



National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Issue No. 1, December 2011



BLM and FS Launch National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

This is the first in a series of newsletters about the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (FS) are implementing this strategy to aid in the conservation of the greater sage-grouse and to assure that conservation measures are included in each agency's respective land use plans (LUPs). This newsletter contains background information, an overview of the planning strategy, and guidance on how to get and stay involved throughout the process.

Figure 1 – Sage Grouse



To initiate this process, the two agencies published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on December 9, 2011, announcing the beginning of a scoping period to solicit public comments and identify issues. The BLM is the lead agency on these EISs and SEISs, and the FS is participating as a cooperating agency. This process is being completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, and the Resources

Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The BLM and the FS are preparing environmental impact statements (EISs) and supplemental EISs (SEISs) to identify and incorporate explicit objectives and appropriate sage-grouse conservation measures into LUPs.

Background

In April 2010, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) found that the greater sage-grouse warrants protection under the ESA but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, high-priority species first. One reason for this decision was an identified need for more adequate regulatory mechanisms to ensure species conservation.

As land management agencies, the BLM and FS are responsible for managing sage-grouse habitat. Since LUPs provide the regulatory mechanism for such management, the BLM and FS, through the planning process, are incorporating explicit objectives and appropriate conservation measures into LUPs. For those LUPs not already in a revision process, the BLM intends to complete revisions within the next three years to aid conservation of the greater sage-grouse and avert a potential listing under the ESA.

The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of LUPs and address, as necessary, revisions and amendments throughout the range of the greater sage-grouse.

Note that the sage-grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) in California and Nevada and the Columbia Basin DPS in Washington are not part of this process and are being addressed through other planning efforts.

The BLM and FS have determined that the proposed strategy is a major federal action which requires the preparation of EISs in accordance with NEPA. The agencies will seek public and agency input to identify issues to address in the EISs and coordinate with other federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies in preparing the EISs. The BLM will conduct detailed environmental studies on the proposed and alternative strategies, and analyze how implementation of each approach may affect the quality of the environment.

Overview of the National Planning Strategy

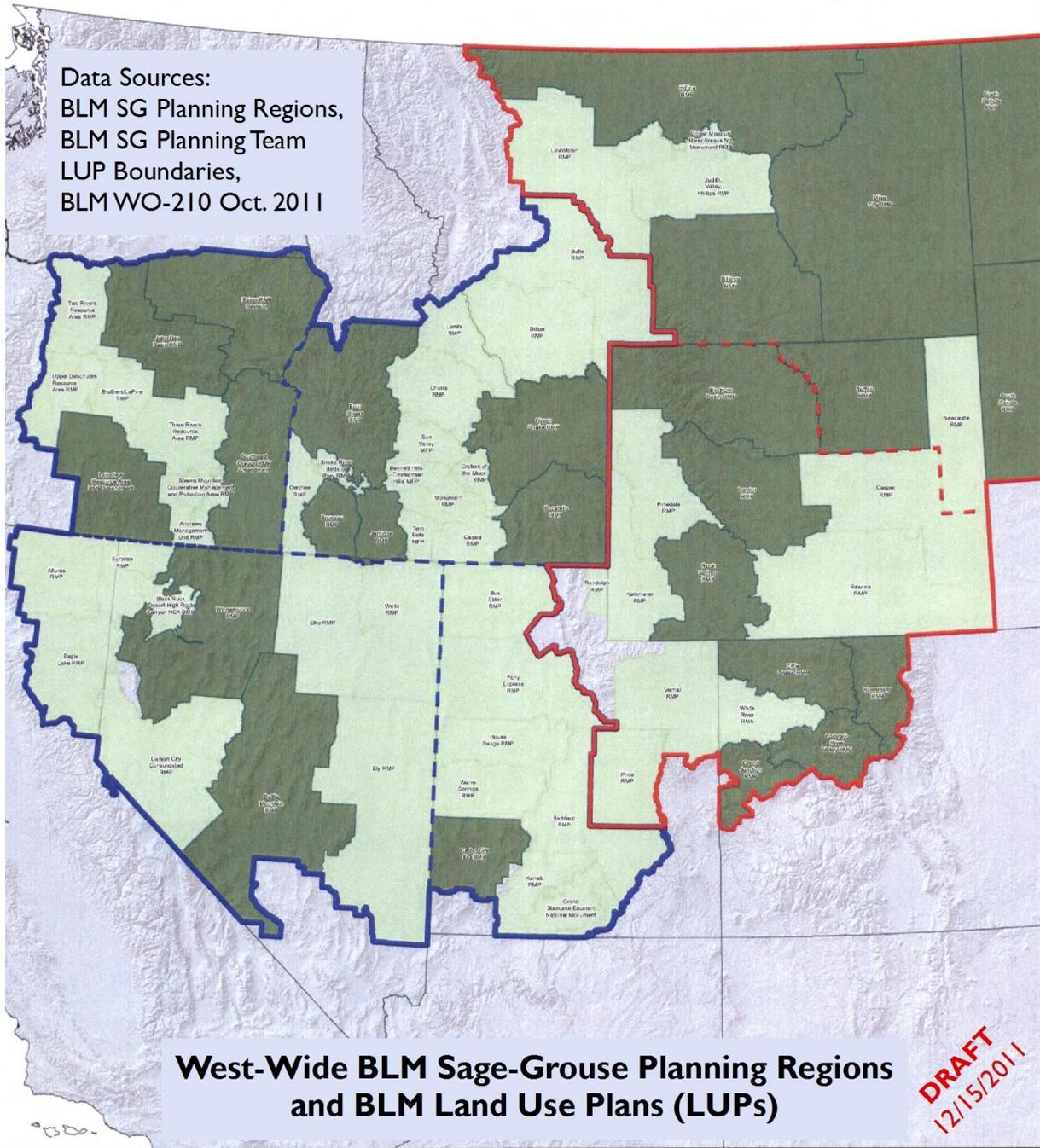
The BLM is developing a national strategy to preserve, conserve, and restore sagebrush habitat, the ecological home of the greater sage-grouse. The BLM will issue national policy and direction, based on the best available science, resource and environmental needs and information, and their multiple-use mission to guide the agency's actions in future planning efforts. At the local level, the BLM and FS will work on formal plan "amendments" for LUPs that will implement ongoing and new conservation and habitat restoration measures. As many as 98 BLM LUPs address greater sage-grouse, while the FS expects to evaluate conservation measures in as many as 9 LUPs that cover FS planning units considered high priority for the conservation of sage-grouse. LUPs to be amended are listed in the NOI, available through the [project Web site](#).

