Definitions

The following is a list of terms related to sage-grouse that should consistently be used during the RMP process or other related NEPA analysis, projects or discussions. This will minimize confusion within the BLM and with our constituents.

Sage-Grouse Habitat Areas (MT/DAKs BLM).

The MT/DAKs BLM will delineate three types of sage-grouse habitat areas (within Management Zones 1 and 2) as part of the planning process:

- Sage-Grouse Habitat - Protection Priority Areas,
- Sage-Grouse Habitat - Restoration Priority Areas, and
- Sage-Grouse Habitat - General Sage-Grouse Areas.

Each area will have varying degrees of management in order to achieve the desired outcomes (goals/objectives) for each sage-grouse habitat area. The sage-grouse habitat delineations may be modified as needed as local site conditions change or as new information becomes available.

Sage-Grouse Habitat - Protection Priority Areas: Areas with limited impacts containing substantial and high quality sage-grouse habitat that support sustainable sage-grouse populations. Management actions would emphasize the protection and enhancement of sustainable sage-grouse populations. Areas are delineated by using "key", "core" and connectivity data/maps and other resource information.

Sage-Grouse Habitat - Restoration Priority Areas: Areas with on-going or imminent impacts containing substantial and high quality sage-grouse habitat that historically supported sustainable sage-grouse populations. Management actions would emphasize restoration for the purpose of establishing or restoring sustainable sage-grouse populations. Areas are delineated by using "key", "core" and connectivity data/maps and other resource information.

Sage-Grouse Habitat – General Habitat Areas: Areas with or without on-going or imminent impacts containing sage-grouse habitat outside of the priority areas. Management actions would maintain habitat for sustainable sage-grouse populations to promote movement and genetic diversity. Areas are delineated based on sage-grouse habitat.

Other common terms and definitions.

Core Areas: The term "core" is associated with the state designated areas. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFW&P) identified areas they feel are most important for sage-grouse. These areas are mapped and have been provided to the BLM. The state of Wyoming has also identified core areas (see below).

> **MFW&P core area.** Sage-grouse core areas are habitats associated with 1) Montana's highest densities of sage-grouse (25% quartile), based on male counts, and/or 2) sage-grouse lek complexes and associated habitat important to sage-grouse distribution (refer to the document: Greater Sage-grouse Core Areas Designation for Montana Version 1.0, January 13, 2009).
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> **Wyoming core area.** Sage-grouse core population areas in Wyoming were designated by the Governor's Sage-grouse Implementation Team in 2008. The goal of the designation was to incorporate at least 2/3 of the sage-grouse population in Wyoming. A map of high density areas based on lek data with 4-mile buffers served as a base map. Using the density map, the team avoided areas of development and included areas of lower sage-grouse lek density to ultimately include 83% of the peak males on leks into the Core Population Areas. The team intends for Core Area boundaries to change based on new information.

Key Habitat Areas. This term refers to the map generated by the BLM in response to IM No. MT-2008-062, which identifies important sage-grouse habitat. The primary purpose of the "key area" map was to map and protect important sage-grouse habitats related to fire suppression activities.

Special Management (Emphasis) Areas/Priority Landscapes. In an effort to address management actions on a landscape level, one approach is to determine which resource values (or resource uses) are important and then identify where they occur. These priority landscapes or emphasis areas within the planning area may have unique management scenarios or alternatives to meet the desired outcomes (goals/objectives) for the defined area. The emphasis may be on habitat protection and restoration in areas with high resource values (i.e., sage-grouse, unfragmented native grasslands, crucial winter range, etc.); areas with high resource development potential (i.e., oil and gas areas, wind energy, travel/OHV areas, etc.); or other special areas with high values or uses (i.e., scenic areas, heritage values, WUIs, etc.). This is just one approach to identifying areas that may require special management actions.

Focus Areas (Wyoming Term). Focus Areas were designated in 2008 for the Buffalo Field Office only and were designated as part of the land use plan revision process. The term "Focus Areas" in the Buffalo Field Office may or may not remain in use after the land use plan is completed.

Wildlife Habitat. (a) Species specific environment and environmental conditions suitable for occupancy by that species; (b) a particular land cover type that provides an environment and environmental conditions suitable for occupancy by many species.

Critical Habitat Areas. Generally identified by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for endangered, threatened, or candidate species. The area of land, water, and airspace required for the normal needs and survival of a species. These areas contain physical and biological features (1) essential to the conservation of the species, and (2) which may require special management considerations or protection.

Crucial Habitat. Parts of the habitat necessary to sustain a wildlife population at critical periods of its life cycle. This is often a limiting factor on the population, such as breeding and/or winter habitat.

Habitat Connectivity/Corridors. Landscape elements that connect similar patches of habitat in sufficient quantity and arrangement to allow for the movement of wildlife. These linkage zones are where species migrate and intermingle ensuring genetic inter-change and consequently long-term survival.

Fragmentation. The splitting or isolating of patches of similar habitat. Habitat can be fragmented by natural events or development activities.

Reclamation. Rehabilitation of a disturbed area to make it acceptable for designated uses. This normally involves re-grading, replacement of topsoil, re-vegetation, and other work necessary to restore it for use.

Restoration. Implies returning the disturbed site to a condition which mimics pre-disturbance conditions or in some instances a desired plant community consistent with what should be present in the absence of disturbance. The long-term goal is to create functional, high quality habitat that is occupied by sage-grouse. Short-term goal may be to increase percentage of preferred vegetation, seeding of desired species, or treatment of undesired species.

Sagebrush habitat. A land cover type with sagebrush as the dominant plant species. Sagebrush habitat provides environmental conditions for many species associated with sagebrush for all or part of their life cycle. Examples of sagebrush associated species include Greater Sage-Grouse, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, and Sagebrush Lizard.

Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat. A specific environment, or set of environmental conditions suitable for occupancy by Greater Sage-Grouse often typified by the presence of sagebrush. Sage-grouse habitat may be further defined by the season of use (i.e., winter, breeding, and brood rearing (see below)), each with its own set of different environmental conditions. Each planning area may further define seasonal habitat characteristics based on local ecological conditions.

General Habitat.

Winter. Winter concentration areas are selected by sage-grouse where sagebrush is 10-14 inches above the snow, with a canopy ranging from 10 to 30 percent. Wintering areas may also be on flat to generally southwest facing slopes or in areas where sagebrush height may be less than 10 inches (25 cm) but the snow is routinely blown clear by wind. In the most severe winter weather conditions, sage-grouse will often be restricted to tall stands of sagebrush usually located on deeper soils in or near drainages.

Nesting. The most suitable nesting habitat includes a mosaic of sagebrush with horizontal and vertical structural diversity. A healthy understory of native grasses and forbs provides 1) cover for concealment of the nest and hen from predators, 2) herbaceous forage for pre-laying and nesting hens, and 3) insects as prey for chicks and hens. Preferred nesting cover may vary dependant upon local potential habitat conditions.

Brood rearing. Early brood-rearing habitat must provide adequate cover (sagebrush canopy cover of 10 to 25 percent preferable) adjacent to areas rich in forbs and insects to assure chick survival during this period. Typically mosaics of upland sagebrush and other habitats (e.g., wet meadows, riparian areas) that together provide abundant insects and forbs for hens and chicks. All sage-grouse gradually move from sagebrush uplands to more mesic areas during the late brood-rearing period (3 weeks post-hatch) in response to summer desiccation of herbaceous vegetation. These areas provide an abundance of forbs and insects for both hens and chicks. Brood rearing habitats can include sagebrush habitats as well as riparian areas, wet meadows and alfalfa or other agriculture fields.

Lek. A traditional breeding area for sage and sharp-tailed grouse where males assemble to establish dominance, display, and breed.

Confirmed Sage-grouse Lek. Defined as: a) minimum of 2 years with 2 or more males lekking on site (preferred) or b) 1 year with 2 or more males lekking on site followed with evidence of lekking (vegetation trampling, feathers, and droppings) during subsequent year. One of three subcategories will be assigned a Confirmed Lek:

a. Active – default assignment unless criteria are met for "Inactive" or "Extirpated"
b. Inactive –10 years with no sign of lek activity - supported by surveys conducted during 3 or more years over the last 10 years
c. Extirpated – Habitat changes have caused birds to permanently abandon a lek (e.g., plowing, urban development, overhead power line).

Provisionally Confirmed Sage-Grouse Lek. Recent evidence of lekking, with or without observed sage-grouse.

Un-confirmed Sage-grouse Lek. Single count with no subsequent survey or a reported lek without supporting survey data.

Sustainable Population. Capable of maintaining a healthy, productive, and reproducing population over a long period of time. Sustainable is achieved when population growth rate (i.e., lambda) ≥ 1.0.

Stipulations or Conditions of Approval (applied to all surface-disturbing and/or disruptive activities).

Controlled Surface Use (CSU). Use or occupancy is allowed (unless restricted by another stipulation), but identified resource values require special operational constraints. CSU is used for operating guidance, not as a substitute for the NSO or timing stipulations.

No Surface Occupancy (NSO). Use or occupancy of the land surface is prohibited in order to protect special values or uses or identified resource values.

Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs are measures applied on a site-specific basis to reduce, prevent or avoid adverse environmental or social impacts. BMPs are applied to management actions to aid in achieving desired outcomes for safe, environmentally responsible resource development, by preventing, minimizing or mitigating adverse impacts and reducing conflicts. When BMPs are incorporated into a permit by the proponent or the BLM, BMPs become required actions.

Mitigation Measures. Methods or procedures developed for the purpose of reducing or lessening the impacts of an action. Reducing impacts should include all aspects of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, restore and offset) and appropriate measures may include on- and off-site mitigation. During the environmental review and decision making process, appropriate mitigation measures will be selected as part of the final decision. These mitigation measures then become a mandatory part of the approved action or permit.

Surface-Disturbing Activities. The physical disturbance and movement or removal of land surface and vegetation. Some examples of surface-disturbing activities include construction of roads, well pads, pipelines, powerlines, reservoirs, facilities, recreation sites; chisel plowing; and mining that involve soil penetration and/or substantial mechanical damage to plants.

Disruptive Activities. Resource uses/activities that are likely to alter the behavior, displace, or cause excessive stress to existing animal or human populations occurring at a specific location and/or time. The term is commonly used in conjunction with protecting wildlife during crucial life stages (e.g., breeding, nesting, birthing, etc.), although it could apply to any resource value. The use of this land use restriction is not intended to prohibit all activities or authorized uses such as research and monitoring, casual uses (as defined in various sections of the CFR), hunting, emergency situations, etc.

In this context, disruptive activity(ies) refers to those actions that alter behavior or cause the displacement of individuals such that reproductive success is negatively affected, or an individual's physiological ability to cope with environmental stress is compromised. This term does not apply to the physical disturbance of the land surface, vegetation, or features. Examples of disruptive activities may include noise, human foot or vehicle

traffic, domestic livestock roundups, or other human presence regardless of the activity. When administered as a land use restriction (e.g., No Disruptive Activities), this term may prohibit or limit the physical presence of sound above ambient levels, light beyond background levels, and/or the nearness of people and their activities.

Temporary Disruptive Activities are activities that involve human presence or activities to be in crucial habitats for less than one hour during a 24-hour period in a site specific area.