

WEBVTT

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00:00:05.720 --> 00:00:17.190

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Hello, everyone! I'd like to welcome you all to the Bureau of Land Management's virtual public meeting for the Greater Sage-Grouse Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement.

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00:00:17.500 --> 00:00:24.929

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: We're going to give folks just a few minutes here to join the meeting and then we'll go ahead and begin the PowerPoint presentation. So please stay tuned.

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00:00:25.160 --> 00:00:35.449

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I do want to note that close captioning is available by selecting the closed caption icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen if you are using the Zoom web portal or Zoom app on your computer.

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00:01:24.330 --> 00:01:34.699

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, again, welcome everyone to today's meeting for the Bureau of Land Management Greater Sage-Grouse Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement.

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00:01:34.880 --> 00:01:42.529

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: My name is Alli Yamnitsky, and I am with AECOM, a contractor for the BLM and I will be one of your meeting facilitators today.

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00:01:43.270 --> 00:01:44.940

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: We can go to the next slide, please.

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00:01:47.110 --> 00:01:50.050

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: On screen now is our expected agenda.

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00:01:50.090 --> 00:01:55.029

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I'm first going to review a few meeting ground rules and some tips and tricks for using Zoom.

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00:01:55.320 --> 00:01:59.650

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: We'll then have staff introductions before our project presentation.

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00:02:00.120 --> 00:02:04.100

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And then following the presentation, we will have a question-and-answer session.

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00:02:05.040 --> 00:02:06.329

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Next slide, please.

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00:02:08.000 --> 00:02:14.499

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: So, for meeting ground rules, for the duration of the meeting, participant microphones and videos will remain turned off.

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00:02:14.980 --> 00:02:21.700

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Written questions for the BLM about the project can be sent through the Q&A Box located on your Zoom Toolbar.

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00:02:22.000 --> 00:02:32.280

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: You can submit rank questions at any time throughout the meeting. However, BLM will only begin providing answers once we've reached the Q&A session after the presentation.

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00:02:33.540 --> 00:02:39.869

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: We do also have those questions that were submitted with registration. So, there's no need to submit those questions twice.

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00:02:40.000 --> 00:02:44.059

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And of course, we do ask that you refrain from using any inappropriate language.

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00:02:45.020 --> 00:02:52.110

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: During the meeting, if you need any technical assistance, you can enter a message into the chat box, and a technician from our team will contact you.

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00:02:52.120 --> 00:03:02.639

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Or you can email me at [alli.yamnitsky@aecom.com](mailto:alli.yamnitsky@aecom.com).

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00:03:02.910 --> 00:03:19.639

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I do want to note, too. We do have a few phone callers joining us this evening. If you are joining by phone, and you would like to ask the verbal question. Since you do not access to the QA. Box, I will review instructions on how exactly to do that once we do reach that Q&A session, following the presentation.

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00:03:20.840 --> 00:03:44.280

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And then another note about Q&A, is that with our pre-registered questions, we received a question about the USGS 2024 Coates data example and the management categories. If you submitted that question, would you please send a clarification? There were several publications of the Coates 2020, sorry 2024,

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00:03:44.310 --> 00:03:51.440

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: data published. And so we're just looking for a little bit of clarification, so we can provide you with the best answer possible.

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00:03:52.430 --> 00:03:53.950

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Next slide, please.

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00:03:55.470 --> 00:04:11.990

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And for some tips and tricks for using Zoom. All of the features that we'll be using today are on the screen now. These are all also available on the Zoom toolbar, which is at the bottom of your screen, and you may need to toggle your mouse or press on your phone screen to get that toolbar to pop up.

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00:04:12.420 --> 00:04:22.509

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: The Q&A Box will be used for any questions directed to the BLM about this project. And then again, you can submit those at any time throughout the presentation or during the Q&A session.

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00:04:22.990 --> 00:04:36.670

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: The chat box will be used for any technical Zoom related questions that you may have. We will also be placing relevant website links, emails, and mailing addresses in there throughout the meeting. So it's a good idea to keep that open in case you wish to use those.

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00:04:37.520 --> 00:04:42.869

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And then, lastly, closed captions are available by selecting the live transcript icon.

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00:04:43.600 --> 00:04:50.890

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And with that, I would like to turn it over to Pat Deibert with the BLM to get us started on staff introductions.

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00:04:52.860 --> 00:04:57.629

Patricia Deibert: Thank you, Alli, and good evening everyone. First, I'd like to

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00:04:58.730 --> 00:05:19.619

Patricia Deibert: thank you all coming to particularly giving us your evening, and you could be with your family, or otherwise occupied. So we do appreciate your attendance, and we are hopeful that this information that we are presenting this evening will give you some good structure by which to provide us robust and substantive comments.

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00:05:21.460 --> 00:05:23.560

Patricia Deibert: So how did we get here?

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00:05:24.070 --> 00:05:30.890

Patricia Deibert: Why are we doing this? What was the background that got BLM doing another planning effort for the Greater Sage-Grouse?

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00:05:31.450 --> 00:05:37.790

Patricia Deibert: In 2010, the Fish and Wildlife Service had several petitions for listing the Greater Sage-Grouse

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00:05:37.800 --> 00:05:39.929

Patricia Deibert: under the Endangered Species Act.

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00:05:40.540 --> 00:05:47.449

Patricia Deibert: And they said that point that sage-grouse did warrant listing, because, in part

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00:05:47.510 --> 00:05:51.270

Patricia Deibert: habitat was not adequately protected for the bird.

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00:05:51.950 --> 00:06:08.270

Patricia Deibert: and so that fell to the BLM and the Forest Service, because we have the majority of the habitat out there. And said, what can we do to better protect this habitat or conserve this habitat for sage-grouse so the Fish and Wildlife Service can remove that as a concern in their listing determination?

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00:06:08.880 --> 00:06:14.229

Patricia Deibert: And so all the plans were revised across the range of Greater Sage-Grouse to provide for that improved conservation.

