EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its resource management plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) directs the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) to develop and periodically revise or amend its land and resource management plans (LRMPs), which guide management of National Forest System lands. These two agencies' plans will be generically referred to as land use plans (LUPs) throughout the remainder of this document, unless the reference is to a specific BLM or Forest Service LUP.

The BLM and Forest Service Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed Plan provides a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in the most valuable habitat. Land use allocations in the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA) and Important Habitat Management Areas (IHMA), while minimizing disturbance in General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA). In addition to establishing protective land use allocations, the Proposed Plan would implement a suite of management tools, such as disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives and monitoring, mitigation approaches, adaptive management triggers and responses, and other protective measures throughout the range. These overlapping and reinforcing conservation measures will work in concert to improve and restore GRSG habitat condition and provide consistency in how the BLM and Forest Service will manage activities in GRSG habitat in the planning area.

ES.1.1 Rationale for the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy and Land Use Plan Amendment

This land use plan amendment is the result of 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). In that finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was "warranted, but precluded" for listing as a threatened or endangered species. A "warranted, but precluded" determination is one of three results that may occur after a petition is filed by the public to list a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This finding indicates that immediate publication of a proposed rule to list the species is precluded by higher-priority listing proposals; that is, a species should be listed based on the available science, but listing other species takes priority because they are more in need of protection.

The USFWS reviewed the status of and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. Of the five listing factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, "the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the GRSG," and Factor D, "the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms," posed "a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future" (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and Forest Service as conservation measures in LUPs.

Consistent with the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011),[1] the BLM as the lead agency, together with the Forest Service as a cooperating agency, is preparing 15 environmental impact statements (EISs), with associated plan amendments and revisions. These documents provide a set of management alternatives focused on specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG (see **Figure ES-1**, Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Boundaries).

Science-based decision making and collaboration with state and local partners are fundamental to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The 15 GRSG LUP/EISs address threats to GRSG identified by state fish and wildlife agencies, the BLM National Technical Team, and the USFWS in the context of its listing and Forest Service GRSG LUP/EISs (USFWS 2013),[2]. Where consistent with conservation objectives, the GRSG LUP/EISs adopt unique state and stakeholder developed approaches and priorities. Additional science-based reviews by the

[1] BLM (US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management). 2011. Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National. Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy. Washington, DC. December 27, 2011.
[2] USFWS (US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2013. Greater Sage-grouse *(Centrocercus urophasianus)* Conservation Objectives: Final Report. USFWS, Denver, CO. February 2013.

Figure ES-1

US Geological Survey and related scientific literature provided further guidance on specific issues that arose in developing the final BLM and Forest Service decision and the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report. The COT report was prepared by wildlife biologists from state and federal agencies and provides a blueprint for the overall conservation approach set forth in the BLM GRSG LUP/EISs. In addition, regular meetings with the Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force provided additional opportunities for coordination with member states.[3]

ES.1.2 Description of the Planning Area and Habitat Management Areas

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM and Forest Service will make decisions during this planning effort. The planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction. The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-regional GRSG planning area covers all or portions of 28 counties in Idaho, 6 counties in southwestern Montana, and 1 county in northern Utah. While the planning area consists of all lands regardless of ownership, decisions resulting from this land use plan amendment (LUPA)

[3] The Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force works to identify and implement high priority conservation actions and integrate ongoing actions necessary to preclude the need for the GRSG to be listed under the ESA. The Task Force includes designees from the 11 western states where GRSG is found as well as representatives from USFWS, BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, United States Geological Survey, and Department of the Interior.

would apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in GRSG habitats (decision area), including surface and split-estate lands with BLM-administered subsurface mineral rights. **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment, describes the current resource and resource use conditions in the planning area.

