



Idaho Greater Sage-Grouse Implementation Plan Conformance Request and Review Worksheet



-----Field Office Section-----

Project Point of Contact: Jeremy Bisson	Date: May 2, 2016
Project Name: Soda Emergency Fuel Breaks	
Project Type: Fuels	
Location: Owyhee Front in the WUI adjacent to the Soda Fire burned area.	
Which Alternative is Being Evaluated: Emergency Action	
Area of Impact: Owyhee Front	
Conservation Area: Idaho West Owyhee Conservation Area	
Habitat Designation: IHMA managed as PHMA	
Have any Adaptive Management Triggers been engaged: Yes	
Is Project Within SFA: No	
Is Project Within a BSU: Yes	
Does the Proposed Project contribute towards the Disturbance Cap: Yes	
Please describe type of disturbance and the expected acres:	
Percent Disturbance within BSU: Current NOC Estimate: West Owyhee Important: 0.4% and West Owyhee Priority: 0.2%	Percent Disturbance within Project Area: A preliminary review suggests that the project area is well below the 3% cap.

Allocation: Open

Please identify the Management Decisions that authorize the proposed project or otherwise appear applicable:

Management Decision Number	Apply?	Management Decision Text	Conformance Statement.
MD SSS 5	Yes	<i>Prioritize activities and mitigation to conserve, enhance and restore GRSG habitats (i.e., fire suppression activities, fuels management activities, vegetation treatments, invasive species treatments etc.) first by Conservation Area, if appropriate (Conservation Area under adaptive management or at risk of meeting an adaptive management soft or hard trigger), followed by PHMA, then IHMA then GHMA within the Conservation Areas. Local priority areas within these areas will be further refined as a result of completing the GRSG Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessments as described in Appendix H. This can include projects outside GRSG habitat when those projects will provide a benefit to GRSG habitat.</i>	<i>The current EA proposes treatments which are expected to benefit GRSGs in a priority area to conserve GRSG.</i>
MDSS 29	yes	<i>New anthropogenic disturbances within PHMA (Idaho only): Anthropogenic Disturbance Screening Criteria. In order to avoid surface-disturbing activities in PHMA, priority will be given to development (including ROWs, fluid minerals and other mineral resources subject to applicable stipulations) outside of PHMA. When authorizing development in PHMA, priority will be given to development in non-habitat areas first and then in the least suitable habitat for GRSG. In addition to the PHMA and IHMA Anthropogenic Disturbance Development Criteria (MD SSS 30), the following criteria must all be met in the project screening and assessment process:</i>	<i>The development associated with road improvement is expected to result in a net gain of GRSG habitat because established fuel breaks are expected to protect new seedlings (which included sagebrush) from future fires, protect unburned key habitat from fire, and are expected cause an overall increase (Net Gain) in sagebrush cover (Key Habitat) in PHMA and IHMA habitat over time.</i>



