will become available in the future as populations and habitats are dynamic ecosystem processes. The states and the BLM need to have flexibility to change boundaries delineation once the new, peer reviewed information has been evaluated by the states, DSEWS, USFS, BLM, and other cooperating agencies.			
<b>Please Provide Next Step to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted.		
Policy			
Plan Changes	The BLM needs to amend the plans to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes.		

Topical Area	Habitat objective Table		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	<b>Rangewide</b>	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Concern that habitat objectives table will be used to make grazing permit decisions without consideration of local conditions			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification on appropriate and inappropriate uses for the habitat objectives table. Provide additional training to BLM employees on how to consider special status species habitat objectives when evaluating land health and issuing grazing permits.		
Policy	Issue IM formalizing clarification		
Plan Changes			

Topical Area			
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)			
Policy			
Plan Changes			
Other			

Good afternoon,

On June 7, the Secretary of Interior issued Secretarial Order No. 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States. The Order has several associated tasks but the focus of this request here is to conduct “a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive annual grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-Grouse habitat.”

You have been identified as your state’s point of contact to provide information on the issue of invasive annual grasses and wildland fire.

The questionnaire below will assist us with gathering information from your respective state on the issue of wildland fire and invasive annual grasses. A representative working on a response to the Order will follow-up this questionnaire with a phone call.

The timeframe to gather information and report to the Secretary is very short. A written response is preferred to ensure we are properly capturing your state’s input, but we will need a written response by Friday, June 23. If you are unable to provide a written response within this time frame, we can take notes from a phone conversation.

Secretarial Order No. 3353 can be found at  
[https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so\\_3353.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so_3353.pdf)

The Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) provides a comprehensive approach in addressing wildland fire and invasive species in the sagebrush rangelands, with a particular focus on integrated fire and resource vegetation and restoration projects. The strategy emphasizes the use of collaboration and integration with partners to prioritize resources, budgets, and capacity; and promote efficiency and expediency in managing the sagebrush rangelands. The IRFMS lists numerous Action Items including both long- and short-term activities in fire and fuels management, post-fire restoration, and large-scale removal of invasive annual grasses. The IRFMS also supports the development of a sagebrush centered conservation and restoration strategy, which is being addressed through collaboration with WAFWA in the development of their Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.

The Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) document can be found at  
[https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/documents/IntegratedRangelandFireManagementStrategy\\_FinalReportMay2015.pdf](https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/documents/IntegratedRangelandFireManagementStrategy_FinalReportMay2015.pdf)

1. What collaborative efforts have occurred in your state to address the threats from wildland fire and invasive annual grasses to sagebrush rangelands and Greater Sage-Grouse habitats?

2. What can federal, state and local governments and local cooperators do to improve collaboration and coordination on addressing wildland fire and invasive annual grasses in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat?
  - a. How can federal, state and local governments and local cooperators (e.g., rural fire departments) improve the efficiency and efficacy of actions to address rangeland fire?
  - b. What practices or tools are available that land managers may not be fully utilizing to address the threat of wildland fire and invasive annual grasses in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat?
  - c. Do land managers need more science or research related to invasive annual grasses or wildland fire in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat? If so, on what specific topics?
  
3. What are your state's recommendations to improve the "All Hands All Lands" collaborative approach to wildland fire management (do we need additional tools)?

4. Do you have any other additional recommendations or information to include?



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
<http://www.blm.gov>



JUN 20 2017

To: James C. Cason, Acting Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Through: Katharine S. MacGregor, Acting Assistant Secretary  
Land and Minerals Management *Katharine MacGregor*

From: Michael D. Nedd, Acting Director – Bureau of Land Management *M. Nedd*

Subject: Recommended Members for the Sage Grouse Review Team

Secretarial Order 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States, establishes a Sage-Grouse Review Team to be made up of members from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), United States Geological Survey (USGS) and others as needed. The team is tasked with coordinating with United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) and the Western Governors Association Sage Grouse Task Force to complete the tasks identified in the Order. I have conferred with counterparts in the Department of the Interior (DOI) and make the following recommendations for the Sage-Grouse Review Team:

- Kathy Benedetto, Special Assistant to the Secretary, BLM (Co-Lead)
- John Ruhs, Acting Deputy Director, Operations, BLM (Co-Lead)
- Casey Hammond, Special Assistant to the Secretary, Assistant Secretary – Fish Wildlife and Parks
- Greg Sheehan, Deputy Director, FWS
- Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director for Ecosystems, USGS
- Tim Williams, Deputy Director of External Affairs, DOI
- Amanda Kaster, Advisor to the Secretary, DOI
- Vincent DeVito, Energy Counselor to the Secretary, DOI
- Cynthia Moses-Nedd, Liaison to State and Local Government, DOI

I am conferring with the USFS to identify an individual to coordinate with the Sage Grouse Review Team. I have also identified Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director-Resources and Planning, BLM as the Coordinator for this effort. She will report through John Ruhs and Kathy Benedetto to the Review Team.

Concur: \_\_\_\_\_

Do not concur: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative appointments: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*James C. Cason*  
James C. Cason

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*6/20/17*



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

ORDER NO. 3353

Subject: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States

**Sec. 1 Purpose.** The purposes of the Order are to: (1) enhance cooperation between the Department of the Interior (Department) and the States of Oregon, Washington, California, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado (the Eleven Western States) in the management and conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse (Sage-Grouse) and its habitat; (2) support a partnership with clearly defined objectives and roles for Federal and State entities responsible for Sage-Grouse management and conservation in order to sustain healthy populations of the species; and (3) establish a team to review the Federal land management agencies' Sage-Grouse plan amendments and revisions completed on or before September 2015.

**Sec. 2 Authorities.** This Order is issued under the authority of section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat. 1262), as amended, and pursuant to the land management and programmatic authorities of the bureaus identified below in section 4b.

**Sec. 3 Background.** The Department has broad responsibilities to manage Federal lands and resources for the public's benefit, including, but not limited to, permitting authorized uses; managing habitat to support fish, wildlife, and other resources; protecting cultural resources; and providing recreational and educational opportunities on Federal lands and waters.

The State agencies responsible for fish and wildlife management possess broad powers for the protection and management of fish, wildlife, and plants within their borders, except where preempted by Federal law. State agencies are at the forefront of efforts to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations and to conserve at-risk species to ensure that protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not required.

The State-Federal Sage-Grouse Task Force (SGTF) was established in 2011 as a forum for high-level State and Federal representatives to meet and evaluate policies, programs, management actions, data sharing, and other actions affecting conservation of the Sage-Grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem, as well as the health of the communities and economies of the American West.

