

JMH CAP Record of Decision

JMH CAP FACTS Greater Sage-Grouse

BACKGROUND:

Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) are found throughout the planning area wherever suitable sagebrush habitat exists. Approximately 40 percent of the planning area contains important greater sage-grouse breeding areas (leks, nesting, and early-brood-rearing areas) and wintering habitat. Greater sage-grouse breeding and winter habitats are identified in coordination with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).

Data collected in 2003 compared to data collected in 1952 from greater sage-grouse leks in the area show a 70 percent decline in the numbers of males attending leks. The decline can be attributed to various factors such as drought, predation, habitat alteration, and development activities.

Limitations on activities to protect all greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat include closing about 179, 800 acres to future oil and gas leasing. The JMH CAP also limits the amount, and degree, of activities through No Surface Occupancy and controlled surface use stipulations for those areas available to oil and gas leasing, and developing transportation plans to reduce roads and traffic. Information provided in recent studies will be incorporated into the plan through the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation process.

Specific management actions to protect the greater sage-grouse have been developed based on the best scientific information available at the time of analysis. The CAP also allows for new information to be incorporated as it becomes available provided it is applicable to this area.

SPECIFICS:

BLM designed the National Sage-grouse Strategy around four main goals. Associated with each goal are specific strategies and actions that BLM will undertake to meet the goal. The four goals are:

- Improve the effectiveness of the management framework for addressing conservation needs of greater sage-grouse on lands administered by the BLM.
- Increase understanding of resource conditions to prioritize habitat maintenance and restoration.
- Expand partnerships, available research, and information that support effective management of greater sage-grouse habitat.
- Ensure leadership and resources are adequate to continue ongoing conservation efforts and implement national and state-level greater sage-grouse habitat conservation strategies and/or plans.

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The JMH CAP is in agreement with these goals.

More importantly, the JMH CAP follows BLM Manual 6840. Specifically, the objectives are:

“A. To conserve listed species and the ecosystems on which they depend.

“B. To ensure that actions requiring authorization or approval by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM or Bureau) are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species and do not contribute to the need to list any special status species, either under provisions of the ESA or other provisions of this policy.”

- Greater sage-grouse management objectives in the JMH CAP include:
 - Areas managed for greater sage-grouse breeding will depend on site specific evaluations
 - Distances, timing (seasonal) limitations, and other mitigation measures may be adjusted when new research and site-specific information become available
 - Habitat inventories will focus on locating nesting and early brood-rearing habitat
 - Prior to offering oil and gas leases, field reviews may be necessary to identify actual habitat.
- Management actions focus on protecting habitat required by the birds during crucial life phases, such as breeding and wintering habitat.
- The JMH CAP greater sage-grouse management is in agreement with the WGFD “Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan”
 - Energy and agriculture industry representatives participated in developing this plan
- The BLM will continue to work with all interested parties to protect greater sage-grouse habitat.
- Seasonal limitations on activities to protect breeding and wintering birds are March 1 through July 15 and November 15 through March 14, respectively. Exceptions to the timing restrictions are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Limitations on activities to protect all greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat include closing about 179,800 acres to future oil and gas leasing, limiting the amount, and degree, of activities through No Surface Occupancy and controlled surface use stipulations for those areas available to oil and gas leasing, and developing transportation plans to reduce roads and traffic. Information provided in

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recent studies will be incorporated into the plan through the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation process, as appropriate.