GRSG habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the decision area consists of lands allocated as PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA (**Figure ES-2** Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas – Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS, **Table ES-1** Habitat Management Areas in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Planning Area). PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA are defined as follows:

- PHMA (5,192,600 acres): BLM-administered and National Forest System lands identified as having the highest value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies for PHMA are derived from and generally follow the Preliminary Priority Habitat boundaries (see **Chapter 3**) identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS, but may be modified based on the objectives of each alternative. Areas of PHMA largely coincide with areas identified as Priority Areas for Conservation in the COT report.
- IHMA (3,153,300 acres): BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that provide a management buffer for PHMA and connect patches of PHMA. IHMA encompasses areas of generally moderate to high conservation value habitat and/or populations, but that are not as important as PHMA. There are no IHMAs designated within southwestern Montana. The IHMA boundaries and management strategies are derived from and generally follow the Preliminary Medial Management Area (PMMA) and Important Habitat Zone (IHZ) boundaries identified in Alternatives D and E, respectively, of the Draft LUPA/EIS, but may be modified based on the objectives of each alternative. These lands serve a critical role in the adaptive management strategy developed by the State of Idaho and adopted in the Proposed Plan.
- GHMA (2,760,500 acres): BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that require some special management to sustain GRSG populations. The GHMA boundaries and management strategies are derived from and generally follow the Preliminary General Habitat boundaries (see **Chapter 3**) identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS, but may be modified based on the objectives of each alternative.

The planning area includes other BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that are not allocated as habitat management areas for GRSG. The Idaho

and Southwestern Montana LUPA/EIS does not establish any additional management for these lands; these lands will be managed according to the existing, underlying land use plan for the area.

Figure ES-2 Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas – Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS

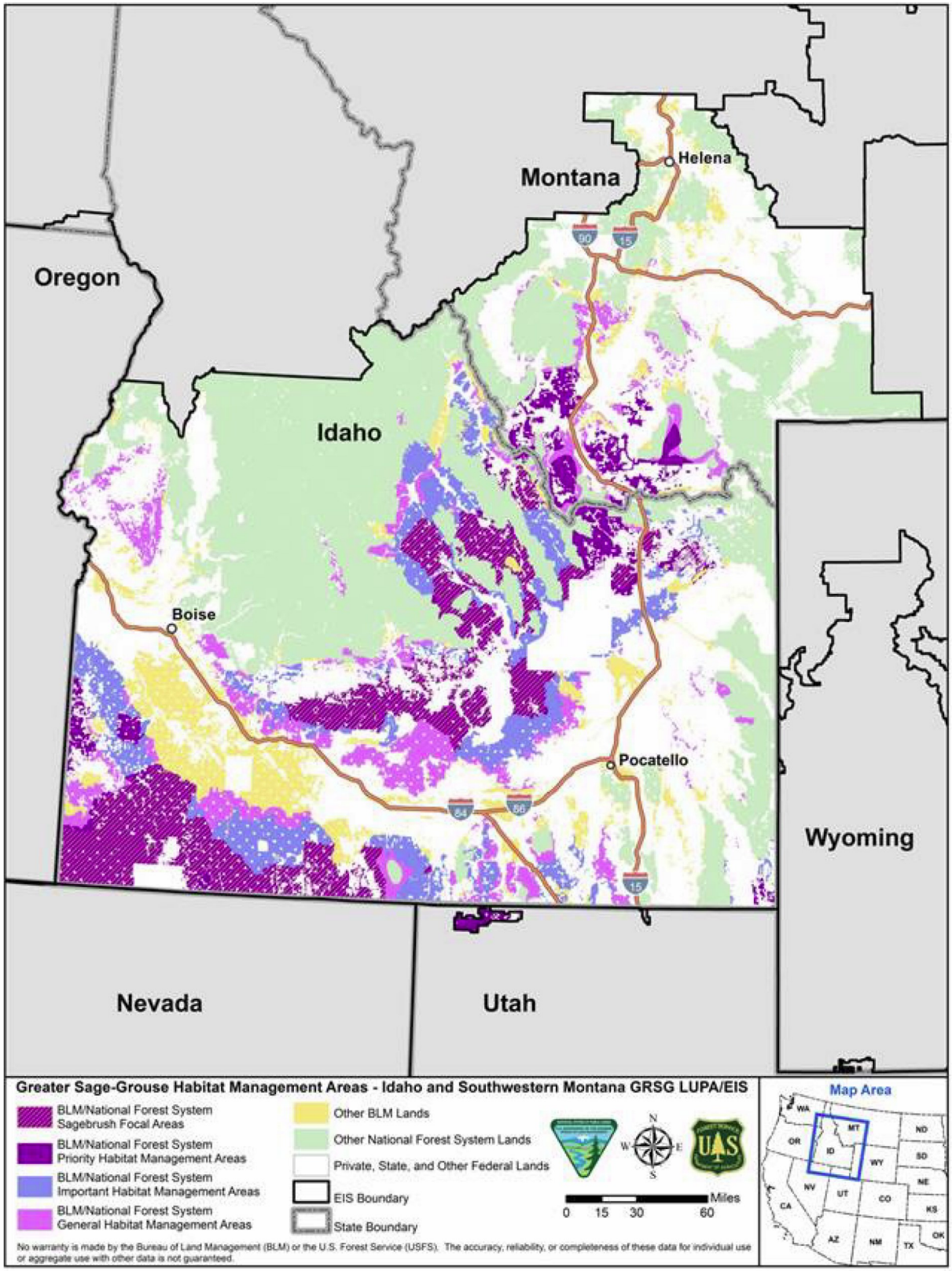

Table ES-1
Habitat Management Areas in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Planning Area

Habitat Management Area	Acres of BLM-administered/National Forest System Lands	Percent of BLM-administered/National Forest System Lands in Planning Area
PHMA	5,192,600	20
IHMA	3,153,300	12
GHMA	2,760,500	11
Other BLM-administered/National Forest System lands	14,605,400	57

The Proposed Plan also identifies specific Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) (3,842,900 acres), which are a subset of PHMA. The SFAs were derived from Greater Sage-Grouse "stronghold" areas described in a USFWS memorandum to the BLM and Forest Service titled *Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes* (USFWS 2014).[4] The memorandum and associated maps provided by the USFWS identify areas that represent recognized "strongholds" for GRSG that have been noted and referenced as having the highest densities of GRSG and other criteria important for the persistence of the species.

In its listing decision, the USFWS noted that changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of GRSG populations. Changes in land allocations and conservation measures in the BLM and Forest Service LUPs provide a means to implement regulatory mechanisms to address the inadequacy identified by the USFWS.

ES.3 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed federal action is the Proposed Plan, which identifies resource management actions in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained-yield mandates of FLPMA and the NFMA. The proposed action is intended to provide a consistent framework for managing GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. The alternatives, including the Proposed Plan, comprise desired future outcomes, and a range of management actions, allowable uses, and land use allocations that guide management on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands to conserve, restore, and enhance GRSG habitat. The Proposed Plan (see **Section ES.6,** Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan and Environmental Effects, and **Section 2.6.2**, Proposed Plan Amendment), represents the agencies' approach for addressing the purpose and need.

[4] USFWS (US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2014. Memorandum: Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes. October 27, 2014.

ES.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE LUPA/EIS

ES.4.1 Scoping

The BLM and Forest Service initiated the LUPA/EIS process on December 9, 2011, with the publication in the Federal Register of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to begin a planning effort. A public scoping process began in January 2012 and included a series of seven public meetings in various locations throughout the planning area. Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues to consider in the planning process. The scoping process included soliciting input from interested state and local governments, tribal governments, other federal agencies and organizations, and individuals to identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the plan amendment, and to assist in the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives (See **Section 6.2.2**, Public Notification of Scoping and **Section 6.2.3**, Public Scoping Open Houses).

The final Scoping Summary Report, available online at *http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html*, prepared in conjunction with all the GRSG LUPAs, summarizes the scoping and issue-identification process and describes 13 broad issue categories identified during the scoping process (see also **Section 1.5.2**, Issues Identified for Consideration in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region).