In September 2015, the Department and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) adopted amendments and revisions to 98 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land use plans across the Eleven Western States addressing, in part, the Sage-Grouse and its habitat (the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans). The 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans govern management of 67 million acres of Federal lands. More than half of remaining Sage-Grouse habitat is on land managed by BLM and USFS. As the Department moves forward in the management of Sage-Grouse habitat, it is imperative that it does so in a manner that allows both

wildlife and local economies to thrive and incorporate the expertise of Federal employees in the field, local conditions, and proven State and local approaches.

In October 2015, in reliance upon the conservation commitments and progress reflected in Federal land use plan amendments and revisions and other private, State, and Federal conservation efforts, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the ESA. In making that finding, FWS committed to work with State and Federal partners to conduct a Sage-Grouse status review in 5 years.

#### Sec. 4 **Policy.**

##### a. Cooperation with the Eleven Western States on Sage-Grouse Conservation Efforts.

Consistent with governing laws, regulations, and policies, the Department will implement a multifaceted strategy to enhance cooperation with the Eleven Western States primarily responsible for the management and conservation of Sage-Grouse. The strategy will include supporting a partnership that allows the Department and the Eleven Western States to maintain healthy populations of Sage-Grouse and improve collaboration and integration of State and local concerns and approaches into sagebrush management and conservation on Federal lands. Accordingly, and subject to paragraph 4b, below, the BLM Director, working with other heads of bureaus and offices within the Department, USFS, and affected States through the SGTF, shall develop:

- (i) memorandums of understanding and other agreements with states and other partners regarding implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans;
- (ii) training for BLM staff regarding implementation of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans, including direction to consider state and local information, as appropriate; and
- (iii) memorandums of understanding and other agreements with States and other partners regarding integration of information on Sage-Grouse populations into Federal land management decisions.

##### b. Department of the Interior Sage-Grouse Review Team.

This Order establishes the Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team). The Team will be made up of land managers and other professionals from bureaus and offices, including BLM, FWS, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The Team will closely coordinate with USDA and USFS. The Team will engage with appropriate State agencies through the SGTF to coordinate its work. The Team is hereby directed to conduct:

- (i) a review of the plans and programs that States already have in place to ensure that the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species;

(ii) a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-Grouse habitat;

(iii) an examination of the impact on individual States disproportionately affected by the large percentage of Federal lands within their borders, recognizing that those lands are important to resource use and development, and to the conservation of the Sage-Grouse;

(iv) a review of the 2015 Sage-Grouse Plans and associated polices, including seven BLM Instruction Memoranda (IM) issued in September 2016. The review will include (1) identification of provisions that may require modification or rescission, as appropriate, in order to give appropriate weight to the value of energy and other development of public lands within BLM's overall multiple-use mission and to be consistent with the policy set forth in Secretary's Order 3349, "American Energy Independence," implementing the Executive Order signed by the President on March 28, 2017, "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth"; and (2) opportunities to conserve the Sage-Grouse and its habitat without inhibiting job creation and local economic growth;

(v) as appropriate, the Team should provide recommendations with regard to (1) captive breeding; (2) opportunities to enhance State involvement; (3) efficacy of target populations on a State-by-State basis; and (4) additional steps that can be taken in the near term to maintain or improve the current population levels and habitat conditions.

#### **Sec. 5. Implementation.**

a. Within 10 days of the signing of this Order, the Deputy Secretary will designate individuals from within the Department to serve on the Team.

b. The BLM Director will designate an individual to coordinate all activities by and within the Department with respect to implementation of this Order.

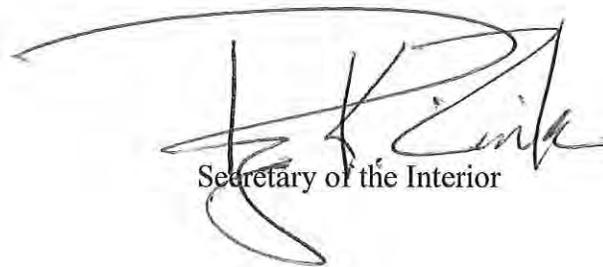
c. All bureaus and offices are directed to immediately begin implementing section 4 of this Order by identifying opportunities for cooperative management agreements and collaborative partnerships with the Eleven Western States and by outlining any specific steps to be undertaken.

d. Within 60 days of the date of this Order, the Team shall provide a report to the Secretary summarizing the review set forth in section 4b of this Order and provide recommendations regarding additional steps the Department should take to address any issues identified as a result of that review.

**Sec. 6 Effect of Order.** This Order is intended to improve the internal management of the Department. This Order and any resulting reports or recommendations are not intended to and

do not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this Order and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

**Sec. 7 Expiration Date.** This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until its provisions are accomplished, amended, superseded, or revoked, whichever occurs first.



Secretary of the Interior

Date: June 7, 2017



June 20, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As active participants in the Federal-State Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force), we stand ready to engage with the federal Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team) created by your Secretarial Order 3353 "Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (S.O. 3353/Order). To that end, we invite members of the federal Team to initiate coordination with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Task Force by attending a formal Task Force meeting on June 26 held in conjunction with the WGA Annual Meeting in Whitefish, Montana. The purpose of the Task Force meeting will be to:

- Establish the role of the Task Force in implementation of S.O. 3353;
- Determine the process and timeline for how the review will be conducted, how the Task Force will assist the Team in completing the state plan reviews, and identify proper channels of communication to aid in their timely completion;
- Identify what steps will be taken to ensure the Team is coordinating its work with the Task Force and not duplicating the work the Task Force; and
- Determine the process for completion of the Team's report and how the Department of Interior will implement the Team's recommendations to ensure durability for state and federal agencies and that protections of the federal Endangered Species Act remain "not warranted."

Honorable Ryan Zinke

June 20, 2017

Page 2

In announcing S.O. 3353, you indicated that the spirit of the Order is to work hand in hand with states and ensure that their efforts in conserving the greater sage-grouse are fully recognized. We appreciate your acknowledgement of the western states' considerable role in conserving greater sage-grouse and would further emphasize the importance of including state officials as substantive participants in any federal review of current land use plans.

The states possess the local knowledge and expertise necessary to address the provisions that need improvement and can identify strategic ways to address problematic provisions in the land use plan amendments. The collective efforts of the Task Force represent a model of state-federal cooperation. We assert that such a model will be essential in realizing the goals put forth in S.O. 3353.

Respectfully,



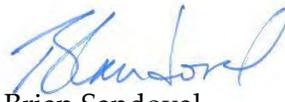
John Hickenlooper  
Governor of Colorado  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force



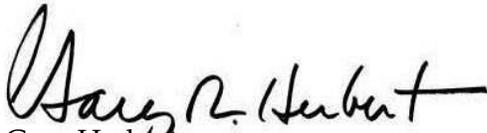
C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana



Brian Sandoval  
Governor of Nevada



Gary Herbert  
Governor of Utah



Matt Mead  
Governor of Wyoming  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force

cc: Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management  
Greg Sheehan, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## **Organization Structure**

This effort is being led for the BLM by Karen Kelleher with support from a team comprised of BLM, USGS, and FWS specialists. The team is from all organizational levels and includes skills in project management, public affairs, regional/national perspectives, and science. For effective communication, it would be desired to have a SGTF member as a primary contact to work directly with Karen.

