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# CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wyoming State Office and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) Regional Office have initiated a planning effort to prepare Land Use Plan (LUP) amendments with an associated environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Casper, Green River (covering the Rock Springs Field Office), Kemmerer, Newcastle, Pinedale, and Rawlins Resource Management Plans (RMP); and the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF), Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF), and Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP). This final EIS describes and analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives for the public lands and resources administered by the BLM in the six field offices and the National Forest System lands and resources administered by the Forest Service in the three planning units. This analysis will aid the BLM decision-maker in formulating amended RMPs and the Forest Service decision-maker in formulating amended LRMPs and activity-level decisions for the planning area. These two agencies' plans, RMPs and LRMPs, are generically referred to as LUPs throughout the remainder of this document. Acreage figures throughout this final EIS are rounded to the nearest ten unless otherwise stated.

In 2010, the State of Wyoming developed a “Core Population Area” strategy to weave the many on-going efforts to conserve the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in Wyoming into a statewide Strategy. New science, information and data continue to emerge regarding “Core Population Areas” and the habitat and behaviors of the Greater Sage-Grouse, which led the Governor’s Sage-grouse Implementation Team to re-evaluate the original “core population areas” and protective stipulations for Greater Sage-Grouse. It is the policy of BLM Wyoming to manage Greater Sage-Grouse seasonal habitat and maintain connectivity in identified areas in support of the population management objectives set by the State of Wyoming. This guidance is consistent with guidelines and recommendations provided for in the Wyoming Governor’s Sage-Grouse Implementation Team’s Core Population Area Strategy and the most recent Wyoming Governor’s Executive Order (EO) 2011-5 (WY EO 2011-5).

## 1.2 CHANGES BETWEEN THE DRAFT EIS AND THE FINAL EIS

As a result of public comments, best science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft LUP Amendments/Draft EIS, the BLM’s and Forest Service’s Preferred Alternative, identified as Alternative E in the Draft LUP Amendments/Draft EIS, has been modified and is now the Proposed LUP Amendments for managing BLM-administered lands and National Forest System lands within the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse planning area. The Proposed LUP Amendments focus on addressing public comments, while continuing to meet the BLM’s and Forest Service’s legal and regulatory mandates.

Changes to the alternatives between the draft EIS and final EIS:

- Chapter 2 has been reorganized for consistency between all sub-regional Greater Sage-Grouse LUP Amendments/Final EIS.
- The Greater Sage-Grouse adaptive management plan has been further defined in Section 2.7.1, Adaptive Management.

- The Greater Sage-Grouse monitoring strategy has been further defined in Section 2.7.2, Monitoring for the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy, and Appendix D of the final EIS.
- The Greater Sage-Grouse mitigation strategy has been further defined in Section 2.7.3, Regional Mitigation, and Appendix D of the final EIS.
- The Forest Service Proposed LUP Amendments are now a stand-alone proposed plan in the final EIS.
- In the Proposed LUP Amendments (previously identified as Alt E) in the final EIS, the following areas that were identified as general habitat in Alternatives B, C, D are managed as priority-core or priority-connectivity:
  - 32,756.82 acres of priority-connectivity on the BTNF
  - 63,195.32 acres of priority-core on the BTNF
  - 54,252.59 acres of priority-core on TBNG
  - 3,335.85 acres that were identified as core habitat in Alternatives B, C, and D are managed as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) on the BTNF.
- Sagebrush Focal Areas—These areas have been identified in the Proposed LUP Amendments based on recommendations in a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) memorandum, and are proposed to be managed as PHMAs with the following additional management: Recommended for withdrawal; NSO without waiver, exception, or modification for fluid mineral leasing; and prioritized for management and conservation actions including, but not limited to review of livestock grazing permits/leases. Alternative E (now the Proposed LUP Amendments) identified areas recommended for withdrawal, NSO, and/or prioritization for grazing, and analyzed the impacts of those decisions.
- CEA WAFWA analysis—A quantitative cumulative effects analysis for Greater Sage-Grouse was included in the Final EIS. This analysis was completed to analyze the effects of management actions on Greater Sage-Grouse at a biologically significant scale which as determined to be at the WAFWA Management Zone. The Draft EIS, in Chapter 4, included a qualitative analysis and identified that a quantitative analysis would be completed for the Final EIS at the WAFWA Management Zone.
- Net Conservation Gain—The net conservation gain strategy is in response to the overall landscape-scale goal which is to enhance, conserve, and restore Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat. All of the action alternatives provided management actions to meet the landscape-scale goal.

## Habitat Delineation

The BLM and Forest Service have identified Greater Sage-Grouse habitat in coordination with the State of Wyoming. This habitat falls into one of the following categories:

- Core Habitat Areas—The boundaries of the Greater Sage-Grouse areas that were identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable Greater Sage-Grouse populations per version 3 of the State of Wyoming EO Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area of Protection (WY EO 2010-4) (Wyoming Office of the Governor 2010). These areas include breeding, late brood-rearing, winter concentration areas and migration or connectivity corridors and correspond to Washington Office Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. WO-2012-043 as Preliminary Priority Habitat.

- Key Habitat Areas—The boundaries of the Greater Sage-Grouse areas that were identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable Greater Sage-Grouse populations per version 2 of the State of Wyoming EO Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area of Protection (WY EO 2008-2) (Wyoming Office of the Governor 2008). These areas include breeding, late brood-rearing, winter concentration areas and migration or connectivity corridors and correspond to Washington Office IM No. WO-2012-043 as Preliminary Priority Habitat. Key Habitat Areas were replaced by Core Habitat Areas.
- Connectivity Areas—Greater Sage-Grouse Connectivity Habitat (as defined in the WY EO 2011-5) is one of two components of Priority Habitat Management Areas. Connectivity Habitats are state-designated areas identified as the most important for Greater Sage-Grouse and include known, migration or connectivity corridors. It does not include breeding, late brood-rearing, or winter concentration areas.
- Non-Core Sage-Grouse Habitat—Areas of occupied seasonal or year-round habitat not located within Core or Connectivity Habitat. These areas correspond to Preliminary General Habitat as defined in Washington Office IM No. WO-2012-043.

The Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report identified PACs based upon the data provided by State Fish and Game agencies. The State of Wyoming manages sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats consistent with Governor's EO 2011-05, *Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection* (Core Area Strategy), which establishes Core Areas.

In October 2014, the BLM updated the habitat category delineation. In the Proposed LUP Amendments/Final EIS Greater Sage-Grouse habitat nomenclature has been changed from Core and Connectivity Areas to priority habitat management area (PHMA) and Non-Core Sage-Grouse Habitat to general habitat management area (GHMA).

## 1.2.2 Sagebrush Focal Areas

On October 27, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provided the BLM/Forest Service a memorandum titled "*Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes.*" The memorandum and associated maps provided by the USFWS identify areas that represent recognized "strongholds" for Greater Sage-Grouse that have been noted and referenced as having the highest densities of Greater Sage-Grouse and other criteria important for the persistence of the species (USFWS maps). Within these areas, the BLM/Forest Service identified SFA (Map 2-36), which are PHMAs with the following additional management:

- 1) Recommended for withdrawal from the General Mining Law of 1872, subject to valid existing rights, the lands shown on Map 2-23 (252,160 acres)
- 2) Prioritized for management and conservation actions in these areas, including but not limited to review of livestock grazing permits/leases (see livestock grazing section for additional actions).

