

# Appendix T

## Public Comment Response Report



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## **T. Response to Comments on the Draft Land Use Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement**

### **T.1 Introduction**

After publishing the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service held a 90-day public comment period to receive comments on the Draft LUPA/EIS. The BLM and Forest Service received written comments on the Draft LUPA/EIS by mail, email, and submissions at the public meetings and oral comments transcribed at public meetings. Comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns. The BLM and Forest Service recognize that commenters invested considerable time and effort to submit comments on the Draft LUPA/EIS and developed a comment analysis methodology to ensure that all comments were considered, as directed by NEPA regulations.

According to NEPA, the BLM and Forest Service are required to identify and formally respond to all substantive public comments. The BLM and Forest Service developed a systematic process for responding to comments to ensure all substantive comments were tracked and considered. Upon receipt, each comment letter was assigned an identification number and logged into the BLM's comment analysis database, CommentWorks, which allowed the BLM and Forest Service to organize, categorize, and respond to comments. Substantive comments from each letter were coded to appropriate categories based on the content of the comment, retaining the link to the commenter. The categories generally follow the sections presented in the Draft LUPA/EIS, though some relate to the planning process or editorial concerns.

Comments similar to each other were grouped under a topic heading, and the BLM and Forest Service drafted a statement summarizing the issues contained in the comments. The responses were crafted to respond to the comments, and, if warranted, a change to the EIS was made.

Although each comment letter was diligently considered, the comment analysis process involved determining whether a comment was substantive or nonsubstantive in nature. In performing this analysis, BLM and Forest Service relied on the CEQ's regulations to determine what constituted a substantive comment.

A substantive comment does one or more of the following:

- Questions, with a reasonable basis, the accuracy of the information and/or analysis in the Draft LUPA/EIS
- Questions, with a reasonable basis, the adequacy of the information and/or analysis in the Draft LUPA/EIS
- Presents reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the Draft LUPA/EIS that meet the purpose and need of the proposed action and addresses significant issues
- Questions, with a reasonable basis, the merits of an alternative or alternatives

- Causes changes in or revisions to the proposed action
- Questions, with a reasonable basis, the adequacy of the planning process itself

Additionally, the BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) identifies the following types of substantive comments:

Comments on the Adequacy of the Analysis: Comments that express a professional disagreement with the conclusions of the analysis or assert that the analysis is inadequate are substantive in nature but may or may not lead to changes in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. Interpretations of analyses should be based on professional expertise. Where there is disagreement within a professional discipline, a careful review of the various interpretations is warranted. In some cases, public comments may necessitate a reevaluation of analytical conclusions. If, after reevaluation, the manager responsible for preparing the EIS (Authorized Officer) does not think that a change is warranted, the response should provide the rationale for that conclusion.

Comments That Identify New Impacts, Alternatives, or Mitigation Measures: Public comments on a Draft EIS that identify impacts, alternatives, or mitigation measures that were not addressed in the draft are substantive. This type of comment requires the Authorized Officer to determine whether it warrants further consideration. If it does, the Authorized Officer must determine whether the new impacts, new alternatives, or new mitigation measures should be analyzed in the Final EIS, a supplement to the Draft EIS, or a completely revised and recirculated Draft EIS.

Disagreements with Significance Determinations: Comments that directly or indirectly question, with a reasonable basis, determinations regarding the significance or severity of impacts are substantive. A reevaluation of these determinations may be warranted and may lead to changes in the Final EIS. If, after reevaluation, the Authorized Officer does not think that a change is warranted, the response should provide the rationale for that conclusion.

Comments that failed to meet the above description were considered nonsubstantive. Many comments received throughout the process expressed personal opinions or preferences, had little relevance to the adequacy or accuracy of the Draft LUPA/EIS, represented commentary regarding resource management and/or impacts without any real connection to the document being reviewed, or were considered out of scope because they dealt with existing law, rule, regulation, or policy. These comments did not provide specific information to assist the planning team in making changes to the alternatives or impact analysis in the Draft LUPA/EIS and are not addressed further in this document. Examples of nonsubstantive comments include the following:

- The best of the alternatives is Alternative D (or A, B, or C).
- The preferred alternative does not reflect balanced land management.
- More land should be protected as wilderness.

- BLM needs to change the Taylor Grazing Act and charge higher grazing fees.
- I want the EIS to reflect the following for this area: no grazing, no logging, no drilling, no mining, and no OHVs.
- More areas should be made available for multiple uses (e.g., drilling, OHVs, and ROWs) without severe restrictions.

Opinions, feelings, and preferences for one element or one alternative over another, and comments of a personal and/or philosophical nature, were all read, analyzed, and considered. However, because such comments are not substantive in nature, the BLM and Forest Service did not include them in the report and did not respond to them. While all comments were reviewed and considered, comments were not counted as “votes.” The NEPA public comment period is neither considered an election, nor does it result in a representative sampling of the population. Therefore, public comments are not appropriate to be used as a democratic decision-making tool or as a scientific sampling mechanism.

Comments citing editorial changes to the document were reviewed and incorporated. The Proposed LUPA/Final EIS has been technically edited and revised to fix typographic errors, missing references, definitions, and acronyms, and other clarifications as needed.

Copies of all comment documents received on the Draft LUPA/EIS are available by request from the BLM’s Idaho State Office. Comments received by mail, email, and at meetings, or delivered orally during the public meetings are tracked by commenter name and submission number.

### **Campaign Letters**

Several organizations and groups held standardized letter campaigns for the GRSG effort through which their constituents were able to submit the standard letter or a modified version of the letter indicating support for the group’s position on the BLM and Forest Service LUPA actions. Individuals who submitted a modified standard letter generally added new comments or information to the letter or edited it to reflect their main concern(s). Modified letters with unique comments were given their own letter number and coded appropriately. All commenters who used an organization’s campaign letter were tracked in the BLM and Forest Service commenter list and are available from the BLM and Forest Service upon request.

### **How This Appendix is Organized**

This appendix is divided into three main parts. The first part, Introduction, provides an overview of the comment-response process. The second part, Issue Topics, Responses, and Comments, is organized by the primary topic and then by specific issue subtopics that relate to an aspect of NEPA, the BLM and Forest Service planning processes, or specific resources and resource uses. The topics are labelled Sections 1 through 25. For example, all comment summaries that relate to aspects of the alternatives fall under the heading, “Section 1.3, Range of Alternatives.” Comments summaries and responses for baseline information (such as the information found in **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment) and impact analysis (**Chapter 4**) are found under the respective resource topic. For example, comment

summaries and responses related to the affected environment and impact analysis on Fire and Fuels are under the “Section 7 – Fire and Fuels” heading. Each topic or subtopic contains a statement that summarizes all substantive comments received on that topic or subtopic and the BLM’s and Forest Service’s response to the summary statement. Excerpts of all substantive comments are posted on the project website: [http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/prog/planning/SG\\_RMP\\_rev.html](http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/prog/planning/SG_RMP_rev.html).

The terms preliminary priority management area (PPMA) and preliminary general management area (PGMA) were used in the Draft EIS to describe the relative prioritization of areas for GRSG conservation. These are BLM and Forest Service terms used to differentiate the degree of managerial emphasis a given area would have relative to GRSG. As the BLM and Forest Service moved from a Draft EIS to a Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, such prioritizations are necessarily no longer “preliminary” in nature. As such, they have been replaced with the terms Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA) and General Habitat Management Area (GHMA). Comments on the Draft LUPA/EIS referred to PPMA and PGMA. As such, the summary statements also use these terms. However, responses use the terminology used in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS (PHMA and GHMA).

The third part, Commenter Lists, provides the names of individuals who submitted unique comment letters (not campaign letters) on the Draft LUPA/EIS. Commenters are listed alphabetically by the organization name or commenter’s last name.



CommentWorks® Issue Report  
Initiative: ID-GRSG-AM

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## T.2 Issue Topics, Responses, and Comments

### Section 1 – NEPA

#### *Summary*

The FEIS needs to identify an Environmentally Preferred Alternative, evaluate the plan according to the USFWS's Evaluation Criteria for Conservation Plans, and provide a summary comparison of the population effects under each alternative.

#### *Response*

1. Section 1505.2(b) requires that, in cases where an EIS has been prepared, the Record of Decision (ROD) must identify all alternatives that were considered, ". . . specifying the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable." This alternative(s) will be identified in the ROD. The range of alternatives includes the GRSG conservation measures in A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (NTT 2011) in Alternative B; recommendations from individuals and conservation groups in Alternatives C and F; adjustments to the NTT report (NTT 2011) to provide a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses under Alternative D; and inputs from the Idaho and Utah Governors' Offices for lands in each state in the sub-region for Alternative E.
2. The Policy for the Evaluation of Conservation Efforts (PECE) is the USFWS responsibility and will be used by USFWS during their evaluation of BLM/FS land use plans as appropriate.
3. The FEIS includes discussion of population effects in **Section 4.2**.

### Section 1.1 - Public Notification

#### *Summary*

BLM needs to publish the statistics for people that provided comment letters on the Draft EIS, as well as the comments, their responses, and changes made to the document in the FEIS.

#### *Response*

All substantive comments received on the Draft EIS were considered and reviewed for information that would result in changes to the document. Comments simply stating a preference for or against a specific alternative or opinions without reasonable basis were considered non-substantive since they do not meet the substantive comment requirement of BLM Handbook H-1790-1, Section 6.9.2.1. See **Chapter 6** for additional details on the comment analysis process.

Form letters, or identical letters submitted by different commenters, were identified as part of the DLUPA/DEIS comment response effort. Since these submissions are identical in nature, it is adequate for only one "master" form letter to be included as part of the comment response effort and reviewed for substantive comments. All form letters will be entered into the project decision file and all commenters will be entered into the project decision file as having submitted a comment during the DLUPA/DEIS comment period.

Index of parties, comments, and responses are provided in the FEIS. Changes made to the EIS are summarized in the beginning of each chapter.

## Section 1.2 - Cooperating Agency Relationships

### *Summary*

The BLM did not coordinate with state and local agencies that would be affected by the actions considered in the EIS, as required by NEPA and FLPMA. Several commenters requested additional coordination for BLM to consider.

### *Response*

Requirements under FLPMA and the planning regulations are to: 1) coordinate the LUP process with LUPs of other agencies, states, and local governments to the extent consistent with law; 2) keep apprised of state/local/tribal plans to the extent practical; consider state/local/tribal plans that are germane to the BLM LUP; 3) assist in resolving inconsistencies with federal LUPs to the extent practicable; 4) provide for meaningful public involvement of state/local officials, 5) where possible/appropriate, develop LUPs collaboratively with cooperating agencies; 6) make LUPs consistent with officially approved or adopted resource related plans/policies of other feds, states/locals/tribes, to the extent such plans/policies are consistent with federal law and the purposes, policies, programs of federal law; and 7) make LUPs consistent with state/local tribal plans that are not officially approved or adopted, to the maximum extent practical [1610.3-1(a). FLPMA 202(c)(9)].

The BLM has met these requirements by coordinating with cooperating agencies, including other agencies and state and local governments. Cooperating agency relationships are described in the Final EIS in **Section 6.3.1**, Cooperating Agencies. In December 2011, the BLM sent letters to five tribal governments within the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region inviting them to be cooperating agencies. The BLM also sent letters to over 60 local, state, and federal agencies inviting them to participate as cooperating agencies for the LUPA/EIS. To date, 29 agencies agreed to participate on the EIS as designated cooperating agencies, and have signed Memoranda of Understanding with the BLM's Idaho State Office (**Table 6-5**, Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region Cooperating Agency Participation). The BLM has considered consistency with other plans in **Appendix R**. Additional details are provided in **Chapter 6**.

## Section 1.3 - Range of Alternatives

### *Summary*

1. The alternatives fail to meet NEPA adequacy because: a. they (individually or collectively) do not meet the purpose and need for the action b. alternatives were all largely the same, and that the BLM needed to provide more distinction (range) between them c. BLM needs to consider the alternatives presented by Cooperating Agencies and Environmental Organizations, including the County alternatives, the Conservation Groups' alternative, and alternatives for the listing of the species or not listing the species. d. specifically that Alternative D needed to include the Ecological Site Descriptions to provide adequate



understanding of the current management e. and the BLM and Forest Service failed to adequately define the No Action Alternative.

2. Commenters also suggested that BLM and Forest Service did not provide adequate rationale for the need of the project.

***Response***

1. a. In accordance with NEPA, the BLM and Forest Service have discretion to establish the purpose and need for action (40 CFR 1502.13). CEQ regulations direct that an EIS "...shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action" (40 CFR 1502.13). Also, under the CEQ regulations, the BLM and the Forest Service are required to "study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources as provided by section 102(2)(E) of the Act [NEPA]." (40 CFR 1501.2(c)). The breadth or narrowness of the purpose and need statement has a substantial influence on the scope of the subsequent analysis. The purpose and need statement provides a framework for issue identification and will inform the rationale for alternative selection. The range of alternatives developed are intended to meet the purpose and need and address the issue; thereby providing a basis for eventual selection of an alternative in a decision (BLM NEPA handbook and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Act Handbook Chapter 10 – Environmental Analysis). The range of alternatives considered in the EIS meets the purpose and need for the planning effort by including conservation measures for GRSG in compliance with BLM's multiple use and sustained yield mission. The range of alternatives is described further in response 1.c. As stated in the DLUPA/EIS, the BLM and the Forest Service prepared the Idaho LUP amendment with an associated EIS to be applied to lands with GRSG habitat.

b. The BLM and the Forest Service considered a reasonable range of alternatives during the GRSG planning process in full compliance with the NEPA. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require that the BLM and the Forest Service consider reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment. While there are many possible alternatives or actions to manage public lands and GRSG in the planning area, the BLM and the Forest Service fully considered the planning issues and criteria developed during the scoping process to determine a reasonable range of alternatives. As a result, six alternatives were analyzed in detail in the DLUPA/EIS that best addressed the issues and concerns identified by the affected public. The range of alternatives in the DLUPA/EIS represented a full spectrum of options including a no action alternative (current management, Alternative A).

Additionally, the resulting action alternatives offer a range of possible management approaches for responding to planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping, and to maintain or increase GRSG abundance and distribution in the planning area. While the goal is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions and constitutes a separate LUPA with the potential for different long-range outcomes and conditions.

The relative emphasis given to particular resources and resource uses differs as well, including allowable uses, restoration measures, and specific direction pertaining to individual resource programs. When resources or resource uses are mandated by law or are not tied to planning issues, there are typically few or no distinctions between alternatives. Meaningful differences among the six alternatives are described in the FEIS in **Table 2-9**, Comparative Summary of Allocation Decisions of the Proposed Plan Amendment and Draft Alternatives, and in **Section 2.8**, Draft LUPA/EIS Alternatives.

c. Based on this alternative development process, the BLM and Forest Service considered input from cooperating agencies, environmental organizations, and the public. As described in **Section 2.8.3**, Alternative B, the BLM used the GRSG conservation measures in A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (NTT 2011) to form BLM and Forest Service management direction under Alternative B. This is consistent with the direction provided in BLM Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, which states that the BLM must consider all applicable conservation measures developed by the NTT in at least one alternative in the land use planning process.

