

Sage-Grouse Lek Definitions

Lek. A traditional courtship display area attended by male sage-grouse in or adjacent to sagebrush dominated habitat. Designation of the site as a lek requires observation of two or more male sage-grouse engaged in courtship displays. In addition new leks must be confirmed by a survey conducted during the appropriate time of day and during the strutting season. Observation of sign of strutting activity can also be used to confirm a suspected lek.

Lek Complex. A group of leks in close proximity between which male sage-grouse may be expected to interchange from one day to the next. A specific distance criteria does not yet exist.

Lek Count. A census technique that documents the actual number of male sage-grouse observed on a particular lek or complex of leks using the methods described below.

Lek Survey. A monitoring technique designed primarily to determine whether leks are active or inactive and obtaining accurate counts of the numbers of males attending is secondary.

Annual status – Each year a lek will be determined to be in one of the following status categories:

Active. Any lek that has been attended by male sage-grouse during the strutting season. Presence can be documented by observation of birds using the site or by signs of strutting activity.

Inactive. Leks where it is known that there was no strutting activity through the course of a strutting season. A single visit, or even several visits, without strutting grouse being seen is not adequate documentation to designate a lek as inactive. This designation requires either an absence of birds on the lek during multiple ground visits under ideal conditions throughout the strutting season or a ground check of the exact lek site late in the strutting season that fails to find any sign (droppings/feathers) of strutting activity.

Unknown. Leks that have not been documented either active or inactive during the course of a strutting season.

Based on annual status a lek may be put into one of the following categories for management purposes:

Occupied Lek. A lek that has been active during at least one strutting season within the last 10 years. Management protection will be afforded to occupied leks.

Unoccupied Lek. (Formerly termed “historical lek”). There are two types of unoccupied leks, “destroyed” or “abandoned”. Management protection will not be afforded to unoccupied leks.

Destroyed lek: A formerly active lek site and surrounding sagebrush habitat that has been destroyed and no longer capable of supporting sage-grouse breeding activity. A lek site that has been strip-mined, paved, converted to cropland or undergone other long-term habitat type conversion is considered destroyed. Destroyed leks do not require monitoring unless the site is reclaimed to suitable sage-grouse habitat.

Abandoned lek: A lek in otherwise suitable habitat that has not been active during a consecutive ten-year period. Before a lek is designated “abandoned” it must be confirmed as “inactive” (see above criteria) in at least four non-consecutive strutting seasons spanning the 10 years. Once designated “abandoned,” the site should be surveyed at least once every 10 years to determine whether or not the lek has been reoccupied.

Undetermined Lek. Any lek that has not been documented as being active in the last 10 years but does not have sufficient documentation to be designated unoccupied. Management protection will be afforded to undetermined leks until their status has been documented as unoccupied.