

DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2012-0027-EA

To: All interested in Bureau of Land Management-administered lands in eastern Oregon

From: BLM Oregon/Washington Prineville District

The Prineville District BLM is requesting your comments and concerns about a proposed project to conduct greater sage-grouse habitat improvement activities for areas along the southern boundary of the Prineville District near the towns of Brothers and Hampton. The BLM is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify a range of alternatives to address restoring playas, which are considered important habitat for sage-grouse. Potential activities may include modifying dugouts, juniper thinning, altering water sources for livestock, removing or relocating roads, and modifying grazing seasons of use or removing grazing. This Sage-grouse Playa Management Project EA will also complete an analysis for any grazing permit renewals in the project area.

Over the past several decades, the Prineville District BLM has been actively managing and improving habitat for the greater sage-grouse. In 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) found that the greater sage-grouse warrant listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. An immediate listing determination was deferred until November 2015; however, due to other higher priority species also being considered for listing at that time. In light of this, the BLM has placed an even greater emphasis on improving habitat conditions for sage-grouse throughout its range.

In particular, playas (flat, un-drained desert basins that become shallow lakes at times) are important to manage because they provide highly nutritious forbs (vegetation) during important brood-rearing periods. Playas in the project area are primarily located in areas classified as core and low density sage-grouse habitat by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; and are high priority areas for maintaining and improving.

The primary human activities affecting playas, and subsequently sage-grouse, are roads, fencing, and concentrated livestock use. Roads and fences can fragment habitat and lead to the potential for collisions. Playas also serve as water sources for livestock and wildlife; some have been dug out to extend water availability. Livestock concentrate in the playas when water is available, resulting in increased use, trampling of plants, altered nutrient cycles, and soil compaction; contributing to the diminished ecological condition of the playas.

The BLM would also like to consider thinning juniper and reducing shrub densities on lands classified as having Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs). More than 10,000 acres have already been thinned to remove juniper from sagebrush habitat in the area, and moving treatments into LWC areas would improve habitat connectivity for sage-grouse between playas across the landscape.

Changes to allotment permit stipulations will also be evaluated and if grazing is removed from entire pastures and/or allotments or if a travel management decision is made to designate roads in the project area in order to remove or relocate roads, the Brothers/La Pine Resource Management Plan would be amended.

If you have comments you would like the BLM to consider, please send them to the BLM by **April 9, 2012**. There are a number of ways you can provide comments and stay informed about this project. Choose one or more from the list below:

**MAIL:** BLM, Sage-Grouse Playa Management EA  
3050 NE Third Street  
Prineville, OR 97754

**EMAIL:** [BLM\\_OR\\_PR\\_SageGrouse\\_Playa\\_mgmt\\_EA@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_OR_PR_SageGrouse_Playa_mgmt_EA@blm.gov) **FAX:** (541) 416-6798

**PHONE:** Matt Shaffer, Project Lead (541) 416-6743  
Bill Dean, Assistant Field Manager (541) 416-6887  
Chip Faver, Field Manager (541) 416-6731  
Molly Brown, Field Manager (541) 416-6766

The next step is to review the comments we receive from the public, incorporate them with the issues the BLM's internal interdisciplinary team raises, and develop sage-grouse habitat improvement alternatives for the project area. Finally, there will be another comment period on the Draft EA, before the BLM will issue a decision. The anticipated start for implementation of the project is spring of 2013.

Thank you for your time and commitment to eastern Oregon's public lands.

# Public Comment Form

## Comments

Your name (please **print**): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing (put an **X** in one box only):

self only, or  business, organization, or agency (list): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address, State, and ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return comments by April 9<sup>th</sup> 2012 to:** **Prineville BLM – Sage-Grouse Playa Management EA,  
3050 NE Third Street  
Prineville, OR 97754**

E-mail: BLM\_OR\_PR\_SageGrouse\_Playa\_mgmt\_EA@blm.gov FAX: (541) 416-6798

Questions: (541) 416-6700

**Important Privacy Notice:** Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask BLM in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, the agency cannot guarantee we will be able to.

Brothers

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Hampton

**Legend**

-  Cities District
-  Highways
-  Roads
-  BLM District Boundaries
-  Project Area
-  Playas
-  County Boundaries
-  Bureau of Land Management
-  U.S. Forest Service
-  State
-  Private

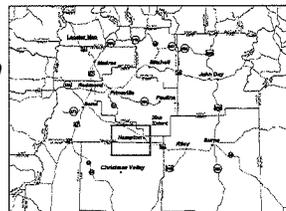
# Sage Grouse Playa Management EA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management

PRINEVILLE DISTRICT

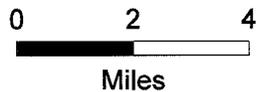


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