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00:06:14.460 --> 00:06:20.049

Patricia Deibert: And in 2015 the Fish and Wildlife service did state these conservation planning efforts

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00:06:20.150 --> 00:06:28.359

Patricia Deibert: as a primary factor for getting to a not warranted to determination for Greater Sage-Grouse and the Endangered Species Act.

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00:06:29.520 --> 00:06:45.199

Patricia Deibert: In 2019, there were several plan amendments that were done to make the plans more consistent with some standing efforts. And every state except Montana, did revisit their Greater Sage-Grouse amendments, and made some changes.

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00:06:45.660 --> 00:06:55.069

Patricia Deibert: However, as is unfortunately, often the case, we did have some concerns raised legally about those 2019 amendments

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00:06:55.200 --> 00:07:06.360

Patricia Deibert: They engaged- we had a judge that enjoined on the decision there, and that judge did enjoin amendments out of concerns raised to that court case.

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00:07:06.500 --> 00:07:10.369

Patricia Deibert: What that means is, we were not allowed to apply the amendments.

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00:07:10.580 --> 00:07:15.699

Patricia Deibert: He did not vacate them. He did not remove them. He just simply said, fix it.

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00:07:15.840 --> 00:07:18.840

Patricia Deibert: and then we can come back to 2019 efforts.

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00:07:19.210 --> 00:07:30.800

Patricia Deibert: In 2015- So that means then the 2015 plan amendments become in effect because we cannot apply the 2019 plan amendments until we fix the courts concerns.

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00:07:32.280 --> 00:07:33.799

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:07:37.370 --> 00:07:42.870

Patricia Deibert: So why didn't we just fix our concerns that we identified in 2019?

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00:07:43.903 --> 00:07:56.549

Patricia Deibert: When we started looking at the information as we started to come together to address those concerns, we realized there was a lot of information published in the scientific literature since 2015.

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00:07:57.153 --> 00:08:02.489

Patricia Deibert: And I'm going to turn my camera off my apologies. My internet's not playing that well.

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00:08:04.320 --> 00:08:06.060

Patricia Deibert: There we go. Hopefully that helps.

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00:08:06.120 --> 00:08:19.370

Patricia Deibert: But there's a lot of new scientific literature published in the journals about sage-grouse and about sage-grouse habitat management, and how to do better management for the bird.

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00:08:19.840 --> 00:08:26.079

Patricia Deibert: We also were tracking sage-grouse population trends because trends reflect habitat condition.

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00:08:26.360 --> 00:08:41.590

Patricia Deibert: And through a commitment to do monitoring, we found that we had tripped 16 different habitat triggers. Meaning a habitat, that had been lost above a threshold that had been identified in the 2015 and 2019 plans.

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00:08:42.200 --> 00:08:56.050

Patricia Deibert: Additionally, we have 42 areas where population trends were concerning from 2015 to 2019. So we were still really concerned with what was happening out there with sage-grouse, and more importantly their habitat.

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00:08:56.080 --> 00:09:00.372

Patricia Deibert: Population declines have continued, as you can see there.

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00:09:01.250 --> 00:09:13.020

Patricia Deibert: And although there are different rates of decline, spatial and temporal differences in the rates of declines. Every single state across the range of the species has experienced long term sage-grouse declines.

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00:09:14.430 --> 00:09:16.610

Patricia Deibert: We're also keenly aware

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00:09:16.940 --> 00:09:25.340

Patricia Deibert: that we have changes in the sagebrush landscape that could be due to droughts, which was experienced across a great deal of the species range,

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00:09:25.710 --> 00:09:32.199

Patricia Deibert: and climate change. And that necessitated us to consider how we were applying some of our management decisions.

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00:09:32.940 --> 00:09:43.020

Patricia Deibert: And then, of course, we had the past court concerns. And so we just decided to- let's just do a new effort. Let's bring in this new scientific literature where it's applicable.

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00:09:43.260 --> 00:09:52.969

Patricia Deibert: Let's look at the landscape, and how it has changed. And let's make sure that we're also addressing court concerns because we don't want to do this again in another few years.

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00:09:54.060 --> 00:09:55.649

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:09:57.000 --> 00:09:59.090

Patricia Deibert: So what are we proposing to do?

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00:09:59.820 --> 00:10:06.719

Patricia Deibert: We are going to, or we are proposing to amend the goals, objectives, and management from our previous planning efforts

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00:10:06.900 --> 00:10:12.320

Patricia Deibert: and 77 resource management plans to enhance Greater Sage-Grouse conservation.

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00:10:14.210 --> 00:10:18.649

Patricia Deibert: Even though we're developing a new plan amendment with this effort.

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00:10:18.730 --> 00:10:22.289

Patricia Deibert: We realized we had some valuable lessons learned.

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00:10:22.710 --> 00:10:41.875

Patricia Deibert: And we do a lot of really good work, and particularly with our partners in 2015 and 2019. So we're going to build on those

previous efforts. And we're going to make sure that in addition to that really good work that has come before and lessons learned from that. We're going to bring in some of this new scientific information

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00:10:42.270 --> 00:10:50.540

Patricia Deibert: with the goal of achieving conservation or enhancing the conservation for Greater Sage-Grouse on BLM administered lands.

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00:10:50.630 --> 00:10:55.419

Patricia Deibert: But also continue our responsible uses under our multiple use mandate.

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00:10:56.880 --> 00:10:58.580

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:11:01.390 --> 00:11:05.940

Patricia Deibert: So this is our planning area. And it looks huge. And it is.

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00:11:06.421 --> 00:11:14.609

Patricia Deibert: And this is the entire area that BLM or the offices that BLM will be having changes in the resource management plans.

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00:11:14.990 --> 00:11:19.499

Patricia Deibert: But if you look at the actual distribution of sage-grouse in the next slide,

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00:11:22.890 --> 00:11:26.350

Patricia Deibert: you'll see that it is a little smaller, although it's still quite large.

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00:11:26.985 --> 00:11:34.030

Patricia Deibert: This is the current management areas that we that we have for Greater Sage-Grouse from our 2015 planning effort.

