



HiLine Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)

FACT SHEET: Greater Sage-Grouse

Program Contact: Craig Miller, Wildlife Biologist (406) 262-2849

The greater sage-grouse was identified as a planning issue early in the process for the HiLine RMP/EIS, 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 sage-grouse 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 by the end of 2015 and make a decision as to whether the sage-grouse warrants protection under ESA.

Based on the identified threats to the sage-grouse and the USFWS timeline for reviewing its listing decision on this species, the BLM initiated the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy to incorporate objectives and adequate conservation measures into RMPs in order to provide assurances for the conservation of the sage-grouse.

The National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy requires evaluating the adequacy of existing RMPs and as necessary, revising RMPs, such as the HiLine Draft RMP/EIS, to incorporate sage-grouse 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 HiLine RMP Preferred Alternative identifies three areas containing substantial and high quality sage-grouse and grassland bird habitats that are displayed on the attached map. Management actions in these three areas would emphasize the conservation and enhancement of sage-grouse and grassland bird habitat.

Greater Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Area: This area is located in south Phillips and south Valley counties and encompasses approximately 930,000 acres. The area is delineated by using “key,” “core” and connectivity data/maps land ownership patterns, and other resource information. Sage-grouse core areas are habitats associated with 1) Montana’s highest densities of sage-grouse, based on male counts and/or 2) sage-grouse lek complexes and associated habitat important to sage-grouse distribution.

Grassland Bird/Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Areas: These two areas are located in north Phillips and north Valley counties and they encompass approximately 299,000 acres. These areas contain substantial and high quality grasslands that support large populations of special status grassland bird species. This suite of species includes the following species of concern: Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, McCown's longspur, Baird's sparrow, and long-billed curlew. Areas were delineated using survey results, predictive models of species distributions, and land ownership patterns. These areas also include core area for greater sage-grouse identified by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.

What is the National Technical Team Report?

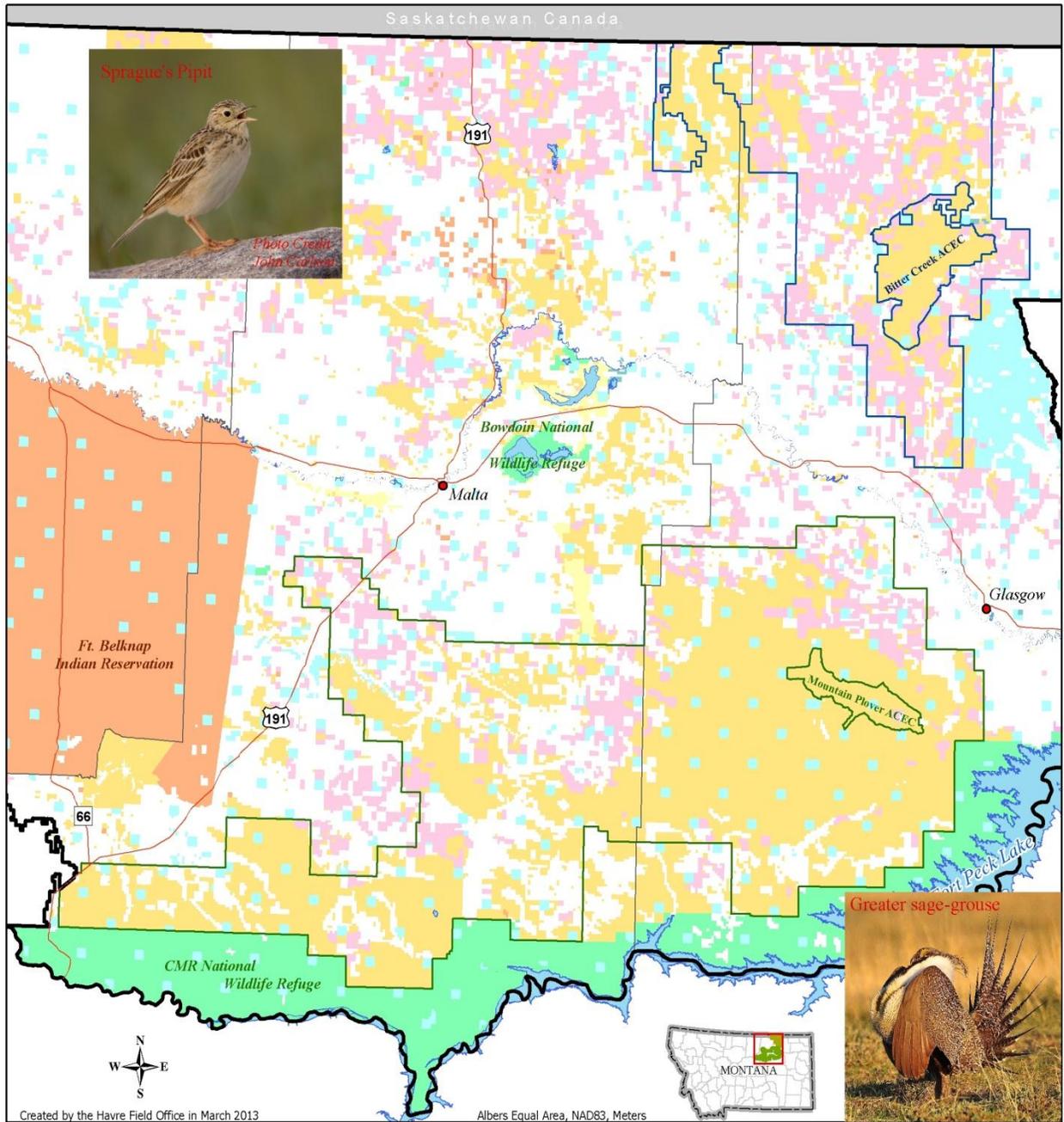
As part of its Greater Sage-Grouse National Planning Strategy, the BLM convened a National Technical Team (NTT). This team was composed of representatives from the BLM, USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey and state wildlife agencies.

The team was charged with developing a report ensuring relevant science related to greater sage-grouse 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 greater sage-grouse management. Rather, the goal of the report is to provide a resource for BLM personnel to use, as appropriate, in addressing on-the-ground conservation through the planning process.

Is the HiLine Draft RMP consistent with the NTT Report?

The BLM has considered and analyzed the NTT conservation measures in the HiLine Draft RMP/EIS in accordance with the most recent guidance, BLM Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2012-044. The 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 greater sage-grouse management and conservation in land use plans (BLM Montana/Dakotas State Office Instruction Memorandum MT-2010-017).



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
HiLine District

Priority Protection Areas

Name

- Grassland Bird/Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Areas
- Greater Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Area
- RMP Boundary
- County
- Interstate
- Highway or State Route
- Towns

**Greater Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Area
and
Grassland Bird/ Greater Sage-Grouse Protection Priority Areas**

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bankhead-Jones Land Use Lands
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Indian Reservation
- Military Reservation and Corps of Engineers
- BLM Monument
- State
- Private
- US Fish and Wildlife National Wildlife Refuge
- State, County, City
- Water

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