

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

March 17, 2004

In Reply Refer To:
6500 (WO-230) P

EMS TRANSMISSION 03/19/2004
Instruction Memorandum No. 2004-136
Expires: 09/30/2005

To: State Directors, NSTC and WO Officials
From: Director
Subject: Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitat Conservation

DD: 03/24/2004

Program Areas: Wildlife Management

Purposes: Issuance of Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) guidance for (1) sage-grouse habitat mapping; and (2) participation in State-led sage-grouse conservation planning.

Policy/Action: The following two actions are directly related to sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat conservation by the BLM:

Sage-grouse Habitat Mapping: The BLM, Forest Service and State wildlife agencies began broad resolution sage-grouse habitat mapping in 2001. The goal of this mapping is to develop information using local expertise about the current extent of sage-grouse habitat and restoration priorities. A recent assessment of the status of these mapping efforts determined that many States have completed their first generation maps. However, additional work is required in several States to complete their mapping efforts. Discussions among members of the recently-established Interagency Executive Sage-grouse Conservation Steering Committee have determined that completing this task is one of the highest short-term priorities. Our goal is to complete the mapping in time to be considered in the Fish and Wildlife Services's review of the status of the Greater sage-grouse. To meet that deadline, the individual State mapping will need to be completed by March 24, 2004. I am requesting State Directors provide the necessary resources to accomplish this task by that deadline. The maps need to be digital and, along with the metadata, are to be provided directly to Bruce Durtsche at the National Science and Technology Center. Additional clarification and adjustment may be needed during the compilation of State maps. Information on metadata and mapping standards is provided in attachment 1. Please contact Mr. Durtsche at (303) 236-6310 if you have specific questions about your mapping efforts.

Participation in State-level Sage-grouse Conservation Planning: In 1999, twelve western State fish and wildlife agencies initiated conservation planning for sage-grouse. The resulting plans will serve as the principal conservation tool for sage-grouse within each State; however the status of these planning efforts varies from State to State. The BLM is committed to working cooperatively with each State in completing these plans. It is especially critical that we work closely with the States as we develop our own State-level conservation implementation strategies and that the two efforts be as seamless as possible. The value of BLM's sage-grouse strategy will be based, in part, on the combined effectiveness of the individual State conservation plans. Therefore, it is my goal that each BLM State office, along with its partners, completes their BLM State-level strategy by January 2005. In those cases where BLM and the State have developed a timeline with a later completion date, I ask that the BLM and affected State explore opportunities to revise the schedule to meet this important goal and report back to me on the new timeframes.

State Directors are responsible for ensuring that each State Office has a primary point of contact(s) that is responsible for coordination with your respective State wildlife agency counterparts in development and implementation of the State

Conservation Plan.

Background: In July 2003, Instruction Memorandum 2003-209 provided background on the development of a BLM national sage-grouse habitat conservation strategy to conserve and restore declining sage-grouse habitat on BLM-managed lands. Since that date, the BLM has completed a draft national conservation strategy which will be finalized and issued in June 2004, after the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) has completed their range-wide assessment of the status of sage-grouse populations and habitat.

On January 5, 2004, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the “eastern” subspecies of sage-grouse was not warranted for listing primarily because the “eastern” subspecies is no longer recognized as a distinct subspecies or as a distinct population segment as defined by the Endangered Species Act. However, the FWS also determined that while the “eastern” subspecies was not warranted for further consideration under the ESA, they do intend to address all remaining petitions by March 29, 2004. Currently, there are several other petitions to list the Greater sage-grouse range-wide. For BLM to be responsive to the FWS efforts a substantial amount of information needs to be compiled and made available with very short time frames.

Impact on Budget: Implementing this request has minimal budget implications.

Coordination: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) was coordinated with Planning, Assessment and Community Support (WO-210) and Rangeland Resources (WO-220).

Contact: E. Dwight Fielder, Group Manager, WO-230, (202) 452-7761 or Cal McCluskey, Wildlife Biologist, (208) 373-4042, Mark Hilliard, Wildlife Biologist, (208) 373-4040, Julie Moore, Endangered Species Specialist, (202-452-7746).