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00:11:34.330 --> 00:11:36.879

Patricia Deibert: And a quick explanation of colors.

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00:11:37.040 --> 00:11:39.820

Patricia Deibert: The darker colors, the darker purple

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00:11:40.030 --> 00:11:47.210



Patricia Deibert: are where what we call the priority habitat management areas identified in the 2015 planning effort.

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00:11:47.570 --> 00:11:54.069

Patricia Deibert: These are areas that our state wildlife agency partners have identified to the BLM

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00:11:54.120 --> 00:11:56.770

Patricia Deibert: as being absolutely essential.

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00:11:56.820 --> 00:12:00.330

Patricia Deibert: Excuse me, essential for maintaining sage-grouse on the landscape.

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00:12:00.410 --> 00:12:16.279

Patricia Deibert: They contain some of the best habitat for sage-grouse. They contain some limiting areas for sage-grouse, such as if there's a limiting winter area, etc., things like that. And it's just basically the best habitat that remains out there for the bird.

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00:12:16.600 --> 00:12:37.280

Patricia Deibert: The lighter purple areas are general habitat management areas, and these still provide habitat for greater sage-grouse, but they may not be as high of a quality for sage-grouse. They may not be used as much as the priority habitat manage areas, or they may not provide that important seasonal habitat.

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00:12:38.440 → 00:12:45.030

Patricia Deibert: The blue areas on this map are actually identified by our state wildlife agency partners.

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00:12:45.130 --> 00:12:49.920

Patricia Deibert: And they have different designations depending upon which state you are in.

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00:12:49.990 --> 00:13:03.500

Patricia Deibert: For example, in Montana, they have areas called restoration areas. And these are areas that are identified for restoration activities meaning the sagebrush and the sagebrush habitats

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00:13:03.540 --> 00:13:09.940

Patricia Deibert: are still of good enough quality that some restoration funding could help us get it back to sagebrush itself.

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00:13:10.490 --> 00:13:18.180

Patricia Deibert: Idaho has an important habitat management area that's managed differently than what Montana manages restoration areas for.

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00:13:18.300 --> 00:13:24.349

Patricia Deibert: Nevada is also has different number, excuse me, different definitions on habitat management areas.

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00:13:24.370 --> 00:13:36.250

Patricia Deibert: The point is, they were identified as important by our State agency partners, and so we incorporated them into our planning effort in 2015, and we will continue to do so as we move forward.

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00:13:37.880 --> 00:13:39.310

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:13:41.940 --> 00:13:46.613

Patricia Deibert: So this is the same map from 20- oops too far. Can we go back? One, please? Thank you.

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00:13:47.010 --> 00:13:54.310

Patricia Deibert: This is the same map from 2015. But what we've done here is we've removed all non-BLM administered services.

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00:13:54.350 --> 00:14:00.550

Patricia Deibert: So this is where our actual actions will occur, management actions that we are proposing will occur if they are adopted.

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00:14:00.860 --> 00:14:10.439

Patricia Deibert: The BLM has, it's important to note, we only have 47% of the greater sage-grouse habitat on BLM administered lands.

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00:14:10.700 --> 00:14:15.680

Patricia Deibert: The U.S. Forest Service has about 8% and private lands have about 30%.

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00:14:16.420 --> 00:14:27.559

Patricia Deibert: But for BLM we have almost half, and we take the responsibility for conserving this habitat seriously. But we also acknowledge that without our vast partnerships we could not do this alone.

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00:14:28.600 --> 00:14:30.100

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:14:32.600 --> 00:14:38.370

Patricia Deibert: So what are we changing? What's really going to happen in this proposed planning effort?

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00:14:40.290 --> 00:14:55.840

Patricia Deibert: We have existing RMP decisions that have really good information on there. That the updated scientific information we had or the court concerns we had really don't affect how we do management under those decisions.

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00:14:56.100 --> 00:15:03.890

Patricia Deibert: We will bring those forward unchanged, and I'll tell you which ones we are proposing to change in this effort in just a moment.

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00:15:05.190 --> 00:15:09.949

Patricia Deibert: So we're not changing everything. We're changing some parts of things,

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00:15:11.510 --> 00:15:13.209

Patricia Deibert: or proposing to change.

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00:15:13.570 --> 00:15:27.950

Patricia Deibert: We also looked at the habitat management area boundaries and based on this new information, this new science, we worked with our state agencies. We worked with people who are on the ground actually doing management for this bird and management of habitat.

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00:15:28.180 --> 00:15:36.650

Patricia Deibert: And we actually suggested tweaking some of these boundaries, and worked very closely with our state partners to see if that was necessary.

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00:15:37.940 --> 00:15:43.460

Patricia Deibert: So some of our habitat management area boundaries have or are being proposed for changing.

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00:15:44.300 --> 00:15:45.720

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:15:48.060 --> 00:15:50.980

Patricia Deibert: So what is this new science of which I speak?

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00:15:51.655 --> 00:15:56.539

Patricia Deibert: There was a lot of publications, and we reviewed them all. Some were not applicable,

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00:15:56.740 --> 00:16:01.099

Patricia Deibert: some were incredibly applicable, some were really influential.

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00:16:01.411 --> 00:16:07.538

Patricia Deibert: For example, we have some examples listed here on the slide. One of the most important or one of the most

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00:16:08.390 --> 00:16:17.879

Patricia Deibert: intriguing changes in sciences, the genetic information on Greater Sage-Grouse. It is probably the most genetically mapped species in North America at this point.

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00:16:18.560 --> 00:16:26.970

Patricia Deibert: The genetics talks to or is telling us all kinds of things about how sage-grouse have historically and are currently using the landscape.

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00:16:27.150 --> 00:16:38.730

Patricia Deibert: It has identified important areas of genetic diversity which we are hoping to conserve because that then gives a resilience to Greater Sage-Grouse to face any additional challenges in the future.

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00:16:39.720 --> 00:16:48.670

Patricia Deibert: We also looked at some models of breeding habitats, and like persistence, we have a model that is telling us how leks are going to be able to persist into the future.