## **General Workplan**

We have identified 4 major tasks (each co-led by a Federal appointee & desire a SGTF appointee):

- a. plan & policy comparisons for each state (each BLM SD leads for their state)
- b. Science/Data – including getting and using new data including non-government data (USGS led – Steve Hanser)
- c. Biological Metrics - to include State target population numbers, captive breeding, translocations, and other “things to help the bird” (FWS led – Nicole Alt)
- d. ways to further address fire and invasive species and IRFMS (WO-200/FA led – Rick Belger)

We envision the first task, plan and policy comparisons, to be conducted on a state-by-state basis, led by the BLM State Director and State SGTF member and then consolidated over the range. The remaining 4 tasks (b-d) would be conducted range-wide, with membership from both the Great Basin & Rocky Mountain regions, but may not require membership from every state. We have also requested USFS participation and expect they will provide team members.

For each task, teams should identify additional training requirements and additional opportunities for improved collaboration (MOUs, other tools). Emphasis should be on flexibility to respond to local conditions and assessment of issues of concern.

Policies & Plans: Assess options that are less than policy (clarifications, training, MOUs, etc.) that can help improve implementation and provide flexibility; policy changes (rescind or modify existing policies; develop new policies) that could provide additional guidance on how to implement plans; and plan changes/amendments. Where possible, consider multiple options for solutions and provide rationale for the change. A preliminary template to gather information has been developed (see attached).

Fire & invasives: Consider work already underway such as recommendations from invasives meeting in fall 2016; WAFWA Conservation & Restoration Strategy. A preliminary set of questions has been developed (see attached).

Science & Data: Consider work already underway such as Actionable Science Plan, Science Framework, National Science Strategy; State & Federal policies and procedures on using 3<sup>rd</sup> party data. Preliminary questions to consider are being developed and will be provided for review.

Biological Metrics: consider work already done on topics by WAFWA, State agencies, others. Preliminary questions to consider are being developed and will be provided for review.

Face to face meeting: gather issues identified state-by-state and discuss range-wide, regional, or state-specific recommendations; identify common issues; consider information from range-wide teams and

how those recommendations should be incorporated; and generally cross-pollinate to minimize risk that something is missed.

### **General timeline**

- Currently underway/starting – June 30 – Gather 1<sup>st</sup> round information and provide to core team
- June 26 – SGTF meeting
- July 5-7 – Core team to synthesize information
- July 8 – EOC meeting
- Week of July 11 (July 8 or July 12-13) – 1-1.5 day face to face meeting
- July 14-19 – Core team to Draft Report
- July 20-25 – SGTF, BLM State Directors, DOI Sage Grouse Review Team comment on draft report
- July 26-28 – Core team to Modify report
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- What else should we be doing that we aren't doing?

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  - Preliminary Resolution Level of Identified Issue
    - No action needed issue is inconsequential
    - Clarification through training, modification/revoking of existing policy, or issuance of new policy
    - Clarification of a direction in the BLM Plans through maintenance
    - Clarification through analysis of a new alternative in the BLM Plans through a plan amendment process
    - Issue identified, but more time required for coordination
- Review of BLM Policy (Including the 7 BLM Instruction Memorandums)
  - Preliminary rationale for course of action each of the BLM IMs
- Data and Science Review Preliminary Recommendations
  - Preliminary identification of efficiencies or development of new processes for:
    - data sharing network
    - recognizing and sharing new science
- Biological Metrics Preliminary Recommendations
  - Captive Breeding
  - State-by-State Target Populations
- Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Preliminary Recommendations
  - Review of the effectiveness of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy including suggestions for modifications
- Identification of next steps with suggested timeframe
  - Inclusions of needed outreach and coordination

#### State Contacts for SO 3353:

Please find attached a template we are asking you to use to gather information on policy/plan issues and concerns as you talk with your states – to include ensuring the 2015 BLM sage-grouse plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species.

Please work with your Governor's office appointed person to identify these issues and options to address them. Please provide your completed templates to the core team by June 23. We are working to schedule a face-to-face meeting of BLM, FWS, USGS, and SGTF/state team members on June 27-29, more information to follow shortly. This meeting will use the information you gather by June 23 to inform the development of recommendations to the Secretary.

The template is set up to gather key information on the topic and issue of concern, an early assessment of the extent of the concern (range-wide, state specific), and potential short-term and/or long-term ways to address the concern. We encourage you to particularly put thought into options for "quick fix"/short term solutions that we can address while allowing you to continue to move forward with your collaborative implementation work. Please fill out as much of the template as possible and feel free to add additional information at the bottom as needed.

The template includes Short Term recommendations that we can implement quickly to help address concerns/issues

- 1) Clarification—this should include all things less than policy, e.g., training, instructions, MOUs, and could be completed in a relatively short timeline
- 2) Policy—suggestions for new policy, rescinding policies, or change to existing policy that would better align the BLM plans/policy with the state plans or otherwise improve the BLM plans

And, Longer-term recommendations

- 3) Potential Plan Changes—are there decisions in the plans that would require a plan amendment.

Below is a preliminary list of topics that may warrant discussion with the states. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive nor will all of these topics be pertinent in all states – feel free to add or delete topics as needed. All we ask is you put one topic per template so we can readily group them when we get to the analysis and then report writing phase. Keep in mind that there are also three subgroups developing suggestions for incorporating other data and new science, dealing with fire and invasive species, and augmenting populations. If you have suggestions that are pertinent to these areas, please forward them to the core team so they can be provided to the appropriate subgroup.

#### Potential Topics:

Habitat boundary adjustments

Thresholds/responses approach (grazing)

NSO/CSU for oil and gas

Sagebrush Focal Areas

Habitat objectives

Compensatory mitigation – net gain requirement

Exclusion areas vs. avoidance areas

Mineral withdrawal

Adaptive management, hard and soft triggers

Buffers

Disturbance Cap

Items in Governor's consistency review

Training needs

MOU needs

IFRMS

Data incorporation

Changes that States would consider in their plan or the federal plans that would help to conserve Sage-grouse and its habitat but not specifically to avoid listing under the ESA.

Due to WO on June 23, 2017

Please limit template to one topical area but complete as many topical areas as necessary

Topical Area	Habitat Boundary Adjustments		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Habitat boundaries were developed with the best available information at the time of the plan development. New and additional information is now available and new information will become available in the future as populations and habitats are dynamic ecosystem processes. The states and the BLM need to have flexibility to change boundaries delineation once the new, peer reviewed information has been evaluated by the states, DSEWS, USFS, BLM, and other cooperating agencies.			
<b>Please Provide Next Step to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted.		
Policy			
Plan Changes	The BLM needs to amend the plans to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes.		

