



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Utah State Office  
P.O. Box 45155  
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155  
<http://www.blm.gov>



IN REPLY REFER TO:  
6500  
(UT-933)P

February 15, 2011

Information Bulletin No. UT 2011-015

To: District Managers, Monument Manager and AFOs  
From: Deputy State Director, Natural Resources  
Subject: FY 2011 Greater Sage-Grouse Data Call for Annual Status Review

**Program Area:** Wildlife, Fuels, Range Management, Minerals

**Purpose:** The purpose of this IB is to request that Field Offices in Vernal, Price, Salt Lake, Fillmore, Cedar City, Richfield, Kanab, Moab, and the Grand Staircase/Escalante N.M., provide input, where applicable, for the 2011 Greater Sage-grouse Data Call.

**Background:** The greater sage-grouse was determined to be Warranted for Listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on March 5, 2010. Because of other higher listing priorities, the greater sage-grouse was further determined to be precluded from listing at that time, and was designated as a Candidate species for listing. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is required to conduct an annual Status Review to determine if the species should continue to be a Candidate for listing, or if there is enough new information to determine that the species is no longer warranted for listing. This IB provides the necessary information for Field Offices to provide any new information relative to greater sage-grouse that can assist in that decision-making process.

This year's annual review is primarily focused on biological information as well as any changes that have occurred through regulatory mechanism actions between **October 2009 and January 2011**, so some of the Field Offices may have a No Response to this data request. Field Office Managers and Biologists were provided an early copy of the data request on February 7 and should be prepared to provide responses.

**Policy/Action:** Because of the very short response time provided, all offices are requested to submit their responses using the attached Field Office Response Form directly to Steve Madsen at [steve\\_c\\_madsen@blm.gov](mailto:steve_c_madsen@blm.gov) by COB Wednesday February 23, 2011. Even those offices with

a No Response should provide that information to Steve. Attached is the USFWS letter to the State Director requesting the updated information, a summary of the data being requested by

F&WS, as well as a Response Form for each applicable office's response(s). If there are questions please contact Steve via email or at 801-539-4058.

**Budget Impacts:** There are no additional budget impacts. Some offices will likely have a No Response and other offices should be able to provide the information very quickly.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** None

**Contact:** Steve Madsen, UTSO Wildlife Program Lead at 801-539-4058.

Signed by:  
Verlin L. Smith  
Acting DSD, Natural Resources

Authenticated by:  
Rosie Geren  
Records Manager

Attachments:  
F&WS Letter to UT SD  
F&WS Data Request  
Field Office Response Form



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services  
5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

UTAH STATE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE	
STATE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE	
BY	OFFICE INITIALS
DATE	
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Juan Palma, State Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
P.O. Box 45155  
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155

Dear Mr. Palma:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is initiating our annual review of the Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) which was designated as a candidate species in March 2010, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). As a result, the Service will review the species' status annually to determine if any further listing action should be taken based on scientific data. Potential actions include one of the following: proposing the species for immediate listing, removing the species from the candidate list, changing the species' listing priority number, or no change in the species' current status.

As part of this annual review, the Service is soliciting new information regarding changes in the status of the bird, its habitats, or scientific understanding of the species and its habitats. The March 2010 finding for the Greater sage-grouse identified habitat loss and fragmentation and insufficient regulatory mechanisms as the primary factors for designating the species as warranted for listing. Therefore, our annual review will primarily focus on any changes in these two factors. However, realizing the interactive nature of the many items considered for the 2010 listing decision with habitat condition and regulatory mechanisms, we would appreciate receiving any new information regarding sage-grouse and sagebrush status.

Attached is a list of information/data we are collecting for this annual review. To the extent possible, please provide the requested information, including spatial data when appropriate and available. More details of the types of data requested are included in the attached sheet. We have not specified a format for receiving the information requested and leave that to your discretion. Please do not send raw data unless specifically requested on the attached sheet. All information should be submitted to our office no later than March 1, 2011.

We appreciate your efforts in providing the Service the best scientific data regarding the Greater sage-grouse. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Pat Deibert at 307-772-2374, ext. 226, or by e-mail at pat\_deibert@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

R. Mark Sattelberg  
Field Supervisor  
Wyoming Field Office

Enclosure

## **Data Request for the Annual Review of the Greater Sage-Grouse Candidate Status**

The following is a general outline of items for which we are seeking information. We understand that not every responder will need to address every issue or have knowledge of some issues in their locale. Please provide the information that is applicable for your area of jurisdiction. We are requesting information you may have collected between October 2009 and January 2011.

As for conservation efforts, we are requesting any updates to the information provided in the conservation efforts database in 2009, and any new conservation efforts. We will continue to use the conservation efforts database for collecting this information with the exception of those actions that are implemented and are now known (not predicted) to be effective at improving the status of sage-grouse. Information regarding projects previously entered into the conservation efforts database for which effectiveness is now known should be appended to this request.

### **Data Request:**

**Population status, trends and numbers:** This section is primarily directed towards State and Provincial agencies for response.

