

BLM Fire and Aviation

Sage-grouse Conservation Efforts

“Sagebrush habitat is BLM’s #1 conservation commitment.”

- BLM Director Bob Abbey

Fire is an important part of the ecology of sagebrush habitats. It’s not possible to eliminate all fire from sagebrush, nor is it advisable. BLM’s aim is to limit the damage from unwanted wildfires in sagebrush habitat by thorough planning before a fire, prompt action during the fire, and effective rehabilitation of a burned area after the fire. Through large-scale fuels management treatments, BLM can break-up substantial, contiguous areas of highly flammable invasive species, thereby decreasing the chance of large fires that threaten remaining high-quality sagebrush habitat.



Wildfires are a leading cause of sagebrush loss, but BLM can minimize the decline by taking appropriate action before and during wildfires. Some of the steps adopted by BLM to limit damage in sagebrush habitat from unwanted wildfires are:

- Any BLM fire management activities in sagebrush habitat strive to protect sage-grouse habitat, including recovering sage-grouse habitat.
- BLM positions fire suppression resources where wildfires are likely to occur in sagebrush habitat, based on weather and fuels information from Predictive Services.
- Local BLM resource advisors are assigned during initial and extended attack in sagebrush habitat to assist fire managers with integrating sage-grouse considerations into decisions.
- Improved firefighter awareness of sagebrush habitat’s importance is stressed through training, fire briefings, shift plans, and any other appropriate means.
- Sagebrush habitat “toolboxes” have been created for the appropriate management level. The toolboxes contain localized maps of sagebrush habitat and sage-grouse populations, resource advisor’s phone number, and a list of the best management practices applicable to the area.
- Detailed maps depicting sage-grouse populations and sagebrush habitats are used in dispatch centers to help with decisions about fire.
- BLM fire and resource specialists work to enhance sage-grouse habitat by treating cheatgrass and other invasive species, seeding with sagebrush, removing competing vegetation in sagebrush areas, establishing rows of fire-resistant vegetation call “greenstrips”; and opening up overgrown leks or strutting areas.
- In FY 2011, BLM treated 214,607 acres by mowing, seeding or spraying for invasive species in prime sagebrush habitat. That number is expected to rise to about 466,000 acres in 2012.



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