Topical Area	Habitat objective Table		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Concern that habitat objectives table will be used to make grazing permit decisions without consideration of local conditions			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification on appropriate and inappropriate uses for the habitat objectives table. Provide additional training to BLM employees on how to consider special status species habitat objectives when evaluating land health and issuing grazing permits.		
Policy	Issue IM formalizing clarification		
Plan Changes			

Topical Area			
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)			
Policy			
Plan Changes			
Other			

Good afternoon,

On June 7, the Secretary of Interior issued Secretarial Order No. 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States. The Order has several associated tasks but the focus of this request here is to conduct “a further examination, through the framework established by the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy, of issues associated with preventing and fighting the proliferation of invasive annual grasses and wildland fire, which are leading threats to Sage-Grouse habitat.”

You have been identified as your state’s point of contact to provide information on the issue of invasive annual grasses and wildland fire.

The questionnaire below will assist us with gathering information from your respective state on the issue of wildland fire and invasive annual grasses. A representative working on a response to the Order will follow-up this questionnaire with a phone call.

The timeframe to gather information and report to the Secretary is very short. A written response is preferred to ensure we are properly capturing your state’s input, but we will need a written response by Friday, June 23. If you are unable to provide a written response within this time frame, we can take notes from a phone conversation.

Secretarial Order No. 3353 can be found at  
[https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so\\_3353.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/so_3353.pdf)

The Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) provides a comprehensive approach in addressing wildland fire and invasive species in the sagebrush rangelands, with a particular focus on integrated fire and resource vegetation and restoration projects. The strategy emphasizes the use of collaboration and integration with partners to prioritize resources, budgets, and capacity; and promote efficiency and expediency in managing the sagebrush rangelands. The IRFMS lists numerous Action Items including both long- and short-term activities in fire and fuels management, post-fire restoration, and large-scale removal of invasive annual grasses. The IRFMS also supports the development of a sagebrush centered conservation and restoration strategy, which is being addressed through collaboration with WAFWA in the development of their Sagebrush Conservation Strategy.

The Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy (IRFMS) document can be found at  
[https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/documents/IntegratedRangelandFireManagementStrategy\\_FinalReportMay2015.pdf](https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/documents/IntegratedRangelandFireManagementStrategy_FinalReportMay2015.pdf)

1. What collaborative efforts have occurred in your state to address the threats from wildland fire and invasive annual grasses to sagebrush rangelands and Greater Sage-Grouse habitats?

2. What can federal, state and local governments and local cooperators do to improve collaboration and coordination on addressing wildland fire and invasive annual grasses in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat?
  - a. How can federal, state and local governments and local cooperators (e.g., rural fire departments) improve the efficiency and efficacy of actions to address rangeland fire?
  - b. What practices or tools are available that land managers may not be fully utilizing to address the threat of wildland fire and invasive annual grasses in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat?
  - c. Do land managers need more science or research related to invasive annual grasses or wildland fire in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat? If so, on what specific topics?
  
3. What are your state's recommendations to improve the "All Hands All Lands" collaborative approach to wildland fire management (do we need additional tools)?

4. Do you have any other additional recommendations or information to include?

# FINAL DRAFT AGENDA

Great Basin Region Implementation Workshop **Version 5.15.17**

May 18-19, 2017

Idaho State Office – Sagebrush/Ponderosa Room  
Boise, Idaho

T/C: 1-866-633-3076 LC: 6484685# PC: 5883697#

## Purpose and Expected Outcomes

- Discuss progress and make decisions to update the Great Basin Region Implementation Strategy
  - **Regional IPOW project prioritization and Priority Geographic Areas**
  - **Programmatic EISs**
  - **Regional Support Teams**
  - **Budget**
  - **Communications Plan**
- Explore and discuss a plan implementation scenario in which the BLM is working under the direction of a state authored sage grouse/sage steppe conservation plan

## **DAY 1** Thursday, May 18, 10:00 – 4:30 (Working lunch)

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Welcome and Introductions</b> (10 min)                        | Tim, June & Jeff    |
| <b>Purpose of meeting and expected outcomes</b> (10 min)         | Jeff & Johanna      |
| <b>GB Regional Prioritization of IPOW - Introduction</b> (5 min) | Johanna             |
| - FY 18 Regional IPOW Prioritization – Presentation (30 min)     | Abbie & State Leads |

### QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Priority Geographic Areas and Long-term Regional IPOW Prioritization – Discuss proposed process (30 min) Johanna/Brent
- Reach agreement on proposed process to coordinate with state/federal agencies and other partners on prioritization – Discussion (15 min) Johanna
- Reach agreement on the proposed structure of TPOW – Discussion (5 min)

## QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Reach agreement on proposed leaders intent on process and outcomes reached to prioritize FY 18 IPOW projects across GB region and prepare proposed recommendation of project list for State Director decision
- ✓ Report on progress and methodology used by Technical POW to identify priority geographic areas that will guide future prioritization of on-the-ground projects, discuss, and prepare for State Director support
- ✓ Reach agreement and finalize proposed Leaders' Intent on how we will share, elicit feedback, coordinate and communicate with state, federal, and other partners on proposed methodology for prioritizing geographic areas
- ✓ Finalize proposed Leaders' Intent on the future structure and roles and responsibilities of the TPOW (Does it need a charter?)
- ✓ Finalize proposed Leaders' Intent on Next Steps in Prioritization process

### ***Finalize Proposed Leaders' Intent*** (30 min)

**BREAK** (15 min)

**Programmatic EISs** (20 min)

- Update – NOI, contract modification, budget
- PEIS project plan – Presentation

Jon Beck

## QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Affirm January State Director agreement to use end-of-year funding to fully fund PEIS contract
- ✓ Report on progress of Support Team PEIS efforts, scoping plan and other coordination activities (internal communication strategy, etc.)
- ✓ Finalize process and budget to ensure timely completion of PEISs
- ✓ Finalize next steps for coordination with respective States

### ***Finalize Proposed Leaders' Intent*** (10 min)

**Regional Support Team Roles and Responsibilities** (30 min)

- Team Status Update
- PEIS Assignments
- Non-PEIS Regional Assignments

June

- Project Criteria, Selection Process
- Next Steps

## QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Finalize roles and responsibilities for PEIS assignments
- ✓ Finalize roles and responsibilities, criteria, and process for identification of regional non-PEIS assignments
- ✓ Draft Leaders' commitment to efficient functioning of Boise and Reno Regional Teams relative to any changes in roles and responsibilities

### ***Finalize Proposed Leaders' Intent*** (20 min)

#### **Communications** (10 min)

- Quarterly newsletter - April 2017
- Regional communication support and assignments

Ken Frederick

## QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Report on progress and get feedback on next quarter feature topic
- ✓ Reach agreement on need for Regional Communications support and assignments