During scoping for the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS, individuals and conservation groups submitted management direction recommendations for protection and conservation of GRSG and their habitat, including the Sage-grouse Recovery Alternative and proposed disturbance cap. The recommendations, in conjunction with resource allocation opportunities and internal sub-regional BLM and Forest Service input, were reviewed in order to develop BLM and Forest Service management direction for GRSG under Alternatives C and F. County plans were evaluated for consistency with current LUPs in **Appendix R**.

Alternative D incorporates adjustments to the NTT report (NTT 2011) to provide a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses, and was developed in full cooperation with the Cooperating Agencies taking note of the agencies' concerns with socioeconomic issues.

Alternative E was based on inputs from the Idaho and Utah Governors' Offices for lands in each state in the sub-region.

Whether the GRSG is determined for listing by the USFWS is outside the jurisdiction of the BLM and Forest Service and beyond the scope of this EIS. As noted in the Purpose and Need, the BLM was to consider regulatory mechanisms that would protect the species and its habitat. As such, the BLM and Forest Service did not develop alternatives should the USFWS choose to list or not list the GRSG.

e. Ecological Site Descriptions are not necessary to describe the affected environment, but will be considered on a site-specific basis during project implementation as appropriate.

f. As clarified by the CEQ, the "no action alternative" for a land use plan amendment or revision means "no change" from current management or level of management intensity (CEQ 40 Questions, Question 3). The no action alternative may be thought of in terms of



continuing with the present course of action. The No Action Alternative is described in Alternative A, and includes the current management for the programs within the scope of the analysis. The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparison of the five action alternatives to the existing planning decisions.

2. The purpose and need is provided in **Chapter 1**. Under FLPMA, the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the BLM has the discretion to engage in land use planning whenever appropriate for management of the public lands.

#### **Section 1.4 - Best Available Info Baseline Data**

##### ***Summary***

The EIS fails to meet NEPA adequacy for baseline data because the scale of baseline data used is too broad, the EIS failed to include the State and Transition models as part of the baseline information, and the No Action management actions, as presented, do not explain the regulatory mechanisms that are currently available to preserve GRSG habitat.

##### ***Response***

The CEQ regulations require an EIS to "succinctly describe the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration. The description shall be no longer than is necessary to understand the effects of the alternatives. Data and analyses in a statement shall be commensurate with the importance of the impact, with less important material summarized, consolidated, or simply referenced. Agencies shall avoid useless bulk in statements and shall concentrate effort and attention on important issues" (40 CFR 1502.15). Additionally, the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS is a programmatic NEPA effort to conserve GRSG and its habitat across a broad geographic area. As such, the BLM and the Forest Service described the current conditions and trends in the affected environment broadly, across a range of conditions, appropriate to program-level land use planning actions. Existing regulatory mechanisms under the No Action Alternative are presented in detail in **Appendix U**.

The BLM and the Forest Service complied with these regulations in describing the affected environment. The requisite level of information necessary to make a reasoned choice among the alternatives in an EIS is based on the scope and nature of the proposed decision. The affected environment provided in **Chapter 3** and related appendices including **Appendices Y** through **CC** in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS is sufficient to support, at the general land use planning-level of analysis, the environmental impact analysis resulting from management actions presented in the DLUPA/EIS. For example, listing every water quality-impaired stream within the planning area by name would not provide useful information at this broad-scale analysis, particularly where the proposed plan alternatives did not vary the level of riparian protections to provide reduced levels for non-impaired streams. The riparian protections within each alternative were applied to all streams, whether or not they were water quality-impaired.

As specific actions come under consideration, the BLM and the Forest Service will conduct subsequent NEPA analyses that include site-specific project and implementation-level actions. Site-specific concerns and more detailed environmental descriptions will be

addressed when project-level reviews are tiered to the analysis in this EIS (40 CFR 1502.20, 40 CFR 1508.28). In addition, the public will be offered the appropriate opportunity to participate in the NEPA process for site-specific actions.

Habitat conditions and trends for each GRSG population area were determined by modeling vegetation dynamics, such as wildfire, succession, insects and disease, habitat restoration projects (e.g., sagebrush seeding, grass seeding, and herbicide treatment of annual grass), prescribed fire, overgrazing, conifer encroachment and treatment, mechanical sagebrush treatment, and fuels reduction projects using the VDDT (see **Appendix X**).

## Section 1.5 - GIS Data and Analysis

### *Summary*

Commenters noted several issues with the GIS data and analysis conducted in the Draft EIS:

- The maps and data layers do not provide enough detail to address "local ecological site variability". The data are too coarse and do not provide assurances to more localized decision making; some habitat areas are inaccurately identified in the maps.
- BLM used old data layers to develop maps; BLM should use the newer data layers.
- The BLM needs to be consistent in their edge-mapping across state boundaries when there are different data sets used.

### *Response*

Before beginning the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS and throughout the planning effort, the BLM and the Forest Service considered the availability of data from all sources, adequacy of existing data, data gaps, and the type of data necessary to support informed management decisions at the land-use plan level. The data needed to support broad-scale analysis of the planning area are substantially different than the data needed to support site-specific analysis of projects. The LUPA/EIS data and information is presented in map and table form and is sufficient to support the broad scale analyses required for land use planning.

Additionally, the BLM and the Forest Service consulted with, collected, and incorporated data from other agencies and sources, including but not limited to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Idaho and Montana state wildlife agencies. These data were used throughout the EIS, including **Chapters 2, 3, and 4**. The Draft EIS notes that the BLM and Forest Service would incorporate any refinements or updates if or when the data were made available.

As a result of these actions, the data gathered by the BLM and the Forest Service is of the appropriate scale and provided an adequate analysis that led to an adequate disclosure of the potential environmental consequences of the alternatives.

A land use planning-level decision is broad in scope and, therefore, does not require an exhaustive gathering and monitoring of baseline data. The baseline data provides the



necessary basis to make informed land use plan-level decisions. Land use plan-level analyses are typically broad and qualitative rather than quantitative or focused on site-specific actions (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1, Chapter II, A-B at 11-13 and Chapter IV, B at 29; Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 – Land Management Planning). The BLM and the Forest Service will conduct subsequent project-specific NEPA analyses for projects proposed for implementation under the land use plan, which may include but are not limited to fuels treatment, habitat restoration, and conifer removal. The subsequent NEPA analyses for project-specific actions will tier to the land-use planning analysis and evaluate project impacts at the appropriate site-specific level (40 CFR 1502.20, 40 CFR 1508.28). The public will have the appropriate opportunity to participate in the NEPA process for site-specific actions.

Between the Draft and Final EIS, the BLM and Forest Service worked closely to resolve differences between GRSG habitats across state boundaries. These refinements are reflected in the Final EIS maps and GIS calculations and described in **Appendix N**.

## **Section 1.6 - Indirect Impacts**

### ***Summary***

BLM's overall impact analysis is deficient in the following areas:

1. Lack of discussion for where, when, and how BLM will have sufficient funding to implement the actions
2. The analysis does not distinguish between the effects of each alternative
3. The BLM and Forest Service did not fully analyze the No Action alternative by not acknowledging the existing laws and actions already in place that would manage the habitat.

### ***Response***

1. As a landscape level planning effort, none of the alternatives authorize site-specific activities on public lands. The agencies' selection of an alternative does not authorize funding to any specific project or activity nor does it directly tie into the agencies' budgets as appropriated annually through the Federal budget process. As a consequence, agencies' costs and differences in program costs across alternatives have not been quantified. Information has been presented in several resource impact sections on the types of costs that might be associated with various GRSG conservation measures.
2. **Tables 2-12 and 2-13** in the FEIS, when combined with the effects analysis in **Chapter 4**, adequately compares the effects between alternatives.
3. All alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, are subject to existing laws as described in **Sections 1.6 and 1.7**. The No Action Alternative is described in **Section 2.8.1, Tables 2-9, 2-10, and 2-11**, and **Appendix U**. The No Action Alternative is analyzed under each resource in **Chapters 4 and 5** and summarized in **Tables 2-12 and 2-13**.

## Section 1.7 - Cumulative Impacts

### *Summary*

The EIS cumulative impacts analysis is inadequate because it does not adequately identify the reasonably foreseeable future actions, present a comprehensive listing of the effects across all sub-regions, nor analyze how the alternatives' actions would affect actions and decisions in neighboring states/jurisdictions.

### *Response*

The BLM and the Forest Service thoroughly explained its consideration and analysis of cumulative effects in the Draft and Final LUPA/EIS in **Chapter 5** and has augmented this analysis for the FEIS. The Draft and Final LUPA/EISs considered the present effects of past actions, to the extent that they are relevant, and present and reasonably foreseeable (not highly speculative) Federal and non-Federal actions, taking into account the relationship between the proposed alternatives and these reasonably foreseeable actions. This discussion summarizes CEQ guidance from June 24, 2005, stating that "[g]enerally, agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions." This is because a description of the current state of the environment inherently includes the effects of past actions. Information on the current conditions is more comprehensive and more accurate for establishing a useful starting point for cumulative effects analysis. The BLM and the Forest Service explicitly described their assumptions regarding proposed projects and other reasonably foreseeable future actions. On Forest Service-administered lands, reasonably foreseeable actions are those that would occur under their current land use plans from a broad-scale perspective.

The BLM and the Forest Service have complied fully with the requirements of 40 CFR 1508.7 and prepared a cumulative impact analysis to the extent possible based on the broad nature and scope of the proposed management options under consideration at the land use planning level.

The DLUPA/EISs contains a qualitative discussion of cumulative effects at the WAFWA Management Zone scale to set the stage for a more quantitative analysis to be contained in the Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment/FEIS. Additional quantitative cumulative analysis was added to the Final EIS in **Chapter 5**, Cumulative Impacts.

## Section 1.9 - Mitigation Measures

### *Summary*

1. The BLM needs to include a monitoring, mitigation, and adaptive management plan/framework in the FEIS that will include specific criteria for determining GRSG conservation success and how the disturbance percentages will be calculated.
2. BLM needs to clarify the relationship between the disturbance thresholds and the monitoring framework.



3. The BLM needs to release the mitigation strategy for public review.

***Response***

Mitigation and monitoring frameworks were introduced in the DEIS in **Chapter 2** and in **Appendices F** and **E**, respectively. An Adaptive Management strategy was also introduced in **Chapter 2** of the DEIS. A more detailed mitigation framework, monitoring framework, and adaptive management strategy has been incorporated into **Chapter 2** of the FEIS and **Appendices J, E, and G**, respectively.

Mitigation will be applied to all implementation actions/decisions that take place on Federal lands within GRSG habitat during the life of this plan. Mitigation has been further defined as Regional Mitigation and the Framework is in **Appendix J**. The Regional Mitigation Framework was developed to follow the BLM's Regional Mitigation Manual MS-1794, Forest Service Handbook FSH 1909.15, and CEQ 40 CFR 1508.20.

The Mitigation Framework, through the mitigation hierarchy, guides the BLM and Forest Service. The hierarchy direction is to first, avoid impacts entirely by not taking a certain action or parts of an action, second, if unable to avoid, minimize impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of an action or parts of an action, and lastly, if avoidance or minimizing is not possible, compensate impacts associated with future implementation actions. If residual impacts to GRSG from implementation-level actions remain after applying avoidance or minimization measures, then compensatory mitigation projects will be used to offset the residual impacts in an effort to achieve the land use plan goals and objectives. As articulated in **Appendix J**, compensatory mitigation will occur on sites that have the potential to yield the greatest conservation benefit to GRSG, regardless of land ownership. These sites should be sufficiently "durable." According to BLM Manual Section 1794, durability is defined as "the administrative, legal, and financial assurances that secure and protect the conservation status of a compensatory mitigation site, and the ecological benefits of a compensatory mitigation project, for at least as long as the associated impacts persist.

Specific mitigation strategies, based on the Framework, will be developed by regional teams (at the WAFWA Management Zone level) within one year of the issuance of the Record of Decision. These strategies will guide the application of the mitigation hierarchy to address GRSG impacts within that WAFWA Management Zone. The WAFWA Management Zone Regional Mitigation Strategy will be applicable to BLM and Forest Service lands within the zone's boundaries. Subsequently, the BLM's and Forest Service's NEPA analyses for implementation-level decisions that might impact GRSG will include analysis of mitigation recommendations from the relevant WAFWA Management Zone Regional Mitigation Strategy(ies).

The Monitoring Framework in **Appendix E** outlines the methods that the BLM and Forest Service will use to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the planning strategy and the land use plans to conserve the species and its habitat. The regulations for the BLM (43 CFR 1610.4-9) and the Forest Service (36 CFR 219.12) require that land use plans establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluations, based on the sensitivity of the resource to the decisions involved.

Implementation monitoring results will provide information to allow the BLM and Forest Service to evaluate the extent that the decisions from the BLM and Forest Service LUPs to conserve GRSG and their habitat have been implemented. Effectiveness monitoring will provide the information to evaluate whether BLM and Forest Service actions achieve the objective of the planning strategy (BLM IM 2012-044) and the conservation measures contained in the land use plans to conserve GRSG populations and their habitats.

Monitoring efforts will include data for measurable quantitative indicators of sagebrush availability, anthropogenic disturbance levels, and sagebrush conditions. This information will assist the BLM and the Forest Service with identifying whether or not they are achieving their land use plan goals and objectives, reaching an adaptive management soft or hard trigger, as well as providing information relative to the disturbance cap. Specifically, habitat degradation (percent of human activity in a biologically significant unit), habitat availability (percent of sagebrush in a biologically significant unit), and habitat degradation intensity (density of energy facilities and mining locations) will be gathered to inform the disturbance cap measurement (Proposed Plan action AD-1).

Adaptive management is a systematic approach for improving resource management by learning from management outcomes. An adaptive approach involves exploring alternative ways to meet management objectives, anticipating the likely outcomes of alternatives based on the current state of knowledge, implementing one or more of these alternatives, monitoring to learn about the impacts of management actions, and then using the results to update knowledge and adjust management actions accordingly.

Incorporating adaptive management into the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS will ensure a degree of certainty that the decisions in the plan will effectively contribute to the elimination or adequate reduction of one or more threats to the GRSG and its habitat. The adaptive management approach incorporates a set of triggers in the plan, a soft and hard trigger. These triggers were developed to inform the BLM and Forest Service as to when the Federal agency needs to respond (take action) to address a declining trend in GRSG or GRSG habitat figures.

Soft triggers represent an intermediate threshold indicating that management changes are needed at the project/implementation level to address habitat and population losses. Hard triggers represent a threshold indicating that immediate action is necessary to stop a severe deviation from GRSG conservation goals and objectives as set forth in the BLM and Forest Service plans. The adaptive management soft and hard triggers and land use planning responses to these triggers are described and analyzed fully in this EIS (Proposed Plan actions AM-1 through AM-16).

The agencies will use the data collected from monitoring (**Appendix E**) to identify any changes in habitat conditions related to the goals and objectives of the plan. The BLM and Forest Service will use the information collected through monitoring to determine when adaptive management triggers are met.



## Section 2 – FLPMA

### *Summary*

The DLUPA/EIS has failed to comply with the multiple-use mandates found in the BLM's FLPMA and the Forest Service's Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act because it has put protecting GRSG and GRSG habitat above legal requirements for balanced management.

