

## **Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA)**

### **What is a Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA)?**

CCAs are voluntary conservation agreements between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and one or more federal or private partners. The FWS works directly with partners like the BLM and its CCA participants to identify potential wildlife threats and subsequently plan for conservation measures necessary to address the identified potential threats. The design and implementation of the conservation measures is a collaborative effort. BLM will monitor and report on the effectiveness of the voluntarily selected measures that address the potential threats. Assurances, such as those available to non-federal landowners are not available to BLM or other federal agencies. This is because federal agencies are subject to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the agencies are not provided the same incentives and assurances as private or non-federal landowners.

### **What is a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA)?**

Conservation of animal and plant resources on non-federal lands is important because many species rely heavily – or in some cases, entirely – on such lands. However, due to concern about potential land use restrictions that could occur if a species becomes listed under the ESA, some property owners have been reluctant to engage in conservation activities that encourage use of their land or water by such species. A Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) addresses this concern by providing incentives for non-federal property owners to engage in voluntary conservation activities that can help make listing a species unnecessary. More specifically, a CCAA provides participating property owners with a permit containing assurances that if they engage in certain conservation actions for species included in the agreement, they will not be required to implement additional conservation measures beyond those in the CCAA. Also, additional land, water, or resource use limitations will not be imposed on them should the species become listed in the future, unless they consent to such changes.

### **What is the goal of a CCA and/or CCAA?**

The goal is to achieve early and durable conservation benefit for the species through cooperative, voluntary conservation efforts on federal and non-federal lands. Actions taken by a landowner to remove or reduce threats meet this objective when it is the assessment that if all private landowners and producers were to adopt equivalently effective conservation measures, there would be no need to list the species based on the threats the measures address.

### **What is the benefit to a landowner?**

In exchange for taking action to remove or reduce threats to candidate species, or not taking action that could create threats, the FWS agrees not to require additional conservation measures if the species of concern ever becomes listed.

### **Aren't CCAAs and CCAs a tool used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

CCAAs and CCAs are voluntary agreements that FWS participates in, but the agreements are driven by the voluntary commitments from partners. BLM Wyoming is working collaboratively with FWS and voluntary participants, in this case livestock grazing



permitter/lessee to provide seamless conservation strategies across landownerships and operations. The CCAA/CCA programs are voluntary conservation tools that provide one way for livestock producers operating on both private and non-federal lands as well as federal lands to contribute to the conservation of Candidate species prior to their listing under ESA. For this contribution, private and non-federal landowners are given assurances that future operations will not be asked to accommodate additional measures for conservation that those agreed to at the signature of the agreement.

**Is livestock grazing considered a threat to sage-grouse?**

Proper livestock grazing management is not a threat to Greater sage-grouse. Improper livestock grazing practices and/or unfortunate timing of ranch management activities can have negative impacts on Greater sage-grouse and their seasonal habitats.

**What is BLM's purpose for a CCA?**

The primary purpose of the CCA is to promote grazing practices that reduce or eliminate potential threats to sage-grouse and their habitats on enrolled allotments and to ensure that existing, neutral or beneficial grazing practices are likely to continue uninterrupted if the species is listed in the future. BLM CCAs are also intended to facilitate consistent implementation of conservation measures across public and private lands where a participating permittee/lessee also has enrolled their private lands in the *Greater Sage-Grouse Umbrella CCAA for Wyoming Ranch Management*.

**What is an allotment-level CCA?**

It is an agreement to implement, monitor, and report on the effectiveness of conservation measures as to their benefit for sage-grouse habitat on an allotment scale. There is a statewide CCA umbrella that mirrors the statewide umbrella CCAA.

**Has the BLM developed an “umbrella CCA” comparable to the Wyoming Umbrella CCAA?**

Yes. The Statewide CCA is not an umbrella in exactly the same fashion as the CCAA, but the two have the same effect. New CCAs will rely on the Statewide CCA for standardization and finalization. The Statewide CCA very closely mirrors the CCAA document and includes the same list of voluntary measures for consideration in discussions of identified potential threats.

**What impact does a CCA have on my grazing permit?**

A permittee's or lessee's participation in a CCA does not change or otherwise modify their existing grazing permit or Allotment Management Plan. The conservation measures for the CCA are intended to require no additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to implement. Permit or lease terms and conditions are separate from the CCA and CCAA process. If new terms and conditions are proposed for a particular permit or lease as a result of planning processes, they are not being proposed because of the CCA. It is likely that some may be similar, but that is a function of the RMPs and CCAs working separately with sage-grouse and livestock grazing. It is not an effort to make CCAs mandatory or regulatory in any way.