### ***Finalize Proposed Leaders' Intent/Next Steps*** (10 min)

#### **Recap/Refine Proposed Leaders' Intent, Decisions and Outcomes** (60 min)

Jeff & All

#### **ADJOURN – 4:30 pm**

#### **4:30 – 5:00 pm**

Finalize slides/presentation materials - proposed Leaders Intent, Decisions and Outcomes for tomorrow  
Jeff, Johanna & Ken

#### **Day 2 Friday, May 19 8:30-2:00** (working lunch)

#### **8:30 – 10:30 am**

Prepare for Executives meeting with SDs/WO/NIFC/NOC (60 min)  
Finalize Proposed Leaders' Intent and/or support language for State Directors

FY 18 Regional IPOW Priorities  
 Regional Support Team roles and responsibilities  
 PEISs – process and budget  
 TPOW – Methodology and Priority Geographic Areas  
 TPOW – Coordination/communication with partners  
 Communication

OPEN DISCUSSION (30 min) (if time available)

What is the status of each State's plan relative to the ARMPA, state alternatives analyzed, and conversations with state partners? (Quick summary by State)

How would you propose to implement ARMPA plan commitments in your state under a scenario in which the BLM is directed to work under a state authored/approved sage grouse/sage steppe conservation plan?

#### QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Desired Objectives and Outcomes

- ✓ Engage in robust discussion about issues, challenges and opportunities associated with moving forward together as a Region in a manner that would maintain consistency, efficiencies, and a landscape-scale approach to implementation
- ✓ Prepare to share recommendations and issues with Executives this afternoon

**BREAK** (30 min)

**Friday, May 19, 11:00 – 2:00**

#### **EXECUTIVES MEETING (SDs/ASDs/WO/NOC/NIFC)**

(Working lunch)

Welcome and Opening Remarks (10 min) Tim

Brief State Directors and other Executives on Proposed Leaders' Intent (60 min) ASDs/DSDs

(note: first discuss proposed Leaders' Intent where there is consensus from Thursday, followed by where there is not consensus)

FY 18 Regional IPOW Prioritization  
 TPOW – Priority Geographic Areas  
 TPOW – Partner Coordination  
 Regional Support Teams  
 PEISs

Communications

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

**Desired Objectives and Outcomes**

- ✓ Finalize agreement and Leaders’ Intent on prioritization formula for FY 18 IPOW funding to GB states (based on state-specific % of projects regionally prioritized)
- ✓ Affirm Leadership support for TPOW methodology and next steps
- ✓ Finalize TPOW path forward to coordinate and communicate with state, federal and other partners on proposed priority geographic areas
- ✓ Finalize Leaders’ Intent regarding changes in Regional Support Team roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Finalize Leaders’ Intent related to PEIS project plan and budget

***Finalize Leaders’ Intent and Next Steps*** (15 min)

**BREAK (5 min)**

Organizational Strategy (10 min)	June
ARMPA Plan Implementation and Project Completion Update (15 min)	ASDs
FY 2017 and 2018 Outlook (15 min)	Karen
Transition/Policy Update (5 min)	Karen

QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

State Plan Implementation Scenario Discussion (30 min) (if time available)	DSDs
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QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Desired Objectives and Outcomes**

- ✓ Share options and opportunities to inform future decisions
- ✓ Finalize Leaders’ Intent as appropriate

**1:45 – 2:00 pm**

Future implementation challenges	SDs/Execs
Final Summation and Comments	SDs/Execs
Next Meeting (2017/2018 meeting schedule)	Johanna

**ADJOURN**



June 20, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As active participants in the Federal-State Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force), we stand ready to engage with the federal Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team) created by your Secretarial Order 3353 "Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (S.O. 3353/Order). To that end, we invite members of the federal Team to initiate coordination with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Task Force by attending a formal Task Force meeting on June 26 held in conjunction with the WGA Annual Meeting in Whitefish, Montana. The purpose of the Task Force meeting will be to:

- Establish the role of the Task Force in implementation of S.O. 3353;
- Determine the process and timeline for how the review will be conducted, how the Task Force will assist the Team in completing the state plan reviews, and identify proper channels of communication to aid in their timely completion;
- Identify what steps will be taken to ensure the Team is coordinating its work with the Task Force and not duplicating the work the Task Force; and
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Honorable Ryan Zinke

June 20, 2017

Page 2

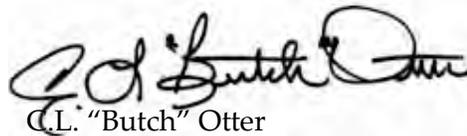
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The states possess the local knowledge and expertise necessary to address the provisions that need improvement and can identify strategic ways to address problematic provisions in the land use plan amendments. The collective efforts of the Task Force represent a model of state-federal cooperation. We assert that such a model will be essential in realizing the goals put forth in S.O. 3353.

Respectfully,



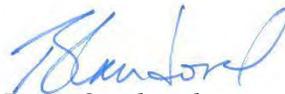
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Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force



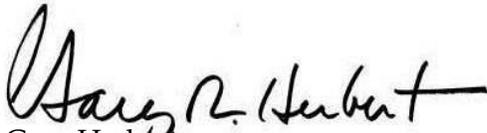
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cc: Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land  
Management  
Greg Sheehan, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**AGENDA****Sage-Grouse Task Force Meeting**

Monday, June 26, 2017

Ramsey Room, Lodge at Whitefish Lake

Whitefish, Montana

Conference Line: (b) (5), Code: (b) (5)

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10:00 a.m.	<b>Welcome</b> <i>John Swartout, Colorado; Bob Budd, Wyoming – SGTF Co-Chairs</i>
10:15 a.m.	<b>S.O. 3353: Coordination Between Interior Review Team &amp; Task Force</b> <i>John Swartout, Colorado; Bob Budd, Wyoming – SGTF Co-Chairs</i>
11:15 a.m.	<b>Additional Items</b> Time reserved for additional topics.
11:30 a.m.	<b>Adjourn</b>



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June 20, 2017

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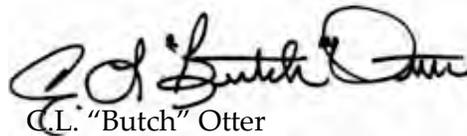
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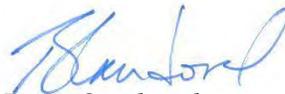
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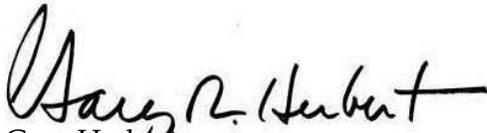
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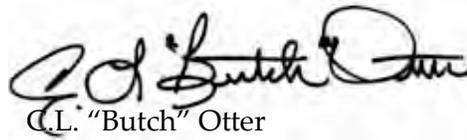
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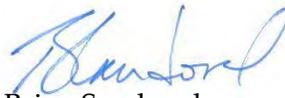
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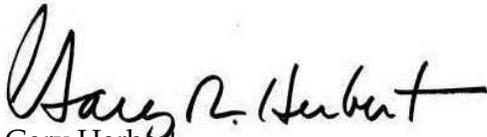
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June 20, 2017