On November 21, 2014 the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) published "*Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse – A Review*" (*Open File Report 2014-1239*). The USGS review provided a compilation and summary of published scientific studies that evaluate the influence of anthropogenic activities and infrastructure on Greater Sage-Grouse populations. The BLM has reviewed this information and examined how lek buffer-distances were addressed through land use allocations and other management actions in the Draft Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse LUP Amendments. The State of Wyoming's Core Area Strategy is designed to protect birds and habitat within core areas using a suite of

tools and mechanisms that work in concert to conserve sage-grouse by reducing habitat loss and fragmentation through lek buffers, disturbance limits, excluded activities, and a sophisticated mapping utility to monitor the amount and density of disturbance. The USFWS has informed the BLM that the combined effect of these overlapping and reinforcing mechanisms give USFWS confidence that the lek buffer distances in the Core Area Strategy will be protective of breeding sage-grouse.

### 1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The planning area for the Greater Sage-Grouse LUP Amendments consists of lands managed by the Wyoming BLM Casper, Kemmerer, Newcastle, Pinedale, Rawlins, and Rock Springs field offices, and the Forest Service BTNF, MBNF, and TBNG Planning Units (Map 1-1), and includes all lands and federal mineral estate managed by the BLM and the Forest Service within these areas. The planning area encompasses approximately 16 million acres of public surface land administered by the BLM and the Forest Service (Map 1-2), and approximately 23 million acres of federal mineral estate in Albany, Campbell, Carbon, Converse, Crook, Fremont, Goshen, Laramie, Lincoln, Natrona, Niobrara, Platte, Sublette, Sweetwater, Teton, Uinta, and Weston counties in Wyoming (Map 1-3). Of the 23 million acres of federal mineral estate, approximately 7 million acres are split estate. Table 1-1 provides a summary of land and mineral ownership and administrative jurisdictions within the planning area. All of the lands in the planning units and field offices are reflected in this table and included in the amendment. Specific information regarding amounts and locations of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat can be found in Chapter 3.

**Table 1-1. Land and Mineral Ownership and Administrative Jurisdictions within the Planning Area**

Jurisdiction	Acres <sup>1</sup>		
	PHMA	GHMA	Total
Total land surface area in the planning area (all ownership)	10,034,910	16,752,270	38,854,460
<b>Areas the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse LUP Amendments decisions will cover:</b>			
Federal land/federal minerals <sup>2</sup>	4,899,020	6,160,160	15,813,030
Federal land/nonfederal minerals <sup>3</sup>	125,210	220,290	360,560
Nonfederal land/federal minerals <sup>4</sup>	1,716,960	3,564,750	6,540,190
<b>Total BLM-administered federal land surface and National Forest System lands to be covered by LUP decisions</b>	<b>5,033,240</b>	<b>6,372,900</b>	<b>16,154,740</b>
<b>Total federal mineral estate to be covered by LUP decisions</b>	<b>6,992,690</b>	<b>10,193,790</b>	<b>22,999,790</b>
<b>Areas the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse LUP Amendments decisions will <i>not</i> cover:</b>			
Private or state land/private or state minerals <sup>5</sup>	2,952,860	6,401,130	15,265,380

Jurisdiction	Acres <sup>1</sup>
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<sup>1</sup> Because of land surface and mineral ownership overlaps and administrative responsibility overlaps, acreage figures for different jurisdictions do not add up to the total acreage.

<sup>2</sup> Where the federal land surface and federal mineral estate are both administered by the BLM or the Forest Service, LUP decisions would apply to both the land surface and the mineral estate.

<sup>3</sup> Where the federal land surface is administered by the BLM or the Forest Service, and the minerals are privately or state owned, LUP decisions would apply only to BLM/Forest Service-administered federal land surface and only to the extent allowed by law. Although surface management decisions may affect the timing and location of development, surface management decisions cannot preclude development of the non-federally owned minerals. The LUP decisions for mineral management would not apply to the non-federal mineral estate. Anticipated surface and mineral management actions and their direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts (cumulative impacts to the extent that they affect resource management decisions) are included/disclosed in the analyses.

<sup>4</sup> Where the land surface is privately owned or owned by the State of Wyoming, and the minerals are federally owned (i.e., split estate), the RMP decisions would apply to BLM-administered federal mineral estate and, to varying degrees, the surface estate. RMP decisions would only pertain to the state owned and privately owned land surface to the extent allowed by law and to the extent that the impacts were the result of the federal action. BLM would work with the private/state surface owners to honor their wishes to the extent allowed by law. Anticipated surface and mineral management actions and their direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts (cumulative impacts to the extent that they affect resource management decisions) are included/disclosed in the analyses.

<sup>5</sup> The LUP Amendments will not include any management decisions that are applicable to areas where the land surface and minerals are privately owned or owned by the State of Wyoming. However, anticipated impacts that might affect LUP decisions on these lands are included in the cumulative impact analysis.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider environmental consequences in their planning and decision-making processes. NEPA requires that an EIS be prepared for any federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. RMPs and LRMPs are accompanied by EISs.

The analysis in this final EIS considers a comprehensive range of alternatives that provide for various levels of resource protection and uses. The EIS analyzes the potential environmental consequences of implementing each management alternative and the potential land allocation/resource use conflicts.

## 1.4 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The BLM and the Forest Service are preparing LUP amendments with associated EISs for LUPs containing Greater Sage-Grouse habitat that are not currently undergoing amendment or revision. Other BLM Wyoming LUPs currently undergoing revision are the Buffalo, Big Horn, Lander and Rock Springs RMPs. This effort responds to the recent “warranted, but precluded” Endangered Species Act listing petition decision from the USFWS (75 Fed. Reg. 13910, March 23, 2010). Nationwide, approximately 52% of sagebrush habitat is on BLM-administered land; the Forest Service has management authority for 8% of sagebrush habitat. Changes in management of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat are necessary to avoid the continued decline of populations that are anticipated across the species’ range. These plan amendments will focus on areas affected by threats to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision.

The purpose for the LUP amendments is for identification and incorporation of appropriate Greater Sage-Grouse conservation measures into the plan. In compliance with the Washington Office Instruction Memorandum No. 2012-044 (12/27/2011) BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy (IM No. WO-2012-044), the measures to be considered include appropriate conservation measures developed by the National Technical Team (NTT). The BLM will consider such measures in the context of its multiple-use mandate under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and incorporate measures that will help conserve, enhance, and/or restore Greater Sage-Grouse habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat.

The BLM and Forest Service intend to issue separate Records of Decision (ROD) for the LUP amendments of each agency to be finalized by August, 2015, and expect that they will offer sufficient evidence for the USFWS to consider a determination that listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act is not warranted.

Decision to be Made: The BLM and the Forest Service will decide whether, and if required, how to amend the six existing RMPs and the three existing LRMPs, to address management of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.

## 1.5 READER'S GUIDE

This section briefly describes the organization of this document (the chapter-by-chapter content) and provides an overview of the EIS process.

### 1.5.1 Reader's Guide to This Document

Federal regulations implementing NEPA dictate much of the organization of this final EIS. These regulations are found in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1500–1508.

This final EIS contains the following major chapter headings and information:

**Table of Contents**—Presents the content of the document with page references and lists of maps, figures, and appendices.

**Chapter 1, Introduction**—Presents an introduction to the final EIS; the purpose and need to which BLM and the Forest Service are responding; an overview of the BLM and the Forest Service planning processes; statutes (laws), limitations, and guidelines to which the BLM and the Forest Service must adhere in preparing the LUP amendments; and the relationship of this final EIS to other plans.

**Chapter 2, Description of the Alternatives**—Describes the No Action Alternative and how all the action alternatives were developed, management guidance common to all alternatives, and alternatives considered but eliminated from further consideration. It also presents specific plan-level resource goals, objectives, and management actions proposed for each alternative, as well as a comparative summary of impacts. The alternatives present a reasonable range of reasonable alternatives based on new information, guidance, laws and policy, and scientific knowledge.

