

Appendix F

Key Habitat Map Update Process



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F. Idaho Key Habitat Map Update Process and Provisions for Addressing GRSG documented in New Areas Outside Priority, Important and General Habitat Management Areas

Modifications to Priority, Important and General Habitat Management Areas:

The BLM and FS have worked closely with the State of Idaho and USFWS in using the best available science to delineate GRSG occupancy in Idaho to the extent possible, as reflected in the boundaries of the Priority, Important and General Habitat Management Areas (PHMA, IHMA, GHMA) identified in this Plan. These management areas will be reviewed and updated approximately every 5 years. Prior to a specific 5-year update, however, it is possible that due to progress toward conservation and habitat restoration, vegetation succession or new information arising from scientific studies or targeted surveys, additional areas of occupied GRSG habitat may be identified, occurring outside the three management areas. Such new areas of occupancy must be based on sound science (e.g., telemetry, formal habitat assessments documenting GRSG usage etc.) and represent an occupied seasonal habitat. They must not be based solely on random or occasional observations of GRSG. In these areas GRSG habitat on BLM and/or FS lands will be managed in accordance with Required Design Features, seasonal restrictions and/or BMPs deemed appropriate by BLM or FS for that area (See Appendix B Required Design Features). During the 5-year map update plan amendment process, formal designation of these new areas as PHMA, IHMA or GHMA will be considered by BLM/FS in coordination with the State of Idaho and USFWS along with other recommendations for modification to existing PHMA, IHMA or GHMA areas

Modifications to the Key Habitat Map:

The Idaho GRSG Key habitat map displays several broad vegetation classes relevant to GRSG conservation and habitat restoration, that underlie and help inform the Priority, Important and General Habitat Management Areas. These vegetation classes include Key habitat, perennial grasslands, annual grasslands and conifer encroachment areas, and have been utilized in GRSG conservation in Idaho since 2000.

As directed in IM ID-2013-010, Idaho BLM annually updates the Key Habitat map. The purpose of this Instruction Memorandum (IM) is to request updates to the Idaho Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map. The update is needed to reflect habitat changes resulting from wildfire, succession, and vegetation treatments that occurred or were observed since the last update. This update is also intended to capture additional edits recommended by the field offices, sage-grouse Local Working Groups (LWG), or agency partners in sage-grouse conservation.

Factors to Consider During Annual Updates: The following factors are applicable to land of any ownership status for which the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) data are available, or for which data or other information are provided by non-BLM partners. If such new data are unavailable, or not provided by partners, retain the existing spatial data in the dataset:

1. Wildfires that have occurred in the most recent calendar year fire season on land administered by the BLM and on land not administered by the BLM.
2. Vegetation management projects that have been completed within key habitat or potential restoration areas of sage-grouse planning areas. This includes activities such as burned area rehabilitation seeding projects, sagebrush thinning/reduction, conifer thinning/reduction, restoration of annual grasslands, new fuel breaks, etc. However, only consider those treatment areas completed and where a change in habitat classification has occurred (e.g., from annual grassland to perennial grassland; perennial grassland to key habitat, etc.). Areas planned for treatment or in the process of treatment (e.g., cheatgrass chemical treatment is completed, but seeding is pending) should not be included until an observed change in habitat category is achieved.
3. Changes in habitat status resulting from vegetation succession, such as perennial grasslands that have transitioned to key habitat due to increased sagebrush cover.
4. Habitat mapping errors or omissions that have been identified in the existing Idaho Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map and other edits recommended by sage-grouse conservation partners, as appropriate. For this item, it is crucial that BLM field office biologists or an alternate staff specialist coordinate closely with their agency partners, especially the FS and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), to actively solicit and resolve additional suggested edits that we may not be aware of. Those edits must also be incorporated into the respective BLM office's update submission. This is vital to ensure that the update is completed efficiently and as collaboratively as possible.
5. Since the Idaho Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map is intended for use by all conservation partners in Idaho, it is important that we maintain a seamless coverage across land ownerships. In that regard, when updating do not clip out BLM (or non-BLM land) on the basis of land ownership. Rather, make edits based on vegetation boundaries only, using the best available information and professional judgment. If you have uncertainties about accuracies for certain areas, document that in the metadata as appropriate.
6. Based on discussions during map updates in recent years, we will again use a 10.0 acre minimum polygon size for wildfires since data are readily available to that scale. For vegetation treatments, we will also use a minimum area of 10 acres. For sagebrush or other vegetation patches (e.g., key habitat, perennial grassland, annual grassland, conifer encroachment), delineate habitat to the extent you have data, recognizing that some offices may have more recent, finer resolution data than others.
7. Areas that have recently burned, for which the field has little or no information as to habitat status, should be classified as "recent burn." Efforts to document the general habitat status in these areas should be made the following field

season if possible, in preparation for the next map update. The field may also attribute 2013 fires as perennial grassland or annual grassland, as appropriate.

8. Sage-grouse habitat polygon descriptions relevant to this IM include key habitat, perennial grassland, annual grassland, and conifer encroachment potential restoration areas.
 - Key habitat includes areas of generally intact sagebrush that provide sage-grouse habitat during some portion of the year.
 - Perennial grassland can be reclassified as key habitat once average sagebrush canopy cover is at least 10 percent.
 - Annual grassland areas may be reclassified as perennial grassland once a restoration, fuels treatment or related project, such as an Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R) seeding, is considered successful (i.e., seeded perennial species have successfully established).
 - Conifer encroachment areas may be reclassified as key habitat following treatment of conifers if sagebrush cover is at least 10 percent and there is a perennial understory. They can also be reclassified as perennial grasslands if native perennial herbaceous species are dominant or if an associated restoration seeding is successful.
9. Field offices must ensure that original project-level data utilized in this update, including Global Positioning System data files, spatial, tabular and metadata associated with specific vegetation treatments, restoration projects, ES&R projects, etc., are archived at the field level and readily accessible in the event of future data calls.

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