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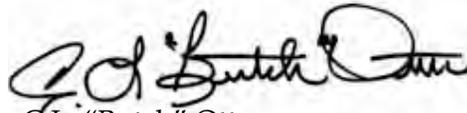
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Respectfully,



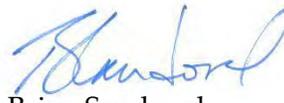
John Hickenlooper  
Governor of Colorado  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force



CL. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana



Brian Sandoval  
Governor of Nevada



Matt Mead  
Governor of Wyoming  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force

cc: Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land Management  
Greg Sheehan, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



June 20, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

As active participants in the Federal-State Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force), we stand ready to engage with the federal Sage-Grouse Review Team (Team) created by your Secretarial Order 3353 "Greater Sage Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States" (S.O. 3353/Order). To that end, we invite members of the federal Team to initiate coordination with the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Task Force by attending a formal Task Force meeting on June 26 held in conjunction with the WGA Annual Meeting in Whitefish, Montana. The purpose of the Task Force meeting will be to:

- Establish the role of the Task Force in implementation of S.O. 3353;
- Determine the process and timeline for how the review will be conducted, how the Task Force will assist the Team in completing the state plan reviews, and identify proper channels of communication to aid in their timely completion;
- Identify what steps will be taken to ensure the Team is coordinating its work with the Task Force and not duplicating the work the Task Force; and
- Determine the process for completion of the Team's report and how the Department of Interior will implement the Team's recommendations to ensure durability for state and federal agencies and that protections of the federal Endangered Species Act remain "not warranted."

Honorable Ryan Zinke

June 20, 2017

Page 2

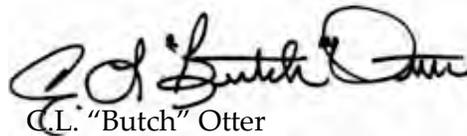
In announcing S.O. 3353, you indicated that the spirit of the Order is to work hand in hand with states and ensure that their efforts in conserving the greater sage-grouse are fully recognized. We appreciate your acknowledgement of the western states' considerable role in conserving greater sage-grouse and would further emphasize the importance of including state officials as substantive participants in any federal review of current land use plans.

The states possess the local knowledge and expertise necessary to address the provisions that need improvement and can identify strategic ways to address problematic provisions in the land use plan amendments. The collective efforts of the Task Force represent a model of state-federal cooperation. We assert that such a model will be essential in realizing the goals put forth in S.O. 3353.

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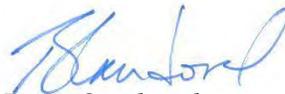
John Hickenlooper  
Governor of Colorado  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force



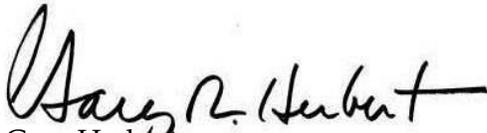
C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho



Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana



Brian Sandoval  
Governor of Nevada



Gary Herbert  
Governor of Utah



Matt Mead  
Governor of Wyoming  
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force

cc: Karen Kelleher, Deputy Assistant Director, Resources and Planning, Bureau of Land  
Management  
Greg Sheehan, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

#### State Contacts for SO 3353:

Please find attached a template we are asking you to use to gather information on policy/plan issues and concerns as you talk with your states – to include ensuring the 2015 BLM sage-grouse plans adequately complement state efforts to conserve the species.

Please work with your Governor's office appointed person to identify these issues and options to address them. Please provide your completed templates to the core team by June 23. We are working to schedule a face-to-face meeting of BLM, FWS, USGS, and SGTF/state team members on June 27-29, more information to follow shortly. This meeting will use the information you gather by June 23 to inform the development of recommendations to the Secretary.

The template is set up to gather key information on the topic and issue of concern, an early assessment of the extent of the concern (range-wide, state specific), and potential short-term and/or long-term ways to address the concern. We encourage you to particularly put thought into options for "quick fix"/short term solutions that we can address while allowing you to continue to move forward with your collaborative implementation work. Please fill out as much of the template as possible and feel free to add additional information at the bottom as needed.

The template includes Short Term recommendations that we can implement quickly to help address concerns/issues

- 1) Clarification—this should include all things less than policy, e.g., training, instructions, MOUs, and could be completed in a relatively short timeline
- 2) Policy—suggestions for new policy, rescinding policies, or change to existing policy that would better align the BLM plans/policy with the state plans or otherwise improve the BLM plans

And, Longer-term recommendations

- 3) Potential Plan Changes—are there decisions in the plans that would require a plan amendment.

Below is a preliminary list of topics that may warrant discussion with the states. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive nor will all of these topics be pertinent in all states – feel free to add or delete topics as needed. All we ask is you put one topic per template so we can readily group them when we get to the analysis and then report writing phase. Keep in mind that there are also three subgroups developing suggestions for incorporating other data and new science, dealing with fire and invasive species, and augmenting populations. If you have suggestions that are pertinent to these areas, please forward them to the core team so they can be provided to the appropriate subgroup.

#### Potential Topics:

Habitat boundary adjustments

Thresholds/responses approach (grazing)

NSO/CSU for oil and gas

Sagebrush Focal Areas

Habitat objectives

Compensatory mitigation – net gain requirement

Exclusion areas vs. avoidance areas

Mineral withdrawal

Adaptive management, hard and soft triggers

Buffers

Disturbance Cap

Items in Governor's consistency review

Training needs

MOU needs

IFRMS

Data incorporation

Changes that States would consider in their plan or the federal plans that would help to conserve Sage-grouse and its habitat but not specifically to avoid listing under the ESA.

Due to WO on June 23, 2017

Please limit template to one topical area but complete as many topical areas as necessary

Topical Area	Habitat Boundary Adjustments		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Habitat boundaries were developed with the best available information at the time of the plan development. New and additional information is now available and new information will become available in the future as populations and habitats are dynamic ecosystem processes. The states and the BLM need to have flexibility to change boundaries delineation once the new, peer reviewed information has been evaluated by the states, DSEWS, USFS, BLM, and other cooperating agencies.			
<b>Please Provide Next Step to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification as to what to do between now and when the new maps are adopted.		
Policy			
Plan Changes	The BLM needs to amend the plans to adopt the most current habitat maps and also determine how to have this happen in the future as the habitat changes.		