**Chapter 3, Affected Environment**—Describes the planning area and the existing environmental conditions that would be affected by the alternatives presented in Chapter 2.

**Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences**—Describes the impacts of each management alternative, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Management actions presented in Chapter 2 are analyzed to determine their impact on the individual resource programs included in Chapter 4. Some management actions result in impacts to resource values and resource uses, while others do not. In cases in which a particular management action does not result in an impact, there is no discussion of that action in the analysis.

**Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination**—Describes the EIS scoping process and other past and planned agency consultation and public involvement activities. This chapter presents a list of agencies, organizations, and individuals to whom this final EIS was sent, along with a list of preparers that includes the names and qualifications of the persons responsible for preparing this final EIS.

**List of Acronyms**—Presents the acronyms used in the document and their meanings.

**Glossary**—Presents an alphabetized list of definitions of selected terms used in this final EIS.

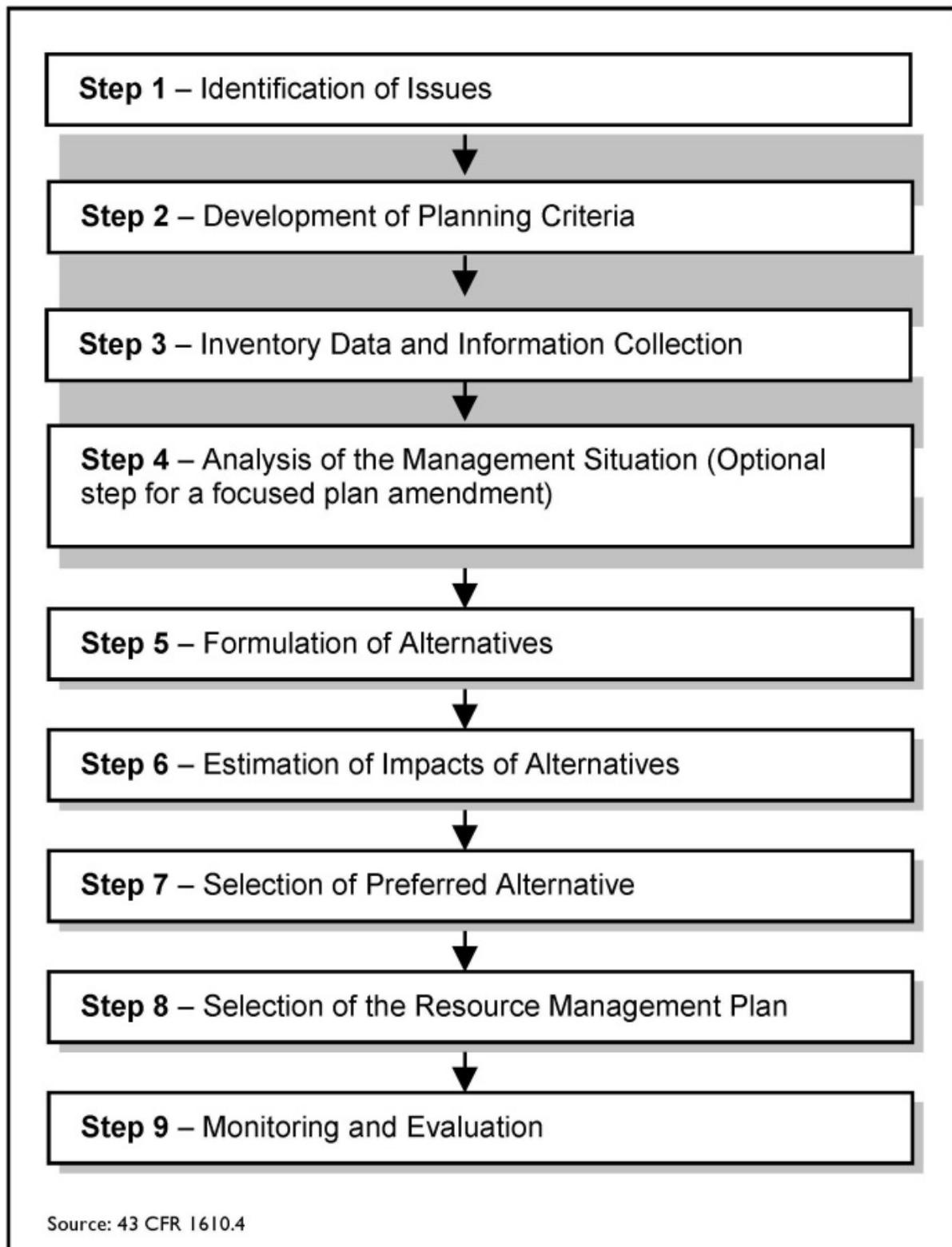
**Literature Cited**—Provides full citation information for all source material cited within this final EIS.

**Figures, Maps, and Appendices**—Provides additional documents that substantiate analysis or provide other information directly relevant to this final EIS are also included.

## **1.5.2 Reader's Guide to the EIS Process**

The process for preparing an EIS is established through federal regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR §1500–1508).

Figure 1-1. Nine Step Planning Process



The major steps in the EIS process are described below.

**Notice of Intent (NOI)**—The BLM published an NOI in the *Federal Register* on May 28, 2010, to announce its intention of amending the six BLM RMPs. On December 9, 2011, a NOI was published in the *Federal Register* to initiate the BLM/Forest Service Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy across 10 western states, including California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Southwest Montana in the Great Basin Region and North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming in the Rocky Mountain Region. On February 10, 2012 BLM published a Notice of Correction that changed the names of the regions that are coordinating the EISs and supplemental EISs, and added 11 Forest Service LRMPs to the project. The Forest Service published a NOI on March 2, 2012 to ensure all stakeholders interested in the Forest Service activities were aware of the NOI published by the BLM and were provided a complete list of potentially impacted forests and grasslands. This NOI increased the number of Forest Service LRMPs to 20.

**Scoping Period**—The scoping period was initiated with the publication of the NOI on May 28, 2010. Although the 30-day scoping period ended on June 28, 2010, scoping comments were accepted for consideration in the Draft RMP Amendments through August 30, 2010. A total of six public scoping meetings were conducted during the scoping period. A second scoping period was initiated on December 9, 2011. It was extended through the Notice of Correction published February 12, 2012 and ended on March 23, 2012. This scoping period initiated the BLM/Forest Service Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy across ten western states in the Rocky Mountain Region. It also included the BTNF, MBNF, and the TBNG into the BLM's original six RMP Greater Sage-Grouse amendment process, initiated in 2010. Five additional public scoping meetings were held during this scoping period.

**Draft EIS**—The draft EIS considered public and agency comments received during the scoping process, provided a description of the alternatives developed from the issues and concerns raised during the scoping process, described the affected environment, and assessed the potential effects of implementing the alternatives.

**Comment Period and Public Hearings**—The BLM and Forest Service provided the public with 90 days from the date of publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Draft LUP Amendments/Draft EIS to review the document and submit comments. The NOA was published in the *Federal Register* on December 27, 2013. The 90-day public comment period officially ended on March 27, 2014. Any letters received after the closing date were accepted and also addressed during preparation of the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed LUP Amendments/Final EIS.

A total of 22,877 letters were received: 22,869 were sent by e-mail and 14 were submitted in hardcopy format or sent by mail. Of the total letters received, 22,624 of them were identified as being form letters. Form letters are described as letters containing identical text submitted by more than five individuals.

**Final EIS (this document)**—The final EIS assesses, considers, and responds to public and agency comments received on the draft EIS. A NOA for the final EIS was published in the *Federal Register*. The BLM/Forest Service will accept protests regarding the Proposed LUP Amendments/Final EIS for 30 days after it is published. A joint agency response will be provided to those who file for administrative review of the proposed decision(s). All protests will be resolved before finalizing the separate BLM and the Forest Service RODs.

