

APPENDIX I—DISTURBANCE DENSITY CALCULATION TOOL MANUAL

The Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) goal for any new activity or development proposal within core habitat areas is to provide consistent support for population management objectives of the State. Activities would be consistent with the strategy where it can be sufficiently demonstrated that no declines to core populations would be expected as a result of the proposed action. Published research suggests that impacts to sage-grouse leks associated primarily with infrastructure and energy development are discernible at a distance of at least four miles, and that many leks within this radius have been extirpated as a direct result of development (Walker et al. 2007, Walker 2008). Research also suggests that an evaluation of habitats and sage-grouse populations that attend leks within an 11-mile radius from the project boundary, in the context of “large” projects, may be appropriate in order to consider all seasonal habitats that may be affected for birds that use the habitats associated with the proposal during some portion of the life-cycle of seasonally migratory sage-grouse (Connelly et al. 2000).

Based on this information, the potential for direct and indirect impacts to sage-grouse within core habitat areas shall be evaluated, at minimum, out to four miles from relatively small individual proposed actions. Effects analyses may extend out 11 miles or more from the project boundary for large-scale projects, depending on local knowledge and information regarding the site-specific population. The evaluation of “large” or “small” projects is not related to the disturbance density calculation tool (DDCT). The determination of size will be based on the distance at which an appropriate effects analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) should be conducted, unless pertinent data and information indicates a greater distance would be appropriate.

For the purpose of illustrating the implementation of the “large” or “small” determination within this policy statement, examples of relatively small actions may include, but are not limited to: minor exploratory natural gas well drilling proposals, individual rights-of-way (including below ground linear projects), vegetation treatments conducted in accordance with the sagebrush treatment protocols (see Integrated Vegetation Management below, and Attachment 6 – Wyoming Game and Fish Department Protocols for Treating Sagebrush to be Consistent with Wyoming Executive Order 2011-5), wind energy site testing, and sage-grouse monitoring projects. Examples of large-scale actions may include, but are not limited to: oil and gas field developments, wind energy farm/field development projects, large interstate transmission power lines, and vegetation treatments that eliminate functional habitat for sage-grouse. In all cases, these distances are only a suggested distance for evaluation, and project specific distances for evaluation can be modified based upon available data and information. Additionally, in the event that these measures are all adopted in a final proposal, this does not mean that the proposed activity would be automatically approved. BLM and U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) must evaluate proposed actions on a case-by-case basis while meeting their obligations under NEPA, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), and other applicable laws.

Due to the evolving nature of the DDCT manual, the manual would become outdated soon after publication of this amendment document. To access the most up-to-date version of the DDCT manual, please use the following link to the WY IM-2013-035 Step-by-step Cooperative Strategy for Use of Web-based Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool at: <http://web.wy.blm.gov/Wy.im/13/index.htm>.