

## Federal Agencies Announce Initial Step to Incorporate Greater Sage-Grouse

### Conservation Measures into Land Management Plans

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) today announced the initial steps in a formal planning process to evaluate greater sage-grouse conservation measures in land use plans in 10 Western states. The two public land management agencies are opening a 60-day public comment period on issues that should be addressed in Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEISs) that will be published in the Federal Register on December 9.

Based on ongoing threats to the greater sage-grouse and its habitat throughout the West, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2015 deadline for making a decision whether to list the species under the Endangered Species Act, the BLM and the USFS aim to incorporate consistent objectives and conservation measures into relevant Resource Management Plans by September 2014. As a result, the accompanying environmental reviews will be conducted under expedited timeframes.

"As the steward of more than half of all remaining sagebrush habitat in the United States, the BLM is playing a leading role in developing and implementing land management actions to conserve the sage-grouse and its habitat," BLM Director Bob Abbey said. "Today's action is the first step in formally involving the states, tribes, local governments, researchers, organizations, and the interested public in addressing sage-grouse conservation in our multiple land management plans in 10 western states. Working with our partners, we will use these land use plans to implement actions range-wide so we can conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM lands over the short term and the long term."

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell said, "the agency is committed to conserving the habitat of the greater sage-grouse to prevent the species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. We welcome the invitation from the Bureau of Land Management to work together as one federal family on this important issue."

Greater sage-grouse currently use as much as 47 million acres of land managed by the BLM, and about nine million acres of land managed by the USFS. As many as 98 BLM Resource Management Plans address greater

sage-grouse, while the USFS expects to evaluate conservation measures into as many as nine Land and Resource Management Plans considered high priority for the conservation of sage-grouse. The BLM and the USFS expect to prepare EISs to analyze proposed amendments to some Land Use Plans that are not currently undergoing amendment or revision. For plans already under amendment or revision, the BLM and the USFS will consider incorporating conservation measures, either through the ongoing amendment or revision process, or through SEISs.

In an effort to encourage tailored, region-specific partnerships, cooperation and restoration measures, the planning process will be coordinated under two regions: an Eastern region which includes land use plans in the states of Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota and portions of Utah and Montana; and a Western Region which includes land use plans in northeastern California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and portions of Utah and Montana.

Comments may be made to the BLM during the scoping meetings or by any of the following methods:

. Eastern Region

o web site: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/eastern.html>

o email: [sageeast@blm.gov](mailto:sageeast@blm.gov)

o fax: 307-775-6042

o mail: Eastern Region Project Manager, BLM Wyoming State Office, 5353 Yellowstone, Cheyenne, WY 82009

. Western Region

o web site: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/western.html>

o email: [sagewest@blm.gov](mailto:sagewest@blm.gov)

o fax: 775-861-6747

o mail: Western Region Project Manager, BLM Nevada State Office, 1340 Financial Blvd., Reno, NV 89502