
Appendix O

Greater Sage-Grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species
Habitat Assessment

APPENDIX O

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE WILDFIRE AND INVASIVE SPECIES HABITAT ASSESSMENT

The process that is identified here is a suggestion for a consistent approach in conducting an assessment of the GRSG habitat and wildfire threat at the local planning unit level. Variations to this approach may be made based on interdisciplinary team input and other priorities identified in this LUPA.

This collaborative analysis is intended to ensure that actions will be beneficial for long-term enhancement and protection of GRSG habitat.

This four-step process will influence the determination of appropriateness and resulting character of projects to protect, maintain, and enhance GRSG habitat. This process will also identify “priority” or “focus” areas which spatially define priorities within the planning area for purposes of wildland fire and invasive species. Subsequent program planning and resource management planning should be developed with and incorporate the results of this analysis in coordination with other priorities identified in this plan. Initiation and/or completion of project-level NEPA for actions stemming from this assessment will increase certainty of implementation and effectiveness.

This same type of process should be developed at the regional level by both the BLM/Forest Service that would focus on a prioritized process to: 1) ensure completion and assessment updates of the local unit level Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Assessments prior to December 2014; and 2) outline a process in which funding is prioritized and allocated by need.

O.I STEP I: CHARACTERIZATION OF GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT

Relationship to the Larger-Scale Setting

- How does the planning unit lie within the context of the GRSG habitat?

Location

- Describe the relationship of GRSG habitat with the planning unit.

Analysis Area Setting and Spatial Boundary

- Brief description of GRSG habitat described in terms of acreage and the selection of the analysis area.
- Analysis area should be large enough to provide buffers around GRSG habitat to effectively address fire hazard, risk to GRSG habitat, and restoration opportunities.

O.2 STEP 2: ISSUES AND KEY QUESTIONS

Fire and Fuels Issue

- In coordination with USFWS, identify where fire is a major threat to GRSG habitat and where fire may help enhance habitat in the local planning area. In a brief paragraph summarize the issues related to wildland fire.

Key Questions

Fire Management

1. Where are priority fire management areas (spatially defined polygons having the highest need for preparedness and suppression action?)
2. Where is the greatest wildfire risk considering trends in fire occurrence, fuel conditions, and highly valued GRSG habitat?
3. Where will fire suppression resources be most successful to mitigate the risk and protect GRSG habitats?
4. Where do opportunities exist that could enhance or improve suppression capability in important GRSG habitats?
 - a. For example, increased water availability through installation of heli wells or stock tanks.
 - b. Decreased response time through pre-positioned resources or remote stations.
5. Where should wildfire be managed to achieve LUP objectives for improving or restoring GRSG habitat (e.g., old decadent sagebrush/juniper encroachment)?
6. How can fire management be coordinated across jurisdictional boundaries to reduce risk or to improve GRSG habitat?

Fuels Management

1. Where are the priority fuel management areas (spatially defined treatment opportunity areas which consider fire risk, fuels conditions, and highly valued GRSG habitat)?
2. Based on fire risk to important GRSG habitats, what types of fuels treatments should be implemented that will reduce the risk? Where should fuels treatments be prioritized, and what's the amount of treatment acres needed for long-term enhancement and protection of GRSG habitat?
3. Based on opportunities for fire to improve/restore GRSG habitats, what types of fuels treatments should be implemented that will increase ability to allow fire? Where should fuels treatments be prioritized, and what amount of treatment is needed for long-term enhancement and protection of GRSG habitat?
4. Are there opportunities to utilize a coordinated approach across jurisdictional boundaries?
 - a. Fuel reduction techniques, including, but not limited to, grazing, prescribed fire, chemical, biological, and mechanical treatments.
5. Are there areas where fuel treatments help restore GRSG habitat, as well as reduce risk?

Restoration

1. Are there opportunities for restoration treatments to protect, enhance or maintain GRSG habitat?
2. Where will post-fire restoration be most successful?

O.3 STEP 3: CURRENT CONDITIONS

The purpose of this step is to develop information relevant to the issues and key questions identified in Step 2.

Biological features

Fire and Fuels

- Has fire played a role in shaping the vegetation?
- Description to include dominant cover types, plant associations and seral stages to identify condition of GRSG habitat.
- What has been the impact of fire exclusion (increased conifer encroachment)?
- What is the current extent of annual grasses, their effect on fire frequency/severity/size, and implications for fire suppression?
- What are the trends related to plant succession and fire regimes?

Fuels Management

- Describe current fuels management within the planning area

Fire Management

- Describe fire occurrence trends
- Describe suppression capabilities

Restoration

- Spatial depiction of invasive species occurrence.

Methodology

- What are the analysis methods to be utilized and analysis assumptions?

Use of best available Science

- Describe data sets used, such as the fire simulation layer and local data
- What are the elements of science used?

Fire Risk

O.4 STEP 4: INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section consider the analysis in Sections 3 Interpret, refine, and recommend temporal, spatial, and quantifiable outcomes that are prioritized based on need. (This can also be correlated to Vegetation Dynamics Development Tool modeling as a comparison and refine the results.) Include broad statements related to each question, including how you got to the results.

- There is a need to perform X amount of restoration treatments.
- There is a need to perform X amount of fuel treatments.
- There is a need to prioritize GRSG habitats for aggressive initial attack that were identified at highest risk from losing key habitat components. Identify which GRSG habitats would be prioritized.
- To enhance initial attack capabilities, there is a need to install X infrastructure or staff, X number of remote station during X timeframes or X conditions.

Fire Management

- I. Identify priority areas for fire suppression resources to protect GRSG habitats that are at greatest risk.
 - Include spatially defined priority areas, tables, maps or appropriate info.

2. Identify opportunities to enhance or improve suppression capability.
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.
3. Identify areas where wildfires can be managed to achieve LUP objectives.
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.

Fuels Management

1. Identify, based on fire risk, fuel conditions and burn probability, fuels treatment priority areas and the level of treatment (acres) needed for long-term enhancement and protection of GRSG habitat.
 - Include spatially defined priority areas, tables, maps, or appropriate info.
 - Proposed fuels treatments should be delineated by type, such as:
 - i. Linear fuel break along roads
 - ii. Other linear fuel breaks to create anchor points
 - iii. Prescribed burning
 - iv. Mechanical conifer removal)
 - v. Other mechanical, biological or chemical treatment
2. Identify where fuel treatments would increase the ability to use fire to improve/enhance GRSG habitat?
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.
3. Identify coordination between X and X agencies to facilitate the planning and implementation for fuels treatments.
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.

Restoration

1. Identify restoration treatments needed to protect, enhance or maintain GRSG habitat.
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.
2. Identify locations where post fire restoration treatments should be focused.
 - Include tables, maps or appropriate info.

Annual Treatment Needs

1. Based on the information above and within the planning area, what are the annual needs based on the key questions and summary statements?

Annual Treatment Abilities

1. Putting GRSG habitat protection and enhancement into perspective with other high valued resources and important land management goals, how does the annual need relate to capabilities?
2. What are the realistic annual expectations in fire management, fuels management, and restoration for the next five years?