

**Amending the Southeastern Oregon and Lakeview RMPs:
(1) 9th Circuit Settlement Agreement; & (2) Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation**
August 30, 2012

The BLM has added a new priority since the BLM initiated preparation of the Southeastern Oregon (SEO) and Lakeview Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendments and associated Environmental Impacts Statements (EISs) pursuant to terms of the Ninth Circuit Settlement Agreement. The importance of conserving the greater sage-grouse has recently become even clearer to BLM and it has embarked on a nation-wide effort to improve Greater Sage-Grouse conservation on BLM administered-lands.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its listing decision under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the greater sage-grouse as “Warranted but Precluded.” Inadequate regulatory mechanisms were identified as a major threat in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the greater sage-grouse. The USFWS has identified the principal regulatory mechanism for the BLM as conservation measures in RMPs. In December 2011, the Washington Office (WO) BLM released a National Technical Team Report outlining potential conservation measures for the greater sage-grouse that BLM is to consider in RMPs.

The emphasis on and new information related to Greater Sage-Grouse conservation resulted in the BLM’s intention to amend approximately 70 RMPs throughout the Bureau. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare EISs to amend RMPs throughout the Bureau for greater sage-grouse conservation was published in December 2011. This unprecedented national planning effort has been split into two regions: a Rocky Mountain Region and a Great Basin Region. The Rocky Mountain Region will prepare numerous EISs to consider amending RMPs in the states of Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of western Utah and western Montana. The Great Basin Region will also prepare multiple EISs to consider amending RMPs in California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and portions of eastern Utah and eastern Montana. The BLM aims to incorporate objectives and conservation measures into RMPs by September 2014 in order to provide adequate regulatory mechanisms to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat. These measures would be considered by USFWS as it makes its final determination on whether to list the Greater Sage-Grouse under Section 4 of the ESA. Therefore, these EISs will be prepared under expedited timeframes.

In Oregon, the BLM is preparing a programmatic EIS for amendment of up to nine RMPs to incorporate conservation measures for the Greater Sage-Grouse. The Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment effort will include the SEO RMP (2002) and the Lakeview RMP (2003). Given the expedited timeframes and conservation need for the Greater Sage-Grouse, preparation and completion of the Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendments and associated EISs will come before all other planning efforts in eastern Oregon, including the SEO and Lakeview RMP Settlement Agreement Amendments. Thus, the existing SEO RMP (2002) and the Lakeview RMP (2003) will first be amended to incorporate Greater Sage-Grouse conservation measures that are adopted by those two BLM Districts at the completion of the Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment effort. Once the Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment effort is complete, the BLM will continue looking at the 9th Circuit Settlement amendment process for the SEO and Lakeview RMPs. The BLM continues to place a high priority on the Settlement Agreement Amendments but it is more feasible and efficient to first complete the Greater Sage-Grouse RMP amendments.