ES.4.2 Cooperating Agency Collaboration

Throughout this planning effort, the BLM and Forest Service have engaged with multiple federal, state, and local government agencies as well as Native American tribes. Consistent with the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) and FLPMA and the Forest Service Manual 1920 and NFMA, cooperating agencies share knowledge and resources to achieve desired outcomes for public lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks. A total of 26 agencies and counties signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to formalize their cooperating agency relationship. The BLM and Forest Service met with and provided relevant information to cooperating agencies throughout the planning process. For more information, see **Chapter 6**, Consultation and Coordination.

ES.4.3 Development of the Draft LUPA/EIS

Development of Management Alternatives

In accordance with NEPA and the CEQ implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500), the Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS planning team considered public input and developed a reasonable range of alternatives for the Draft LUPA/EIS.

The planning team developed six unique alternatives, including one No Action Alternative and five action alternatives, which were subsequently analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS. Each of the preliminary action alternatives was designed to:

- Respond to USFWS-identified issues and threats to GRSG and its habitat, including specific threats identified in the COT report
- Address the 13 range-wide planning issues
- Fulfill the purpose and need for the LUPA
- Meet the mandates of the FLPMA and the NFMA

Collectively, the five action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, D, E, and F) analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS offer a range of possible management approaches for responding to the purpose and need as well as the planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping. While the overarching goal of the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions, which if selected as the final plan, would constitute a unique LUPA.

Publication of Draft LUPA/EIS

Public Comment Period

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft LUPA/EIS was published in the Federal Register on November 1, 2013. The NOA initiated a 90-day public comment period, which ended on January 29, 2014. The BLM and Forest Service also held seven 2-hour public comment open houses for the Draft LUPA/EIS in January 2014.

Comment Analysis

During the Draft LUPA/EIS 90-day public comment period, the BLM and Forest Service received thousands of written comments by mail, email, and submissions at the public meetings. Comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns. Upon receipt, the BLM and Forest Service reviewed the comments, grouped similar substantive comments under an appropriate topic heading, and evaluated and wrote summary responses addressing the comment topics. The response indicated whether or not the commenters' points would result in new information or changes being included in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS. **Section 6.2.5**, Public Comment on the Draft LUPA/EIS, provides a detailed description of the comment analysis methodology and an overview of the public comments received on the Draft LUPA/EIS. Complete comment summaries and responses, including rationale and any associated changes made in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS, can be found in **Appendix T**.

ES.5 LUPA/EIS ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

ES.5.1 Alternative A: No Action

Under Alternative A, neither the BLM nor Forest Service would develop new management actions to protect GRSG habitat. Management of existing threats to GRSG populations and habitat, such as infrastructure, invasive species, grazing, mineral development, and wildfire, would continue in accordance with existing land use planning documents.

ES.5.2 Alternative B

Alternative B is based on the conservation measures developed by the BLM National Technical Team (NTT) planning effort described in Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. WO-2012-044. As directed in the IM, the conservation measures developed by the NTT must be considered and analyzed, as appropriate, through the land use planning and NEPA processes by all BLM state and field offices that contain occupied GRSG habitat. Alternative B would apply management actions to PHMA and GHMA, including actions that would exclude ROW development in PHMA and avoid development in GHMA, close PHMA to fluid mineral leasing, mineral material sales, and nonenergy leasable minerals, and recommend proposed withdrawal from locatable mineral entry in PHMA. These management actions would reduce surface disturbance in PHMA and would minimize disturbance in GHMA, thereby maintaining GRSG habitat.

Management actions for wildfire would focus on suppression in PHMA and GHMA, while limiting certain types of fuels treatments. Vegetation management would emphasize sagebrush restoration. Collectively, vegetation and wildfire management would conserve GRSG habitat. Grazing would continue with similar impacts under Alternative B as Alternative A.

ES.5.3 Alternative C

Alternative C is the most restrictive approach to GRSG conservation. Alternative C would eliminate all future ROWs, fluid mineral leasing, nonenergy leasable mineral development, and mineral material sales on GRSG habitat. Alternative C would also recommend proposed withdrawal from locatable mineral entry for all GRSG habitat. Alternative C would manage all GRSG habitat as PHMA. This alternative would substantially reduce surface disturbance in all GRSG habitat.

