

## **About BLM's Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy**

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) ruled that listing the species for protection under the Endangered Species Act was “warranted but precluded.” FWS said that it had other, higher priority species it needed to address first, but that it would subsequently address the greater sage-grouse and determine if it needed to be listed at a later date.

In its finding, FWS said BLM and the USFS are not “fully implementing the regulatory mechanisms available” to ensure species conservation. BLM and the USFS are addressing the FWS concerns through the planning process formally initiated today.

The greater sage-grouse is an icon of western sagebrush ecosystems. It is a large, rounded-winged, spike-tailed, ground-dwelling bird, about two feet tall and weighing from two to seven pounds. Females are a mottled brown, black and white. Males are larger and have a large white ruff around their neck and bright yellow air sacks on their chest, which they inflate during their elaborate mating displays.

Once seen in great numbers across sagebrush landscapes of the West, sage-grouse have declined in number over the past one hundred years because of the loss and degradation of sagebrush habitats essential for their survival. Greater sage-grouse now occupy only about 56% of the habitat that was available to them before the arrival of settlers of European descent.

States manage all resident wildlife, including sage-grouse, through their respective wildlife management divisions or departments. Federal agencies such as the BLM and the USFS are responsible for managing habitat on the lands under their respective jurisdictions. The sage grouse are culturally significant to American Indian Tribes; many of which have traditional ceremonies, treaty rights, and conservation activities associated with the bird. Local governments and private landowners or administrators may also have responsibilities related to wildlife and habitat.

The BLM's Planning Strategy does not apply to the Washington State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) and California/Nevada “bi-state” DPS, of the Greater Sage-grouse. Sage grouse in Washington have been managed under a specific Washington Greater Sage-Grouse Recovery Plan since 2004. BLM and the USFS has limited involvement in the Washington State DPS and only manages about 5 percent of the remaining habitat for this population. The “bi-state” DPS exists in a small area in California and Nevada. It is being addressed by the FWS with different timeframes and processes. It also does not apply to Gunnison sage-grouse, which is a separate species. The Gunnison sage-grouse is being addressed by the Rangewide Conservation Plan (RCP). It includes a suite of conservation strategies designed to address localized and range-wide threats to the species, and has been used to help design projects and management strategies within its habitat.