**ROD and Approved LUP Amendments**—The ROD/Approved LUP Amendments is a separate and concise public record that details the final agency action and links the decisions to the analysis presented in the EIS. It describes how the environmental impacts and other factors were considered in the decision-making process. This document also links management decisions to the analysis presented in the EIS and

describes how environmental impacts and other factors were considered in the decision-making process. The BLM and the Forest Service will develop an implementation plan for the decisions in the ROD.

## 1.6 NATIONAL GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANNING STRATEGY

On December 9, 2011, an NOI was published in the Federal Register to initiate the BLM/Forest Service Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy across ten western states, including California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Southwest Montana in the Great Basin Region and North Dakota, Northwest Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming in the Rocky Mountain Region. The Proposed LUP Amendments/Final EIS is one of 15 separate EISs that are currently being conducted to analyze and incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse, consistent with National BLM and the Forest Service policy.

On December 27, 2011, the BLM Washington Office released IM No. WO-2012-044, which directed BLM State Offices across the Greater Sage-Grouse range to consider all applicable conservation measures when revising or amending its RMPs in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, including appropriate measures developed by the Sage-grouse National Technical Team (NTT) and presented in the December 2011 NTT Report entitled “A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures.” The National Policy Team created the NTT in August of 2011 specifically to develop conservation measures based on the best available science.

Along with the reasonable, applicable measures that were outlined in the NTT Report, planning efforts associated with this National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy will also analyze reasonable conservation measures that were submitted to the BLM and the Forest Service from various state governments and from citizens during the public scoping process. It is the goal of the BLM and the Forest Service to make a final decision on these plans by August 2015, so that adequate regulatory mechanisms are incorporated in place before the USFWS makes a listing decision in 2015.

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) produced a complete conservation assessment for Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat in 2002. In 2006, WAFWA established seven sage-grouse Management Zones which are based on populations within floristic provinces (detailed description in Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats [Connelly et al. 2004]). The planning decisions/conservation measures in this strategy are intended to address the long-term population trends in each of the seven Management Zones (Map 1-4). The National BLM/Forest Service Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy is to maintain and enhance populations and distribution of Greater Sage-Grouse by protecting and improving sagebrush habitat and ecosystems that sustain these populations. The overall objective of the WAFWA range-wide Strategy is to produce and maintain neutral or positive trends in populations and to maintain or increase the distribution of sage-grouse in each Management Zone.

The Management Zones include:

### **Management Zone I:** Great Plains Management Zone (GPMZ)

- Includes lands in the states and provinces of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Alberta, and Saskatchewan.

### **Management Zone II:** Wyoming Basin Management Zone (WBMZ)

- Includes lands in the states of Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming.

**Management Zone III:** Southern Great Basin Management Zone (SGBMZ)

- Includes lands in the states of California, Nevada, and Utah.

**Management Zone IV:** Snake River Plain Management Zone (SRPMZ)

- Includes lands in the states of Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah.

**Management Zone V:** Northern Great Basin Management Zone (NGBMZ)

- Includes lands in the states of California, Nevada, and Oregon.

**Management Zone VI:** Columbia Basin Management Zone (CBMZ)

- Includes only lands in the state of Washington.

**Management Zone VII:** Colorado Plateau Management Zone (CPMZ)

- Includes lands in the states of Colorado and Utah and considers Greater and Gunnison Sage-Grouse.

A Greater Sage-Grouse COT composed of State and USFWS representatives was created to develop range-wide conservation objectives for the sage-grouse. The COT created the Conservation Objectives Report (2013), which is composed of reasonable objectives, based upon the best scientific and commercial data, for the conservation and survival of Greater Sage-Grouse. The Conservation Objectives Report defines the degree to which threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve sage-grouse, so that it is no longer in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future.

**Table 1-2. Threats by Management Zone and Population**

Population	Threats <sup>1</sup>												
	Isolated/Small Size	Sagebrush Elimination	Agricultural Conversion	Fire	Conifers	Weeds/Annual Grasses	Energy	Mining	Infrastructure	Grazing	Free-Roaming Equids	Recreation	Urbanization
<b>Management Zone I: Great Plains</b>													
Powder River Basin (Wyoming)	N	L	N	L	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	L
<b>Management Zone II: Wyoming Basin</b>													
Jackson Hole (Wyoming)	Y	L	N	L	L	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	L
Wyoming Basin (Wyoming portion)	N	L	N	L	L	L	Y	L	Y	Y	L	Y	L

Population	Threats <sup>1</sup>												
Laramie (Wyoming, Colorado)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	U	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
N. Park (Wyoming Basin in Colorado)	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Source: USFWS 2013. <sup>1</sup> Threats are characterized as: Y=threat is present and widespread, L=threat present but localized, N=threat is not known to be present, and U=unknown.													

Because the BLM and the Forest Service administer a large portion of sage-grouse habitat within the affected states, changes in BLM and Forest Service management of sage-grouse habitat are anticipated to have a beneficial impact on existing sage-grouse populations and could reduce the need to list the species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

While energy development has been identified as the primary threat to the Greater Sage-Grouse within its eastern range, this area is not immune to the threat of wildfire. Within the Rocky Mountain Region, wildfire was identified by the Conservation Objectives Team Final Report (2013) as a present and widespread threat in seven of thirteen priority areas of conservation (PACs) and as a present but localized threat in the remaining PACs. While fire is a naturally occurring disturbance in the sagebrush steppe, the incursion of non-native annual grasses is facilitating an increase in mean fire frequency which can preclude the opportunity for sagebrush to become re-established. The Proposed LUP Amendments includes requirements (referred to as Greater Sage-Grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessment in appendices in draft documents) that landscape scale Fire and Invasives Assessments be completed and updated regularly to more accurately define specific areas to be treated to address threats to sagebrush steppe habitat. Within the Rocky Mountain Region, assessments have not yet been completed but will be scheduled based on the need to identify and address potential threats. Additionally, the Secretary of the Interior issued Secretarial Order 3336 on January 5, 2015 which establishes the protection, conservation, and restoration of “the health of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem and, in particular, Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, while maintaining safe and efficient operations as a critical fire management priority for the Department.” The Secretarial Order will result in a final report of activities to be implemented prior to the 2016 Western fire season. This will include prioritization and allocation of fire resources and the integration of emerging science, enhancing existing tools to implement the Proposed LUP Amendments and improving the ability to protect sagebrush-steppe from damaging wildfires.

### 1.6.1 Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Objectives: Priority Areas for Conservation and How They Correlate with Priority and General Habitat Management Areas

In 2012, the Director of the USFWS asked the COT, consisting of state and USFWS representatives, to produce recommendations regarding the degree to which the threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The COT Report (USFWS 2013a) provides objectives based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release. The BLM/Forest Service planning decisions analyzed in the LUP/EISs are intended to ameliorate threats identified in the

COT Report and to reverse the trends in habitat condition. The COT Report can be viewed online at the following address:

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/COT/COT-Report-with-Dear-Interested-Reader-Letter.pdf>.

The highest level objective in the COT Report is identified as meeting the objectives of WAFWA's 2006 Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Strategy of "reversing negative population trends and achieving a neutral or positive population trend."

The COT Report provides a WAFWA Management Zone and Population Risk Assessment. The report identifies localized threats from sagebrush elimination, fire, conifer encroachment, weed and annual grass invasion, mining, free-roaming wild horses and burros, urbanization, and widespread threats from energy development, infrastructure, grazing, and recreation (USFWS 2013a, p. 18) (Table 1-2).

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 (PAC).