Under Alternative C, the BLM and Forest Service would take a passive management approach to vegetation management and fuels treatments. Additionally, all GRSG habitat would be unavailable for livestock grazing.

ES.5.4 Alternative D

Alternative D, one of the agencies' co-preferred alternatives from the Draft LUPA/EIS, presents a balanced approach to maintaining and enhancing GRSG populations and habitat.

Alternative D would limit disturbance in GRSG habitat by excluding wind and solar energy development, avoiding all other ROW development, closing no and low potential areas within PHMA to fluid mineral leasing, applying no surface occupancy stipulations to fluid mineral development within 0.6 miles of leks in PHMA, closing GRSG habitat to mineral material sales within 3 kilometers of an occupied lek, and closing PHMA and IHMA to future nonenergy leasable mineral development. These management actions would protect GRSG habitat while allowing other activities, subject to conditions.

Under Alternative D, the BLM and Forest Service management would support sagebrush/perennial grass ecosystems enhancements, increase fire suppression in PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA, and manage livestock grazing to maintain or enhance sagebrush and perennial grass ecosystems.

ES.5.5 Alternative E

Alternative E incorporates proposed GRSG protection measures recommended by the States of Idaho and Utah. Management in Montana would remain unchanged from the current LUPs (Alternative A). Alternative E addresses the following primary threats: fire, invasive weeds, and infrastructure development. It also includes guidance for several secondary GRSG threats such as recreation, improper livestock grazing, and West Nile virus for BLM and Forest Service programs that affect GRSG or its habitat. In Montana, there would be no new regulatory mechanisms to address GRSG conservation.

ES.5.6 Alternative F

Alternative F would restrict development in ways similar to those proposed under Alternative B. Alternative F would limit surface disturbance in PHMA and GHMA.

The BLM and Forest Service, under Alternative F, would prioritize wildfire suppression in PHMA, while limiting certain types of fuels treatments necessary to protect GRSG habitat. Concurrent vegetation management would emphasize sagebrush restoration and enhancement. Alternative F would reduce livestock utilization by 25 percent within PHMA and GHMA.

ES.6 Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan and Environmental Effects

In consideration of public comments, best available science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service developed this Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan (Proposed Plan). The Proposed Plan represents the BLM's and Forest Service's proposed approach for meeting the purpose and need consistent with the agencies' legal and policy mandates.

The BLM and Forest Service Proposed Plans address threats (as described in the COT report) to GRSG and its habitat. The Proposed Plans seek to provide greater regulatory certainty for management actions intended to conserve the

GRSG (**Table ES-2**, Key Components of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats). In making its determination of whether the GRSG is warranted to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, the USFWS will evaluate the degree to which the land use planning decisions proposed in this LUPA/EIS address threats to GRSG and its habitat.

The Proposed Plan would maintain and enhance GRSG populations and habitat. The Proposed Plan would apply management actions, subject to valid existing rights, to other uses and resources, such as:

- Providing a framework for prioritizing areas in PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA for wildfire, invasive annual grass, and conifer treatments;
- Managing areas as ROW avoidance or exclusion for certain types of lands and realty uses, requiring specific design features, and limiting new development where a disturbance cap has been reached;
- Adjusting grazing practices as necessary based on GRSG habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and ecological site potential; and
- Applying no surface occupancy stipulations, with limited exceptions, to fluid mineral development in PHMA and closing PHMA to nonenergy leasable development and mineral material sales.

The Proposed Plan would also establish exception and development criteria and conditions for new anthropogenic activities in PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA to ensure a net conservation gain to GRSG. The Proposed Plan would reduce habitat disturbance and fragmentation through limitations on surface-disturbing activities, while addressing changes in resource condition and use through monitoring and adaptive management.