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00:16:49.420 --> 00:17:01.790

Patricia Deibert: We looked at where there were changes in Greater Sage-Grouse abundance across the range. And are we really conserving the greatest number of birds in the right places? Or has that changed since 2015 and 2019?

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00:17:02.240 --> 00:17:17.760

Patricia Deibert: We looked at the impacts from climate change. And we do use a few climate change models. And I know there are concerns for climate change models because they all measure different things, and they become relatively unstable when you get 20 to 30 years out.

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00:17:18.160 --> 00:17:28.039

Patricia Deibert: However, the models that we have used here helped inform us as to where we are likely to have sagebrush habitats that support sage-grouse

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00:17:28.060 --> 00:17:36.170

Patricia Deibert: persist for at least the next 20 to 50 years. So that we know that we're putting conservation actions in the right locations.

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00:17:38.030 --> 00:17:47.480

Patricia Deibert: And all this great scientific information that's published was really informative. But we really had to go talk to the folks who are living on the ground.

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00:17:47.620 --> 00:18:04.499

Patricia Deibert: We had to talk about changes in local conditions, and by coordinating with our partners. Were the models we used correct? Are they accurately reflecting what's happening on the ground? Were they things that they missed, and are things that we should consider that didn't come through the scientific publication information?

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00:18:06.050 --> 00:18:07.749

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:18:11.250 --> 00:18:17.119

Patricia Deibert: So I promised I would tell you what it is we are considering in these proposed plans.

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00:18:17.210 --> 00:18:28.620

Patricia Deibert: And this is a list that we've developed in coordination with our partners. And things that are not on this list are not being proposed for any kind of modification in this current planning effort.

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00:18:29.450 --> 00:18:38.789

Patricia Deibert: So we've already talked about habitat management area alignments. We're also looking at non habitat within some of these habitat management areas, priority in general,

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00:18:38.830 --> 00:18:44.129

Patricia Deibert: to see if there's some flexibility in allowing us a multiple use in these non-habitat areas.

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00:18:44.800 --> 00:19:10.649

Patricia Deibert: We're going to revisit the mitigation process. We are putting more emphasis on the mitigation hierarchy, which is avoidance first and then minimization, and then going to compensatory mitigation if necessary. This also recognizes the fact that several states in this interim time period have developed legal requirements for mitigation in their states, and we wanted to respect those States processes and bring them into this effort.

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00:19:11.680 --> 00:19:21.650

Patricia Deibert: We're going to revisit habitat objectives. We're moving away from those quantitative numbers we had previously. We're doing a much more qualitative structure

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00:19:22.222 --> 00:19:32.650

Patricia Deibert: and multi scale structure. We're looking at how we're meeting habitat objectives. We will still have some quantitative values adjusting habitat objectives, but they will be in an appendix.

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00:19:32.770 --> 00:19:48.859

Patricia Deibert: That is important, because it gives it far more flexibility to change those numbers as new science allows us to do so or directs us to do so. If they were contained in the plan themselves, we would have to do an entire plan amendment which reduces our flexibility.

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00:19:49.760 --> 00:20:01.490

Patricia Deibert: For disturbance caps, we're maintaining disturbance caps in this proposed change. But we are changing the unit at which disturbance is calculated to be more biologically relevant to sage-grouse.

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00:20:02.250 --> 00:20:12.289

Patricia Deibert: We are looking at fluid mineral development and leasing objectives. This is a fairly major change and that we are not closing any areas to leasing under our preferred alternative.

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00:20:12.847 --> 00:20:25.900

Patricia Deibert: And so, we then have to look at how the associated waivers, exceptions and modifications apply to those decisions, and how we can manage that activity within sage-grouse habitats.

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00:20:27.290 --> 00:20:34.299

Patricia Deibert: One area that we had not proposed to bring forward, but our partners asked us to do so was to take a look at

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00:20:34.440 --> 00:20:39.049

Patricia Deibert: the renewable energy development and transmission associated with that.

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00:20:39.180 --> 00:20:45.229

Patricia Deibert: And so we did bring that forward. We were revisiting our previous decisions and management actions on those activities

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00:20:45.240 --> 00:20:47.510

Patricia Deibert: in this this new proposed effort.

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00:20:47.900 --> 00:20:53.669

Patricia Deibert: Another area that we were asked to bring forward was livestock grazing and wild horses and burro management.

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00:20:53.690 --> 00:21:01.640

Patricia Deibert: And again, we're just revisiting our efforts with this to see if changes are going to be necessary moving forward.

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00:21:02.630 --> 00:21:06.880

Patricia Deibert: Our partners also asked us to bring forward threats from predation.

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00:21:06.950 --> 00:21:11.170

Patricia Deibert: BLM does not directly manage predators.

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00:21:11.250 --> 00:21:26.139

Patricia Deibert: However, we do coordinate efforts with our partners with APHIS, where we know there is a concern relative to predation on any species out there, and how we can facilitate that while still providing conservation for sage-grouse.

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00:21:26.840 --> 00:21:49.250

Patricia Deibert: And then we also re-examine, or are going to re-examine our adaptive management approach. This was widely different across every state, and unfortunately, sage-grouse do not recognize political boundaries. And so we would have birds that under one state would trip a trigger, a population trigger.

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00:21:49.400 --> 00:22:05.438

Patricia Deibert: And the very same bird would walk across the state line, and that trigger was not tripped. And so, we're looking at across state boundary across all political boundary measurement for adaptive management as well as making sure this is

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00:22:08.280 --> 00:22:20.830

Patricia Deibert: on a level that is very biologically important to sage-grouse, and not on an artificial level that may not be a meaningful to conservation of the bird.

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00:22:23.090 --> 00:22:24.859

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please.

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00:22:26.580 --> 00:22:28.220

Patricia Deibert: We also know that

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00:22:28.270 --> 00:22:44.209

Patricia Deibert: sage-grouse habitat varies, depending on where you are in the state. You're going to be very different if you're in northeastern Montana versus western Nevada. Ecologically, we get that. We understand that. So we're also allowing for management for some state specific circumstances.