### *Response*

FLPMA (Section 103(c)) defines "multiple use" as the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people. Accordingly, the BLM is responsible for the task of striking a balance among the many competing uses to which public lands can be put. The BLM's multiple-use mandate does not require that all uses be allowed on all areas of the public lands. The purpose of the mandate is to require the BLM to evaluate and choose an appropriate balance of resource uses which involves tradeoffs between competing uses. The FLPMA also directs the BLM to develop and periodically revise or amend its Resource Management Plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands, and provides an arena for making decisions regarding how public lands would be managed and used.

Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531), the Forest Service manages National Forest System land to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. Land management plans guide sustainable, integrated resource management of the resources within the plan area in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. The Forest Service is required by statute to have a national planning rule: the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976, requires the Secretary of Agriculture to issue regulations under the principles of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 for the development and revision of land management plans.

The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS is a targeted amendment specifically addressing goals, objectives, and conservation measures to conserve GRSG and to respond to the potential of its being listed (see **Section 1.2**, Purpose and Need). Both, the Forest Service's and BLM's planning processes allow for analysis and consideration of a range of alternatives in the DLUPA/EIS that identified and incorporated conservation measures to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat and to eliminate, reduce, or minimize threats to this habitat to ensure that a balanced management approach was recommended. The DLUPA/EIS included alternatives (**Section 2.8**) that provided a greater and lesser degree of restrictions in various use programs, but would not eliminate or invalidate any valid existing development rights.

Additionally, the BLM and the Forest Service developed the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS with involvement from cooperating agencies, including the USFWS, NRCS, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game, to ensure that a

balanced multiple-use management strategy to address the protection of GRSG while allowing for utilization of renewable and nonrenewable resources on the public lands.

## **Section 2.2 - Consistency with other state, county, or local plans**

### ***Summary***

The BLM's actions considered in the alternatives conflict with local and state agency plans and policies; furthermore, the BLM did not review all of the county and state plans to ensure that conservation measures are as consistent as possible with other planning jurisdictions.

### ***Response***

To the extent possible under existing law, the BLM's land use plans must be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans of Indian tribes, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments (see 43 CFR 1610). The BLM has worked closely with State and local governments during preparation of the Draft LUPA/EIS. The LUPA/EIS lists the cooperating agencies actively involved in the planning process in **Section 6.3**. The BLM requested the state, county, and tribal government cooperating agencies assist in the consistency reviews by reviewing the range of alternatives associated with the Draft LUPA/EIS and identify potential inconsistencies between the alternatives and each agency's applicable plans. This allows the state, local, and tribal cooperating agencies to use their special expertise regarding the familiarity with their own state, local, or tribal plans. On the local level, it is a county's responsibility to accurately identify and communicate any inconsistencies between that county's plan and the proposed alternative.

The BLM works to find a balance among uses and needs as reflected in these local government plans and has done so in the preparation of the LUPA/EIS; a list of these plans can be found in **Section 1.7**, Relationship to Other Policies, Plans, and Programs. The BLM is aware that there are specific state laws and local plans relevant to aspects of public land management that are discrete from, and independent of, federal law. However, BLM is bound by federal law. As a consequence, there may be inconsistencies that cannot be reconciled. The FLPMA and its implementing regulations require that BLM's land use plans be consistent with officially-approved state and local plans only if those plans are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Where officially-approved state and local plans or policies and programs conflict with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law applicable to public lands, there will be an inconsistency that cannot be resolved. With respect to officially-approved state and local policies and programs (as opposed to plans), this consistency provision only applies to the maximum extent practical. While county and federal planning processes, under FLPMA, are required to as integrated and consistent as practical, the federal agency planning process is not bound by or subject to state or county plans, planning processes, policies, or planning stipulations. The BLM has considered consistency with other plans in **Appendix R** and there are no known inconsistencies with state and local plans. Clarification has been added in the FEIS in **Section 6.3.1**.

The BLM coordinates with cooperating agencies commensurate with each agency's recognized jurisdiction or expertise. In areas where the States of Idaho and Montana has



clear jurisdiction, such as wildlife populations, the BLM has worked closely with that State agency. In cases where a county or agency has expertise, such as local county socioeconomic information, the BLM has worked closely with the group to incorporate the information into the EIS.

## **Section 2.4 - Planning Regs 43 CFR 1600**

### ***Summary***

The BLM did not provide an explanation for how and why they defined the planning area as they did.

### ***Response***

The framework for the scope of analysis for the project is based upon the BLM and the Forest Service Planning and NEPA manual and handbooks definitions of the planning, decision, and analysis areas. Specifically, Forest Service Manual 1900-Planning Chapter, Zero Code defines the Area of Analysis as “The geographic area within which ecosystems, their components, or their processes are evaluated during analysis and development of one or more plans, plan amendments, or plan revisions. This area may vary in size depending on the relevant planning issue. For a plan, an area of analysis may be larger than a plan area. For development of a plan amendment, an area of analysis may be smaller than the plan area and include multiple ownerships.”

The definition of a Planning Area is the geographic area within which the BLM will make decisions during a planning effort. A planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction; however the BLM will only make decisions on lands that fall under the BLM’s jurisdiction (including subsurface minerals). Unless the State Director determines otherwise, the planning area for a RMP is the geographic area associated with a particular field office (43 CFR 1610.1(b)). State Directors may also establish regional planning areas that encompass several field offices and/or states, as necessary. For this EIS, decision area includes those BLM and Forest Service lands and mineral estates within the sub-region boundaries.

Further details regarding delineation of the planning area and the GRSG habitats within it are presented in **Section 1.1, Section 2.6, Section 2.8,** and **Appendix N.**

## **Section 3 - Other Laws**

### ***Summary***

The BLM has failed to document how the EIS and/or actions considered in the EIS comply with other laws, including all Onshore Orders regulating oil and gas development, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 2000, the Taylor Grazing Act, the Mining and Minerals Policy Act, the Information Quality Act, the Wild Horse and Burro Act, other multiple use mandates (e.g., Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, National Forest Management Act of 1976), and compliance with other federal agency regulations.

***Response***

In the Final EIS, **Section 1.6**, Development of Planning Criteria, the BLM has a criterion stating that all BLM alternatives would comply with existing laws, regulations, and policies. The BLM and Forest Service have reviewed all actions in the Proposed LUPA and found them to be consistent and within the bounds of all required laws, regulations, and policies.

**Section 4 - Sage Grouse**

*No comments are associated with this issue.*

**Section 4.1 - NTT report/findings**

***Summary***

Commenters contended that the National Technical Team (NTT) report is not based on the best available science, contains technical and methodological errors, is not based on local conditions, and has not undergone adequate peer review. Commenters questioned why the NTT report was used when the IM requiring its use has expired.

***Response***

The NTT was formed as an independent, science-based team to ensure that the best information about how to manage the GRSG is reviewed, evaluated, and provided to the BLM and the Forest Service in the planning process. The group produced a report in December 2011 that identified science-based management considerations to promote sustainable GRSG populations. The NTT report (NTT 2011) used the best current scientific knowledge to guide the BLM and Forest Service planning efforts through management considerations to ameliorate threats, focused primarily on priority GRSG habitats on public lands. The NTT report cited 122 references including published papers from the formal scientific literature such as *Journal of Wildlife Management*, *Conservation Biology*, *Biological Conservation*, *Wildlife Biology*, *BioScience* and others, as well as graduate theses and dissertations, conservation strategies, FWS 2010 finding, and others representing the best available science. The NTT report was intended to be used at a programmatic scale and may not reflect local conditions.

The BLM used the NTT report per BLM IM 2012-044 to construct an alternative that would meet the purpose and need. This report was not the only source of information for developing a range of alternatives (see Section 4.5, Range of Alternatives, in this report). BLM is implementing IM 2012-044 through the GRSG planning effort. When an IM expires without being superseded, it can still be applicable and provide guidance to the BLM. The fact that IM 2012-044 expired does not mean the BLM has no authority to continue to analyze the conservation measures identified in the NTT Report. The BLM is appropriately considering and evaluating the measures in the NTT Report, in addition to any other relevant science, through the GRSG planning process.



## Section 4.2 – BER

### *Summary*

The BER contains outdated baseline literature and the EIS should be updated with suggested literature.

### *Response*

A baseline environmental report, titled Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangelwide Conservation of Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) (referred to as the BER), was released on June 3, 2013, by the U.S. Geological Survey. The peer-reviewed report summarizes the current scientific understanding about the various impacts to GRSG populations and habitats and addresses the location, magnitude, and extent of each threat. The data for this report were gathered from BLM, Forest Service, and other sources and were the best available at the range-wide scale at the time collected. The report provides a framework for considering potential implications and management options, and demonstrates a regional context and perspective needed for local planning and decision-making.

Of the suggested studies and references put forth by the commenters, the BLM reviewed them to determine if they: (1) presented new information that would need to be incorporated into the Proposed LUPA/FEIS, (2) were references were already included in the Draft LUPA/EIS, or (3) provided the same information as already used or described in the Draft LUPA/EIS. The BLM determined that several of these references contained new or relevant information (e.g., regarding noise impacts), and subsequently clarified the baseline in **Chapter 3**, analysis in **Chapter 4**, and updated the references cited in Chapter 7 of the Proposed LUPA/FEIS. In some cases, the additional literature was essentially the same as the sources used in the Draft LUPA/EIS or did not provide additional relevant information and was therefore not incorporated in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS.

## Section 4.3 – COT

### *Summary*

Commenters had two distinct views regarding the COT report. One group considered the report overly biased and not representative of the best available information. The other group suggested the DEIS was not fully consistent with the COT report habitat mapping and therefore requires revision to address those deficiencies.

### *Response*

In March 2012, the FWS initiated a collaborative approach to develop range-wide conservation objectives for GRSG to inform the 2015 decision about the need to list the species and to inform the collective conservation efforts of the many partners working to conserve the species. In March 2013, this team released the Conservation Objectives Team (COI) report based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time that identifies key areas for GRSG conservation, key threats in those areas, and the extent to which they need to be reduced for the species to be conserved. Key areas across the landscape that are considered “necessary to maintain redundant, representative, and resilient populations” are identified within the COT Report. The USFWS in concert with the

respective state wildlife management agencies identified these key areas as Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs). All or portions of PACs are encompassed in the GRSG management areas under each alternative. Acres of GRSG management areas within PACs under each alternative are presented by GRSG analysis area in **Table 4-16**. The COT report serves as guidance to Federal land management agencies, State GRSG teams, and others in focusing efforts to achieve effective conservation for this species.

**Table 2-12** demonstrates how the BLM and Forest Service management actions under each alternative address the threats to the populations in the Idaho and southwestern Montana sub-region. In Idaho, Core and Important Habitat Zones under Alternative E were used to derive the PACs in the COT. The BLM and Forest Service have continued to work with the USFWS and State agencies to develop a proposed plan.

#### **Section 4.4 - Policy Guidance**

##### ***Summary***

The USFWS will evaluate the BLM and Forest Service plans in accordance with applicable laws and policies, including USFWS's Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts as appropriate.

##### ***Response***

The BLM and Forest Service are working closely with the USFWS to ensure certainty of implementation and effectiveness to the extent possible. However, certain management actions, such as restoration activities, are contingent on funding availability and thus some uncertainty remains.

#### **Section 4.5 - Range of Alternatives**

##### ***Summary***

Commenters proposed revisions or requested additional details and clarifications to the alternatives related to GRSG. Topics of concern included:

- The size of lek buffers
- Need for and size of disturbance cap
- Restrictions on wind energy development
- Noise restrictions
- Livestock grazing management changes
- Inadequate description of adaptive management and monitoring
- Need for an improved definition of no net unmitigated loss
- Leasable mineral restrictions
- Juniper removal



- Existing and new fencing as they relate to sage-grouse strikes and mortality
- Lack of active habitat restoration
- Habitat monitoring

Commenters were concerned about greater sage-grouse habitat mapping, including suggesting clarifications or revisions to the habitat map and concerns about using the map for site-scale projects.

Commenters were also concerned that Manual 6840 was not used as the baseline policy governing present GRSG conservation in the No Action alternative.

***Response***

As noted above in the response in Section 1.3, Range of Alternatives, of this report, **Section 2.4** of the FEIS describes how the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS planning team employed the BLM and Forest Service planning process to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the LUPA and worked closely with the State with assistance from the USFWS.

Meaningful differences among the six alternatives are described in the FEIS in **Table 2-9**, Comparative Summary of Allocation Decisions of the Proposed Plan Amendment and Draft Alternatives, and in **Section 2.8**, Draft LUPA/EIS Alternatives. The issues below have been addressed in management actions and associated appendices prepared for the proposed plan and analyzed in **Chapter 4**.

Regarding the following issues:

- Lek buffers have been revised in the FEIS; in undertaking BLM management actions, and consistent with valid and existing rights and applicable law in authorizing third-party actions, the BLM will apply the lek buffer-distances identified in the USGS Report “Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse – A Review” (Open File Report 2014-1239) in accordance with **Appendix B**.
- Additional specificity regarding the disturbance cap has been further explained in the FEIS; the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS includes a 3 percent disturbance cap at the Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) and project scale. Specific language has been included in the Proposed LUPA alternative (see **Chapter 2**, Proposed Plan action AD-1), as well as additional guidance for how the disturbance cap would be implemented and accounted for and what data is appropriate for determining disturbance (see **Appendix G**).
- Restrictions on wind energy development are described in the Proposed Plan, action LR-2.
- Noise and seasonal stipulations for both construction and long-term implementation of land use activities have been included in the FEIS (**Appendices B and C**).

- Livestock grazing management changes are described in the Proposed Plan actions RM-1 through RM-19 and include additional guidance provided for incorporating GRSG decisions into livestock grazing authorizations.
- Additional detail regarding adaptive management is provided in the Proposed Plan actions AM-1 through AM-16 and **Appendix G**. Monitoring is described in the Proposed Plan actions MON-1 through MON-7 and **Appendix E**. In the Proposed LUPA, additional clarifications are provided for the mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management. See also response to comments in Section 1.9, Mitigation Measures, of this report.
- No net unmitigation loss has been removed from the Proposed Plan. Additional specificity regarding net conservation gain has been further explained in the FEIS in MIT-3, **Chapter 8**, and **Appendix J**. Additionally, the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS includes guidance for net conservation gain when mitigating adverse impacts on GRSG.
- Leasable mineral restrictions are described in the Proposed Plan actions FLM-1 through FLM-7 and NEL-1 through NEL-3.
- Juniper removal is described in VEG-8.
- The BLM and Forest Service used the latest science in developing management actions related to fences that adequately address collision risk. No change has been made to the document regarding this issue in the FEIS (see Proposed Plan action RM-14).
- Site-specific projects are not identified in the broad-scale plan, but there are a number of restoration actions described in the Proposed Plan in the wildfire and vegetation management actions.
- The BLM and Forest Service, in coordination with the state, have clarified monitoring and mapping expectations in the FEIS (**Appendices E and F**).

A description of the habitat mapping process for each alternative was presented in **Section 2.6** of the DEIS, Detailed Description of Alternatives. The Proposed Plan describes updates to the map in MA-5 through MA-8 and **Appendix F**.

**Section 1.6.1** states that the LUPA would comply with all applicable BLM policies and guidance, including BLM Manual 6840. **Section 2.7.3** describes consistency of the mitigation strategy with BLM Manual 6840.