Signed by:
Francis R. Cherry, Jr.
Acting Director

Authenticated by:
Barbara J. Brown
Policy & Records Group, WO-560

1 Attachment

[1- Guidance on 1:100,000 scale sage-grouse habitat mapping \(3 pp\)](#)

BLM Guidelines for Mapping Mid to Broad Scale Existing Sage Grouse/Sagebrush and Other Plant Communities and Other Information.

Provide the data gathered from 1:100,000 scale quadrangles for your BLM State as a double precision, Arc Info coverage with polygon topology. Any documented projection is acceptable.

Attributes should include the field's class, derived class (optionally populated), and acres, formatted as described below:

<u>Item Name</u>	<u>Width</u>	<u>Output Type</u>		<u>N.Dec</u>
Area	8	18	F	5
Perimeter	8	18	F	5
sghab#	4	5	B	-
sghab-id	4	5	B	-
Class	16	16	C	-
Class2	16	16	C	-
Acres	16	16	F	3

Polygons must be attributed by class, for example K = Sagebrush/Perennial Grass Habitats, etc. Other attributes are optional.

Table 1 pertains to the “core,” vegetation related themes that are the centerpiece of this mapping effort, attributed by field ‘class’.

Table 2 pertains to “derived,” habitat condition or development activities related themes, attributed by field ‘derived-class’ and optionally populated.

Questions: contact Bruce Durtsche (303) 236-6310 at the BLM National Science and Technology Center.

TABLE 1. VEGETATION THEMES

ATTRIBUTE (Class)	DESCRIPTION
K	Sagebrush/Perennial Grass Habitats - Areas with generally at least 5 percent sagebrush canopy cover and a native or seeded perennial grass understory.
R1	Perennial Grassland Habitats - Native or seeded grasslands with generally less than 5 percent canopy cover.
R2 *	Annual Grass Habitats With or Without Sagebrush - Areas dominated by annual grasses with or without sagebrush. * Note: Category R2 should be used only if it is not possible to map using categories R2A and R2B at this time
R2A *	Annual Grass Habitats With Sagebrush - Areas dominated by annual grasses with sagebrush. -- annual grass understory and <i>sagebrush present</i> * Note: Category R2A is a “subcategory” of R2. If not possible to map at this time, use R2
R2B *	Annual Grass Habitats Without Sagebrush - Areas dominated by annual grasses without sagebrush. -- annual grass understory and <i>sagebrush not present</i> (essentially pure annual grass stand) * Note: Category R2B is a “subcategory” of R2. If not possible to map at this time, use R2
R3	Conifer Encroachment Habitats - Sagebrush or perennial grassland areas (potential for sagebrush reestablishment) with conifer encroachment occurring.
NA	Other Than Sagebrush Plant Communities - Sagebrush communities not present.
U	No Data - Areas not mapped.

TABLE 2. DERIVED THEMES (Optional)

ATTRIBUTE (Derived)	DESCRIPTION
LH	Linkage Habitats - These are corridors or areas joining areas of isolated populations, through which sage grouse currently move or may eventually move to occupy.
PS	Population Strongholds - Populations of sage grouse that have robust numbers (relatively large and stable or increasing) and where habitat fragmentation has not precluded movement between habitats and adjacent populations.
IP	Isolated Populations - Populations of sage grouse are relatively small and habitat fragmentation has isolated individual populations.
DH	Developed Habitats - One or more of the above vegetation habitats where human development activities have disturbed portions of the landscape surface. These types of habitats consist of intensive oil/gas development (DH1), surface mines (DH2), transmission lines (DH3) and other utility corridors (DH4), housing subdivisions (DH5), roads (high density or high volume)(DH6), or other types of developments (DHx).
HR	Habitats At Risk - These habitats consist of the above vegetation habitats where there is a reasonable foreseeable development potential. To determine Habitats At Risk, Field Office personnel have provided information of proposed projects that may soon have NEPA documentation initiated, or where NEPA documentation has recently been completed for the above described types of development.