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		<p><i>a. The population trend for the GRSG within the associated Conservation Area is stable or increasing over a three-year period and the population levels are not currently engaging the adaptive management triggers (this applies strictly to new authorizations; renewals and amendments of existing authorizations will not be subject to this criteria when it can be shown that long-term impacts from those renewals or amendments will be substantially the same as the existing development);</i></p> <p><i>b. The development with associated mitigation will not result in a net loss of GRSG Key habitat and mitigation will provide a net conservation benefit to the respective PHMA;</i></p> <p><i>c. The project and associated impacts will not result in a net loss of GRSG Key habitat or habitat fragmentation or other impacts causing a decline in the population of the species within the relevant Conservation Area (the project will be outside Key habitat in areas not meeting desired habitat conditions or the project will provide a benefit to habitat areas that are functioning in a limited way as habitat);</i></p> <p><i>d. The development cannot be reasonably accomplished outside of the PHMA; or can be either:</i> <i>1) developed pursuant to a valid existing authorization; or 2) is co-located within the footprint of existing infrastructure (proposed actions will not increase the 2011 authorized footprint and associated impacts more than 50 percent, depending on industry practice).</i></p> <p><i>e. Development will be implemented adhering to the required design features (RDF) described in Appendix C;</i></p> <p><i>f. The project will not exceed the disturbance cap (MD SSS 27)</i></p> <p><i>g. The project has been reviewed by the State Implementation Team and recommended for consideration by the Idaho Governor.</i></p>	<p><i>Development cannot be reasonably accomplished outside PHMA or IHMA since fuel breaks need to be strategically located within and adjacent to the habitat they are intended to protect.</i></p> <p><i>Project work will adhere to all applicable RDFs.</i></p> <p><i>This project will not cause the project area to exceed the 3% disturbance cap, nor will the BSU exceed the 3% disturbance cap.</i></p>
<p>MDSS 30</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>The following Anthropogenic Disturbance Development Criteria must be met in the screening and assessment process for proposals in PHMA and IHMA to discourage additional disturbance in PHMA and IHMA (as described in MD LR 2 and MD RE 1; applies to Idaho only):</i></p> <p><i>a. Through coordination with the USFWS and State of Idaho (as described in MD CC 1), it is determined that the project cannot be achieved, technically or economically, outside of this management area; and</i></p> <p><i>b. The project siting and/or design should best reduce cumulative impacts and/or impacts on GRSG and other high value natural, cultural, or societal resources; this may include colocation within the footprint for existing infrastructure, to the extent practicable; and</i></p>	<p><i>This project has been coordinated with USFWS and the State of Idaho through the development of the Soda Fire ESR project and through scoping.</i></p> <p><i>It cannot be achieved outside of this management area because moving the project outside GRSG habitat would not meet the purpose and need of protecting GRSG habitat. The intent of this project is to strategically place fuel breaks within sagebrush steppe to help reduce the risk of large wildfires in sagebrush habitat.</i></p> <p><i>This project is expected to reduce the cumulative impacts of fire on GRSG habitat. As a result, net conservation</i></p>



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		<p><i>c. The project results in a net conservation gain to GRSG Key habitat or with beneficial mitigation actions reduces habitat fragmentation or other threats within the Conservation Area; and</i></p> <p><i>d. The project design mitigates unavoidable impacts through appropriate compensatory mitigation; and</i></p> <p><i>e. Development will be implemented adhering to the RDFs described in Appendix C.</i></p> <p><i>f. The project will not exceed the disturbance cap (MD SSS 27).</i></p>	<p><i>gain is expected.</i></p>
MD VEG 2	Yes	<p><i>Implement vegetation rehabilitation or manipulation projects to enhance sagebrush cover or to promote diverse and healthy grass and forb understory to achieve the greatest improvement in GRSG habitat based on FLAT Assessments, HAF assessments, other vegetative assessment data and local, site specific factors that indicate sagebrush canopy cover or herbaceous conditions do not meet habitat management objectives (i.e. is minimal or exceeds optimal characteristics). This may necessitate the use of prescribed fire as a site preparation technique to remove annual grass residual growth prior to the use of herbicides in the restoration of certain lower elevation sites (e.g., Wyoming big sagebrush) but such efforts will be carefully planned and coordinated to minimize impacts on GRSG seasonal habitats.</i></p>	<p><i>This is a major component of the proposed action.</i></p>
MD VEG 9	Yes	<p><i>Incorporate results of the FLAT Assessments into projects and activities addressing invasive species as appropriate.</i></p>	<p><i>This project includes measures recommended by FLAT assessments in a FLAT area.</i></p>
MD VEG 10	Yes	<p><i>Implement noxious weed and invasive species control using integrated vegetation management actions per national guidance and local weed management plans for Cooperative Weed Management Areas in cooperation with State and Federal agencies, affected counties, and adjoining private lands owners.</i></p>	<p><i>This is a component of the proposed action.</i></p>
MD VEG 11	Yes	<p><i>Conduct integrated weed management actions for noxious and invasive weed populations that are impacting or threatening GRSG habitat quality using a variety of eradication and control techniques including chemical, mechanical and other appropriate means.</i></p>	<p><i>This is incorporated into the proposed action.</i></p>
MD FIRE 17	Yes	<p><i>Design and implement fuels treatments that will reduce the potential start and spread of unwanted wildfires and provide anchor points or control lines for the containment of wildfires during suppression activities with an emphasis on maintaining, protecting, and expanding sagebrush ecosystems and successfully rehabilitated areas and strategically and effectively reduce wildfire threats in the greatest area.</i></p>	<p><i>This is the purpose of the proposed project</i></p>
MD FIRE 19	Yes	<p><i>Apply appropriate seasonal restrictions for implementing vegetation and fuels management treatments according to the type of seasonal habitats</i></p>	<p><i>The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance the overall quality of winter range habitat.</i></p>



