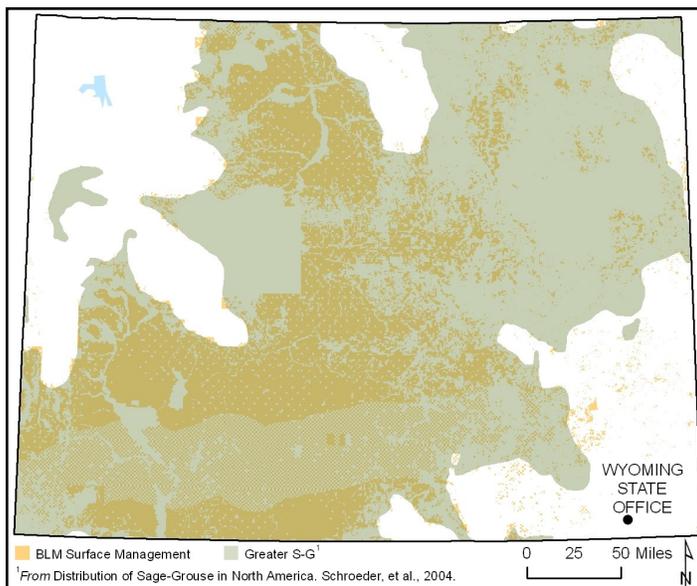


BLM-Wyoming

Sage-grouse Conservation Efforts

On December 29, 2009, BLM-Wyoming issued Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. WY-2010-012, titled, “Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Policy on Wyoming Bureau of Land Management Administered Public Lands including the Federal Mineral Estate.” This memo provides guidance to BLM-Wyoming Field Offices on sage-grouse habitat management for proposed activities and resource management planning. The guidance also provides consistent management practices aimed at conserving sage-grouse and their habitats.



BLM-Wyoming’s policy is to manage sage-grouse seasonal habitats and maintain habitat connectivity in support of population objectives set by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). The guidance is structured to use an adaptive management approach to habitat conservation, restoration, and enhancement. BLM-Wyoming’s goal is to work toward sage-grouse habitat conservation in concert with the WGFD, local sage-grouse working groups, and other partners and stakeholders.

BLM-Wyoming, in cooperation with its many partners, has several ongoing collaborative sage-grouse conservation initiatives underway across the state:

Buffalo Field Office: Recognizing the need to maintain current monitoring of sage-grouse populations in the Powder River Basin, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation initiated an ongoing project in 2008 that annually follows the life cycle of as many as 100 radio-marked sage-grouse females. The data collected has helped to identify successful conservation measures, and guide future activities and habitat enhancements. Anadarko has extended its larvicide application beyond coal-bed natural gas produced water to other natural sources that provide habitat for mosquitoes and pose a risk to human, equine, and wildlife health. Through a number of recent sage-grouse studies, Anadarko has identified and applied numerous successful conservation measures in conducting its operations.

Casper Field Office: Three projects to date are completed or underway, with the goal of improving sage-grouse habitat through a combination of fire and mechanical treatments, providing a reliable water source for wildlife, and improving the sage-grouse knowledge base through studies of seasonal distribution and habitat use by greater sage-grouse in western Natrona County. Partners include WGFD, Miles Land and Livestock, Garrett Ranch Company, Forgey Ranches, Milne Ranches, M&D Livestock, Spano Trust, Cox Ranches, Strohecker Ranch LLC, Short Trusts, Eccles Land and Livestock, WildHorse Basin LLC, Dodds Trust, Clear Creek Cattle Company, Backus Ranch, Martin Land and Livestock, Mule Deer Foundation, Shepperson Ranch, and Rob Shook.

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Lander Field Office: ConocoPhillips (Burlington Resources), Noble Energy, EnCana Oil & Gas, and Devon Energy have all contributed to sage-grouse conservation efforts, which include studying the movement of sage-grouse using radio telemetry and GPS technology, providing funding and support for vegetative treatments in an area of heavy sage-grouse use, and conducting studies on reclamation techniques with the goal of improving reclamation success, which in turn improves sage-grouse habitat.

Pinedale Field Office: The Jonah Interagency Mitigation and Reclamation Office (JIO) manages a \$24.5 million monitoring and mitigation fund committed by EnCana Oil & Gas (USA), Inc. (\$21.5 million) and BP America Production Company (\$3 million).

All of this year's 22 projects will have a direct impact on sage-grouse habitat. One particular project involves making livestock tanks and troughs survivable for sage-grouse and other small animals. Many different wildlife species, including sage-grouse, bats, and small mammals, depend on livestock troughs and tanks for water. However, many of these animals die while trying to drink or bathe in these structures, especially when water levels are low and escape ramps are absent or inadequate. Engaging area youth, over 550 escape ramps are being fabricated and installed in troughs and tanks throughout the BLM Pinedale Field Office. Installation will take place in 2010 and be completed by Future Farmers of America students from Pinedale, Wyo., and other volunteers.

Worland Field Office: Marathon Oil Company contributed money for two separate habitat enhancement projects. One project treated 300 acres of decadent sage-grouse habitat in the Grass Creek Basin. The project is designed to enhance sagebrush regeneration with the goal of improving survival and increasing sage-grouse numbers. The second project developed a water well for wildlife use.

Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative: In Wheat Creek Meadows, some one and a half miles of new fence was built and about eight miles of existing fence replaced or upgraded to maximize forage for wildlife. The project, which involved building an enclosure fence around approximately 1,600 acres, provides protection of wildlife habitat and wetlands, and places special emphasis on maximizing the potential for wildlife species production and diversity. Many special status species call the area home, including the sage-grouse, loggerhead shrike, pygmy rabbit, and great basin spadefoot. Partners, participants, or contributors on this project include Ducks Unlimited, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Western Fuels - Wyoming, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Wind Development and Sage-grouse: The Power Company of Wyoming (PCW) has drafted and proposes to enter into a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) among PCW, The Overland Trail Cattle Company, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), which incorporates a comprehensive Conservation Plan. The CCAA and Conservation Plan commits PCW and TOTCO (property owners) to implementing significant, long-term conservation measures on the 311,000-acre Overland Trail Ranch consisting of a checkerboard of both federal and non-federal lands. The CCAA and Conservation Plan will guide conservation measures accommodating on-going ranching and agricultural operations, including cattle grazing, and developing the proposed Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project. All this while providing a net conservation benefit to the greater sage-grouse, as well as the Northern Leopard Frog and the Wyoming Pocket Gopher. The draft plan identifies threats and mitigation measures to achieve a landscape-scale, integrated conservation approach for these species across the mix of land ownerships.