For this planning effort, the BLM has divided the greater sage-grouse's range into Eastern and Western Regions. Grouse and grouse habitat are affected by a variety of factors that vary in intensity in different parts of its range. Habitat alteration due to wildfire impacts the Western Region more strongly, while habitat fragmentation due to human development has a greater influence in the Eastern Region. Dividing the species' range into two regions makes it easier to tailor conservation actions to the specific conditions of an area. This division also allows for closer cooperation and partnerships on region-specific conservation and habitat restoration measures.

Western Regional Planning Strategy

You are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed interest in BLM and FS activities within at least one of the four sub-regions for this planning strategy: Nevada and northeastern California; Oregon; Idaho and southwestern Montana; and Utah. Each sub-region will undertake its own EIS. Each sub-region-specific EIS will specifically address identified key issues and will analyze the impacts of amending all pertinent LUPs with that guidance. The Record of Decision issued at the end of the EIS process will amend the LUPs to include the new management direction.

Figure 2 – West-Wide BLM Sage-Grouse Planning Regions and BLM Land Use Plans



- Existing LUPS
- LUPs in Progress
- East SG Planning Region
- East SG Planning Sub-Region
- West SG Planning Region
- West SG Planning Sub-Region



Schedule

December 2011 – Notice of Intent Published in the Federal Register

December 2011 to February 2012 – 60-day Scoping Period

November 2012 to January 2013 – 90-day Draft EISs Public Comment Period

October 2013 – Publish Final EISs and Proposed RMP Amendments

May 2014 – Issue Records of Decision and Approved RMP Amendments

Next Steps

The initial step in the EIS process is scoping, during which the agencies coordinate with the public and other agencies to identify issues of concern to be addressed in the EIS, potential effects, and the degree to which these effects will be analyzed. The BLM will host 26 scoping meetings across the four sub-regions where the public may submit comments on FS and BLM LUPs. While all meetings will accept scoping comments on the newly initiated plan amendments started with the recent NOI, some areas may have plan changes already underway in their local BLM District. In these areas, meetings will also provide information regarding the stage of the process that the local plan is in, which may be too far along to accept additional scoping comments on that particular plan. Meeting dates and locations are listed on the next page.

A Scoping Report will summarize all public input and will be made available on the [project Web site](#). The project team will then incorporate public input, as appropriate under NEPA, into the sub-region-specific EISs. In the latter part of 2012, each sub-region will release its Draft EIS. You will then have an opportunity to review what the team has prepared and comment on changes you would like to see. With that feedback, each sub-region team will develop a Final EIS, which are scheduled for release in the fall of 2013. Finally, each BLM sub-region team will have its own EIS and accompanying Record of Decision and will complete the process by incorporating the planning strategy into the respective LUPs.