The Proposed Plan adopts important aspects of the State of Idaho's Alternative E by establishing conservation measures as well as developing a three-tiered habitat map (i.e., PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA) that directs disturbance out of the best GRSG habitat where possible. The three-tiered map also serves as the foundation for an adaptive management approach that includes habitat and population hard and soft triggers in areas most valuable to the GRSG and the shifting of IHMA to PHMA when triggers are hit.

For a full description of the BLM and Forest Service Proposed Plan Amendments, see **Section 2.6.2** and **Section 2.6.3**.

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan
All Threats	• Implement the Adaptive Management Plan, which allows for more restrictive land use allocations and management actions to be implemented in IHMA if habitat or population hard triggers are met. • Require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to GRSG. • Monitor implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures in GRSG habitats according to the Habitat Assessment Framework. • Apply buffers necessary based on project type and location to address impacts on leks when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Apply Required Design Features (RDFs) when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. (BLM only) • Incorporate RDFs as land use plan guidelines. (Forest Service only) • Prioritize the leasing and development of fluid mineral resources outside of GRSG habitat. (BLM only) • Work with the operator to locate fluid mineral development outside GRSG habitat. (Forest Service only)
All development threats, including mining, infrastructure, and energy development	• PHMA: Implement an anthropogenic disturbance cap of 3% within the Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) and proposed project analysis areas (Idaho and Montana). Apply Anthropogenic Disturbance Exception Criteria and Anthropogenic Disturbance Development Criteria (Idaho only). • PHMA/IHMA: Implement a density cap of an average of 1 energy and mining facility per 640 acres. • IHMA: Implement the 3% disturbance cap. Apply Anthropogenic Disturbance Development Criteria.
Energy Development—Fluid Minerals, including geothermal resources	• PHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation without waiver or modification, and with limited exception. In SFAs, NSO without waiver, modification, or exception. • IHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to NSO stipulation without waiver or modification, and with limited exception. • GHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to Controlled Surface Use (CSU) and Timing Limitation (TL) stipulations.
Energy Development—Wind Energy	• PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for wind energy development under any conditions) • IHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for wind energy development with special stipulations) • GHMA in Montana: Avoidance area
Energy Development—Solar Energy	• PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions) • IHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for solar energy development

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan
	with special stipulations) • GHMA in Montana: Avoidance area
Infrastructure – major Rights-of-Way (ROW)	• PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations) • IHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations) • GHMA in Montana: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations)
Infrastructure – minor ROWs	• PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations) • IHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations)
Mining—locatable minerals	• SFA: Recommend withdrawal from the Mining Law of 1872
Mining—non-energy leasable minerals	• PHMA: Closed area (not available for non-energy leasable minerals)
Mining—saleable minerals	• PHMA: Closed area (not available for saleable mineral development) with a limited exception (may remain open to free use permits and expansion of existing active pits if criteria are met)
Mining—coal	• Not applicable in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region.
Livestock Grazing	• Prioritize the review and processing of grazing permits/leases in SFAs followed by PHMA. (BLM only) • Adjust grazing management to move towards desired habitat conditions consistent with ecological site capability. (Forest Service only) • The NEPA analysis for renewals and modifications of grazing permits/leases will include specific management thresholds, based on the GRSG Habitat Objectives Table, Land Health Standards, and ecological site potential, to allow adjustments to grazing that have already been subjected to NEPA analysis. (BLM only) • Consider closure of grazing allotments, pastures, or portions of pastures, or managing the allotment as a forage reserve as opportunities arise under applicable regulations, where removal of livestock grazing would enhance the ability to achieve desired habitat conditions. (Forest Service only) • Prioritize field checks in SFAs followed by PHMA to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits. (BLM only)
Free-Roaming Equid Management	• Manage Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in GRSG habitat within established Appropriate Management Level (AML) ranges to achieve and

