



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Oregon State Office

P.O. Box 2965

Portland, Oregon 97208



**In Reply Refer to:**

6500/1600/3000 (OR-932) P

June 1, 2009

EMS TRANSMISSION 06/02/2009

Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2009-038

Expires: 09/30/2010

To: District Managers, Branch Chiefs

From: State Director, Oregon/Washington

Subject: Modification of Guidance Found in the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon: A Plan to Maintain and Enhance Populations and Habitat (Oregon State Strategy)

**Program Area:** Wildlife, Special Status Species, Riparian, Realty/Energy, and Land Use Planning.

**Purpose:** This instruction memorandum (IM) provides modifications to guidance found in the Oregon State Strategy pertaining to the construction of wind energy grids (wind farms). The purpose is to maintain consistency with current science and recommendations provided by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

**Policy/Action:** The recommendation to limit the construction of wind energy grids (wind farms) to no closer than 8 km (5 miles) of known/occupied sage-grouse habitat (pg. 83, *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon: A Plan to Maintain and Enhance Populations and Habitat, Oregon State Strategy*) is reduced to a 4.8 km (3 miles) radius of sage-grouse lek sites. However, additional buffers, stipulations, or mitigation outside the 4.8 km radius should be considered to minimize loss of winter and brood rearing habitat and to address the ODFW's objective of "no net loss" of critical winter and brood rearing habitats. Guidelines for additional buffers for wind towers include:

1. Winter Habitat: Winter habitat has not been adequately inventoried in Oregon, and field units should consult ODFW personnel and internal Bureau of Land Management data to identify winter habitat and the connectivity corridors between habitats for protection with a 0.5 mile buffer. If telemetry or other data suggests habitat use patterns outside the 4.8km (3 mile) radius, that information should be used in determining buffers and stipulations.

2. **Brood Rearing Habitats:** Generally comprised of a mosaic of upland vegetation intermixed with wetland sites. These areas can be more than 10 miles from lek sites. They are essential for sage-grouse survival and should be protected with a 0.5 mile buffer. ODFW personnel and internal BLM data should be considered to identify these sites.
3. **Access Roads and Power Lines:** Consult the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon for guidelines (pgs. 83 & 84). In addition, ODFW is now recommending that ground-level structures (e.g., roads, buried power lines) not be sited within 0.5 miles of the nearest lek site. Whenever possible, linear activities such as roads and power lines should be combined into a single right of way corridor to minimize habitat fragmentation and disturbance.

**Timeframe:** This IM is effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Unknown.

**Background:** By signature (2005), the Oregon State Office (OSO) BLM adopted and agreed to implement where possible the Oregon State Strategy. In 2007, the BLM OSO provided guidance (IMOR2008-014) on the placement of MET towers in sage-grouse habitats that was not addressed in the Oregon State Strategy. The current Oregon State Strategy, August 2005 (pg.83), recommends that wind energy grids should be constructed a distance of 8 km (5 miles) from known/occupied habitat. Based on recent research (Walker et al. 2007, Doherty et al. 2008), the ODFW, concomitant with its wildlife mitigation policy, is now recommending that energy grids not be constructed within a 4.8 km (3 miles) radius of sage-grouse lek sites. Additionally, ODFW has recommended a mitigation standard of “no net loss with net benefit” for critical winter and brood rearing habitat outside of the 4.8-km (3 miles) lek radius in areas affected by wind farm development.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** Policy action taken is in accordance with national special status species management policy (Manual 6840).

**Coordination:** It is essential that all programs implementing or approving ground disturbing activities coordinate projects to ensure success with sage-grouse specific management goals. This IM has been coordinated with ODFW and Dwight Fielder, WO-230.

**Contact:** If you have questions regarding this IM, contact George Buckner, Wildlife Biologist, at 503-808-6382.

**Districts with Unions** are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you with assistance in this matter.

Signed by  
Michael S. Mottice  
Associate State Director

Authenticated by  
Paj Shua Cha  
Records Section

2 Attachments

1 – IM-OR–2008-014 (2 pp)

2 – IM-OR–2007-073 (2 pp)

Distribution

WO-230 (D. Fielder)



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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**In Reply Refer to:**

2800/6100 (OR-932/936) P

October 30, 2007

EMS TRANSMISSION 10/31/2007

Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2008-014

Expires: 9/30/2009

To: DMs, Staff and Branch Chiefs

From: State Director, Oregon/Washington

Subject: Wind Energy Testing and Monitoring Proposals in Sage-Grouse Habitat

**Program Area:** Right-of-Way Management, Wind Energy, and Special Status Species Management

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides additional guidance to the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program (2005) on processing right-of-way applications for wind energy projects on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) located in sage-grouse habitats. This IM specifically addresses the Best Management Practices (BMP) for site monitoring and testing relating to the installation of meteorological (MET) towers. This IM does not address the processing of a Plan of Development for wind energy production facilities.