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		<i>present. Allow no treatments in known winter range unless the treatments are designed to strategically reduce wildfire risk around and/or in the winter range and will protect, maintain, increase, or enhance winter range habitat quality. Ensure chemical applications are utilized where they will assist in success of fuels treatments. Strategically place treatments on a landscape scale to prevent fire from spreading into PHMA or WUL.</i>	
MD FIRE 22	Yes	<i>Fuel treatments will be designed through an interdisciplinary process to expand, enhance, maintain, and protect GRSG habitat which considers a full range of cost effective fuel reduction techniques, including: chemical, biological (including grazing and targeted grazing), mechanical and prescribed fire treatments.</i>	<i>The proposed action provides for a wide variety of treatment options intended to improve habitat quality for sage-grouse and other wildlife by altering the fire regime for the purpose of protecting GRSG habitat.</i>
MD FIRE 25	Yes	<i>Strategically pre-treat areas to reduce fine fuels consistent with areas and results identified within the Wildfire and Invasive Species Assessments.</i>	<i>This project includes targeted grazing and pre-emergence herbicide application as recommended by FLAT assessments in a FLAT area.</i>
MD LG 13	Yes	<i>Prioritize removal, modification or marking of fences or other structures in areas of high collision risk following appropriate cooperation, consultation and coordination to reduce the incidence of GRSG mortality due to fence strikes (Stevens et al. 2012).</i>	<i>Marking of fences is part of the proposed action (EA pg. 94)</i>

Required Design Features

MD SSS 34: RDFs and seasonal habitat restrictions will not be required for emergency or short-term activities necessary to protect and preserve human life or property.

Because this is an emergency action to protect live and property MD SSS 34 applies. This emergency action can proceed without applying the RDFs or seasonal habitat restrictions. The emergency area is not nesting habitat which many of the RDFs were designed to protect.

Is Mitigation Required: No

Rationale or Brief Description of Mitigation: Mitigation would not be required for this project because the expected effect of establishing fuel breaks on GRSG is that more GRSG habitat (including PHMA and IHMA managed as PHMA due to a tripped habitat trigger) would eventually meet sagebrush cover needs for GRSG and that there would already be a net benefit to GRSG as a result. Although this project will remove sage-grouse habitat, it is expected to protect significantly more habitat from wildfire than would be removed by the project.

Based on the Above Review, Is the Project in Conformance with the Sage-grouse ARMPA (Sept 2015)?: Yes

Rationale: This emergency fuel breaks project is in conformance with the sage-grouse ARMPA it does not violate any of the decisions within the ARMPA. The Majority of this project is occurring within the soda fire perimeter where the majority of sagebrush was removed, therefore the amount of actual habitat removed is much less than if the project were occurring within intact habitat. These fuels breaks are intended to protect restoration activities and once fully restored are expected to reduce the risk of large wildfires and future loss of habitat in this same area.