#### **Section 4.6 - Best Available Info Baseline Data**

##### ***Summary***

Commenters suggested new or additional literature for the BLM and Forest Service to consider in the DLUPA/EIS related to:



- Determination of GRSG population size and trends
- Effects of livestock grazing, predation, drought, noise, and anthropogenic development
- Appropriate lek buffers and disturbance cap to incorporate
- Mitigation
- Hunting
- Accuracy of the habitat mapping
- Infrastructure
- West Nile virus

### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.4 of this comment report, the BLM and the Forest Service used the most recent and best information available that was relevant to a land-use planning-level analysis including the Baseline Environmental Report (BER; Manier et al. 2013), NTT report (NTT 2011), and COT report (USFWS 2013). Additionally, the BLM and the Forest Service consulted with, collected, and incorporated data from other agencies and sources, including but not limited to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, scientific literature, field and district office data.

Of the suggested studies and references put forth by the commenters, the BLM reviewed them to determine if they: (1) presented new information that would need to be incorporated into the Proposed LUPA/FEIS, (2) were references were already included in the Draft LUPA/EIS, or (3) provided the same information as already used or described in the Draft LUPA/EIS. The BLM determined that several of these references contained new or relevant information (e.g., regarding noise impacts), and subsequently clarified the baseline in **Chapter 3**, analysis in **Chapter 4**, and updated the references cited in Chapter 7 of the Proposed LUPA/FEIS. Inclusion of this information does not present a seriously new or different picture of the impacts from what was analyzed in the DEIS and/or that information submitted/used in the PRMP would not result in impacts that were not previously considered and analyzed within the spectrum of the alternatives in the DEIS. In some cases, the additional literature was essentially the same as the sources used in the Draft LUPA/EIS or did not provide additional relevant information and was therefore not incorporated in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS.

A description of the habitat mapping process for each alternative was presented in the DEIS in **Section 2.6**, Detailed Description of Alternatives.

### **Section 4.7 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM and Forest Service should conduct additional, more comprehensive analysis of the impacts on GRSG to provide more substantiated conclusions.

Commenters provided suggestions on how to improve or modify the impact analysis for GRSG in several topic areas including:

- Hunting
- Predation
- Anthropogenic disturbance, disturbance caps, and lek buffers
- Expanding on beneficial effects on GRSG from range improvements
- GRSG population size and trend
- Livestock grazing, fences, and trailing
- Noise as related to low-level military overflights
- Success of habitat improvement projects
- Prescribed fire
- Herbicides
- West Nile virus
- More detailed analysis of Alternative A
- Climate change
- Need to identify areas for restoration
- Coal suitability

The EIS fails to provide justification as to why “withdrawal from mineral entry” is necessary to protect GRSG and its habitat when the same objective can be achieved through avoidance, minimization of impacts, and mitigation of impacts within the designated areas.

***Response***

The LUPA/FEIS provides an updated and expanded discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. As described in **Section 2.12.1**, coal was not an issue for analysis. As required by 40 CFR 1502.16, the LUPA/FEIS provides a discussion of the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action, any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the alternatives be implemented, the relationship between short-term uses of man’s environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources should the proposal be implemented. The LUPA/FEIS provided sufficiently detailed information to aid in determining whether to proceed with the proposed plan in a manner such that the public could have an understanding of the environmental consequences associated with the alternatives, in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.1.



Land use plan-level analyses are typically broad and qualitative rather than quantitative or focused on site-specific actions (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1, Chapter II, A-B at 11-13 and Chapter IV, B at 29; Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 – Land Management Planning). The DLUPA/EIS contains only planning actions and does not include any implementation actions. Therefore, effects on GRSG population levels are not required to be quantified as part of the impact analysis. A more quantified or detailed and specific analysis would be required only if the scope of the decision included implementation actions. As specific actions that may affect the area come under consideration, the BLM and the Forest Service will conduct subsequent NEPA analyses that include site-specific project and implementation-level actions. The site-specific analyses will tier to the plan-level analysis and expand the environmental analysis when more specific information is known. In addition, the public will be offered the appropriate opportunity to participate in the NEPA process for implementation actions.

Impacts from the alternatives on GRSG are described in **Section 4.2** of the FEIS. While a land use planning-level action is broad in scope and, therefore, does not require site-specific impact analysis, a thorough review of the EIS's impact analysis relevant to GRSG was found to need additional information and support for the conclusions/findings. The BLM and the Forest Service have updated this information in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS to provide the necessary information to make informed land use plan-level decisions (**Section 4.2**). This includes revisions to discussions pertaining to those topics in the bulleted list above.

BLM considered a range of alternatives for locatable minerals management in **Chapter 2**, including recommendation for withdrawal and application of RDFs to the extent consistent with applicable law. The FEIS considers impacts of the Proposed Plan decisions to recommend withdrawals and to implement mitigation measures in **Chapters 4 and 5**.

#### **Section 4.8 - Cumulative Impact Analysis**

##### ***Summary***

The BLM and Forest Service need to provide additional analysis regarding the cumulative effects of livestock grazing and land treatments. In addition, the agencies should predict GRSG population changes based on expected cumulative actions.

##### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.7 of this comment report, the BLM and Forest Service analyzed cumulative effects to GRSG in the DLUPA/EIS in **Chapter 5** of the FEIS. The BLM and Forest Service expanded and quantified cumulative impacts for the proposed LUPA/FEIS in **Chapters 5.1.6 and 5.1.10**. These sections have a subheader for Grazing/Free-Roaming Equids where livestock grazing is addressed. The subheaders for Spread of Invasive Plants and Conifer Encroachment address land treatments. Section 4.7 of this comment report describes how land treatments and domestic livestock were addressed in the Environmental Consequences section of the DEIS. The DLUPA/EIS considered the present effects of past actions, to the extent that they are relevant, and present and reasonably foreseeable (not highly speculative) Federal and non-Federal actions, taking into account the relationship between the proposed alternatives and these reasonably foreseeable actions. This discussion summarizes CEQ guidance from June 24, 2005, stating that "[g]enerally, agencies can

conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions." This is because a description of the current state of the environment inherently includes the effects of past actions. Information on the current conditions is more comprehensive and more accurate for establishing a useful starting point for cumulative effects analysis. The BLM and the Forest Service explicitly described their assumptions regarding proposed projects and other reasonably foreseeable future actions. On National Forest System lands, reasonably foreseeable actions are those that would occur under their current land use plans from a broad-scale perspective.

The BLM and Forest Service have complied with the requirements of 40 CFR 1508.7 and prepared a cumulative impact analysis based on the broad nature and scope of the proposed management options under consideration at the land use planning level. Therefore, effects on GRSG population levels are not required to be quantified as part of the cumulative impact analysis.

#### **Section 4.9 - Mitigation Measures**

##### ***Summary***

The BLM and Forest Service mitigation strategy is inadequate or needs clarifications. Topics of concern include:

- Certainty that mitigation will be implemented
- Lack of scientific evidence that mitigation and habitat restoration results in greater sage-grouse population increases
- Adequacy of the monitoring program
- Effectiveness of compensatory mitigation
- How mitigation proposals will be evaluated
- Siting of mitigation actions
- Durability of mitigation investments
- Consideration of using mitigation banks
- Creation of a mitigation program
- Framework behind exceptions and associated mitigation, e.g., science behind allowing exceptions; offsetting losses and prove mitigation is successful
- Need for mitigation given the restrictive management in the alternatives
- Link between compensatory mitigation and adaptive management



***Response***

A more detailed mitigation framework, monitoring framework, and adaptive management strategy have been incorporated into the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, **Section 2.7**, Adaptive Management, Monitoring, and Mitigation and **Appendices J, E, and G**.

Further detailed descriptions of the mitigation, monitoring, and adaptive management frameworks are available in Section 1.9, NEPA Mitigation Measures, of this report.

**Section 5 – ACECs**

**Section 5.1 - Range of Alternatives**

***Summary***

Issue 1: In the Draft EIS/LUPA, the BLM and Forest Service did not accurately or consistently represent the number of ACECs being proposed under each alternative, particularly Alternative C.

Issue 2: Alternatives in the Draft EIS/LUPA do not provide an adequate range of management actions for ACECs by only considering new ACECs under two of the action alternatives (Alternatives C and F).

Issue 3: Whether through ACECs or another administrative designation, the BLM and Forest Service must ensure any administrative designation established for the protection of sage-grouse habitat will provide adequate non-discretionary protections.

***Response***

Response 1: The FEIS has been revised to ensure consistent representation of proposed ACECs under Alternatives C and F in **Table 2-9, Table 2-11, and Sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.13**.

Responses 2 and 3: As noted in Section 1.3, NEPA Range of Alternatives, of this report, the alternatives, including the management actions for the ACEC program, meet the purpose and need for the EIS. Alternatives within the EIS have established that not all protective management for the GRSG is limited to ACEC designation. Only Alternatives C and F proposed to establish new ACECs for the protection and management of the GRSG. While the other alternatives do not propose such designations, existing ACECs would be carried forward. Further, the other alternatives still contain similarly specific management prescriptions to manage and protect the GRSG and its habitat that would be equivalent to protections afforded via an ACEC or other designations. The Proposed Plan includes management area designations for SFA, PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA which are all intended to help conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat.

## Section 6 - Climate Change

### Section 6.4 - Cumulative Impact Analysis

#### *Summary*

The EIS does not adequately address the cumulative effects of climate change on GRSG or GRSG habitat, including the cumulative effects of livestock grazing on vegetation communities and the likelihood of a changing climate to result in an increase in invasive weeds.

#### *Response*

Assessing the impacts of grazing on climate change is outside the scope of this document, except as it pertains to reducing impacts on GRSG and GRSG habitat within the planning area and in consideration of valid existing rights and the BLM's multiple use mandate under FLPMA. The PRMP/FEIS does disclose the potential effects associated with global climate change on GRSG habitats in **Section 4.2**. However, pursuant to 40 CFR 1500.1(b), information must be "of high quality" in order to be considered in the analysis. As explained in **Section 4.1** of the EIS, it is speculative to attempt to predict the specific nature or magnitude of such changes.

## Section 7 - Fire and Fuels

### Section 7.1 - Range of Alternatives

#### *Summary*

The BLM and Forest Service should examine the location and size of proposed fuel breaks in further detail as fuel breaks in large areas of intact sagebrush limit fire and related habitat destruction. Specifically, one commenter requests use of green-strips, including non-native species, for fuel breaks. Use of prescriptive fire as a management tool should be further examined.

Timelines for long-term fire management measures should be established in the FEIS. One commenter recommends that measures be implemented one year after the ROD. Implementation details of fire control measures should be specified. The BLM and Forest Service should acknowledge the importance of flexibility in fire management plans in the FEIS and allow for on-the-ground decision-making for effective fire management. Language within alternatives should be revised for clarity.

#### *Response*

Before using prescribed fire, the BLM assesses local conditions for potential invasive plant invasion. **Section 4.6.2**, Nature and Types of Effects, notes that while prescribed fire does have beneficial uses, the presence of invasive plants and the potential for invasive plants to spread after a prescribed fire would need to be evaluated on a site-specific basis. Alternatives B and E specifically note that prescribed burns should occur at higher elevation in the absence of cheatgrass. If the BLM were to use prescribed fire, the area would be evaluated on a site-specific basis with the intention of preventing cheatgrass invasion. The Proposed



Plan includes a suite of fire management decisions to address fuels management described in **Section 2.6**, including implementation of the FIAT, supporting development and implementation of the RFPAs, utilizing a full range of fire management strategies and tactics through strategic wildfire suppression planning, and use of targeted grazing as a fuels treatment.

## **Section 7.2 - Best available information baseline data**

### ***Summary***

The FEIS should include citations indicating that implementation of fuel breaks in sagebrush systems reduces the rate of fire spread. In addition, citations should be provided to support the use of prescribed fire to improve GRSG habitat. The BLM and Forest Service should recognize livestock grazing as an effective fire management tool due to its role in controlling invasive plants and decreasing fuel loads.

### ***Response***

The EIS affected environment section provides the appropriate information for the scope and scale of the project (see Section 1.4, NEPA Baseline Information of this report). However, upon BLM and Forest Service reviews and public comment suggestions, some sections in **Chapter 3** have been updated and revised to include clarifications or new information. **Section 4.2.2**, Nature and Type of Effects, has been updated to include information about fuel breaks and prescribed fire, and to clarify the relationship between livestock grazing and fire.

## **Section 7.3 - Impact Analysis**

### ***Summary***

The DEIS does not contain sufficient analysis of indirect impacts of reduced grazing on fuel loads and related wildfire risk. Additionally, the analysis of impacts of fire suppression activities should be reexamined. It is particularly important that this analysis is clarified as lack of sufficient regulatory mechanisms for wildland fire was cited as a primary threat to GRSG in the FWS listing decision.

### ***Response***

The impact analysis provides the appropriate information for the scope and scale of the project (see Section 1.6, NEPA Impact Analysis, of this report). The Proposed Plan includes a suite of fire management decisions described in **Section 2.6**, including implementation of the FIAT, supporting development and implementation of the RFPAs, utilizing a full range of fire management strategies and tactics through strategic wildfire suppression planning, and use of targeted grazing as a fuels treatment. Upon BLM and Forest Service reviews and public comment suggestions, some sections in **Chapter 4** have been updated and revised to include clarifications to the text. **Section 4.2.2** in the FEIS has been revised to clarify the impacts of reduced grazing on fuel loads.

In addition, impacts analysis discussion has been modified to clarify the impacts of different suppression measures proposed by the alternatives.

Close coordination with federal, state, and private firefighting personnel, local fire departments and local expertise, such as RFPAs, will improve strategies for initial attack and developing comprehensive suppression strategies to minimize and reduce the size of wildfires threatening PHMA and IHMA following ignition. The creation of RFPAs will ensure better and faster initial attack on wildfires threatening PHMA and IHMA through the employment of additional trained firefighters and resources in rural parts of the GRSG Management Area.

## **Section 8 - Fish and Wildlife**

### **Section 8.1 - ESA Consultation**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM fails to address avoiding the potential to list the GRSG under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and that the bird does not meet the criteria to be listed under the ESA.

#### ***Response***

As stated in **Chapter 1, Section 1.1**, Background, in the FEIS, this plan amendment effort is the result of the December 2011, BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011). The Strategy responds to the March 2010, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as Threatened or Endangered (75 Federal Register 13910, March 23, 2010) (2010 Finding). In the 2010 Finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered species.

## **Section 9 - Lands and Realty**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM should prohibit the construction of new permanent infrastructure within lands specially designated for GRSG protection, because studies show GRSG avoid areas with development.

#### ***Response***

The alternatives consider a range of alternatives regarding ROW avoidance and exclusion as presented in **Table 2-11** of the FEIS. Additionally, the Proposed LUPA SFA, PHMA, and GHMA are designated as avoidance areas for high voltage transmission line ROWs, except for the transmission projects specifically identified in the Proposed LUPA alternative. All authorizations in these areas, other than the excepted projects, must comply with the conservation measures outlined in this proposed plan, including the RDFs and avoidance criteria presented in the Proposed Plan actions AD-3 and AD-4 of the Final EIS. The BLM is currently processing applications for Gateway West and Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Projects and the NEPA review for this project is well underway. The BLM is analyzing GRSG mitigation measures through the project’s NEPA review process, which will include analysis of conservations measures (see **Section 4.8**).



