



BLM NEWS RELEASE

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BLM to Use State, Regional Data in Identifying Wildlife Corridors, Crucial Habitat

Washington, D.C. – The Bureau of Land Management announced today that it will use state and regional data and maps to help it identify wildlife corridors and crucial habitat in future land-use planning and management efforts. The maps will be available for the BLM to use as a result of the Western Wildlife Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool, known as “CHAT”, an initiative of the Western Governors’ Association.

Information developed through the CHAT will facilitate an organized and comprehensive approach to obtaining wildlife-related data and maps by the BLM and other federal agencies. BLM Deputy Director Mike Pool signed Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-039, which instructs land managers to use prioritized wildlife and habitat information and data developed through state- and regional-level CHATs as a principal source to inform land use planning, as well as related natural resource decisions on public lands.

Arizona, Montana and Washington have already developed state-specific information and data, and a regional-level data set is now available that covers several states in the southern great plains. More states are expected to develop information in 2012, and a West-wide CHAT is expected to be available in 2013.

“Western states are developing information on wildlife corridors and crucial habitat that the BLM can use in implementing this IM, which will likely reduce our costs and create efficiencies in planning and land use management,” BLM Director Bob Abbey said.

In 2009, the Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Energy signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Western Governors’ Association regarding coordination among federal agencies and states in the identification and uniform mapping of wildlife corridors and crucial habitat.

“Governors in Western states are working hard to promote new jobs and development, while recognizing the need to protect our wildlife and their habitat,” said Gov. Chris Gregoire, WGA Chair. “These tools help achieve our goals and ensure that people planning development projects consider wildlife values early in their planning process.”

Utah Governor Gary Herbert, WGA Vice-Chairman, said, “At a time when we are working hard to reduce government spending, it is appreciated that the BLM is looking to use this cutting-edge wildlife information from state agencies to inform their planning decisions.”



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The BLM's National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy and the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments are two ongoing efforts that will use the CHAT data and maps when appropriate to support planning and management activities.

To read the IM, please visit:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2012/IM_2012-039.html.

About the BLM - The BLM manages more land – over 245 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

About the WGA - Established in 1984, the Western Governors' Association (WGA) is an independent, non-partisan organization of governors from 19 Western states, two Pacific-flag territories and one commonwealth. Through WGA, member Governors identify and address key policy and governance issues in natural resources, the environment, human services, economic development, international relations, transportation and public management.

Since the adoption of WGA's *Wildlife Corridors Initiative Report* in June 2008, 17 states have become members of the Western Governors' Wildlife Council. Its members develop policies and tools to identify and conserve crucial wildlife habitat and corridors across the region. The Wildlife Council's focus is on implementing the CHAT model by 2013, making information on important fish and wildlife habitat compatible across the West and easily accessible to anyone making land use decisions.

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