1. What are the population trends for your State or Province? If describing by population, please use the population descriptions identified in the 2006 WAFWA Conservation Strategy.
  - a. Is the trend expected given weather conditions and population cycling?
2. Has there been any significant change in the populations in your State or Province (more than normal annual fluctuations)?
  - a. If yes, do you know the cause of the population change? Please describe.

**Habitat status and trends:** To the extent possible, for each of items listed below please provide locations, populations affected, acreage affected and geospatial data if available. The primary focus of these questions is directed at occupied habitats (at least during one season) or sagebrush habitats that are essential for long-term species persistence (e.g. connectivity corridors).

1. Areas of sagebrush lost due to permanent conversion (e.g. agricultural lands, subdivisions). In addition to the information requested above, please identify the stage of loss (e.g. proposed, in NEPA review, completed).
  - a. Please identify proposed areas of conversions that have a high certainty of occurrence.

2. Please identify areas that will be converted in association with Farm Bill Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP).
3. For areas where CRP has/is providing habitat for grouse, have there been areas where the lands have been put back into production, resulting in a loss of habitat? If so, please estimate the number of acres potentially lost.
4. Acres of occupied sagebrush habitats that were lost to fire (either wild or prescribed fires).
5. Expansion of conifers or cheatgrass into sagebrush.
6. Incursion of other invasive species that affects habitat quality and utility for sage-grouse. Please identify the invasive species.
7. Proposed energy developments within occupied sagebrush habitats. In addition to the items requested above, please identify the type (oil, gas, wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal, uranium, etc.) and stage of development, well/turbine/development density, and life of project.
8. Please provide information regarding new, proposed, or expanded mining activities.
9. Transmission corridors for energy transmission. Include status (e.g. NEPA completed, under construction, proposed), and any efforts to minimize impacts to sage-grouse and sagebrush
10. Grazing impacts – any significant changes that affect habitat abundance and quality. We are particularly interested in sagebrush treatments that either remove sagebrush habitats or alter their ability to provide current seasonal habitats (e.g. converting winter habitat to more open canopies that may support brood-rearing).
  - a. Please include treatments conducted for the benefit of wild ungulates.
  - b. Please identify any changes in wild equid status.
11. Please identify any known losses of habitat connectivity, both within and between populations.

**Changes in Regulatory Mechanisms:** Regulatory mechanisms are those that are enforceable by either state or provincial statute, federal land management documents, etc. They do not include voluntary efforts. However, please provide information on any voluntary efforts that may be affecting sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. If these efforts have not yet been implemented, or not yet shown to be effective, please identify those projects within the conservation efforts database.

1. Identify the status of BLM RMP revisions that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (either positive or negative), if any.
2. Identify any changes in the status of regulatory mechanisms that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (positive or negative) on other Federal lands (e.g. FS, NPS, military lands).

3. Identify any new regulatory mechanisms that minimize impacts from fire, invasives, energy development, etc. If new regulatory mechanisms are being considered, you should also identify those, along with the certainty of application.
4. Any new State, Provincial, or other local (e.g. county) efforts to address threats?

**Hunting and other uses:** (Please identify state or province)

1. Have there been any changes to hunting regulations for sage-grouse? If so, please identify the reason behind the change, and if applicable, any results.
2. Have there been any changes in recreational impacts (positive or negative) or in religious use of sage-grouse?
3. Please identify current research projects on sage-grouse in your State or Province, and whether or not the project includes bird capture or collaring.

**Disease and Predation:** (please provide locations where appropriate)

1. Please report any West Nile virus outbreaks in 2010.
2. Are you aware of any new diseases/parasites that have population-level effects?
3. Do you have any data that suggests that predators may be limiting sage-grouse in any part of the range, independent of habitat conditions?
4. Do you have data that supports increases in predator populations that are affecting sage-grouse as the result of habitat alterations?

**Other Factors:**

Do you have any new information regarding negative effects of pesticides, contaminants, recreational activities or other human disturbance, drought and other climatic conditions on the Greater sage-grouse?

Please report any new information on the impacts of climate change on sage-grouse or their habitats.

**Literature:**

Please identify any pertinent literature you feel is important for our review. In addition to citations, if you have cited any literature above, please provide the page numbers of the actual citation.

**Contact person(s):**

Please provide us a contact(s) regarding all of the above requested data in case we have questions.

FIELD OFFICE RESPONSE FORM  
GREATER SAGE-GROUSE DATA CALL FOR October 2009 – January 2011

Field Office \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Providing Response \_\_\_\_\_

(The following outline follows the USFWS Data Request for the Annual Review of the Greater Sage-Grouse Candidate Status. See that request for additional instructions.)

**I Population status, trends and numbers**

**No Field Office Response Required**

State agencies will report this information.