## Section 9.1 - Range of Alternatives

### *Summary*

Commenters requested clarification regarding: types of exclusions, valid existing rights, aboveground fiber optic lines, and disposal under current land use plans.

Commenters also suggested additions to the range of alternatives considered and provided information on the feasibility of the alternatives (e.g., co-location, perch diverters, and burying lines).

Commenters noted that the document has contradicting management actions regarding geothermal development between lands and minerals sections.

Commenters noted that Alternative E did not adequately address the purpose and need.

### *Response*

The BLM and the Forest Service considered a reasonable range of alternatives during the GRSG planning process in full compliance with the NEPA. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require that the BLM and the Forest Service consider reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment. While there are many possible alternatives or actions to manage public lands and GRSG in the planning area, the BLM and the Forest Service fully considered the planning issues and criteria developed during the scoping process to determine a reasonable range of alternatives. The BLM believes the range of alternatives meets the purpose and need for this effort. As a result, six alternatives were analyzed in detail in the DLUPA/EIS that best addressed the issues and concerns identified by the affected public. The range of alternatives in the DLUPA/EIS represented a full spectrum of options including a no action alternative (Alternative A).

Proposed avoidance and exclusion area designations vary by alternative, as presented in **Tables 2-9** and **2-11** of the FEIS. Under Alternative D, all new ROWs, unless specifically excluded, would be avoided, whenever possible, see D-LR-3. Required design features that would apply to specific types of facilities in GRSG habitat are located in **Appendix B**.

The Draft LUPA/EIS included an alternative that allows for placement of fiber optic lines on existing infrastructure (Alternative D, Actions LR-6 and LR-7 in **Table 2-11** of the FEIS).

Under Alternative D, LR-9 (see **Table 2-11**), new power lines outside of existing ROWs, would be buried, where feasible. Reclamation of lands, once facilities are removed, are part of standard BMPs, shown in **Appendix B** of the FEIS. Amendments to existing facilities that are otherwise excluded may be allowed under Alternative D, LR-6. Under Alternative D, lands currently identified for retention within priority GRSG habitat would be retained unless disposal of those lands would increase the extent or provide for connectivity of priority habitat (D-LR -19 and D-LR-21). Alternatives A through F propose retention of all utility corridors (**Table 2-11** of the FEIS).

Lands and minerals management actions did contradict on the topic of geothermal development (D-LR-3, page 2-162 of the DEIS and D-MLM-1, page 2-180 of the DEIS) and the FEIS corrects this contradiction.

The first of the assumptions under Lands and Realty Assumptions, **Section 4.8**, is that BLM and the Forest Service will recognize valid existing rights, as long as those ROWs comply with the terms and conditions of their ROW grant. The agencies will consider all safety concerns into all decisions to authorize a pipeline, including burying a transmission line.

See also Section 9, Lands and Realty, of this report, which further explains changes made to the Proposed LUPA alternative for allocations and management actions.

## **Section 9.2 - Best available information baseline data**

### ***Summary***

Commenters raised concerns with the baseline assumption (as noted in Ellis 1984 and Connelly et al. 2000) that power lines and other vertical structures increase perching opportunities for raptors and increase the potential for GRSG to abandon leks.

Commenters suggested that the BLM and the Forest Service should have considered several additional references in their analysis, related to the relationship between GRSG and transmission lines. For example, commenters noted the DEIS did not include studies that found underground powerlines have more environmental impacts than overhead powerline placement.

Commenters questioned the data in **Table 3-36** of the DEIS, which includes the acreage of transmission lines within GRSG habitat.

### ***Response***

Many reports have been prepared for the development of management recommendations, strategies, and regulatory guidelines. The National Technical Team report (NTT 2011), Conservations Objectives Team (COT; FWS 2013), and the Summary of Science, Activities, Programs and Policies that Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse (also referred to as the Baseline Environmental Report [BER]; Manier et al. 2013) are the most widely used reports that have been incorporated in BLM and Forest Service EISs that address the effects of implementing GRSG conservation measures on lands they manage. Additionally, the BLM and the Forest Service developed the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS with involvement from cooperating agencies, including Idaho Department of Fish and Game to ensure that a balanced multiple-use management strategy to address the protection of GRSG while allowing for utilization of renewable and nonrenewable resources on the public lands.

Management actions included in the Draft LUPA/EIS for the underground placement of powerlines are intended to reduce the potential for long-term impacts on GRSG habitat and species viability. Literature referenced in the FEIS demonstrates that overhead powerlines provide perching opportunities for ravens and other avian predators.



The BLM and Forest Service has reviewed scientific literature provided by commenters regarding the effects of powerlines on GRSG, buffers, perch diverters, and overhead versus burying lines, and the EIS has been revised, as appropriate in **Section 4.2**. Inclusion of this information does not present a seriously new or different picture of the impacts from what was analyzed in the DEIS and/or that information submitted/used in the PRMP would not result in impacts that were not previously considered and analyzed within the spectrum of the alternatives in the DEIS.

Transmission acreages came from the peer-reviewed Baseline Environmental Report (Manier et al. 2013).

### **Section 9.3 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.6 of this report, the DLUPA/EIS provides an adequate discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. As required by 40 CFR 1502.16, the DLUPA/EIS provides a discussion of the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action, any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the alternatives be implemented, the relationship between short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposal should it be implemented. The DLUPA/EIS provided sufficiently detailed information to aid in determining whether to proceed with the preferred alternative or make a reasoned choice among the other alternatives in a manner such that the public could have an understanding of the environmental consequences associated with the alternatives, in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.1.

Impacts to wind energy were discussed in the Draft LUPA/EIS **Chapter 4**, page 4-331. BLM groups Alternative A and Alternative E together in regards to impacts on wind energy. Under Alternative E, the BLM and the Forest Service would limit impacts from wind and solar energy development through the use of triggers in addition to the general stipulations identified in the GRSG section, as well as required design features. This is clarified in the FEIS (see **Section 4.2.5**).

Management actions included in the Draft LUPA/EIS for the co-location of new infrastructure in existing ROWs are intended to reduce the amount of surface disturbance in GRSG habitat and concentrate new development in habitat areas already affected by anthropogenic activities. The BLM and Forest Service recognize that co-location is not feasible in all circumstances, particularly for new powerlines. Requirements for colocation have been clarified in the proposed plan (AD-3 through AD-5).

## Section 10 - Leasable Minerals

### Section 10.1 - Range of alternatives

#### *Summary*

The DEIS needs a better explanation on how valid existing rights are defined and how they will be protected, including fringe or preference right leases. The alternatives need to follow the NTT report recommendations more closely, as well as reflect current USFWS policy recommendations.

The BLM needs to clarify the location of non-leased Known Phosphate Areas in relation to GRSG habitat. The plan is potentially more restrictive to phosphate leasing than a listing under the ESA and did not properly define the environmental baseline for leasable minerals. Without prohibiting new phosphate mining in GRSG habitat, the LUPA does not protect GRSG from the potential impacts of selenium being released to the environment and poisoning wildlife, including GRSG, through transport in air and water and subsequent bioaccumulation. The EIS fails to explain or discuss the authority that the BLM has to close public lands to leasable mineral prospecting and leasing under the LUPA process under Alternatives B, C and D.

The reliance upon vague RDFs under Alternative D is a failure of the BLM to adopt best science that calls for specific restrictions based on observed GRSG response to surface disturbances.

#### *Response*

The BLM and the Forest Service considered a reasonable range of alternatives during the GRSG planning process in full compliance with the NEPA. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1502.1) require that the BLM and the Forest Service consider reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment. While there are many possible alternatives or actions to manage public lands and GRSG in the planning area, the BLM and the Forest Service fully considered the planning issues and criteria developed during the scoping process to determine a reasonable range of alternatives. As a result, six alternatives were analyzed in detail in the DLUPA/DEIS that best addressed the issues and concerns identified by the affected public. The DLUPA/DEIS includes alternatives that provide a greater and lesser degree of restrictions in various use programs, but would not eliminate or invalidate any valid existing development rights. All plan decisions would be subject to valid existing rights. BLM agrees that it cannot impose an NSO on an existing lease. A definition of valid and existing rights has been added to the glossary in the FEIS.

**Figure 3-13** has been improved to show phosphate lease status and KPLAs relative to GRSG habitat. There is no PHMA in the "phosphate patch" and IHMA only in the KPLA west of Bear Lake. There is some GHMA, northwest of Soda Springs, but not within KPLAs.



There are no existing leases in the ACECs proposed by Alternative C in the DEIS. In Alternative F (**Figures 2-45 and 2-46** in the DEIS), there are existing geothermal leases in the Raft River Valley, in the South Magic Valley ACEC (ID-04). There is moderate oil and gas potential in the Bear Lake part of the East Idaho Uplands proposed ACEC (ID-12). There are geothermal leases in the West Central proposed ACEC (ID-11).

Selenium bioaccumulation is not identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service or the NTT Report as a major threat to GRSG and is not part of the conservation strategy being applied by the BLM. No change to the EIS has resulted from this comment.

According to 43 CFR 3501.17 and H-1601-1, Land Use Planning, the BLM has the authority to close areas to non-energy leasable mineral prospecting and leasing. The regulations providing this authority do not need to be described in the EIS because they are outlined in the CFR and describing all governing regulations in the EIS would be impracticable. KPLAs are areas known to contain a valuable deposit of phosphate. Their only significance is that those lands must be leased competitively. A person can obtain a non-competitive phosphate lease on lands outside KPLAs, but only through a successful prospecting program.

Upon review of the preferred alternative, public comments, and coordination with project cooperating agencies, the Proposed LUPA includes allocations for PHMA and SFA to be closed for non-energy leasable minerals, while IHMA and GHMA would be open.

The RDFs were adopted from BMPs in Appendix D of the NTT report. In that appendix, it states that "BMPs are continuously improving as new science and technology become available and therefore are subject to change. Include from the following BMPs those that are appropriate to mitigate effects from the approved action." Wording from NNT report has been added to the discussion of RDFs in the FEIS.

## **Section 10.2 - Best available information baseline data**

### ***Summary***

The oil and gas conditions in the Payette area are different than those studied in the NTT report and should not be used as baseline data. The impacts described by Johnson et al. 2011 are overstated and should be replaced by information from Coates et al. 2013.

### ***Response***

The reasonably foreseeable development scenario for oil and gas assumes a conventional oil and gas field, as unconventional fields have not been discovered nor are they anticipated to be discovered in Idaho. The current development occurring in the Payette area of Idaho is not within GRSG habitat.

Under the Proposed LUPA, areas within SFAs would be open to fluid mineral leasing and development and geophysical exploration subject to NSO without waiver, exception, or modification. Areas within PHMA and IHMA would be open to mineral leasing and development and geophysical exploration subject to NSO with a limited exception (FLM-3). GHMA would be open to mineral leasing and development and geophysical exploration

subject to CSU which includes buffers, seasonal timing restrictions and standard stipulations. Additionally, the Proposed LUPA would incorporate required design features and best management practices appropriate to the management area as COAs when post leasing activity is proposed into any post-lease authorizations.

### **Section 10.3 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Summary***

The analysis in the DEIS describing impacts on leasable mineral development is insufficient.

#### ***Response***

The acres of unleased KPLA land unavailable for development by alternative has been corrected in the Chapter 4 tables in the FEIS. The section describing the impacts from leasable minerals management for Alternative E has been revised. The impacts of non-energy leasable minerals management actions to socio-economics have been included in the FEIS and the impacts with respect to disturbance caps have been analyzed in more detail.

### **Section 10.4 - Cumulative impact analysis**

#### ***Summary***

The DEIS did not adequately analyze cumulative impacts of management actions on leasable mineral development, including impacts to the Western Phosphate Field, the American agriculture industry, and national food security.

#### ***Response***

The BLM and the Forest Service thoroughly explained their consideration and analysis of cumulative effects in the LUPA/FEIS in **Section 5.2.8**. The LUPA/FEIS considered the present effects of past actions, to the extent that they are relevant, and present and reasonably foreseeable (not highly speculative) Federal and non-Federal actions, taking into account the relationship between the proposed alternatives and these reasonably foreseeable actions. This discussion summarizes CEQ guidance from June 24, 2005, stating that "[g]enerally, agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions." This is because a description of the current state of the environment inherently includes the effects of past actions. Information on the current conditions is more comprehensive and more accurate for establishing a useful starting point for cumulative effects analysis. The BLM and the Forest Service explicitly described their assumptions regarding proposed projects and other reasonably foreseeable future actions. On National Forest System lands, reasonably foreseeable actions are those that would occur under their current land use plans from a broad-scale perspective.

The cumulative impacts on the Western Phosphate Field, unleased KPLAs, socio-economic impacts from loss of phosphate resources, reasonably foreseeable actions, and proposed conservation measures are considered and reflected in **Sections 5.2.8** and **5.2.14** (minerals and socio-economics cumulative impacts, respectively).



## Section 11 - Livestock Grazing

### *Summary*

Commenters noted that retirement of grazing permits is not necessarily permanent and highlighted several effects of permit retirement. Further, there is a limit to BLM's ability to devote grazing districts to purposes other than grazing.

### *Response*

FLPMA grants the Interior Secretary the authority to make land use planning decisions, taking into consideration multiple use and sustained yield, present and potential uses of the land, relative scarcity of values, and long-term and short-term benefits, among other resource values (43 USC 1711 Sec 201 (a)). BLM land use planning regulations, found at 43 CFR § 4100.0-8 provides that the BLM shall manage livestock grazing on public lands in accordance with applicable land use plans. The BLM may designate lands as "available" or "unavailable" for livestock grazing through the land use planning process (H-1601, Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C). A decision to make lands unavailable for livestock grazing is not permanent. It is subject to reconsideration, modification and reversal in subsequent land use plan decisions. BLM land use plans may make some, or all, of the land within grazing districts unavailable for grazing during the life of the plan. Further, land use plans may impose restrictions and limitations on grazing or any other grazing management related action intended to achieve the land use planning goals and objectives (H-1601, Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C).

A "chiefly-valuable-for-grazing" determination was originally made for most of the public lands pursuant to the Taylor Grazing Act ("TGA," see, 43 USC § 315a). This determination need only be revisited when the Secretary is considering creating or changing grazing district boundaries. Such a determination is neither required nor appropriate when establishing grazing levels within a district during FLPMA land use planning. (*See* USDI Solicitor Opinion, "Clarification of M-37008, May 13, 2003"). This RMP is not considering creating or changing grazing district boundaries. Although lands have been identified as "chiefly-valuable-for-grazing" per the TGA for purposes of establishing grazing districts within the public domain. This TGA determination does not contradict the BLM's authority or responsibility to manage those lands to achieve resource condition goals and objectives identified during land use planning as required by FLPMA's multiple use and sustained yield mandate.