151

00:22:44.290 --> 00:23:03.659

Patricia Deibert: And they're listed on the screen here. I'll go through them quickly. Colorado it was with concerns with management scales of lek buffers. Lek buffers are very different in Colorado because of topographical and geographical reasons, not for other reasons. Wanted some consistency across their resources and clarifying language.

152

00:23:03.830 --> 00:23:20.127

Patricia Deibert: Idaho has- we had a lesson learned in Idaho, where our previous plans did not allow for saleable minerals, the free-use permits that the county rely on. We're making sure that's corrected in this. They also had concerns with lek buffers and nuclear hydrological energy.

153

00:23:20.660 --> 00:23:32.159

Patricia Deibert: Montana/Dakotas are looking to increase their consistency between offices. Nevada has got new information for priority habitats. They're also very concerned with fire management and

154

00:23:32.661 --> 00:23:39.899

Patricia Deibert: vegetation treatments. They want to look at nonenergy and leaseable minerals management, and some exceptions to their allocations.

155

00:23:39.980 --> 00:23:49.540

Patricia Deibert: Oregon has several research natural areas that need to be addressed independently. They're the only state to have them. They also had some issues to salable mineral management.



156

00:23:49.610 --> 00:23:54.790

Patricia Deibert: Utah is changing the general habitat management definitions and actually applications.

157

00:23:54.870 --> 00:24:06.359

Patricia Deibert: And Wyoming actually created- the State of Wyoming actually created alternatives- our new stewardship areas that address how we do management when there's a great

158

00:24:06.918 --> 00:24:10.030

Patricia Deibert: interspersed between private and public lands.

159

00:24:12.440 --> 00:24:18.590

Patricia Deibert: Next slide, please. And I believe I will turn it over to Quincy Bahr and let me introduce Quincy for you.

160

00:24:19.035 --> 00:24:29.310

Patricia Deibert: Quincy is our Program Manager for this Greater Sage-Grouse planning effort, and he will be able to talk to you all kinds of things about alternatives.

161

00:24:29.690 --> 00:24:32.226

Quincy Bahr: Sweet. Thank you very much, Pat. Appreciate it.

162

00:24:32.880 --> 00:24:48.800

Quincy Bahr: So as we're talking about, what Pat's talked about today, to this point is what we're looking at in this amendment process. All other actions that are from the previous planning efforts that we're not talking about would continue unchanged.

163

00:24:49.050 → 00:24:55.939

Quincy Bahr: So as we're looking to things that we are considering changes to, we're looking at those changes across six alternatives.

164

00:24:56.240 --> 00:25:15.830

Quincy Bahr: So the first alternative looks at those management actions from 2015, from the 2015 records of decision on those plan amendments, related to those specific actions. So that mitigation, disturbance calculation, and the HMA boundaries, so those things that Pat talked about.

165

00:25:15.850 --> 00:25:20.760

Quincy Bahr: Those pieces from 2015 comprise our Alternative One.

166

00:25:21.520 --> 00:25:28.429

Quincy Bahr: Similarly same pieces from the 2019 amendments comprise our Alternative Two.

167

00:25:29.060 --> 00:25:42.779

Quincy Bahr: Oh, and because, as Pat mentioned earlier, because the 2019 amendments were enjoined, not overturned, Alternative 2 is our no action alternative.

168

00:25:43.860 --> 00:25:52.570

Quincy Bahr: Alternative 3 is the most restrictive of all of our alternatives. We are looking at all

169

00:25:52.730 --> 00:25:56.380

Quincy Bahr: habitat management areas

170

00:25:56.400 --> 00:25:59.370

Quincy Bahr: under Alternative 3 would be managed as PHMA.

171

00:25:59.840 --> 00:26:04.359

Quincy Bahr: And then their management, excuse me., their management would be

172

00:26:04.944 --> 00:26:08.990

Quincy Bahr: the most restrictive. If there was a threat

173

00:26:09.394 --> 00:26:14.490

Quincy Bahr: from a given type of use, Alternative 3 would consider precluding that use.

174

00:26:15.014 --> 00:26:22.089

Quincy Bahr: And so it is the one that has the most area and the most restriction in relation to sage-grouse conservation.

175

00:26:22.190 --> 00:26:28.580

Quincy Bahr: It also includes ACECs, I'll talk on those in a little bit, and that is areas of critical environmental concern.

176

00:26:28.790 --> 00:26:38.589

Quincy Bahr: It has the same management- Those would have the same management as the PHMA under Alternative 3. But the boundaries would be identified on the map.

177

00:26:38.980 --> 00:26:41.910

Quincy Bahr: And hit that in a second with Alternative 6.

178

00:26:42.310 --> 00:26:52.870

Quincy Bahr: Alternatives 4 and 5 are fairly similar in relation to the strategy that the intent of both is looking to find a balance between the conservation of grouse,

179

00:26:53.090 --> 00:27:09.389

Quincy Bahr: as well as looking to opportunities where we could also provide for some development. Specifically, but the difference biggest difference between Alternative 4 and alternative 5 is the amount of flexibility provided to local managers.

180

00:27:09.730 --> 00:27:23.719

Quincy Bahr: Alternative 5 provides some additional flexibilities, especially considering the use of compensatory mitigation when looking at site specific conditions in relation to a given project proposal.

181

00:27:24.500 --> 00:27:27.699

Quincy Bahr: There are some other differences that vary state by state,

182

00:27:28.369 --> 00:27:32.260

Quincy Bahr: but I encourage you to look in the document for those specifics.

183

00:27:32.670 --> 00:27:36.370

Quincy Bahr: Alternative 6 is the same as Alternative 5.

184

00:27:36.700 --> 00:27:41.090

Quincy Bahr: With the one exception that it does also include,

185

00:27:41.230 --> 00:27:44.890

Quincy Bahr: different from 5, it includes ACECs.

186

00:27:45.522 --> 00:27:50.469

Quincy Bahr: The boundaries are the same boundaries as are considered under Alternative 3,

187

00:27:50.800 --> 00:27:54.440

Quincy Bahr: but the management is different than what was in 3.

