



FACT SHEET

BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS

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Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument Resource Management Plan Revision

FACT SHEET: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation

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The Billings and Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) covers all resources and programs, including Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG), livestock grazing, oil and gas leasing, lands with wilderness characteristics, recreation, and other planning issues.

Why is BLM emphasizing GRSG management in the Billings and PPNM Draft RMP/EIS?

Greater Sage-Grouse was identified as a planning issue early in the process for the Billings and PPNM RMP revision, through both internal and external scoping, and in coordination with the cooperating agencies. In March 2010, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its decision in response to the proposed listing of the GRSG under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that the listing was “Warranted but Precluded” by higher priority species. Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as one of the criteria in which the “Warranted” decision was based.

The USFWS has identified the principal mechanism for the BLM to assure regulatory certainty is by adopting conservation measures in RMPs. The USFWS will review its warranted-but-precluded decision at the end of 2015 and make a decision as to whether the GRSG warrants protection via the ESA.

Based on the identified threats to the GRSG and the USFWS timeline for reviewing its listing decision on this species, the BLM initiated the National GRSG Planning Strategy to incorporate objectives and adequate conservation measures into RMPs in order to conserve GRSG.

The National GRSG Planning Strategy requires evaluating the adequacy of existing RMPs and, as necessary, revising RMPs, such as the Billings and PPNM Draft RMP/EIS, to incorporate GRSG conservation measures so that sufficient threats can be removed or reduced to minimize the need to list the species under the ESA. Proactively implementing policies and conservation measures now will reduce regulatory burdens on stakeholders.

The BLM solicited public and agency input to identify issues to address in the planning effort and is coordinating with other federal, state, and local government agencies in preparing the documents. The BLM is conducting detailed environmental analyses of a range of alternatives for GRSG.

What is the BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy?

The BLM National GRSG Planning Strategy provides a coordinated, cooperative stakeholder team approach to incorporate regionally appropriate, science-based conservation measures into BLM land-use planning efforts throughout the range of the GRSG.

GRSG benefit from, and make use of, suitable habitat—regardless of land ownership and management responsibility, so the BLM planning strategy uses an open and collaborative approach to foster cooperative conservation efforts across the regions and states that make up the Greater Sage-Grouse range.

The planning strategy illustrates the BLM’s continued commitment to long-term, range-wide GRSG conservation and habitat restoration and acknowledges the added value of engaging all stakeholders and governmental partners in cooperative conservation efforts.

What is the National Technical Team Report?

As part of its GRSG National Planning Strategy, the BLM convened a National Technical Team (NTT). This team was composed of representatives from the BLM, the USFWS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and state wildlife agencies. The team was charged with developing a report to ensure relevant science on GRSG conservation was considered, reasonably interpreted, and accurately presented, with risks and uncertainties clearly delineated; providing conservation objectives in measurable terms to guide planning; and identifying science-based conservation measures.

In 2011, the NTT prepared a report which fulfilled this charge. The report and its associated conservation measures are not intended to create a standard for sage-grouse management. Rather the goal of the report is to provide a resource for BLM field personnel to use, as appropriate, in addressing on-the-ground conservation through the planning process.

Is the Billings and PPNM Draft RMP/EIS consistent with the NTT Report?

The BLM has considered and analyzed the NTT conservation measures in the Billings and PPNM Draft RMP/EIS in accordance with the most recent guidance, BLM Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2012-044. This draft RMP/EIS was reviewed at the regional and Washington Office level for compliance with the guidance. The plan is also consistent with the Montana BLM guidance for GRSG management and conservation in land use plans (BLM Montana/Dakotas Instruction Memorandum MT-2010-017).

What specific measures are considered in the Billings and PPNM draft RMP/EIS to protect Greater Sage-Grouse?

This draft RMP/EIS incorporates specific protections for GRSG within the range of alternatives. We encourage the public to review the specific protections for GRSG in the draft plan, as well as the breadth of other resource and resource uses addressed in the plan. The summary table below lists some of the key protections and plan allocations being addressed in the range of alternatives.

Billings and PPNM Draft RMP/EIS GRSG Protection Priority Areas - Summary of Key Protections				
Action	Alt A (No Action)	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D (Preferred)
GRSG Protection Priority Areas (PPA)	0 acres	154,140 acres – BLM surface 191,543 acres – Federal mineral estate		
GRSG Restoration Areas (RA)	0 acres	45,555 acres – BLM surface 63,437 acres – Federal mineral estate		
Fluid Mineral Leasing	7,536 acres NSO	212,484.8 acres No Lease	25,262 acres NSO	173,568 acres NSO
Rights-of-Way	0 acres	154,054 acres ROW exclusion	153,418 acres ROW avoidance	153,048 acres ROW avoidance
GRSG Habitat ACEC	0 acres	154,140 acres	0 acres	
Solid Leasable Minerals (Coal)		Within Greater Sage-Grouse PPAs (including the Alternative B Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat ACEC) and RAs solid mineral leasing (coal) would only be allowed with the following lease stip: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mining may only occur via sub-surface methods - All mine related appurtenant facilities would be placed outside of the Priority Protection Habitat 		