## Section 11.1 - Range of alternatives

### *Summary*

Multiple commenters requested that the alternatives require closure of voluntarily relinquished allotments. Commenters questioned why changes to grazing management are needed when livestock grazing is not listed as a primary threat to GRSG. More than one commenter noted that grazing should only be restricted where it can be shown that grazing is directly related to the failure to meet GRSG habitat objectives. Additionally, commenters stated that the DEIS failed to consider increased grazing and question the rationale behind this decision. Some commenters also requested additional consideration of reduced grazing

levels and utilization levels, as well as temporary or permanent closure of all or some GRSG habitat to grazing.

Several commenters requested that the LUPA/EIS provide specifics regarding habitat assessment schedules and application of standards, use ecological site descriptions, require immediate application of certain terms and condition to permits, and impose grazing restrictions for priority or general habitat.

***Response***

The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS planning team employed the BLM and Forest Service planning process to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the LUPA. See response in Section 1.3 NEPA Range of Alternatives of this report. The DEIS analyzed a range of alternatives including no grazing and a 25 percent reduction in grazing. Reduction in AUMs under Alternative F would be specified in site specific decisions at the permit renewal level. Language in the FEIS for Alternative F reduction has been clarified. The Proposed Plan includes direction to consider retirement of allotments that become vacant or grazing preferences that are relinquished. If a permit or lease is voluntarily relinquished, the BLM will consider whether the public lands where that permitted use was authorized should remain available for livestock grazing or be used for other resource management objectives (**Section 2.6.2**).

Livestock grazing is identified by USFWS as a threat to GRSG in the March 23, 2010 Federal Register Notice, and therefore it is addressed in this LUPA. Existing regulatory mechanisms, including the fundamentals for rangeland health, would continue to provide the basis for managing grazing in GRSG habitat. However, the Proposed Plan would provide additional consistency in application of BLM rangeland health standards and guidelines relative to GRSG habitat, and would provide additional guidance for prioritizing land health assessments and review of grazing permits to ensure that grazing management is compatible with attainment of GRSG habitat objectives within the planning area. In addition, RDFs and best management practices would be adopted to reduce effects of range improvements and livestock trailing across public lands. Grazing use would be modified when it is identified as the cause for not meeting GRSG objectives. The intent of the land use plan amendment is to change management under all resource programs, where necessary, to benefit GRSG habitat. Standards and Guidelines assessments result in a determination of causal factors for non-achievement of any applicable standard, including standards for wildlife habitat. Where livestock management is determined to be a causal factor for non-achievement of a standard, management must be modified to conform with applicable guidelines. Increased grazing was considered but eliminated from detailed analysis as described in **Section 2.12.3**.

The BLM is required to follow the grazing regulations, including the decision process at 43 CFR 4160, when modifying permit or leases. Upon BLM review of the public comments and input from cooperating agencies, the Proposed LUPA (see management actions RM-1 through RM-19) includes additional guidance as to how the BLM will incorporate GRSG decisions from the amendment into grazing permits and leases.



## Section 11.2 - Best available information baseline data

### *Summary*

Multiple commenters asserted and presented citations supporting their position that grazing has the potential to benefit GRSG by controlling cheatgrass and reducing wildfire risk. Other commenters presented citations supporting the position that grazing damages GRSG habitat and increases cheatgrass risk.

Several commenters requested more detailed information about current grazing management and habitat conditions in the planning area.

Other commenters noted the importance of ranching in the local economy, and also that ongoing collaboration between private ranchers and federal agencies has helped preserve GRSG habitat and should be acknowledged in the EIS.

### *Response*

Before beginning the LUPA/EIS and throughout the planning effort, the BLM and the Forest Service considered the availability of data from all sources, adequacy of existing data, data gaps, and the type of data necessary to support informed management decisions at the land-use plan level. The BLM and the Forest Service also used the most recent and best information available that was relevant to a land-use planning-level analysis (refer to response in Section 1.4, NEPA Baseline data- Best Available Science, in this report for additional information).

**Section 3.3**, discusses the current level of grazing in the planning area and management systems in place. Impacts of current and historic grazing on other resource and resource uses are discussed under the appropriate resource and resource use headings (i.e. **Section 3.2**, Special Status Species - Greater Sage-Grouse). **Section 4.2.2** in the DEIS provides an overview of the ecological impacts of livestock grazing. The DEIS analyzed the effects of no grazing and reduced grazing on components of sage-grouse habitat, including changes in wildfire risk and cheatgrass incursion.

See changes to **Section 3.7**, Wildland Fire Management, for additional discussion of cheatgrass-wildfire dynamics.

Discussion of socioeconomic impacts of current grazing operations in the planning area is discussed in **Section 3.23**, Socioeconomics.

Additional language has been added to the FEIS (**Section 4.5**) recognizing the role of Rural Fire Protection Associations and other collaboration efforts

## Section 11.3 - Impact Analysis

### *Summary*

Some comments detailed beneficial impacts of grazing, and the adverse impacts of grazing restrictions to livestock operations, Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, and the local economy.

One commenter notes that limitations on water developments can have impacts on grazing management and need to be clarified and analyzed in greater detail.

***Response***

Impacts to livestock grazing from current livestock grazing management are addressed in **Section 4.6** of the FEIS. Impacts to the socioeconomic aspect of livestock grazing are discussed in **Section 4.15** of the FEIS.

While a land use planning-level action is broad in scope and, therefore, does not require site-specific impact analysis, a thorough review of the EIS's impact analysis relevant to grazing and indirect socioeconomic impacts and was found to need additional information and support for the conclusions/findings. The BLM and the Forest Service have updated this information in the Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment/FEIS to provide the necessary information to make informed land use plan-level decisions (see changes in **Section 4.15**). Impacts to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations are discussed in **Section 4.5**, Wildland Fire Management. BMPs for livestock developments including water have been revised in the FEIS and related impacts on livestock grazing management have been clarified.

**Section 12 - Locatable Minerals**

**Section 12.4 - Cumulative impact analysis**

***Summary***

The DLUPA/DEIS fails to adequately analyze the cumulative impact of locatable mineral withdrawals across the GRSG range.

***Response***

Due to the variation in types of minerals and occurrence and development potential across the range, and the types of data available for the planning area compared to the entire GRSG range, cumulative impact analysis across the entire GRSG range would not provide meaningful, appropriate analysis. The total number of acres proposed for withdrawal under certain alternatives is included in each of the Great Basin sub-region Draft LUPA/EISs. The Draft LUPA/EIS has met the NEPA/CEQ requirements for cumulative impacts analysis in each of the respective sub-regional EISs. Information explaining the rationale behind the chosen geographic extent of the cumulative impact analysis area has been added to **Section 5.3.8**, Locatable Minerals, of the Final EIS.

**Section 13 - Recreation**

**Section 13.1 - Range of alternatives**

***Summary***

In the LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service should incorporate additional management actions (e.g. Special Recreation Permit/Special Use Permit stipulations, OHV noise regulations, seasonal restrictions on OHV events near leks, rerouting of OHV events away from leks, and hunting) to limit the potential for impacts on GRSG from recreation



activities. Any management actions limiting recreation activities in GRSG habitat should be based on the best available science with proven habitat conservation results.

***Response***

The EIS considers an adequate range of alternatives to protect GRSG, including varying levels of restriction on recreational activities and Special Recreation Permits/Special Use Permits (see **Table 2-11** and proposed plan management REC-1 and REC-2). During subsequent implementation-level travel management planning, new travel management plans would evaluate vehicle routes and determine the need for permanent or seasonal road closures, and mode of travel (e.g. motorcycle, ATV, and UTV) restrictions, including speed. New travel management plans would evaluate vehicle routes and determine the need for permanent or seasonal road closures, and mode of travel (e.g. motorcycle, ATV, and UTV) restrictions during subsequent implementation level travel management planning. 43 CFR 8340 requires all OHVs to comply with state laws including noise and spark arrester requirements (see proposed plan management TM-3, TM-4, and **Appendix L**).

**Sections 1.5.3** and **2.11.2** of the FEIS describe why detailed analysis of hunting and elimination of hunting are outside the scope of this planning effort.

**Section 14 - Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice**

**Section 14.3 - Impact Analysis**

***Summary***

The socioeconomic analysis in the DEIS is overly broad and does not provide sufficient analysis of impacts to individuals, local communities or counties. The DEIS should also expand analysis of the restrictive management actions on planning area operators, communities and services including but not limited to grazing operators and mining.

Finally, the analysis methodology is inadequate to provide a comprehensive analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative analysis of the socioeconomic impacts on the planning area communities.

***Response***

As described in Section 1.6, of this report, the DLUPA/EIS provides an adequate discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. As required by 40 CFR 1502.16, the DLUPA/EIS provides a discussion of the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action, any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the alternatives be implemented, the relationship between short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity, and any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposal should it be implemented. The DLUPA/EIS provided sufficiently detailed information to aid in determining whether to proceed with the preferred alternative or make a reasoned choice among the other alternatives in a manner such that the public could have an understanding of the environmental consequences associated with the alternatives, in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.1.

Impacts were considered on numerous resources, resource uses, and socioeconomic conditions, which included grazing, recreation, and mineral development, among others (**Section 4.15** of the FEIS). A county by county IMPLAN analysis is less desirable or not feasible for those resources analyzed with IMPLAN, as the input data is often not available at the county level. In addition, a discussion of impacts at the county level does not capture the indirect and induced impacts that occur beyond county borders.

The DLUPA/EIS describes the methodology and assumptions used for conducting the impact analysis (see **Section 4.15.1** and **Appendices AA** and **BB** of the FEIS). The methodology and assumptions provide an adequate starting point for discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. As required by 40 CFR 1502.24, the DLUPA/EIS identified methodologies used and made reference to the scientific and other sources relied upon for conclusions in the analysis. Based on these methodologies and assumptions, the DLUPA/EIS provided sufficiently detailed information to aid in determining whether to proceed with the preferred alternative or make a reasoned choice among the other alternatives in a manner such that the public could have an understanding of the environmental consequences associated with the alternatives, in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.1.

## **Section 15 - Soil**

### **Section 15.2 - Best available information baseline data**

#### ***Summary***

One commenter notes that the DEIS lacks references to support discussion of macrobiotic crusts.

#### ***Response***

**Chapters 3** and **4** in the FEIS have been revised to include additional references to support the discussion of macrobiotic crusts.

## **Section 16 - Travel Management**

### **Section 16.1 - Range of alternatives**

#### ***Summary***

The Draft LUPA/EIS failed to consider a full suite of travel management-related management actions that would protect GRSG habitat while allowing for continued administrative access, particularly for existing livestock grazing permittees. Commenters proposed that management actions should be included in the proposed plan to prohibit and reclaim/restore roads in GRSG habitat, limit motorized events, close PPH to OHV use, apply additional seasonal travel restrictions, and apply a maximum route density within proximity of leks in PPH and PGH. Commenters also requested that proposed management actions preserve motorized access on existing routes per the 3-State OHV and National Route Designation decisions and maintain administrative access in grazing allotments.



***Response***

**Section 1.4** of the FEIS describes how the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS planning team employed the BLM and Forest Service planning process to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the LUPA. The BLM and Forest Service complied with NEPA and the CEQ implementing regulations at 40 CFR 1500 in the development of alternatives for this Draft LUPA/EIS, including seeking public input and analyzing reasonable alternatives. The alternatives include management options for the planning area that would modify or amend decisions made in the field office RMPs, as amended, to meet the planning criteria, to address issues and comments from cooperating agencies and the public, or to provide a reasonable range of alternatives. Since this is a plan amendment to address GRSG conservation, many decisions from the field office RMPs are acceptable and reasonable. In these instances, there was no need to develop alternative management prescriptions.

Closure to OHV use was considered but eliminated from detailed analysis as described in **Section 2.11.4**. During subsequent implementation-level travel management planning new travel management plans would evaluate vehicle routes and determine the need for permanent or seasonal road closures, and mode of travel (e.g. motorcycle, ATV, and UTV) restrictions, including noise levels and speed. The route designation process will be completed as subsequent implementation level planning using current travel management policies and will include public and local agency involvement. Addressing these issues at the implementation level allows the BLM and Forest Service to take new information into account as it becomes available.

Needs for administrative access to valid existing rights, grandfathered uses, or permitted activities would be taken into consideration during site-specific NEPA analysis. Restrictions applied to recreational OHV use may not apply to permitted administrative uses.

The BLM and Forest Service have not added a restriction that would limit road densities to less than 0.09 km per km<sup>2</sup> (Wisdom et al. 2011) in GRSG habitat because the threshold established by Wisdom used coarse road data. When taking into consideration actual road density information, use of this threshold is not appropriate. Based on the GRSG Monitoring Framework, the Proposed LUPA includes surface disturbance direct areas of influence when calculating acreage for the disturbance cap, which would include consideration of existing disturbance (e.g., existing roads) when determining whether a project should be deferred or permitted.

**Section 16.2 - Best available information baseline data**

***Summary***

**Chapter 3** of the Draft LUPA/EIS does not depict the number of acres designated as open to cross-country motorized travel.

***Response***

Current travel management designation acres have been added to **Section 3.10** of the FEIS.

### **Section 16.3 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Summary***

For various reasons, commenters asserted that the Draft LUPA/EIS did not adequately analyze the impacts of proposed management actions on travel management. For example, commenters contend that the analysis is not based on sound science or is narrowly focused and uses studies that only demonstrate the negative effects from OHV use; does not adequately describe the magnitude of OHV vs. “naturally occurring” impacts across alternatives; and does not distinguish between motorized and non-motorized impacts. Commenters further request the BLM and Forest Service consider conducting site-specific studies to support proposed management and assert that there would be indirect effects (e.g., ban on new road construction) incurred by existing ROW authorization holders by deferring travel management planning.

#### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.6 of this comment report, the LUPA/FEIS provides an adequate discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. Further, as described in Section 1.4 of this comment report, the BLM used the most recent and best available information that was relevant to a land use planning-level analysis.

The mechanism being used to determine landscape-level travel area designations (open/limited/closed) is 43 CFR 8340 which regulates OHV travel on public lands. BLM does not have a similar regulation for non-motorized travel. Non-motorized travel can be regulated through supplementary rules. Supplemental rules and site specific route designations will be addressed at the implementation level in the future.

New construction related to power line access would be exempted under 43 CFR 8340.05 (3).

While multiple studies on OHV use have been cited, BLM is using the BLM Travel Management Manual and Handbook (M-1626 & H-83421) to address travel planning in the EIS and will continue to use the same policy for future implementation and planning.

### **Section 16.5 - Mitigation measures**

#### ***Summary***

The LUPA/EIS should adopt additional travel-related mitigation measures to educate the public and prevent the spread of invasive species from travel-related sources through mitigation measures such as those described at [playcleango.org](http://playcleango.org).

#### ***Response***

The BLM and Forest Service reviewed the measures provided by commenters on [playcleango.org](http://playcleango.org). The measures were found to be similar to those already provided in **Appendix B**, RDFs, of the Proposed LUPA/FEIS. Results from reviewing the impact



analysis confirmed that the outcomes from the suggested mitigation measures would be the same as those described in the Draft LUPA/EIS, therefore no change is needed.

## **Section 17 - Tribal Interest**

### **Section 17.1 - Consultation requirements**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM should consider additional areas for ACEC designation and should consult with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes about these designations.