**Policy/Action:** The location of MET towers shall be avoided within 2 miles of an active lek or known seasonal concentration area (i.e. roost areas, brood rearing areas) (Connelly, JW., MA Schroeder, A.R.Sands and C.E. Braun. 2000 Wildlife Soc. Bull 28(4): 967-985) unless they are out of the direct line of sight of the active lek or seasonal concentration area. A MET tower may be located within 2 miles of an active lek or seasonal concentration area if a visual obstruction is present to reduce the visibility of the tower in such a manner that reproductive activities are not adversely impacted. Self supporting MET towers are strongly recommended and use of towers requiring guy wires is discouraged. If guy wires are necessary, all wires shall have permanent markers (bird flight diverters) attached for their entire length to increase visibility. Additional BMPs may be required to mitigate negative effects of installing MET towers in sage-grouse habitats. Additionally, operators are to provide for monitoring of nearby leks or seasonal concentration areas as determined by the BLM. This information and associated requirements should be provided to prospective applicants for wind energy testing and monitoring authorizations at the preapplication meeting in advance of application filing.

**Timeframe:** This guidance is in effect immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Minimal

**Background:** The December 2005 ROD on Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments, Attachment A, provides a number of BMPs. Additionally, it specifies that the BLM will incorporate into the ROD, management goals and objectives specific to habitat conservation for species of concern such as sage-grouse. Specifically, the BMPs state that “MET towers shall not be located in sensitive habitats or in areas where ecological resources known to be sensitive to human activities (e.g., prairie grouse) are present.” However, such language is vague in providing protection to sage-grouse while supporting the National Energy Policy of 2001 and the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The absence of more specific language results in inconsistent application of restrictions concerning MET towers. The Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon recommends that turbines, power lines and wind farms should be constructed 8 kilometers (5 miles) from known/occupied habitat. No guidance is provided for MET towers. The Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon recommends that surface occupancy related to mineral and fossil fuel exploration and extraction be avoided within 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) of known/occupied sage-grouse habitats. MET towers are not specified, and no provisions are provided for line-of-sight exemptions.

The guidance provided herein supports the national energy policy and provides specific, consistently applicable guidelines for MET towers.

**Coordination:** Field office wildlife biologists and State Office program leaders reviewed relevant IMs (e.g., IM 2006-216, IB OR-2000-334), the ROD for Implementation of a Wind Energy Development Program and Associated Land Use Plan Amendments (December 2005), Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, 2005), Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems Management Guidelines (BLM, 2000) to provide procedural clarification.

**Contact:** If you have any questions, please contact George Buckner, Wildlife Biologist, at 503-808-6081.

**Districts with Unions** are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by  
Michael S. Mottice  
Acting, Associate State Director

Authenticated by  
Paj Shua Cha  
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Distribution  
WO-230  
WO-350



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Portland, Oregon 97208



**In Reply Refer to:**

6502/ 6516/ 6510 (OR-932) P

July 25, 2007

EMS TRANSMISSION 07/31/07

Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2007-073

Expires: 9/30/2008

To: DMs, Staff and Branch Chiefs

From: State Director, Oregon/Washington

Subject: Sage-Grouse Guidelines

**Program Area:** Wildlife, Range and Special Status Species Management

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides clarifications to conflicting guidance between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems Management Guidelines of 2000 (BLM Interim Guides) and the Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon (OR State Strategy).

**Policy/Action:** Districts should consult management actions and guidelines as recommended in the OR State Strategy. Recommendations in the OR State Strategy are more comprehensive and utilize the most current science over recommendations contained in the BLM Interim Guides.

**Timeframe:** This guidance is in effect immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Minimal

**Background:** The OR State Strategy encourages the BLM (pg 70) to continue to implement the BLM Interim Guides as part of the Oregon BLM overall strategy for managing sage-grouse. A few conflicts exist in the management recommendations between the documents. However, a recent review revealed that the OR State Strategy actions and recommendations are more comprehensive and in many cases contain the same guidance as the BLM Interim Guides.

The major difference between the documents occurs with recommendations for specific vegetation management for seasonal sage-grouse life requirements. In at least one reference, habitat recommendations contained in the BLM Interim Guides are ambiguous relative to scale and unachievable on a landscape scale for Oregon sage-steppe habitats. Therefore, vegetation management for sage-grouse in Oregon should focus on maintaining the 70% sagebrush goal as

outlined on page 66 of the OR State Strategy with emphasis on sagebrush classes 3, 4 and 5 as defined in the BLM Technical Bulletin 417. The 70% sagebrush goal is consistent with goals contained in the Southeast Oregon Resource Management Plan and considered achievable on a landscape scale in Oregon. Each district should refer to the OR State Strategy for district specific management objectives to retain the objective of 70% sagebrush. The 70% sagebrush goal should be applied at a sage-grouse subpopulation or district level in consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Additional references such as the Connelly guidelines (Connelly, J.W., M. A. Schroeder, A.R. Sands and C.E. Braun. 2000. *Guidelines to manage sage-grouse populations and their habitats*. Wildlife Society Bulletin 28(4): 967-985) continue to be considered the benchmark for specific sage-grouse life history requirements and should be reviewed for site or seasonally specific management recommendations.

**Coordination:** It is essential that all programs implementing or approving ground disturbing activities coordinate projects to ensure success with sage-grouse specific vegetation management.

**Contact:** If you have any questions, please contact George Buckner, Wildlife Biologist, at 503-808-6081.

**Districts with Unions** are reminded to notify their unions of this Instruction Memorandum and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by  
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