188

00:27:55.114 --> 00:28:00.779

Quincy Bahr: The management is more restrictive than what is in PHMA under Alternative 6.

189

00:28:01.010 --> 00:28:13.600

Quincy Bahr: How different depends on the state. Again, there are some differences, state by state, as far as the allocations or other management actions. And so how different those are from the ACEC management, varies.

190

00:28:13.800 --> 00:28:19.859

Quincy Bahr: I would encourage if you have an interest in that, Section 2.5.12

191

00:28:19.990 --> 00:28:27.810

Quincy Bahr: in Volume One of the Draft EIS has that ACEC management and the differences between Alternative 3 and Alternative 6.

192

00:28:27.900 --> 00:28:33.290

Quincy Bahr: And then again, Appendix 5 include some additional details on that as well.

193

00:28:33.320 --> 00:28:34.390

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

194

00:28:35.900 --> 00:28:50.110

Quincy Bahr: So we have selected Alternative 5 as our preferred alternative, and that is something that the BLM is required to do in our Draft EISs. In our planning documents we are required to identify a preferred alternative.

195

00:28:50.240 → 00:29:09.310

Quincy Bahr: There is not a requirement to carry that forward. The BLM does have the latitude, as we describe in Section 2.4 of Chapter 2, we have the latitude, as we move forward to take public comment, to work with our partners, our corporate agencies and our state partners.

196

00:29:09.430 --> 00:29:20.859

Quincy Bahr: We can make adjustments to the preferred alternative as we move into the Final EIS. That's part of what we need that input from the public as referred to what we're asking for in this comment period.

197

00:29:21.200 --> 00:29:23.040

Quincy Bahr: In this preferred alternative,

198

00:29:23.070 --> 00:29:39.640

Quincy Bahr: These are some of the key details that we wanted to call out. Specifically, the changes that we are proposing in relation to the habitat management areas. This is looking to maximize alignment with our state partners to apply that science that has been coming out, and that we've evaluated over the years.

199

00:29:40.726 --> 00:29:42.440

Quincy Bahr: Habitat objectives.

200

00:29:42.750 --> 00:29:56.580

Quincy Bahr: It's not that we're dropping habitat objectives. As Pat mentioned, we're turning them into something that's, instead of something very specific and rigid, we want flexibility to be able to adapt to the best available science as it comes out.

201

00:29:56.820 --> 00:30:26.159

Quincy Bahr: So the RMP objective itself will be a qualitative multi scale objective. We're using the habitat assessment framework, which is a tool that that we can use to assess the value of habitat in a given area, and we can evaluate the scale at different levels of how sage-grouse use a landscape. The tables from 2015 that so folks may be familiar with that have the very specific numbers. We've moved those into an appendix- Appendix 8.

202

00:30:26.560 --> 00:30:55.270

Quincy Bahr: And so that's where we want to make sure we have that suitable habitat is defined by the best available science, but also recognize that that science varies as you go throughout the range. So across the range, our objective is to manage for suitable habitat. What that looks like is going to vary, based on the differences in ecology. Again, you can never manage Montana the same as Nevada. Those, the ecological differences are too great, and so we can manage both for suitable habitat.

203

00:30:55.550 --> 00:31:00.830

Quincy Bahr: But we want the flexibility to make those adjustments between those different ecological zones.

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00:31:01.040 --> 00:31:04.390

Quincy Bahr: We've also made adjustments to the disturbance cap.

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00:31:04.726 --> 00:31:18.770

Quincy Bahr: One of the things that we did in 2015 was we included a broader scale. So we have project scale, and that has very little change

in this effort, but the broader scale, we applied that to biologically significant units

206

00:31:19.165 --> 00:31:30.539

Quincy Bahr: what we termed there. And those varied state by state, how states defined those? Some were managed based on wildlife management units in a given state's wildlife agency,

207

00:31:30.750 --> 00:31:49.340

Quincy Bahr: somewhere based on biology. They were very different as far as scale and strategy. So in this area, in this effort, we have looked to identify a consistent biologically defined approach. And so this is based on again, on the habitat assessment framework fine scale

208

00:31:49.620 --> 00:31:55.659

Quincy Bahr: that represents the seasonal habitats associated with a given population.

209

00:31:56.560 --> 00:32:02.930

Quincy Bahr: That's the scale at which we would be applying that larger scale for the disturbance cap.

210

00:32:03.667 --> 00:32:26.849

Quincy Bahr: In addition, and this is different than 2015, we are looking at circumstances where we could provide exceptions based on local conditions. It's not a carte blanche. We have specific standards that we want to make sure we can document before we grant that exception different levels of detail and assurance as you go through the different alternatives. But that is something in our preferred alternative that is included.

211

00:32:27.350 --> 00:32:34.609

Quincy Bahr: As Pat mentioned with adaptive management, the preferred alternative looks to identify some more consistency in relation to thresholds

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00:32:34.988 --> 00:32:53.639

Quincy Bahr: so that that when you cross the political boundary, that we're actually monitoring biological values as you go from one political area to another state, one state to another state, that we're not dropping potential concerns if the population that's using those 2 areas is the same.

213

00:32:54.345 --> 00:32:59.600

Quincy Bahr: We also want to make sure that we are considering the differences between

214

00:32:59.969 --> 00:33:11.129

Quincy Bahr: broader ecological shifts and more local specific shifts. And so some of the data sets that we're looking to use in this effort help us isolate some of those differences.

215

00:33:11.160 --> 00:33:30.080

Quincy Bahr: By the same token, we recognize that there are multiple data sets can help inform how birds are doing in certain areas. And so, while this is a starting point for adaptive management approach as far as measuring and using the tools that we have identified. We also make sure that there are ample opportunities

216

00:33:30.300 --> 00:33:39.139

Quincy Bahr: to either insert consideration of additional data sets after that model, or insert them before and say, well, the model may say things are fine.