#### ***Response***

Alternatives within the EIS have established that not all protective management for the GRSG is limited to ACEC designation. Alternatives C and F proposed to establish new ACECs for the protection and management of the GRSG. While the other alternatives do not propose such designations, they still contain similarly specific management prescriptions to manage and protect the GRSG and its habitat that would be equivalent to protections afforded via an ACEC or other designations. The Proposed Plan includes management area designations for SFA, PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA which are all intended to help conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat. The BLM and Forest Service recognize their responsibility to ensure that meaningful consultation and coordination concerning GRSG planning is conducted with federally recognized tribes, including the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, to consider tribal treaty rights and trust resources. Tribal consultation is described in **Chapter 6** of the FEIS.

### **Section 17.4 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM must ensure tribes, in particular the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, maintain opportunities to access the public domain, exercise off-reservation treaty rights, and continue their traditional customs and practices.

#### ***Response***

The BLM and Forest Service recognize their responsibility to consider potential impacts to Tribal resources. The environmental baseline for tribal interests is presented in **Section 3.17**. Existing treaty rights will be respected throughout the planning and implementation processes. Tribal consultation is described in **Chapter 6** of the FEIS.

## **Section 18 - Vegetation Sagebrush**

### **Section 18.1 - Range of alternatives**

#### ***Summary***

Commenters recommended that the preferred alternative include:

- Specific vegetation treatment acreage objectives
- Passive sagebrush restoration

- Limitations on vegetation treatments in sagebrush areas. To meet COT report objectives, include regulatory mechanisms to avoid sagebrush removal or manipulation in sage-grouse breeding or wintering habitats with minor exceptions.
- Establish priorities for pinyon-juniper removal including reduced grazing in conjunction with pinyon-juniper treatment.
- Restore non-native seedings to increase GRSG habitat
- Apply additional restrictions for herbicide application in GRSG habitat
- Commit to a program to plan, fund, execute and monitor large scale integrated invasive species infestation and eradication projects in a measurable timeframe.
- Include specific objectives to measure success in invasive species eradication

### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.3 of this comment report, the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS planning team employed the BLM and Forest Service planning process to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the LUPA.

Some of the recommended components were addressed in the DEIS and additional information has been included in the FEIS as detailed below.

- Specific vegetation treatment acreage objectives are presented in the vegetation modeling results (**Table 2-5**). Additionally, the Proposed LUPA includes a vegetation objective stating that in all SFAs and PHMAs, the desired condition is to maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover. The attributes necessary to sustain these habitats are described in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (BLM Tech Ref 1734-6).
- Passive sagebrush restoration is included in Alternative C of the DEIS. In some areas passive restoration may not be sufficient to improve GRSG habitat and active restoration may be necessary (Davies et al. 2011) (see pp 4-8, 4-9, 4-54, and 4-101 of the DEIS).
- Limitations on vegetation treatments (e.g., prescribed fire) in sagebrush areas, including winter range, is included in Alternative D (See FM-2, FM-6, FM-13, and VEG-2 in **Table 2-11** of the FEIS). To meet COT report objectives, include regulatory mechanisms to avoid sagebrush removal or manipulation in sage-grouse breeding or wintering habitats with minor exceptions. In addition, VEG-2 states: Implement vegetation rehabilitation or manipulation projects to enhance sagebrush cover or to promote diverse and healthy grass and forb understory to achieve the greatest improvement in GRSG habitat based on Wildfire and Invasive Species Assessments, HAF assessments, other vegetative assessment data and local, site specific factors that indicate sagebrush canopy cover or herbaceous conditions do not meet habitat management objectives (i.e. is minimal or exceeds optimal



characteristics). This may necessitate the use of prescribed fire as a site preparation technique to remove annual grass residual growth prior to the use of herbicides in the restoration of certain lower elevation sites (e.g., Wyoming big sagebrush) but such efforts will be carefully planned and coordinated to minimize impacts to GRSG seasonal habitats.

- Priorities for pinyon-juniper removal are addressed in the DEIS. BLM and Forest Service would remove standing and encroaching trees within at least 3 km of occupied sage-grouse leks and other habitats (e.g., nesting, wintering and brood rearing) to reduce the availability of perch sites for avian predators, as resources permit (see **Appendix B**). Management changes to grazing could be considered under proposed plan management action VEG-4.
- Alternative C in the DEIS supports restoration of native vegetation to areas that have been seeded with non-native species (C-VG-7, **Table 2-11** of the FEIS). The proposed plan provides direction for restoring non-native seedings (see VEG-7).
- Herbicide/Pesticide BMPs are covered under the Vegetation Treatment PEIS (BLM 2007). The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS tiers to the analysis in this document.
- This EIS is intended to provide guidance regarding treatment methods, priorities, objectives, and the conditions under which these treatment objectives would occur. Specifics regarding treatment effectiveness, funding and implementation would be covered in site-specific management actions. BLM and Forest Service would follow agency-specific monitoring requirements.

## **Section 18.2 - Best available information baseline data**

### ***Summary***

The DEIS fails to provide adequate baseline information related to sagebrush vegetation. Commenters questioned the source of BLM data and requested the FEIS utilize additional baseline data on cheatgrass extent and evaluate effectiveness of continuing programs against weeds and juniper encroachment. Commenters provided additional literature to consider. Commenters also advocated an adaptive approach to vegetation management based on site-specific habitats.

### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.4 of this comment report, the BLM and Forest Service considered the availability of data from all sources, adequacy of existing data, data gaps, and the type of data necessary to support informed management decisions at the land use plan-level.

Adaptive management has been incorporated into the Proposed LUPA, as noted above in Section 1.9, Mitigation Measures. The Proposed LUPA incorporates hard and soft triggers, and were developed to inform the BLM and Forest Service as to when the Federal agency needs to respond (take action) to address a declining trend in GRSG or GRSG habitat. Adaptive management would allow BLM increased flexibility to adjust programs based on data collected during operation, to respond to changing conditions and improve effectiveness of vegetation management programs.

The BLM and Forest Service has clarified the vegetation modeling and data sources in **Appendix X**.

### **Section 18.3 - Impact Analysis**

#### ***Summary***

Commenters express concern about unintended or undesirable impacts of vegetation management programs to control weeds or restore sagebrush habitat. The DEIS inadequately analyzes impacts from vegetation restoration.

#### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.6 of this comment report, the DLUPA/EIS provides an adequate discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives. The Proposed Plan includes a vegetation management program intended to 1) reconnect and expand areas of higher native plant community integrity/rangeland health; 2) increase the amount and functionality of seasonal GRSG habitats; and 3) maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover in all SFA and PHMA (**Section 2.6.2**). Impacts from vegetation management and vegetation restoration are analyzed in **Sections 4.2 and 4.3** of the FEIS.

### **Section 18.4 - Cumulative impact analysis**

#### ***Summary***

BLM's cumulative impacts analysis for vegetation failed to consider the impacts of limited resources on GRSG protection.

#### ***Response***

Funding and availability of resources is outside the scope of this EIS.

### **Section 18.5 - Mitigation measures**

#### ***Summary***

Commenters requested detailed plans of action and clarification on mitigation and monitoring, including timing of re-seeding and restoration after fire.

#### ***Response***

Mitigation is detailed in **Appendix J**. The Mitigation Framework is incorporated in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS and was developed to achieve a net conservation gain to the species by implementing conservation actions. Regional mitigation is a landscape-scale approach to mitigating impacts to resources. This involves anticipating future mitigation needs and strategically identifying mitigation sites and measures that can help achieve the greatest conservation benefit for GRSG and its habitats.

If impacts to GRSG or its habitat from authorized land uses remain after applying avoidance and minimization measures, then compensatory mitigation projects will be used to fully offset impacts to achieve conservation benefits. Any compensatory mitigation will be



durable, timely, and in addition to that which would have resulted without the compensatory mitigation.

Specific mitigation strategies, based on the Mitigation Framework, will be developed by regional teams within one year of the issuance of the Record of Decision and be consistent with the BLM's Regional Mitigation Manual MS-1794, Forest Service Handbook FSH 1909.15, and CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1508.20.

Mitigation measures for specific projects are implementation-level decisions and will be included in site-specific analysis which is outside the scope of this EIS.

## **Section 19 - Vegetation Riparian**

### **Section 19.1 - Range of Alternatives**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM and Forest Service should consider additional management approaches for riparian vegetation, including removal of invasive tamarisk, limitations on or removal of livestock grazing, and maintenance of GRSG habitat objectives.

#### ***Response***

As described in Section 1.3 of this comment report, the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA/EIS planning team employed the BLM and Forest Service planning process to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the LUPA. Habitat objectives for riparian areas are described in HM-OBJ-2 and **Table 2-3**. A reasonable range of management for riparian areas is presented in **Table 2-11**, LG/RM-29 through LG/RM-33.

### **Section 19.2 - Best Available Info Baseline Data**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM should disclose baseline data related to Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) of riparian areas in GRSG habitat and the BLM should address whether PFC protects stability of riparian habitat for GRSG.

The BLM should also modify current PFC assessment methods to address GRSG needs, and should focus on site-specific management of riparian habitat to balance competing uses.

#### ***Response***

Comprehensive PFC data is not available on a sub-regional level but is displayed when available.

PFC of riparian systems according to BLM Manual 1737 includes stabilization of streambanks, maintenance of ponding, reduction in erosion, and other features beneficial to GRSG. Modifications to PFC methods and descriptions of site-specific management are outside the scope of this planning effort.

## Section 19.5 - Mitigation Measures

### *Summary*

The BLM should modify current PFC assessment methods to address GRSG needs. In addition, the BLM should focus on site-specific management of riparian habitat to balance competing uses.

### *Response*

PFC of riparian systems according to BLM Manual 1737 includes stabilization of streambanks, maintenance of ponding, reduction in erosion, and other features beneficial to GRSG.

Adaptive management has been incorporated into the Proposed LUPA, as noted above in Section 1.9, Mitigation Measures. The Proposed LUPA incorporates hard and soft triggers, and were developed to inform the BLM and Forest Service as to when the Federal agency needs to respond (take action) to address a declining trend in GRSG or GRSG habitat. Adaptive management would allow BLM increased flexibility to adjust programs based on data collected during operation, to respond to changing conditions and improve effectiveness of vegetation management programs. Site-specific management is outside the scope of this effort.

## Section 20 - Water

### Section 20.3 - Impact Analysis

#### *Summary*

The EIS fails to address impacts on the soil and watershed conditions resulting from grazing-sourced manure, soil erosion and pathogen contamination under each alternative and to provide appropriate mitigation measures. Such an analysis should include a list of impaired waters and the sources of contamination for those waters. The EIS also fails to address the negative impact on GRSG of restricting or removing water developments under Alternative D.

#### *Response*

During preparation of the EIS, it was determined that impacts on soil and water from management actions in the LUPA would be negligible or beneficial and thus did not warrant an extensive analysis in **Chapter 4**. Analysis of impacts on soil and water would be conducted during the NEPA review of implementation-level projects.

**Section 4.2.2** has been revised to include impacts from restriction/removal of water developments.

## Section 21 - Wild Horse and Burros

### *Summary*

Livestock and wild horses were inappropriately grouped together in management actions. Some commenters were also concerned with the 25 percent proposed reduction of AML



under Alternative F and the basis for reduction; they requested reevaluation of reduction based on the fact that wild horse habitat overlaps a minimal percentage of GRSG habitat.

The proposed management should provide flexibility to increase AML/AUM and/or open HAs if data becomes available demonstrating that genetic viability of wild horses and burros is threatened.

Commenters also stated that the preferred alternative would give the BLM too much discretion to reduce AMLs or zero out HMAs which would violate the BLM's legal mandate to protect WHB.

### ***Response***

The BLM and the Forest Service considered a reasonable range of alternatives during the GRSG planning process in full compliance with the NEPA. See Section 1.3, NEPA Range of Alternatives, in this report for an expanded explanation on what constitutes a reasonable range of alternatives. The Proposed Plan includes direction to manage HMAs in GRSG habitat within established AML ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives. Wild horse and burro management, such as conducting rangeland health assessments, gathers and population growth suppression techniques, AML adjustments, and GRSG habitat monitoring, would be prioritized in SFA (**Section 2.6.2**).

The BLM protects, manages, and controls wild horses in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 (Public Law 92-195, as amended), the purpose of which is to "manage wild horses and burros within herd management areas (HMAs) designated for their long-term maintenance, in a manner designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance (TNEB) and multiple use relationships." The FLPMA directs the BLM to manage wild horses and burros as one of numerous multiple uses including mining, recreation, domestic grazing, and fish and wildlife. It also required a current inventory of wild horses and burros. Additional guidance is found in 43 CFR 4700, Protection, Management, and Control of Wild Free-roaming Horses and Burros.

Adjusting AML and/or opening HAs is outside the scope of this project. However, adjusting AML does fall within the legal mandate of the BLM to protect WHB and other resources. Through the BLM's program of monitoring and analysis of data, AMLs have been established and will continue to be adjusted based on available data. AMLs can be adjusted based on the limitations and capability of the range, including the four habitat components (forage, water, cover, and space), while managing for healthy populations of WHBs in balance with other uses and resources (including GRSG). An explanation of the relationship between AMLs and AUMs has been included in the FEIS in **Section 3.6**.

## **Section 21.1 - Best available information baseline data**

### ***Summary***

The BLM should provide documentation of critical genetic data on each of the wild horse and burro herds in the planning area. This will provide BLM basis for identifying which HMAs would not be feasible to place AML reductions on while maintaining genetically viable herds. The BLM should also provide exact population data for all wild horse

populations in HMAs and HAs and clearly defined maps of HMAs and HAs. Finally, any land policy changes resulting from the GRSG plan must be in conformance with the National Academy of Sciences 2013 recommendations for reform of the federal wild horse management program.

***Response***

The prerequisite level of information necessary to make a reasoned choice among the alternatives in an EIS is based on the scope and nature of the proposed decision. The baseline data provided in **Chapter 3** and various appendixes in the Draft LUPA/DEIS is sufficient to support, at the general land use planning-level of analysis, the environmental impact analysis resulting from management actions presented in the Draft LUPA/DEIS. A land use planning-level decision is broad in scope and, therefore, does not require an exhaustive gathering and monitoring of baseline data (see response to Section 1.4 in this report for more details).

Much of the data in the DLUPA/EIS is presented in qualitative and map form, and is sufficient to support the coarse-scale analyses required for land use planning. The FEIS includes a map of HMAs and HAs (**Figure 3-2**). Population data is included in **Table 3-19** of the DEIS. These maps and tables have been reviewed for accuracy prior to inclusion in the FEIS.

Genetic documentation of WHB is an ongoing implementation level process used to monitor the genetic health of BLM's wild horse and burro populations (see BLM IM 2009-061).

The National Academy of Sciences report has been considered in the development of the FEIS and actions appropriate to the land management planning level included as appropriate. Findings of the National Academy of Sciences would also be considered under separate site-specific NEPA actions.

**Section 21.2 - Impact Analysis**

***Summary***

The impacts on GRSG from wild horses and burros are not distinguished from livestock which inaccurately portrays the threat from wild horses and burros.

The DEIS contains contradictions, such as where the DEIS states that "Under all alternatives, no direct change would occur to areas allocated as HMAs/WHBTs for wild horses and burros", then the report proceeds to summarize how every single alternative would restrict wild horse and burro usage in their own federally designated habitats.