Within the planning area, the PACs consist of a total 1,915,990 acres. Under the Proposed LUP Amendments, the PACs are comprised of 1,914,830 acres of PHMA managed by the BLM/Forest Service, 590 acres of GHMA managed by the BLM/Forest Service, and 570 acres of non-habitat managed by the BLM/Forest Service.

## **1.7 PLANNING PROCESS**

Once finalized, the LUP amendments will prescribe land allocations and future management direction for BLM-administered lands within the planning area for Greater Sage-Grouse habitat management. Future BLM permitted activities and/or projects must conform to LUP decisions, and any additional NEPA documents will be tiered to the LUP amendments and EIS or result in additional plan amendments.

### **1.7.1 Bureau of Land Management Planning**

The BLM is directed by the FLPMA to plan for and manage "public lands." As defined by the Act and as applicable here, public lands are those federally owned lands, and any interest in lands (e.g., federally owned mineral estate), that are administered by the BLM.

The process for developing, approving, maintaining, and amending or revising RMPs was initiated under the authority of FLPMA Section 202(a). BLM's regulations under 43 CFR §1610 require BLM to use NEPA processes in preparing the plan so that the plan selected is based on informed decision-making and public involvement. The process is guided by BLM planning regulations in 43 CFR §1600 and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations in 40 CFR §1500.

The pre-planning phase of the BLM planning process consists of (1) compiling and reviewing the current laws, regulations, policies, Presidential executive orders, and directives pertaining to the planning area and (2) developing any needed State Director's guidance specific to the process and planning effort for the planning area.

The hierarchy of documents that BLM decision-makers consider for planning and project implementation is—

- **Land Use Plans.** The highest level of decision-making specific to land use is the RMP. RMPs generally make land allocations and provide goals and objectives for managing specific areas of land. They provide the framework for managing all natural resources under BLM authority for the planning area. Plan decisions are based on a public NEPA disclosure process, usually an EIS.
- **Activity Plans.** Mid-level decisions are provided in activity plans. These plans contain more detailed management decisions than do RMPs. Activity plans address management of specific programs or areas. Examples include allotment management plans, recreation area management plans, and habitat management plans. An activity plan usually selects and applies best management practices to meet LUP objectives. Decisions that cover major (often geographically widespread) proposals lead to coordinated activity plans that cover all programs in an integrated manner. Activity plans can be assessed through either an EIS or an environmental assessment (EA) level of NEPA analysis.
- **Project Plans.** The BLM analyzes individual projects proposed in a specific location for localized or site-specific effects. For example, the BLM would evaluate a range improvement proposal with a site-specific environmental analysis including NEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation, and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) consultation.

## 1.7.2 Forest Service Planning

The 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Forest Service Manuals (FSM) 1950, 1920, and Forest Service NEPA Regulations (36 CFR 220) direct the Forest Service in implementing NEPA into their planning processes.

The highest level of decision-making specific to National Forest and National Grassland management is the LRMP. LRMPs generally make land allocations and provide goals and objectives for managing specific areas of land. They provide the framework for managing all natural resources under Forest Service authority for the planning area. Plan decisions are based on a public NEPA disclosure process, which is usually an EIS. The process of amending a LRMP is outlined in 36 CFR 219. The current version of this regulation states that plan amendments that were initiated before May 9, 2015 may be developed in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation. Therefore, the LRMP amendments in this document were developed according to direction in the 1982 version of the CFR 219.

The process of amending a LRMP is outlined in 36 CFR 219. The current version of this regulation states that plan amendments that were initiated before May 9, 2015, may be developed in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation. Therefore, the LRMP amendments in this document were developed according to direction in the 1982 version of the CFR 25 219. A LRMP includes plan components, proposed and possible actions, the monitoring program, and maps. The objectives of LRMPs are:

1. Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Multiple Use Goals and Objectives, including Desired Conditions
2. Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Management Requirements, including standards and guidelines
3. Establishment of Management Area direction, including prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines
4. Identification of lands suitable or unsuitable for various uses

5. Recommendations for any Wilderness, Wild-Scenic, or other designated areas
6. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluation.

**Plan Components** include Desired Conditions, Objectives, Standards, and Guidelines. Plan components may be developed to apply to either the entire administrative unit or management areas within the unit.

The Forest Service Proposed LUP Amendments for Greater Sage-Grouse described in this analysis include Desired Conditions, Standards, Guidelines, and Objectives. The Proposed LUP Amendments do not propose to revise the Suitability of Areas nor does it identify any additional Special Areas for the Forest Service LUPs.

1. **Desired conditions** are a description of specific social, economic, and/or ecological characteristics of the plan area, or a portion of the plan area, toward which management of the land and resources should be directed. Desired conditions must be described in terms that are specific enough to allow progress toward their achievement to be determined, but do not include completion dates.
2. **Objectives** are concise, measurable, and time-specific statements of a desired rate of progress toward a desired condition or conditions. Objectives describe the focus of management during the next fifteen years and may set priorities, with an expectation that high priority work would be completed first, depending on funding. Objectives should be based on reasonably foreseeable budgets. Failure to achieve objectives by the time specified in the plan does not require a plan amendment or revision.
3. **Standards** and **Guidelines** provide guidance and information for carrying out projects and activities to help achieve objectives and desired conditions. Standards and guidelines do not force action; rather they only apply when action is being taken. They are constraints on project and activity decision-making and are based on matters within the Forest Service's control. Both Standards and Guidelines are established to help achieve or maintain a desired condition or conditions, to avoid or mitigate undesirable effects, or to meet applicable legal requirements. A **Standard** is a mandatory constraint. A **Guideline** is a constraint on project and activity decision-making that allows for departure from its terms, so long as the purpose of the guideline is met. A Responsible Official may adjust guidelines when it is necessary to address effectively specific circumstances. In such a case, the Responsible Official should:
  - a. Document a clear rationale for adjusting the guidelines in both the project analysis and decision documents
  - b. Recognize the purposes for which the guideline was developed and provide assurance that the project or activity will still achieve those purposes (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 10).

**Proposed and Possible Actions** may be displayed in an appendix in the land management plan (16 USC 1604(f)(2)) and may include those actions the Forest Service unit expects to provide. Proposed and possible actions may be presented in a brief summary of the types of projects that may occur in the plan decade to maintain or move toward the desired conditions. Proposed and possible actions should not speculate about the specific amount, quantities, frequency, or magnitude of actions during the plan decade. A plan amendment is not required to change the proposed and possible actions.

A **Monitoring Program** for the plan area (36 CFR 219.6(b)) establishes monitoring questions and associated performance measures. Monitoring questions must link to one or more desired condition, objective, or guideline. Not every desired condition, objective, and guideline must be associated with a monitoring question.

Once finalized, the LRMP amendments described in this analysis will prescribe land allocations and future management direction for National Forest System lands within the planning area for Greater Sage-Grouse habitat management. In addition to amending affected Forest Service LRMPs, the decision resulting from this analysis will also amend any existing Forest Service oil and gas leasing availability decisions to incorporate Greater Sage-Grouse conservation measures as required lease stipulations. Throughout this EIS, a reference to amending Forest Service LRMPs also refers to amending any existing oil and gas leasing decisions to incorporate those measures into responses to the BLM for consent to lease individual parcels of National Forest System lands. Forest Service permitted activities and/or projects must conform to LUP decisions, Project or activity-level decisions to implement the LRMP must follow the NEPA process as outlined in 36 CFR 220.

To reduce confusion for the reader, throughout this document the term LUP is used to represent both a BLM resource management plan and a Forest Service land and resource management plan.