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Proposed Plan
	maintain GRSG habitat objectives. • Prioritize rangeland health assessment, gathers and population growth suppression techniques, monitoring, and review and adjustment of AMLs and preparation of Herd Management Area Plans in GRSG habitat.
Range Management Structures	• Allow range improvements which do not impact GRSG, or which provide a conservation benefit to GRSG such as fences for protecting important seasonal habitats.
Recreation	• PHMA and IHMA: Do not construct new recreation facilities.
Fire	• Identify and prioritize areas that are vulnerable to wildfires and prescribe actions important for GRSG protection. (BLM only) • Protection of GRSG habitat should receive high consideration, along with other high values, when positioning resources. (Forest Service only) • Prioritize post-fire treatments in PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA. (BLM only) • Design fuel treatments to restore, enhance, or maintain GRSG habitat. (Forest Service only)
Nonnative, Invasive Plants Species	• Improve GRSG habitat by treating annual grasses. • Treat sites in GRSG habitat that contain invasive species infestations through an integrated pest management approach.
Sagebrush Removal	• PHMA: Maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover. • All BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions regarding the actions needed to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives for GRSG.
Pinyon and/or Juniper Expansion	• Remove conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats, prioritizing occupied GRSG habitat.
Agricultural Conversion and Ex-Urban Development	• GRSG habitat will be retained in federal management.

ES.7 SUMMARY

Since the release of the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service have continued to work closely with a broad range of governmental partners, including the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USFWS and US Geological Survey in DOI, Indian tribes, governors, state agencies, and county commissioners. Through this cooperation, the BLM and Forest Service have developed the Proposed Plan

that, in accordance with applicable law, achieves the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

Conservation of the GRSG is a large-scale challenge that requires a landscape-scale solution that spans 11 western states. The Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS achieves consistent, range-wide conservation objectives as outlined below. Additionally, the Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS aligns with the States of Idaho and Montana's priorities and land management approaches consistent with conservation of GRSG. The Proposed Plan incorporates adaptive management habitat and population hard and soft triggers as well as management actions to reduce surface disturbance.

Minimize additional surface disturbance. The most effective way to conserve the GRSG is to protect existing, intact habitat. The BLM and Forest Service aim to reduce habitat fragmentation and protect key habitat areas. The Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS minimizes surface disturbance on over 11 million acres of BLM-administered and National Forest System lands by allocating lands as SFA, PHMA, IHMA, and GHMA with decisions that aim to conserve GRSG habitat.

The Proposed Plan includes numerous management actions and strategies to reduce surface disturbance. Some key components include applying a 3 percent anthropogenic disturbance cap, requiring RDFs, implementing anthropogenic disturbance exception and development criteria, requiring mitigation to provide a net conservation gain to GRSG, and prioritizing oil and gas development outside of GRSG habitat.

Improve habitat condition. While restoring sagebrush habitat can be very difficult in the short term, particularly in the most arid areas, it is often possible to enhance habitat quality through purposeful management. The Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS commits to management actions necessary to achieve science-based vegetation and GRSG habitat management objectives established in the Proposed Plan.

The Proposed Plan includes numerous management actions and strategies to improve habitat condition. Some key components include specifying decadal treatment objectives for mechanical, prescribed fire, and grass restoration treatments; incorporating GRSG seasonal habitat objectives into the design of projects or activities; using the Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Assessments to identify priority areas for fuels management, fire management, and restoration; and managing livestock grazing and wild horses to achieve GRSG habitat objectives.

Reduce threat of rangeland fire to GRSG and sagebrush habitat. Rangeland fire can destroy sagebrush habitat and lead to the conversion of previously healthy habitat into nonnative cheatgrass-dominated landscapes.

Experts have identified fire as one of the greatest threats to sagebrush habitat, particularly in the Great Basin.

The Idaho and Southwestern Montana GRSG LUPA/EIS incorporates Secretarial Order 3336 and adopts the specific provisions related to rangeland fire prevention, suppression, and restoration applicable to the planning area contained in "An Integrated Strategy for Rangeland Fire Management: Final Report to the Secretary" to improve the BLM's and Forest Service's ability to protect GRSG habitat from damaging wildfire. The BLM and Forest Service also support the development and implementation of Rangeland Fire Protection Associations in coordination with the State of Idaho.

This page intentionally left blank.