Public Meetings Scheduled for Early 2012

Figure 3 – A Public Meeting



Visit the [project Web site](#) and attend the public scoping and informational meetings to learn more about the project, visit with BLM and FS staff, view maps, and submit comments. All meetings (except Ely) will run from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm and will include informational materials and an opportunity to submit comments. Note the Ely meeting will run from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Presentation materials will be on display throughout the meeting and will be

available on the [project Web site](#). Specific locations for these meetings will be announced through local media and on the [BLM's greater sage-grouse Web site](#). Following is a list of the public meeting dates and locations:

Tonopah, NV – Monday January 9th - Tonopah Convention Center, 301 Brougner Avenue, Tonopah, Nevada

Boise, ID – Monday January 9th - Red Lion Boise Hotel, 1800 Fairview Avenue, Boise, Idaho

Ely, NV – Tuesday January 10th - Ely District BLM Office, 702 North Industrial Way, Ely, Nevada (note the Ely meeting is from 4 until 6 pm)

Idaho Falls, ID – Tuesday January 10th - Red Lion Hotel, 475 River Parkway, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Elko, NV – Wednesday January 11th - Hilton Garden Inn, 3650 Idaho Street, Elko, Nevada

Salmon, ID – Wednesday January 11th - Salmon Valley Business and Innovation Center, 803 Monroe Street, Salmon, Idaho

Winnemucca, NV – Thursday January 12th - Winnemucca Inn, 741 W. Winnemucca Boulevard, Winnemucca, Nevada

Dillon, MT – Thursday January 12th - National Guard Armory, 1050 Highway 41, Dillon, Montana

Lakeview, OR – Tuesday January 17th - BLM Lakeview District Office, 1301 South G Street, Lakeview, Oregon

Price, UT – Tuesday January 17th - Carbon County Event Center, 310 South Fairgrounds Road, Price, Utah

Alturas, CA – Wednesday January 18th - Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Parish Hall, 507 E 4th Street, Alturas, California

Vernal, UT – Wednesday January 18th - Western Park Convention Center, 300 East 200 South, Vernal, Utah

Susanville, CA – Thursday January 19th - Jensen Hall, Lassen County Fairgrounds, Susanville, California

Salt Lake City, UT – Thursday January 19th - Hampton Inn & Suites, 307 North Admiral Byrd Road, Salt Lake City, Utah

Ontario, OR – Monday January 23rd - Four Rivers Cultural Center, 676 SW 5th Avenue, Ontario, Oregon

Randolph, UT – Monday January 23rd - Randolph Senior Center, 5 North Main Street, Randolph, Utah

Baker City, OR – Tuesday January 24th - Baker County Library, 2400 Resort Street, Baker City, Oregon

Snowville, UT – Tuesday January 24th - Snowville Town Hall, 20 West Main Street, Snowville, Utah

Burns, OR – Wednesday January 25th - Harney County Senior Center, 17 S. Alder Avenue, Burns, Oregon

Twin Falls, ID – Wednesday January 25th - Canyon Springs Red Lion Inn, 1357 Blue Lakes Boulevard, Twin Falls, Idaho

Prineville, OR – Thursday January 26th - Stafford Inn, 1773 NE Third Street, Prineville, Oregon

Pocatello, ID – Thursday January 26th - The Clarion, 1399 Pocatello Bench Road, Pocatello, Idaho

Reno, NV – Monday January 30th - Hyatt Place, 1790 East Plumb Lane, Reno, Nevada

Richfield, UT – Monday January 30th, Sevier County Clerks Room #B46 Auditorium, 250 N. Main Ave., Richfield, Utah

Kanab, UT – Tuesday January 31st - Kane City Library, 374 North Main Street, Kanab, Utah

Cedar City, UT – Wednesday February 1st - Heritage Center, Festival Hall, 105 N. 100 E., Cedar City, Utah

How to Get Involved

Get on the mailing list by sending a request to sagewest@blm.gov

Visit the [National Strategy Web site](#)

Visit the [Western Region's strategy Web site](#)

Attend public meetings: Public meetings will be held in 26 cities across the Western Region. See above list and for dates, times, and locations.

Submit questions: Questions regarding the National Sage-Grouse Strategy can be submitted to SageQuery@blm.gov

Submit comments at a public meeting or via one of the methods listed below. Comments will be considered as part of the scoping process until February 16th 2012. You can submit comments even if you haven't attended a public meeting.

E-mail: sagewest@blm.gov

Fax: 775-861-6747

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