## 1.8 PLANNING ISSUES

Planning issues are determined from demands, concerns, conflicts, or problems concerning planned or current use or management of public lands and resources. Issues express concerns, opportunities, conflicts, and problems associated with the planned or current management of public lands. Issues also reflect new data, new or revised policies, and changes in resource uses affecting the planning area. Management concerns are topics or points of dispute that involve a resource management activity or land use. While some concerns overlap issues, a management concern is generally more important to an individual or group, as opposed to a planning issue that has more widespread point of conflict. These issues are usually expressed in terms of the potential adverse consequences or effects that a particular land or resource use may have on other land or resources used or valued by another entity or for another purpose.

### 1.8.1 Issues Addressed

Initially, BLM identified the following three planning issues to be considered within the RMP Amendments for the six field offices:

- Consistency of existing LUP decisions with State of WY EO 2011-5.
- Consistency of sage-grouse policy with other LUP resource decisions and the need to revise the RMPs to address inconsistencies.
- What is the amendment process that revises LUP decisions to best protect the Greater Sage-Grouse, incorporate IM No. WY-2012-019, while minimizing changes to other resource management decisions?

After the initial scoping for the project, the Forest Service LRMPs were added to the planning effort for a region-wide sage-grouse planning effort, and a second scoping period was opened. Additional preliminary planning issues were identified by the BLM and the Forest Service, including the following:

- Lands addressed in the LUP Amendments will be public lands (including surface-estate and split estate lands) managed by the BLM and the Forest Service, respectively, in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. Any decisions in the LUP Amendments will apply only to federal lands administered by either the BLM or the Forest Service.
- The BLM and the Forest Service will consider a range of reasonable alternatives, including appropriate management prescriptions that focus on the relative values of resources while contributing to the conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
- The BLM and the Forest Service will endeavor to use current scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventory, monitoring, and coordination to determine appropriate local and regional management strategies that will enhance or restore Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
- The BLM and the Forest Service will consult with Federally Recognized Native American Tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage within Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
- The BLM and the Forest Service will coordinate and communicate with state, local, and tribal governments. These efforts are to ensure that BLM and the Forest Service; consider provisions of pertinent plans, seek to resolve inconsistencies, and provide ample opportunities for state, local, and tribal governments to comment on the development of amendments or revisions.
- The BLM and the Forest Service will develop vegetation management objectives, including noxious weeds and invasive species (including identification of desired future conditions for specific areas), within Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
- The LUP Amendments will be based on the principles of Adaptive Management.
- Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenarios and planning for Fluid Minerals will follow the BLM Handbook H-1624-1 and current manual guidance for fluid minerals (oil and gas and coalbed methane) and geothermal resources. For National Forest System lands, the Forest Service will use applicable and relevant policy and procedures.
- The LUP Amendments will be developed using an interdisciplinary approach. This approach will prepare reasonable foreseeable development scenarios, identify alternative, and analyze resource impacts, including cumulative impacts to natural and cultural resources, as well as the social and economic environment.

Additional planning issues were identified during the two public scoping periods and from information gathered in analyzing the existing management situation in the planning area. Based on the input of the public, other government agencies, and BLM, issues were identified for the following resource areas:

### **Air Quality**

Impacts from climate change should be included in the analysis of the LUP Amendments.

### **General (Process/Policy)**

The BLM should consider all IMs related to Greater Sage-Grouse in the development of the RMP amendments, such as IM No. WY-2010-022 (Managing Structures for the Safety of Sage-grouse, Sharp-

tailed grouse, and Lesser Prairie-chicken), IM No. WO-2010-017 (Gunnison and Greater Sage-Grouse Management Considerations for Energy Development (Supplement to National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy)), IM No. WO-2012-044, and IM No. WY-2012-019 (Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Policy on Wyoming Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Administered Public Lands Including the Federal Mineral Estate). BLM will use the best available science and specific documents in the development of the LUP amendments, such as BLM/Forest Service policy documents, other state and federal environmental policies, and scientific journal articles. Including terminology definitions, such as “disruptive activity” and “suitable habitat.” Consider a range of management approaches for Greater Sage-Grouse habitat protection. Follow NEPA regulations and BLM/Forest Service policy in developing the LUP Amendments and how the Wyoming planning effort will be incorporated at the regional level.

## **Lands and Realty**

Consider how Greater Sage-Grouse management would impact management or construction of rights-of-ways (ROWs) including corridors.

## **Livestock Grazing**

Consider both the continuation and elimination of livestock grazing practices. Include the impacts of livestock grazing on Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, such as the spread of weeds, soil loss, and range deterioration. Coordinate with livestock grazing permittees in the LUP amendment process and to incorporate livestock grazing management as an important part of the LUP Amendments. In addition, water, riparian, and wetland comments associated with livestock grazing were submitted.

## **Minerals and Energy**

Minerals and energy issues include considering the benefits and detriments to Greater Sage-Grouse from wind and conventional energy development on BLM-administered lands and National Forest System lands. Analyze impacts from mineral development on Greater Sage-Grouse and their habitat, such as lek and nest abandonment, habitat fragmentation, and overall habitat loss and the efforts operators are making to support Greater Sage-Grouse and associated habitat. Consider the effects IM No. WY-2012-019 could have on mineral development, such as allowing for valid existing rights for lease development, buffer distances, reclamation requirements, well density, and regulations on development in non-core areas. Additional issues were raised about management on split estate lands, cumulative impacts of development on Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, particularly for oil and gas, and impacts of wind development, as well as specific implementation-level recommendations. There were concerns with how the BLM and the Forest Service will manage unique energy production techniques including, but not limited to, oil shale extraction and wind development in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. Development in the Powder River and Hoback Basins were of particular concern.

## **Recreation**

Consider the level of recreation that could be allowed to reduce or prevent impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. Managing recreation use is not a major component of the new Wyoming sage-grouse management policy. Through the regulation of recreation special use permits, and the implementation of transportation management plans, some recreation uses may be more regulated in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat than previous management prescriptions. However, this will not account for potential disturbances to breeding or nesting birds, since most recreation activities are not restricted by timing limitations.

## **Socioeconomic**

Consider the adverse economic impacts from the Wyoming sage-grouse management policy and the need for socioeconomic analysis of the impacts from the policy.

## **Special Management Area Designations**

Core areas could be considered for protection through designations of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and the LUP Amendments should consider ACECs to protect Greater Sage-Grouse.

## **Special Status Species (Including Greater Sage-Grouse)**

Issues regarding special status species primarily addressed Greater Sage-Grouse and sage-grouse core areas. Focusing Greater Sage-Grouse management on only core habitat areas could lessen protections in general habitat, which could be detrimental to the species. Management should address all threats to Greater Sage-Grouse, including predation by other species. Use valid sage-grouse data and ensure that sufficient data has been collected to make management decisions within the LUP Amendments. Try to find a balance of managing Greater Sage-Grouse populations effectively while much of the BLM-administered lands and National Forest System lands are already leased for mineral development.

Greater buffer distances, additional seasonal stipulations, and expansion or reduction of core areas are management actions that should be considered in the LUP amendments. Reasons for Greater Sage-Grouse population declines and threats to the species, including intensive resource uses and development, human disturbance, predation, habitat fragmentation, and habitat loss are issues to be included in the document. Consideration of specific Greater Sage-Grouse habitat requirements, such as migration corridors and lek, nesting, winter, and brood-rearing habitat, were described and addressed in the comments.

Other concerns included management recommendations for particular components of habitat as well as discussion of specific potential habitat areas. Areas include: Thunder Basin National Grassland; Upper Snake River Basin; Greys River Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest; Upper Green River Core population and the Gros Ventre River Valley; Bacon Ridge/Breakneck Flats sage-grouse winter use areas; Upper Green River Core population and the Hoback Basin; connectivity of sagebrush habitat along the Wyoming-Idaho State line near Crow, Stump, and Spring Creeks; and habitat connectivity with occupied habitat in Star Valley and Southeast Idaho.