Topical Area	Habitat objective Table		
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
Concern that habitat objectives table will be used to make grazing permit decisions without consideration of local conditions			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)	Issue clarification on appropriate and inappropriate uses for the habitat objectives table. Provide additional training to BLM employees on how to consider special status species habitat objectives when evaluating land health and issuing grazing permits.		
Policy	Issue IM formalizing clarification		
Plan Changes			

Topical Area			
<b>Bold All that Apply</b>			
Scope	Rangewide	Regional	State
<b>Describe the Issue</b>			
<b>Please Provide Next Steps to All that Apply</b>			
Clarification, Training, and other suggestions (less than new policy or plan changes)			
Policy			
Plan Changes			
Other			

<b>State</b>	<b>Governor</b>	<b>Sage Grouse Rep</b>
California (CA)	Jerry Brown	
Colorado (CO)	John Hickenlooper	John Swartout (SPA)
Colorado (CO)	John Hickenlooper	Bob Broscheid (ED)
Idaho (ID)	Butch Otter	Sam Eaton
Idaho (ID)	Butch Otter	Cally Younger
Montana (MT)	Steve Bullock	Carolyn Sime
Nevada (NV)	Brian Sandoval	Ryan McGinness
North Dakota (ND)	Doug Burgum	Robert Lauf
Oregon (OR)	Kate Brown	
South Dakota (SD)	Dennis Daugaard	Matt Konenkamp
Utah (UT)	Gary Herbert	Cody Stewart (Leaving soon)
Washington (WA)	Jay Inslee	Sam Ricketts
Washington (WA)	Jay Inslee	JT Austin
Wyoming (WY)	Matthew Mead	Michael McGrady

Phone	Email
720-556-1682	<a href="mailto:john.swartout@state.co.us">john.swartout@state.co.us</a>
	<a href="mailto:bob.broscheid@state.co.us">bob.broscheid@state.co.us</a>
208-332-1552	<a href="mailto:sam.eaton@osc.idaho.gov">sam.eaton@osc.idaho.gov</a>
	Cally.Younger@gov.idaho.gov
	CSime2@mt.gov; Patrick.Holmes@mt.gov
(202) 624-5405	<a href="mailto:ryan@nevadadc.org">ryan@nevadadc.org</a>
701-328-2206	rlauf@nd.gov
	Matt.Konenkamp@state.sd.us
	CodyStewart@Utah.gov
	Sam.Ricketts@gov.wa.gov
	<a href="mailto:JT.Austin@gov.wa.gov">JT.Austin@gov.wa.gov</a>
307-777-2083	mike.mcgrady1@wyo.gov



<b>Expense Category</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2018 (-)</b>
Bureauwide and WO 200 Overhead	2,399,000	1,800,000	1,800,000
WO Labor and Operations (-13%)	570,800	570,800	496,596
National Seed Strategy (-20%)	3,000,000	3,000,000	2,400,000
Labor non-WO (-10%)	12,600,000	12,806,535	11,525,882
IPOW	25,585,200	13,097,665	15,052,522
BPSS	2,500,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
National Agreements	3,095,000	2,275,000	2,275,000
Travel and Transportation	650,000	650,000	650,000
Science	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Other (plan amendment)	0	2,000,000	2,000,000
Other (litigation)	600,000	300,000	300,000
	\$ 52,000,000	\$ 40,500,000	\$ 40,500,000

## EA Nevada Exploration Projects - BLM Status

Company	Project	Serial Number	Commodity	BLM District	Plan of Operations Submitted	Plan of Operations Complete	EA Issued for Public Comment	EA Approved	Permitting Status	Project Timeline Since Last Month's Report
Aurion Resources LTD	Logan Pass/Southpaw Project	NVN92281	Gold	Ely	8/2/13	Pending		9/3/14	PoO Mod Requested by BLM 1/5/17	
Earth Partner's LLC	Cocomogo	NVN82331	Stone Specialty	Ely	6/26/06	Pending			Needs Reclamation	
White Pine Minerals	Gunman	NVN93839	Gold	Ely	2/17/15	Pending				
Cortez	Westside	NVN78041	Gold	Battle Mountain	1/26/04	Pending				
Baker Hughes	Scruffy Oz	NVN91885	Barium Barite	Battle Mountain	2/20/13	Pending			Additional information requested from operator	
Montezuma Mines Inc	Buffalo Valley Mine	NVN90702	Gold	Winnemucca	4/12/12	7/3/12		Pending		
Rye Patch Gold	Lincoln Hill Project (Oreana)	NVN93830	Gold	Winnemucca	1/22/15	7/29/15	TBA	Pending	EA in progress gathering additional Baseline Data	
Rye Patch Gold	Wilco Project (Oreana)	NVN93831	Gold	Winnemucca	2/12/15	7/29/15	TBA	Pending	EA in progress gathering additional Baseline Data	
Angst Inc.	Maverick Springs	NVN70868	Gold	Elko-Wells	2/2/90	4/29/91			Bond required	
Taylor Western Resources LLC	Victoria Underground Mine	NVN89215	Copper	Elko-Wells	10/14/10				Mine Plan Mod. Rej/withdrawn	
Agnico-Eagle USA Limited	Summit	NVN94678	Gold	Elko-Wells	4/8/16	Pending			Additional Information Requested	
Delorda	Moapa	NVN79918	Gold	Southern NV	4/6/05	11/8/05	Pending		Future Action Suspended	Validity Exam Required and Occupancy issues
Earthly Mining Solutions	Jean	NVN81469	Magnesium	Southern NV	2/9/06				2006-224 Remand Cost Recovery	Send letter to close file if we do not hear from them within 30 days
Rio Tinto	Gold Butte	NVN82429	TBA	Southern NV	8/24/06		9/15/06	Pending	Lands withdrawn in 2002; validity exam required	6/16/2009 sent interlocutory Decision to close file if we do not hear from them within 30 days - Close file
Infrastructure Materials	Royale Project Jean	NVN87370	TBA	Southern NV	4/8/09	more info requested 07/30/2009	8/15/2010 - Operator changed plan before plan was approved	1/5/12	Additional Information requested from operator	Send letter to close file if we do not hear from them within 30 days
Peppertree Const	Searchlight Project	NVN87918	Gold	Southern NV	6/11/09	Plan Modification required 10/21/2016 Plan originally submitted 6/11/2009	8/15/2010 - Operator changed plan before plan was approved	1/5/12	Mine Plan Mod Received 9/26/2016	Mine Plan Mod Received 9/26/2016 Additional Information Requested from Operator
Matheson/Royal M&M	South Searchlight	NVN88186	Gold	Southern NV	2/5/10	2/5/10	11/22/11	Operator will write EA	Additional Information requested from operator	Send letter to close file if we do not hear from them within 30 days
Matheson/Royal City Minerals	West Searchlight	NVN89561	Gold	Southern NV	2/25/11					3/22/2011 Additional Information requested from operator
McCoy Gold	Earthly Min Solutions	NVN94497	TBA	Southern NV	11/23/15	11/23/15	3/7/16	Estimated 3/15/2017	Estimated 4/15/2017	Evaluating information received from operator