**II. Habitat Status and Trends:**

1. Areas of sagebrush lost due to permanent conversion (e.g. agricultural lands, subdivisions, DO NOT INCLUDE WILDFIRE ACRES HERE). Provide locations, populations affected, acreage affected and geospatial data if available. Please identify the stage of loss (e.g. proposed, in NEPA review, completed). Attach geospatial data separately.
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- a. Please identify proposed areas of conversions that have a high certainty of occurrence. \_\_\_\_\_
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2 - 3. Not relevant to BLM

4. Acres of occupied sagebrush habitats that were lost to fire (either wild or prescribed) - NIFC and the WO may provide a national-level response. If you have spatial data please provide separately.
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5. Expansion of conifers or cheatgrass into sagebrush (may be provided by WO nationally). If Field Offices have data, please provide:
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6. Incursion of other invasive species that affect habitat quality and utility for sage-grouse (WO may provide) Respond if a Field Office has new information on invasives affecting sage-grouse habitat other than cheatgrass and conifers:
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7. Proposed energy developments within occupied sagebrush habitats. Please identify the type (oil, gas, wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal, uranium, etc.) and stage of development, well/turbine/development density, and life of project. May be done nationally. (However, BE SURE to address any regulatory mechanisms (i.e. LUPs that identify areas closed to development, contain stipulations, etc., COAs on ROW authorizations and APDs that place restrictions on energy development, otherwise USFWS will assume that if it is open for development in the LUP or if is leased, it cannot be considered habitat for the long term.):
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8. Please provide information regarding new, proposed, or expanded mining activities:

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9. Transmission corridors for energy transmission. Include status (e.g. NEPA completed, under construction, proposed), and any efforts to minimize impacts to sage-grouse and sagebrush:

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10. Grazing Impacts (Please focus on "significant changes" that affected sage-grouse habitat abundance and quality.):

Via email provide a list of sagebrush treatments (include allotment number(s) and acreage) 500 acres or greater in size (other than for fuels modification) that either removed sagebrush habitats or altered their ability to provide current seasonal habitat requirements for sage-grouse.

- a. Please include treatments conducted for the benefit of wild ungulates.
  - b. Please identify any changes in wild horse status:
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11. Loss of habitat connectivity: Presumably state agencies will report this information.

### **III. Changes In Regulatory Mechanisms (PLEASE FOCUS YOUR EFFORT HERE!!)**

**Background Information from USFWS:** *In the March 23, 2010 finding for the Greater sage-grouse the USFWS identified habitat loss and fragmentation, and insufficient regulatory mechanisms to protect habitat, as the primary factors for designating the species as warranted for listing.*

*Given the low resiliency of sagebrush ecosystems, the USFWS recognizes that the results of on-the-ground efforts to address habitat loss and fragmentation will not be immediately evident (but essential to be initiated now for long-term recovery).*

*Addressing insufficient regulatory mechanisms to provide the necessary long-term conservation of sage-grouse habitats can be addressed immediately. The implementation of regulatory mechanisms (e.g. RMP revisions) to support the long-term conservation of sage-grouse habitats is essential to provide an assurance that habitat conservation efforts are not negated in the future. **Immediate attention to stronger regulatory mechanisms through necessary revisions to RMPs in core, high density, or crucial sage-grouse population centers remain the most strategic actions BLM could take to influence the threats that act upon this species.***

*We encourage the Bureau of Land Management to establish the regulatory framework for long-term conservation of sage-grouse while simultaneously initiating habitat rehabilitation and*

*restoration as appropriate on Bureau lands. Without these regulatory structures, sage-grouse are likely to remain warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act.*

1. Identify the status (proposed/draft/completed) of BLM RMP revisions that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (either positive or negative), if any:

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2. Identify any changes in the status of regulatory mechanisms that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (positive or negative) on adjoining Federal lands (e.g. FS, NPS, military lands):

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3. Identify any new regulatory mechanisms that minimize impacts from fire, invasives, energy development, etc. If new regulatory mechanisms are being considered, you should also identify those, along with the certainty of application:

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4. Identify any new State, County, Local Working Group, etc. efforts to address threats?:

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#### **IV. Hunting and Other Uses:**

Coordinate (where appropriate) reporting with your respective state fish and wildlife agency

1. Please identify current research projects on sage-grouse in your area, and whether or not the project includes bird capture or collaring:

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#### **V. Disease and Predation**

Coordinate (where appropriate) reporting with your respective state fish and wildlife agency

1. Do you have any data that suggests that predators may be limiting sage-grouse in any part of the range, independent of habitat conditions?:

(Submit data via email)

2. Do you have data that supports increases in predator populations that are affecting sage-grouse as the result of habitat alterations?: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Submit data via email)

**VI. Other Factors:**

Do you have any new information regarding negative effects of pesticides, contaminants, recreational activities or other human disturbance, drought and other climatic conditions on the Greater sage-grouse? (Please provide citations if appropriate):

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Finally, the USFWS is not asking us to update the conservation efforts data base at this time, however, Jason Robinson from UDWR is updating Utah's Sage-grouse Conservation Efforts Database with updated information relative to on-going Watershed Restoration Initiative projects with sage-grouse habitat improvement objectives.