## **Travel and Access Management**

Consider vehicle use and roads within core habitat, as well as potential for reduced access to BLM-administered lands and National Forest System lands from the new management for Greater Sage-Grouses.

## **Vegetation**

Consider vegetation treatments and the benefits of those treatments on sagebrush habitat, and the threat of cheatgrass and other invasive species on sagebrush habitat.

## **Wildland Fire Management**

Wildland fire (planned and unplanned) may be considered for use in enhancing sagebrush habitat.

## Wildlife and Fisheries

Consider the health and management of sagebrush habitat, restoration of sagebrush and opportunities to restore degraded Greater Sage-Grouse habitat as potential mitigation measures for project proponents, and current and future effectiveness of the restoration of sagebrush habitat due to low precipitation, cheatgrass invasion, and wildland fire. Consider the current conditions of sagebrush habitat and threats to the health of the habitat, such as fragmentation from mineral development and other uses, livestock grazing, and the proliferation of invasive species. Address the management of the entire sagebrush ecosystem, as other sagebrush obligate species' populations are also in decline. Recommendations included specific design features to protect Greater Sage-Grouse from predators. In addition, comments were received on potential conflicts between prairie dog and Greater Sage-Grouse management.

The full range of issues raised during the public scoping period can be viewed in the Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendments Scoping Report and the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Land Use Plan Amendments and Environmental Impact Statements Scoping Summary Report, available on the project website: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/amendments.html>.

## 1.9 PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are the constraints or ground rules that are developed to guide and direct the planning amendment. Planning criteria are based on laws and regulations, guidance provided by the BLM Wyoming State Director and Forest Service Regional Foresters, results of consultation and coordination with the public, other agencies and governmental entities, and Federally Recognized Native American Tribes; analysis of information pertinent to the planning area, public input, and professional judgment. The planning criteria focus on the development of management alternatives, analysis of the related effects, and selection of the Preferred Alternative and the Proposed LUP amendments. Additional planning criteria may be identified as the planning process progresses. General planning criteria include the following:

1. The amendment will be in compliance with FLPMA, NFMA, and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
2. Impacts from the alternatives will be analyzed in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 1610, 36 CFR 219, and 40 CFR 1500.
3. Lands covered in the LUP Amendments will be public land managed by BLM within the designated planning areas. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM or Forest Service administered lands.
4. The LUP Amendments will recognize the state's responsibility and authority to manage wildlife population number and the BLM manages habitat, a coordinated effort is necessary to meet both agency's objectives.
5. The LUP Amendments will incorporate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents whenever possible. Where more restrictive land use allocations or decisions are made in existing RMPs, those more restrictive land use allocations or decisions will remain in effect and will not be amended by the LUP Amendments.
6. The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies and all other interested groups, agencies, and individuals.

7. The BLM, Forest Service, and cooperating agencies will jointly develop alternatives for resolution of common resource management issues and management concerns.
8. GIS and metadata information will meet Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) standards, as required by EO 12906. All other applicable BLM and Forest Service data standards will be followed.
9. All proposed management actions will be based on the best available, current, scientific information, research and technology, and inventory and monitoring information.
10. The LUP Amendments may include adaptive management criteria and protocol to address with future issues.
11. The planning process may use mitigation to develop management options and alternatives. The EIS will analyze the impacts, and is part of the planning criteria for developing the options and alternatives and for determining mitigation requirements.
12. The BLM and the Forest Service will utilize the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) *Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats* (Connelly, *et al.* 2004), and any other appropriate resources, to identify Greater Sage-Grouse habitat requirements and best management practices.
13. The approved RMP amendments will be consistent with the BLM's National Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy.
14. The approved RMP amendments will comply with NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality regulations at Department of the Interior (DOI) regulations at 43 CFR part 46 and 43 CFR part 1600; the 2008 BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1), and all other applicable BLM policies and guidance.
15. The approved LRMP amendments will comply with NFMA, Forest Service NEPA regulations found at 36 CFR 220, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture at 36 CFR part 219, and FSM 1920 and FSH 1909.12.
16. The LUP Amendments will be limited to making land use planning decisions specific to the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
17. The BLM and the Forest Service will consider allocative and/or prescriptive standards to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, as well as objectives and management actions to restore, enhance, and improve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
18. The BLM and the Forest Service will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach, where appropriate, to determine the desired future condition of public lands and National Forest System lands for the conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse and their habitat.
19. As described by law and policy, the BLM will strive to ensure that conservation measures are as consistent as possible with other planning jurisdictions within the planning area boundaries.
20. The BLM and the Forest Service will address socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives. Socioeconomic analysis will use an accepted input-output quantitative model such as IMPLAN or RIMSII, and/or JEDI for renewable energy analysis.

21. Management of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat that intersects with Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) on public lands administered by the BLM will be guided by the BLM Manual 6330, Management of WSAs. Land use allocations made for WSAs must be consistent with BLM Manual 6330 and with other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSA management.
22. The BLM and the Forest Service will consult with Federally Recognized Native American Tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage within Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.
23. The BLM and the Forest Service will coordinate and communicate with state, local, and tribal governments. These efforts are to ensure that BLM and the Forest Service; consider provisions of pertinent plans, seek to resolve inconsistencies, and provide ample opportunities for state, local, and tribal governments to comment on the development of amendments or revisions. The most current approved BLM and Forest Service corporate spatial data will be supported by current metadata and will be used to ascertain Greater Sage-Grouse habitat extent and quality. Data will be consistent with the principles of the Information Quality Act of 2000.
24. Wyoming Game and Fish agencies' Greater Sage-Grouse data and expertise will be utilized in making management decisions.
25. For BLM-administered lands, all activities and uses within Greater Sage-Grouse habitat will conform to existing land health standards. Standards and guidelines (S&G) for livestock grazing and other programs that have developed guidelines will be applicable to all alternatives for BLM lands.

## Planning Criteria for Specific Situations

### Criteria for Hydrocarbon Potential

Areas of hydrocarbon occurrence have been identified within the planning area. These areas have been classified into having high, moderate and low potential for occurrence and development of hydrocarbons. These areas were identified by using available geologic information and past production information from the mineral industry. Estimates of reasonably foreseeable oil and gas (including coalbed natural gas) exploration and development activity have been developed from analysis of past activity and production. These estimates have been used to aid in the analysis of environmental consequences. Because these occurrence and development potential classifications and production estimates are general, they are appropriate for planning purposes but are not appropriate for predicting future specific activity or the specific locations of new discoveries.

### Criteria for Withdrawals and Classifications

Under Section 202(d) of FLPMA, any classification of BLM-administered public lands or National Forest System lands is subject to periodic review to determine whether it is serving its intended purpose and is still needed. These reviews will be conducted during the planning effort and may result in modification or termination of classifications. During the planning effort, the need for new withdrawals may also be identified.

**Withdrawals Under Other Agency Jurisdiction.** The withdrawal review requirement of FLPMA has not yet been completed on those federal lands withdrawn for purposes of other federal agencies (i.e., those lands under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense or BOR). For the purposes of this planning effort, it must be assumed that these withdrawals will remain in effect and that the planning and management authorities for these withdrawn lands will remain with those agencies. Thus, the planning

effort will not include consideration of any planning or management decisions for either the federal land surface or the federal minerals within these withdrawn areas. These lands will be considered in conducting the environmental analysis for the planning effort in terms of cumulative impacts and in terms of how they may be affected by management in the planning area or vice versa.

