

Gunnison Sage-Grouse

December 2014

CURRENT STATUS

On Nov. 12, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced their final determination that the Gunnison Sage-Grouse requires protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a threatened species. The BLM is required to consult with the FWS to determine mitigation measures necessary to avoid or minimize impacts to the species. The BLM is working with the FWS to prioritize consultation where necessary.

The BLM is developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and range-wide plan amendment to incorporate consistent conservation objectives and management actions for Gunnison Sage-Grouse into its 11 Resource Management Plans that contain Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat. The BLM interdisciplinary team working on the development of the EIS and amendment published the project scoping report in late November 2014. The team is finalizing a set of draft alternatives and beginning the alternatives analysis process. The team is working with eighteen federal, state and county cooperating agencies in the development of the EIS and amendment. The project currently remains on track for completion by July 2016.

BACKGROUND

In January 2013, the FWS proposed to list the Gunnison Sage-Grouse as endangered under the ESA. The BLM provided comments on the proposed rule and proposed critical habitat during the public comment period.

In summer 2013, BLM Colorado signed a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) for Gunnison Sage-Grouse on federally-managed lands in the Gunnison Basin. Other signatories to the CCA include the FWS, National Park Service, United States Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Saguache and Gunnison counties. The CCA is designed to complement the statewide Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances developed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the FWS for use on private or state lands.

The BLM and FWS are reviewing ongoing, on-the-ground BLM conservation practices, as well as measures contained in BLM planning documents, policies, and regulations. The BLM implemented Gunnison Sage-Grouse conservation measures in 2013 and 2014 to protect critical habitat across the range of the species until consistent conservation measures can be officially adopted through a range-wide plan amendment. In addition, the two agencies have held multiple discussions throughout 2013 and in to 2014 to address threats to specific populations and identify potential conservation measures.