217

00:33:39.250 --> 00:33:41.999

Quincy Bahr: The model may say things are fine,

218

00:33:42.160 --> 00:33:58.070

Quincy Bahr: but we have data on the ground that says otherwise. And so we wanted to make sure that while we do have some consistency, that's not the only piece of information we're looking to. That our state partners and others have a lot of information that can help inform how birds are doing and how habitat is doing in throughout its range.

219

00:33:59.190 --> 00:34:04.179

Quincy Bahr: Our wind and solar and associated transmission management in our preferred alternative

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00:34:04.400 --> 00:34:12.739

Quincy Bahr: is avoidance instead of closed or exclusion, is the terminology we use back in 2015 and in Alternative 3.

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00:34:12.830 --> 00:34:17.390

Quincy Bahr: We've chosen in the preferred alternative to go avoidance.

222

00:34:17.639 --> 00:34:32.139

Quincy Bahr: We have set, however, standards for that avoidance. That one that at the local scale, we must be able to document that a project could not go forward unless we can document that it won't have impacts to that local population.

223

00:34:32.280 --> 00:34:38.080

Quincy Bahr: And so there's still a very high level that needs to be documented in local authorizations

224

00:34:38.320 --> 00:34:54.740

Quincy Bahr: before an approval can go forward. But this provides us opportunity for evaluating local habitat, evaluating local topography and trying to figure out if there's a way to be able to have some of those projects while still also providing conservation for grouse.

225

00:34:55.150 --> 00:35:09.600

Quincy Bahr: And then the last one here on the slide is oil and gas leasing and development. We don't propose, in the preferred alternative, we don't propose closures, new closures. However, we are still avoiding the most critical areas for sage-grouse.

226

00:35:09.900 --> 00:35:15.559

Quincy Bahr: We are looking to provide for some consistency as we move forward

227

00:35:15.690 --> 00:35:40.319

Quincy Bahr: when there are stipulations on new leases. So, no surface occupancy, disturbance cap, seasonal stipulations. We'd like some consistency in how those are evaluated at the local scale. We wanted to make sure that field managers and authorized officers are clear on what they need to consider before they grant a waiver exception or modification.

228

00:35:41.160 --> 00:35:42.319

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

229

00:35:43.360 --> 00:35:56.229

Quincy Bahr: So this slide is summed. It is a sum of all the habitat management areas across the range. There's a more specific table in the document. It is, I believe

230

00:35:56.440 --> 00:36:08.369

Quincy Bahr: Table 2.3, if I remember right. It is a in Section 2.5.2 that provides similar information, but on a statewide base or on a state by state basis.

231

00:36:08.590 --> 00:36:19.219

Quincy Bahr: In this instance you can see that there are some adjustments throughout the range and throughout the alternatives we are looking at a across the range, an increase of PHMA



232

00:36:20.052 --> 00:36:26.380

Quincy Bahr: that is, the areas that are identified as the most necessary for protection as we move forward.

233

00:36:27.311 --> 00:36:35.949

Quincy Bahr: Just a quick clarification here that as we're looking at oh, yes, so the table is Table 2.3.

234

00:36:35.990 --> 00:36:38.570

Quincy Bahr: It's on page 2-12

235

00:36:38.800 --> 00:36:40.439

Quincy Bahr: in the Draft EIS.

236

00:36:40.960 --> 00:36:43.160

Quincy Bahr: So the

237

00:36:44.740 --> 00:37:08.400

Quincy Bahr: the alternative- sorry, the Alternatives 5 and 6 here. Just wanted to make sure we're clear the ACEC language or the ACEC acreage that only applies to Alternative 6. So even though it's under that Alternative 5 and 6 columns, the HMAs are the same whether it's 5 or 6. The difference is that under 6 there are those 11 million acres of ACEC.

238

00:37:10.120 --> 00:37:13.880

Quincy Bahr: I would encourage you to look to your given States. Again,

239

00:37:13.990 --> 00:37:17.249

Quincy Bahr: as we looked at the data, a lot of the evaluation was,

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00:37:17.390 --> 00:37:24.060

Quincy Bahr: does the new science support the former HMA mappings.

241

00:37:24.370 --> 00:37:26.329

Quincy Bahr: And so in some instances

242

00:37:26.350 --> 00:37:54.550

Quincy Bahr: we have areas that we've added that we missed before, areas that we've reprioritized either up, or down or areas that we've said really, there's the models we used before were wrong. And the updated better information is helping us better identify where the grouse are. So

I'd encourage you to look to, this would be maps in Volume 2, Appendix One. It's Maps 2.1 through 2.6

243

00:37:55.494 --> 00:38:03.880

Quincy Bahr: is where those specific maps are for the HMAs. And then you can download that information from the ePlanning website as well.

244

00:38:04.910 --> 00:38:06.100

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

245

00:38:07.320 --> 00:38:09.811

Quincy Bahr: So what about these ACECs?

246

00:38:10.450 --> 00:38:17.039

Quincy Bahr: ACECs are areas of critical environmental concern. It's something that is in the

247

00:38:17.090 --> 00:38:25.230

Quincy Bahr: Federal Land Policy and Management Act. That's BLM's enabling legislation where Congress directed the BLM

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00:38:25.520 --> 00:38:28.500

Quincy Bahr: to prioritize management of ACECs.

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00:38:28.510 --> 00:38:41.110

Quincy Bahr: And they defined ACECs as areas of public land where special management is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to, and then it lists a variety of potential resources.

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00:38:41.140 --> 00:38:46.840

Quincy Bahr: In this effort, we are only looking at ACECs in relation to sage-grouse habitat.

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00:38:47.320 --> 00:38:56.599

Quincy Bahr: So the other potential values: scenic or cultural, etc. We're looking specifically at the at the sage-grouse component

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00:38:57.510 --> 00:38:59.820

Quincy Bahr: To be considered an ACEC,

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00:39:00.894 --> 00:39:09.189

Quincy Bahr: it must meet 3 criteria. It must have relevance, it must have importance, and it must need that special management.