### **Criteria for BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Forest Service Special Interest Areas**

The relevance and importance criteria for ACEC designation, found in BLM Manual 1613, were applied to BLM-administered public lands in the planning area to identify areas that have the potential for ACEC designation (BLM 2006). An ACEC designation alone does not change the allowed uses of public lands involved (FLPMA Section 201(a) and 43 CFR §1601.0-5a). In addition, protective measures for ACECs are not applied or required simply because of the designation. Any protective measures applied to ACECs are based on what is necessary to protect the relevance and importance criteria for which the ACEC was designated. The only automatic requirement associated with an ACEC designation is that a plan of operations must be submitted for any [locatable mineral] operations causing surface disturbance greater than casual use (43 CFR §3809.11(c)(3)).

Forest Service Special Interest Areas are managed to protect or enhance areas with unusual characteristics. Management emphasis is on protecting or enhancing, and where appropriate developing and interpreting for public education and recreation. These areas are managed to maintain their special interest values. The setting is usually natural, but will vary depending on the area. Typically, Special Interest Areas (also known as SIAs) are designated as botanical, geological, historical, paleontological, scenic, or zoological areas. Special Interest Areas may also be designated to protect and manage threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, or other elements of biological diversity; or for their emotional significance, scenic values, or public popularity. Special Interest Areas vary in size from small to fairly large. In addition, places such as caves, hot springs, cultural resource sites, 14,000 foot peaks, significant views, state designated historic sites, and potential developed sites could be considered for Special Interest Area designation. Alternatives B and C include designation of ACECs or SIAs for priority Greater Sage-Grouse habitat.

Vegetation, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, soil productivity, and water quality will usually, but not always, appear natural (relatively pristine or pre-settlement). Vegetative manipulation may be used to maintain or restore natural conditions, to protect threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, or to protect other values for which the Special Interest Area was proposed or designated. Management implementation guidelines ensure protection of the values for which the area was proposed or designated (R2 Forest Planning Desk Guide).

### **Criteria for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Objectives**

The BLM will use the USFWS's Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report (USFWS 2013), WAFWA's Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004), US Geological Survey's (USGS) Summary of Science, Activities, Programs and Policies that Influence the Rangeland Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) (Manier et al. 2013), and any other appropriate resources to identify Greater Sage-Grouse habitat requirements and BMPs.

## **1.10 RELEVANT STATUTES, LIMITATIONS, AND GUIDELINES**

Numerous federal and state laws and applicable regulations, policies, and actions affect the alternatives analyzed in the Proposed LUP Amendments/Final EIS. FLPMA is the primary authority for BLM administration of public lands. This law provides the overarching policy by which the BLM administers

public lands. The law establishes provisions for land use planning, land acquisition, administration, range management, rights-of-way, designated management areas, and the repeal of certain laws and statutes. FLPMA Sections 201 and 202 establish BLM land use planning requirements. BLM Handbook H-1601-1, *Land Use Planning Handbook* (BLM 2005), provides guidance for implementing BLM land use planning requirements established in FLPMA Sections 201 and 202 and the land use planning regulations at 43 CFR 1600. FLPMA also requires that the BLM provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic species.

LRMPs are prepared in accordance with the NFMA, NEPA, and other laws and regulations. The Forest Service implemented the 1982 Planning Rule (47 FR 43037), and the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning Act when developing the documents being amended in this planning effort.

NEPA establishes a public, interdisciplinary framework for Federal decision-making and ensures that agencies (BLM and all other agencies) take environmental factors into account when considering federal actions. NEPA does not mandate protection of the environment. Instead, it requires agencies to follow a particular process in making decisions and to disclose the information/data that was used to support those decisions. Amending an existing RMP is a major federal action for the BLM. It is also a major federal action to amend Forest Service LRMPs. NEPA requires federal agencies to prepare an EIS for major federal actions; therefore, this EIS accompanies the revisions of the existing plans.

NEPA also created the CEQ, which issued regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) to ensure proper consideration of environmental concerns in federal decision-making. The DOI and the BLM have published their own regulations and guidance related to implementation of the NEPA process and CEQ regulations (DOI Manual Part 516 and Handbook H-1790-1).

This section provides a listing of the authorities that apply to the selection and implementation of management actions in the RMPs and LRMPs. Many additional laws, regulations, and policies guide the management of public lands and are therefore relevant to the LUP Amendments. A list of these laws, regulations, and policies is provided in Appendix L.

## 1.11 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The BLM and the Forest Service LUPs and amendments must be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and programs contained therein, of other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Native American tribes, so long as the guidance and RMPs are also consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands, including federal and state pollution control laws as implemented by applicable federal and state air, water, noise, and other pollution standards or implementation plans.

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 Energy Policy Act of 2005**

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, Section 368, directed that BLM participate in an interagency effort to identify, evaluate, and ultimately establish ROW corridors to accommodate infrastructure that transports forms of energy. Energy-related infrastructure could include natural gas pipelines, high-voltage electrical transmission lines, and similar developments. Upon completion of a programmatic EIS and ROD, planning documents would be amended to incorporate guidance and decisions made for management of the energy corridors established within the planning area.

### **State of Wyoming's Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy**

On August 1, 2008, former Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal signed the first of what would become a short series of Wyoming EOs to establish the State of Wyoming's Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy. The analysis leading up to the EO included a careful review of recommendations developed by the Sage-grouse Implementation Team (SGIT). The group was formed at the direction of the governor and includes BLM, state agencies, energy industry, natural resource professionals including academia, conservation organizations, local governments, private citizens, and others.

The strategy includes population management objectives within and outside "Sage-Grouse Core Areas." The Core Area Strategy in Wyoming has been clarified, refined and continued by current Wyoming Governor Matt Mead. Governor Mead signed his own Executive Order (EO 2011-5) June 2, 2011, to replace and refine EOs from the former Governor. The latest EO continues support of the State's Core Area Strategy for sage-grouse conservation.

All of the EOs of Governor Freudenthal and now Governor Mead, have identified core area objectives and each subsequent order has further refined Wyoming's strategy for long-term conservation, maintenance and on-going management of Greater Sage-Grouse populations and associated habitats within the state, regardless of land ownership pattern.

The primary focus of Wyoming's efforts are 1) maintenance and restoration of suitable habitats within core areas, 2) maintenance of active breeding and nesting birds within core areas, 3) identification and conservation of other important habitat outside core areas, and 4) maintenance of potential for restoration and reclamation outside core areas.

The Wyoming Core Area Strategy includes protective stipulations for sage-grouse (limitations on development activities), based upon their biological needs and a GIS-based procedure for determining levels of anthropogenic (man-made) disturbance on the landscape within the core areas. These disturbances consist of roads, well pads, pipelines, mine pits, and other similar surface alterations. Per the Sage-grouse Executive Order, these disturbances are limited in core areas to minimize anthropogenic activities and disturbances within high density population areas. Habitats and populations outside core areas are monitored and managed for future rehabilitation.

### **Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management 2005**

The U.S. DOI, BLM, is responsible for the development of wind energy resources on BLM-administered lands. Currently, about 500 MW of installed wind capacity occurs under ROW authorizations administered by the BLM in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and

Management Act of 1976 (FLMPA) (United States Code, Title 43, Section 1701 [43 USC 1701]) and the BLM's Interim Wind Energy Development Policy (BLM 2002).

This interim policy was developed, in part, in response to the National Energy Policy recommendations that the Departments of the Interior, Energy, Agriculture, and Defense work together to increase renewable energy production (NEPDG 2001). The interim policy is consistent with the requirements of EO 13212, "Actions to Expedite Energy Related Projects," issued May 2001, that federal agencies take appropriate actions, to the extent consistent with applicable law, to expedite projects to increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy. To further support wind energy development on public lands and also to minimize potential environmental and sociocultural impacts, the BLM is seeking to build on the interim policy to establish a Wind Energy Development Program.