= Milestone Completed  
 = Awaiting BLM action  
 = Awaiting Operator action

- Notes:
- (1) Projected date to be received in Field Office
  - (2) Date received in Field Office
  - (3) Projected date to be available to public

Note: The Environmental Assessment (EA) process differs from the more lengthy EIS process in that there is no requirement to post a Notice of Intent or Notice of Availability in the Federal Register and typically consists of the BLM determining the Plan of Operations and baseline studies are complete prior to preparing the EA releasing it for public comment incorporating substantive comments and producing the EA with Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

# EA Nevada Mining Projects - BLM Status

4/1/17

Company	Project	Commodity	BLM District	Plan of Operations Submitted	Plan of Operations Complete	EA Issued for Public Comment	EA Approved	Permitting Status	Project Timeline Since Last Month's Report	Employment Growth
Isabella Pearl LLC	Isabella Pearl (new)	Gold	Carson City	2/23/08	1/28/11			Baseline data being developed	waiting on operator to provide water modeling reports	125 New Employees
Newmont	Twinc Creeks - Sage Tails	Gold	Winnemucca	8/18/16	5/5/17			Submitted to NEPA 5/16/2017	PoD needs to be determined complete	TBD
Klondex Fire Creek Mine	Fire Creek Mine Sage Grouse M1 gat on	Gold	Battle Mountain	8/1/16 <sup>(1)</sup>	Pending	Pending	N/A	PoD needs to be determined complete. NEPA kickoff scheduled	NEPA kickoff scheduled	Revising GRSG mitigation.
Baker Hughes	Scotty DeP. oject	Baite	Battle Mountain	1/15/16				PoD needs to be determined complete. Baselines are being collected.	Baselines are being collected.	TBD
Hi Liberton	Pleasant View	Baite	Battle Mountain	10/1/16 <sup>(1)</sup>				Baselines are being collected.	Baselines are being collected.	TBD
National Oil Well Varco	Shasta Project	Baite	Battle Mountain	10/1/16 <sup>(1)</sup>				Baselines are being collected.	Baselines are being collected.	TBD
Gulfill LLCs	Prospect Mountain Project	Gold	Battle Mountain	6/10/16				PoD needs to be determined complete	PoD needs to be determined complete	TBD
Robinson NV Mining Co.	Robinson Mine Expansion	Copper	Ely	1/19/16	6/20/16	11/1/16		Proposed to expand Requesting public comments	Waiting on contractor to provide final EA and proposition to provide final RCE	maintain current employees (550)
Newmont	Ban Mine Closure	Gold	Ely	8/27/14						No Change
Lima Nevada Gypsum Quarry	Gypsum Quarry	Gypsum	So Nevada	5/10/12	11/20/12			EA is complete		No Change
Kinross	Round Mountain Phase W	Gold	Battle Mountain	3/17/17				Submitted draft EA on May 8, 2017		No Change

Milestone Completed  
 Awaiting BLM action  
 Awaiting Operator action

Request delayed waiting on BLM action  
 Request delayed waiting on operator action

**Notes**

- (1) Projected date to be received in Field Office
- (2) Date received in Field Office
- (3) Projected date to be available to public

**Note:** The Environmental Assessment (EA) process is from the moment the length of process in that the element to post a Notice of Intent or Notice of Availability in the Federal Register and typically consists of the BLM determining the Plan of Operations and based on that as a complete response to public comments, release of public comment, response to substantive comments, and production of the EA with findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

EIS Nevada Mining Projects - BLM Status

5/1/17

Company	Project	Commodity	BLM District	Plan of Operations Submitted	Plan of Operations Complete	Notice of Intent to Prepare EIS Published	Notice of Availability for Draft EIS Published	Notice of Availability for Final EIS Published	Record of Decision	Permitting Status	Project Timeline: Since Last Month's Report	Employment Growth
Barrick	Cortez Gold Deep South APoD (expansion of underground)	Gold	Battle Mountain	1/8/16	4/19/16	Nov 2016 <sup>(1)</sup>				NOI at WFO for review	ACCOM writing EIS prep plan, internal and public scoping to be checked	TBD
Newmont	Geothermal Phoenix (expansion)	Gold	Battle Mountain	10/20/14	12/18/14	9/29/15	Sep 2016 <sup>(1)</sup>			NDA of DEIS at WFO for review	Waiting for WFO review before Federal Register publication	Extend Operations 23 Years
Hydro Resources and Development	Hydro (expansion)	Gold	Winnemucca	4/30/14	7/3/14	12/30/14				Waiting on USFWS NDA to be prepared/published on Take Permits. Looking at completing baseline studies for job backfill alternative and an alternative tailings pond location. Hydro is reviewing their Plan of Operations and proposed actions once again. USFWS NOI at hydro's office.		Extend Operations 10 Years
GRP	Gold Rock (new)	Gold	Ely	3/21/13	3/29/13	3/28/14	2/13/15	10/7/16		EIS final action activity on schedule updated.	Waiting for final set on NDA (submitted 10/25/16). Received/Responded to comments 12/6/16 pulled back FES to rework Air Quality and Groundwater impacts	100 New Employees
Marigold Mining	Marigold (expansion)	Gold	Winnemucca	7/27/15	9/3/15	3/4/16	Sep 2016 <sup>(1)</sup>			Evaluating issues identified during scoping	FO continuing with EIS preparations.	Extend Operations 10 Years
Elko Mining Group/Gemfield Resources	Gemfield (new)	Gold	Battle Mountain	7/10/13	9/16/13	12/24/13	May 2017 <sup>(1)</sup>			Baseline data being developed	Waiting on approval of the water model which will be used to update the Plan of Operations and prepare the Ecology Risk Assessment reports	150 New Employees
Halliburton	Ross Barite (expansion)	Barite	Elko	3/17/14	10/27/14	9/9/15	Dec 2016 <sup>(1)</sup>			Final NDA of DEIS being reviewed.	In process NAM TV, Working issues with TCPN & Sage Grouse MLDs	Extend Operations 20 Years
McLewen Mining	Gold Bar (new)	Gold	Battle Mountain	12/23/13	4/7/14	9/11/15	Feb 2017			Reviewing public comments on DEIS	Public comment period on DEIS has ended.	160 New Employees
Klondex	Hollister	Gold	Elko	2/3/17	Reviewing	Pending	Pending			Reviewing PA	Currently a cooperating partner are reviewing the first draft PA revision to comply with comments	

Milestone Completed  
 Awaiting BLM action  
 Awaiting Department action

Action taken  
 Delayed waiting on BLM action  
 Delayed waiting on department action

- Notes
- (1) Projected date to be received in Nevada State Office
  - (2) Projected date for plan to be received in Field Office
  - (3) Date received in Nevada State Office
  - (4) Date received in Washington Office
  - (5) Date received in Field Office
  - (6) Date expected to be published in the Federal Register.

G