***Response***

The DLUPA/EIS provides an adequate discussion of the environmental consequences, including the cumulative impacts, of the presented alternatives for a land use planning effort (see detailed response in Section 1.6, NEPA Impacts Analysis of this comment report).



Within the DEIS, the BLM and Forest Service did analyze impacts on WHB and domestic livestock grazing separately and also analyzed the impacts on GRSG from WHB and domestic livestock grazing separately. Impacts on GRSG from WHB and domestic livestock grazing are identified in **Section 4.2** of the DLUPA/DEIS. Impacts on WHB from GRSG management strategies are identified in **Section 4.4** of the Proposed LUPA/FEIS.

BLM appropriately analyzed the impacts to WHB from actions not related to changes in AML.

Text in the WHB impact section has been reviewed and relationship between allocation and management actions clarified in the FEIS.

## **Section 22 – Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

### **Section 22.1 - Range of Alternatives**

#### ***Summary***

All lands with wilderness characteristics that overlap with GRSG habitat represent good opportunities for GRSG conservation and should be analyzed to see how managing those lands to protect wilderness characteristics would coincide with GRSG conservation. The BLM should consider lands with wilderness protection as an alternative to ACEC protection for some areas.

The BLM should complete lands with wilderness characteristics inventories and the DEIS should consider potential lands with wilderness characteristics in the scope of this process.

#### ***Response***

Per BLM Manual 6320, Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process, “In some circumstances, consideration of management alternatives for lands with wilderness characteristics may be outside the scope of a particular planning process (as dictated by the statement of purpose and need for the planning effort). For example, a targeted amendment to address a specific project or proposal may not in all circumstances require consideration of an alternative that would protect wilderness characteristics. In these situations, the NEPA document associated with the plan amendment must still analyze effects of the alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics.” Therefore, while the alternatives do not include management decisions explicitly for lands with wilderness characteristics, impacts on lands with wilderness characteristics are analyzed in **Section 4.14** and **Section 5.3.12**.

### **Section 22.2 - Best Available Info Baseline Data**

#### ***Summary***

The BLM should work with Upper Snake Field Office staff to ensure lands with wilderness characteristics inventories and management are consistent between this EIS/LUPA and the Upper Snake RMP.

The BLM must provide a map of the lands with wilderness characteristics and where it overlaps with priority habitat. If the BLM does not complete lands with wilderness

characteristics inventories, the BLM should use GIS to inventory roadless areas and consider these as potential lands with wilderness characteristics for planning purposes.

The FEIS should explain how the BLM will comply with the 2014 appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies and with Secretary Salazar's Secretarial Order No. 3310.

***Response***

BLM Upper Snake Field Office continues to evaluate lands with wilderness characteristics within the planning area. Decisions related to lands with wilderness characteristics will be addressed in the Upper Snake LUP/EIS.

Per BLM Manual 6320, Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process, "In some circumstances, consideration of management alternatives for lands with wilderness characteristics may be outside the scope of a particular planning process (as dictated by the statement of purpose and need for the planning effort). For example, a targeted amendment to address a specific project or proposal may not in all circumstances require consideration of an alternative that would protect wilderness characteristics. In these situations, the NEPA document associated with the plan amendment must still analyze effects of the alternatives on lands with wilderness characteristics."

The BLM is not making decisions on lands with wilderness characteristics in this planning effort. Doing so is outside the purpose and need and scope of this EIS. As noted in Section 1.3, NEPA Range of Alternatives, of this report, the alternatives meet the purpose and need for the EIS. Alternatives within the EIS have established that not all protective management for the GRSG is limited to identification of lands with wilderness characteristics and can be accomplished through other means. However, while the alternatives do not include management decisions explicitly for lands with wilderness characteristics, impacts on lands with wilderness characteristics are analyzed in **Section 4.14** and **Section 5.3.12**.

Secretarial Order 3310 (issued in December of 2010) was never implemented, the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (PL112-10) prohibited the use of funds to implement the Secretarial Order during fiscal year 2011. The primary direction under S.O. 3310 was the designation of "Wild Lands" that were to be derived from wilderness characteristics inventories. Since that time BLM has provided additional policy in 2012 in the form of Manuals 6310 and 6320 which excludes any designation of "Wild Lands" but continues to provide direction for the inventory of public lands for wilderness resources under FLPMA sections 201 and 202 which is considered appropriate under the Appropriations Act of 2014.

**Section 23 - Predation**

***Summary***

Some commenters state that the BLM does not adequately address the threat of predation or fully analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of predation on GRSG populations;



predation was identified as a threat by the state of Idaho. Others question the analysis of impacts from anthropogenic structures on predation of GRSG, given that the USFWS did not identify predation as a primary threat to GRSG.

***Response***

As stated in **Section 2.11.3** in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS, predator removal is outside the scope of LUPA. The threat of predation is described in **Section 3.2.1** and the potential effects of predation on GRSG populations are addressed in **Section 4.2**.

The BLM and the Forest Service have authority to manage the habitat and have provided an updated analysis in **Section 4.2** of the FEIS to describe how the numerous management actions across the range of alternatives could affect the habitat and indirectly the effects of predation. Altering the sagebrush habitat of the GRSG can create an influx of predators into an area and lead to a population decline. Roads, fences, power lines, and other infrastructure as well as the development of trails and other disturbances may improve access for potential predators near GRSG habitat and increase risks to the species.

**Section 24 – Noise**

***Summary***

Noise studies cited in the DEIS are not public and therefore the results are not reproducible; alternative data should be utilized.

***Response***

Blickley et al.'s research on noise and GRSG has since been published:

Blickley J.L, D. Blackwood, and G.L. Patricelli. 2012. Experimental evidence for the effects of chronic anthropogenic noise on abundance of greater sage-grouse at leks. *Conservation Biology* Vol 26. No 3. 461-471. This literature has been added to **Section 4.2** in the FEIS. Inclusion of this information does not present a seriously new or different picture of the impacts from what was analyzed in the DEIS and/or that information submitted/used in the PRMP would not result in impacts that were not previously considered and analyzed within the spectrum of the alternatives in the DEIS.

**Section 25 - Weeds**

***Summary***

Issue 1: The BLM and Forest Service should analyze past vegetation treatment programs and commenters recommended scientific literature on effects of vegetation treatments.

Issue 2: The EIS should include baseline data on cheatgrass in planning area.

Issue 3: Partnerships with private landowners to control cheatgrass should be considered in the FEIS.

***Response***

Response 1: As described in Section 1.4 of this comment report, the BLM and Forest Service considered the availability of data from all sources, adequacy of existing data, data

gaps, and the type of data necessary to support informed management decisions at the land use plan-level.

As a result of these actions, the BLM and Forest Service gathered the necessary data essential to make a reasoned choice among the alternatives analyzed in detail in the DLUPA/EIS. The BLM and Forest Service utilized the available data to provide an adequate analysis that led to an adequate disclosure of the potential environmental consequences of the alternatives in **Sections 4.2** and **4.3** of the EIS.

Analysis of proposed weed treatment methods tiers off of analysis in the Final Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) [BLM 2007].

Response 2: Potential occurrence of cheatgrass has been modeled (**Section 3.3.5** of the FEIS), and acres of cheatgrass potential in GRSG habitat are shown in the DEIS based on Manier et al. 2013 (see **Table 3-15**, Acres of Cheatgrass Potential within GRSG Habitat) Information presented is appropriate for the planning level actions and analysis and accurate, comprehensive data across the sub-region are not readily available. Further analysis will occur on a site-specific basis at the implementation level.

Response 3: Cooperation with all landowners would be undertaken as feasible and is included in the range of alternatives.

### T.3 Commenter Lists

<b>Organizations, Conservation Groups, Businesses</b>
Livestock Association
Agrium Conda Phosphate Operations
American Bird Conservancy
American Exploration and Minind Association
Arimo Corporation
Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
AWHP
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Beaverhead County Commission
Beaverhead Outdoors Association
BlueRibbon Coalition, Inc.
Board of Cassia County Commissioners
Brackett Livestock Inc.
Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA)
Cassia County Commissioners
Center for Biological Diversity
Central Idaho Rangelands Network (CIRN)
Challis Local Working Group



<b>Organizations, Conservation Groups, Businesses</b>
Custer County Commissioners
Defenders of Wildlife
Department of Defense
Double M Farm
DreamCatcher Wild Horse and Burro Sanctuary
EPA, region 10
Faulkner Land and Livestock
Gooding Soil and Water Conservation District
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Guerry, Inc
Gusman Livestock Co.
Hagenbarth Livestock
Helmick Ranch
Holland Ranch Company, HRL, Inc.
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Conservation League
Idaho Farm Bureau
Idaho Mining Association
Idaho Native Plant Society
Idaho Power
Idaho Recreation Council
Idaho State Senate
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Idaho Wool Growers Association
Industrial Minerals Association
Intermountain Range Consultants
International Mountain Bicycling Association
Ireland Bank
J Lazy S Angus Ranch
J.R. Simplot Company
Jaca Livestock
Jarbidge Sage-Grouse Working Group
Jefferson County
Jerome County
Jerome Peterbilt
Lava and Sage Group
Madision County Board of Commissioners
Magic Valley Cattle Association
Makale Livestock LLC
Matador Cattle Company
Mom and Pop Products

<b>Organizations, Conservation Groups, Businesses</b>
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Wollgrowers Association
Montana Petroleum Assoc
Motorcycle Industry Council
Mountain Home Local Working Group
Murdock Brothers Ranch
Natioanl Mining Association
North Magic Valley LWG
NorthWestern Energy
NRCS
Owhyhee County Farm Bureau
Owyhee Cattlemen's Association
Owyhee County
Pale Horse Cattle Co.
Percy Ranch
Petan Company of Nevada, Inc
Pioneer PR and Development LLC. Trifold Media Company
Prairie Falcon Audubon
Prescott Land and Livestock
Public Lands Advocacy
Public Lands Council/National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Rabo AgriFinance
Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Rocky Mountain Power
Sage Hen
Sagebrush Habitat Conservation Fund
Salmon Falls Land and Livestock Co.
SBS Associates LLC
Shaw Cattle Co
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Simplot Livestock Co.
Soda Springs Plant
Southwestern Montana Stockman's Asociation
Specialty Vehicle Institute of America
Spencer Ranch Inc.
SS Cattle Company LLP
Stevenson Intermountain Seed, Inc.
The Nature Conservancy

<b>Organizations, Conservation Groups, Businesses</b>
The University of Montana-Western
The Wilderness Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Twin Falls Highway District
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
Washington County Commissioners
Weiser River Cattle Association
Western Counties Alliance
Western Energy Alliance
Western Range Service
Western Watersheds Project
WHE/AWHPC
Wild Earth Guardians
Wood River Soil and Water Conservation District
Y-3 II Ranch

<b>Individuals</b>
Albee, Stanley
Anderson, Jason
Auld, Misty
Baker, Bill
Baker, Sarah D.
Baldwin, Cody & Polly
Balfour, Douglas J.
Barkell, Larry W.
Barnard, Sue Ellen
Bauchman, Stephen
Bean, Von
Bennett, Aron
Bodker, Greg
Brackett, Nancy
Bradshaw, Lee
Brendemuehl, James
Breuer, Ernest
Brewer, Ernest
Brockman, William J.
Brown, Randy
Bruce, Josh
Butler, Art
Cameron, Les
Caywood, Joe R

<b>Individuals</b>
Chad,
Chandler, Kirk
Chandler, Terry
Childers, Gary
Childs, Jim
Cooper, Greg
Daniels, Joseph
Danielsen, Kim
Delgado, Carmelita
Devlin, Marybeth
Dixon, D. Paul
Dixon, Matt
Doane, Margaret
Dowton, Stanley M
Duckett, Matt
Eliason, Ken
Ellason, David
Ellis, Dave
Evans, J. Morgan
Farmer, Delbert
Farnsworth, Gary
Finn, Christie
Fischer, Doris
Fite, Katie
Freeburg, Tyanne
Gammett, Glenda
Gammett, Winston
Gardner, Elyse
Gardner, Keagen
Gerber, Jim
Gill, Marty I.
Grant, Jim
Gregg, Kathleen
Griffiths, Susan
Hamilton, Danie
Hanley, Michael F.
Heitman, Dennis
Hennessy, Eileen
Hensley, Chad and Dannelle
Higgins, Brad

<b>Individuals</b>
Hill, Sidnee Rose
Hoskins, Curtis
Howard, Doug
Howard, Shell
Hubbard, Bill
Ingram, Gary and Jackie
Ipsen, Mark
Jayo, Leslie
Jones, Bill
Justice, Kimberly
Kantor, Karen
Kauer, Melva
Kauer, Tex
Kennedy, Robin
Kershner, Bonnie
Kershner, Kenny
Kershnew, Vernon
King, Angela
Knudson, Gina
Kraich
Lankow, Michael
Larson, Kevin A.
Law, Phillip
Lenkner, Charles
Lenkner, Melody
Lequercia, Raime Jo
Levi, Judy
Lichley, Laurie
Line, Richard
Lish, Chris
Lisle, Brandi, Josie, Ruby, and Jess
Little, David
Lord, Jeff
Loucks, Bob
Lufkin, Carl
Lufkin, Robin
Lynch, Janet
Lyons, Charles
Lyshe, Steve
Marchant, Gerald
McAfeeem, Travis

<b>Individuals</b>
McFarland, Mary Lou
Messerli, Gerald
Meyer, Brett
Moss, Paul
Mulder, William J.
Mulkey, Bruce L.
Munns, Tim T.
Murdock, Tanner
Naderman, Justin
Nettleton, Paul
Nevin, Kandace
Newbold, Edward
Osborn, Leah
Osborne, Deland
Oster, Sherry
Otter, C.L. Butch
Pantone, Pamela
Payne, Ted and Dorothy
Perkins, Rod
Peters, John
Peterson, Tom
Piper, Andy
Poorman, Gayle Buhner and Paul
Pratt, Wendy
Proubasta, Dolores
Public, Jean
Ramadorai, Kari
Reeder, Chad
Reeser, D
Richards, Tony and Brenda
Ricketts, John
Ridley, Ramona
Rigby, Scott M.
Rocklein, Christian
Rovner, Jeffrey
Salvin, Katie
Santarsiere, Andrea
Santerre, Gay
Saterwhite, Lee
Satterwhite, Megan



<b>Individuals</b>
Savage, Richard
Schieron, Nanette
Scholes, Delila
Seal, Thom
Sellman, Chester W.
Sendelbach, Barbara
Serres, Julie
Shewmaker, Dan H.
Skaar, Travis
Smith, Leon W.
Smith, Steve
Smith, Wiley F.
Spates, Georgeanne
Stanford, Dennis L.
Stanford, Shane and Laci
Steenhof, Karen
Stockham, Judy
Sweeney, Mark
Thomlinson, John
Thompson, Kerry
Thompson, Matthew
Thompson, Robyn
Thompson, Robyn
Thompson, Ted
Tingey, Jerry
Udy, David L.
VanDer Meullan, Dan
Veselka, Dave and Cathy
Victoria De Goff and family
Waide, Sandra
Wallis, Harley W.
Weaver, Ron
White, Sally
Whittakers, F. James
Williams, Barry T.
Zeleny, Heather
Zocco, Rachelle

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