

Eastern Region Greater Sage-grouse Planning Process

November 2011

The BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy is a planning approach that provides the framework and structure for transparent interagency and stakeholder collaboration on long-term greater sage-grouse conservation and habitat restoration. Under the planning strategy, the BLM will review its principal, existing regulatory framework for sage-grouse conservation—the land use planning process—to determine the development and implementation of new or revised regulatory mechanisms. The focus will be on incorporating regionally-appropriate, science-based conservation measures into BLM land use planning efforts through coordinated, cooperative stakeholder engagement.

The BLM's primary objective for greater sage-grouse is simple: We want to conserve and restore sagebrush habitat on a range-wide basis in the short term for the long term.

Greater sage-grouse benefit from and make use of suitable habitat – regardless of land ownership and management responsibility, so all stakeholders must be engaged in the conservation efforts. Another of our objectives is to make the sagebrush conservation work as collaborative as possible. We know that one agency cannot accomplish all that needs to be done on its own. The BLM has been working with state wildlife agencies and other organizations and working groups to improve greater sage-grouse habitat. We'll depend on these organizations even more as we move forward with our conservation work.

Among the threats to greater sage-grouse habitat are urbanization, wildfire, recreation, energy development, livestock grazing and disease. Multiple threats mean we'll need a diverse set of solutions rather than singular approaches. We have the proper perspective about potential conflicts. At times, we're going to need to make tough decisions among competing interests in our efforts to conserve sagebrush habitat.

Regional efforts will also allow the BLM to focus on the differing threats and conservation opportunities available between the two regions. The Eastern Region (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, northern and northeastern Utah and Wyoming) will focus on addressing the continued loss, fragmentation and degradation of greater sage-grouse habitat as a result of energy development and the accompanying infrastructure. The Eastern Region will also address other threats identified through the planning process.

The BLM is developing interim management measures with the help of our state and federal partners to help ensure that sagebrush habitat is conserved in the short term until we can address conservation measures through resource management plan (RMP) amendments or revisions as necessary. RMPs are the BLM's basic land-use plans and provide the platform for long-term decisions effecting public land management over the next 15-25 years.

We'll start the process to amend or revise RMPs to reflect new conservation measures, starting in fall 2011. Greater sage-grouse habitat is addressed in 73 current RMPs across the entire existing range of the species.

We'll need the help of the public as we move forward. In early 2012, we'll begin the "public scoping" process where we ask interested people, organizations and other agencies for their thoughts and opinions. Where the public scoping process is not appropriate or available, the BLM will hold additional public workshops to engage the public while we address the needs of the greater sage-grouse on BLM lands. All public involvement will culminate with publication of several Final Environmental Impact Statements in 2014.