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00:39:09.843 --> 00:39:33.829

Quincy Bahr: We received some expansive ACEC nominations during our scoping period. We've subsequently received some additional ACEC nominations. As we were looking at these early ACEC nominations, we determined that the safest approach as we move forward, and to make sure that we are as inclusive as possible in what we evaluate. We started with all habitats that we have mapped,

255

00:39:34.280 --> 00:39:42.130

Quincy Bahr: and then identifying that as the relevant areas. Then the question came down to what is important.

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00:39:42.440 --> 00:39:53.879

Quincy Bahr: And importance criteria are defined in our planning regulations and in our ACEC manual. Specifically, it is that an area must have substantial significance.

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00:39:54.910 --> 00:40:19.070

Quincy Bahr: What substantial significance means is further identified as a common list in the regulations, or as a series of adjectives in our planning or in our ACEC manual. But it identifies the characteristics that may lead to an area to be identified as having substantial significance, and that substantial significance is in comparison to other similar resources.

258

00:40:19.370 --> 00:40:22.199

Quincy Bahr: So in this regard it would be similar to sage-grouse habitat.

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00:40:22.310 --> 00:40:37.299

Quincy Bahr: and it's that it must have greater than local significance. And so, as our planning area is west wide, we were looking for areas that had characteristics that indicated some of those substantial significance from that range-wide perspective.

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00:40:38.756 --> 00:40:48.169

Quincy Bahr: As we went through that we identified those potential areas. We've carried forward them into 2 alternatives. And this is where the special management comes in.

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00:40:48.440 --> 00:40:55.230

Quincy Bahr: It's hard to determine special management unless you have some alternatives that have an ACEC and some that don't.

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00:40:55.310 --> 00:40:59.359

Quincy Bahr: And then we compare the effects between those alternatives

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00:40:59.570 --> 00:41:01.400

Quincy Bahr: to determine whether or not

264

00:41:01.620 --> 00:41:07.989

Quincy Bahr: management, special management, associated with the ACEC is required to protect those values.

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00:41:08.010 --> 00:41:31.789

Quincy Bahr: So that's where, under Alternative 3 and under Alternative 6, we have those areas identified. And then under the other alternatives, we do not. And so we will analyze the effects of those different alternatives on that relevant and important value, those ACEC sage-grouse values identified. And then we'll carry those forward into our rationale for whether or not to select or not.

266

00:41:32.160 --> 00:41:35.389

Quincy Bahr: I do want to clarify here that middle bullet,

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00:41:35.500 --> 00:41:44.549

Quincy Bahr: ACECs do not have standard management. There is no law or policy or regulation that says ACECs shall be managed as this.

268

00:41:45.186 --> 00:41:53.500

Quincy Bahr: The ACEC management is what the RMP identifies it as. That's why, under Alternative 3, it is one set of management and under Alternative 6 it is another.

269

00:41:55.460 --> 00:42:21.260

Quincy Bahr: The ACECs do differ from PHMA. Again, the concept of PHMA is that it is those areas of higher priority in relation to conservation of the species. And with ACECs, we're looking at those areas with substantial significance as defined and in comparison to other areas that are more than locally significance. That's the biggest differences is in what criteria we used in identifying each.

270

00:42:21.560 --> 00:42:34.609

Quincy Bahr: There's additional information related to the ACEC evaluation process and includes information related to the nominated areas as well as how we evaluated these. That's in Appendix 5 of the Draft EIS.

271

00:42:35.890 --> 00:42:37.090

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

272

00:42:37.940 --> 00:42:40.748

Quincy Bahr: I guess I will reiterate on the ACECs.

273

00:42:41.560 --> 00:42:45.619

Quincy Bahr: We do not currently carry them forward as part of our preferred alternative.

274

00:42:46.800 --> 00:43:02.429

Quincy Bahr: So in some, here the key points is that with sage-grouse populations continuing to decline. The BLM needs to be able to work with its partners, to act quickly and decisively and quickly as often, which are not described to the BLM planning process. But

275

00:43:02.430 --> 00:43:18.929

Quincy Bahr: we need to be able to act in working with our partners and across state lines to make sure these populations don't end up with isolated populations that no longer have genetic connectivity. We need to make sure that we're being cognizant to changes as we go forward in in habitat and population levels.

276

00:43:19.870 --> 00:43:39.872

Quincy Bahr: Our preferred alternative reflects the science. We feel that it reflects the science and information on being able to balance conservation of grouse with our multiple use mandate that, we will be able to provide some durable protections both from the context of climate change as well as implement-ability.

277

00:43:40.910 --> 00:43:55.870

Quincy Bahr: We do- we have left in place those most successful components of 2015 to 2019, have not wanted to change those. But we've also focused on those areas where we feel that there was some adjustment potential. But either through

278

00:43:56.990 --> 00:44:12.899

Quincy Bahr: new science or through lessons learned over the past 8 to 9 years of implementing these plans of how we can improve management. And finally, we wanted to make sure that we can work or continuing to work with our states so that we can have some consistency where it makes sense.

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00:44:12.980 --> 00:44:19.729

Quincy Bahr: But where it doesn't make sense, and there's some differences between those states, that we can make sure we provide for those opportunities for differences

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00:44:19.770 --> 00:44:21.200

Quincy Bahr: in management.

281

00:44:21.671 --> 00:44:38.919

Quincy Bahr: This effort builds on, you know, going back decades. The longstanding collaboration between Federal and state partners as we're looking at habitat versus population management, and the fact that we need to work together if we're going to have any hope of long term conservation of this species.

282

00:44:39.640 --> 00:44:40.760

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

283

00:44:42.670 --> 00:44:48.240

Quincy Bahr: So what we're asking for from the public. And I've mentioned this a couple times is input.

284

00:44:48.650 --> 00:45:00.350

Quincy Bahr: Did we miss an alternative? Is our impact analysis accurately capturing the effects that we would anticipate from the alternatives? We need to make sure that we're making informed transparent decisions.

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00:45:00.764 --> 00:45:10.655

Quincy Bahr: We need those comments by June 13. Our preference is that you submit those via the ePlanning link. The QR code there will take you to that page or going to that website there.

286

00:45:11.796 --> 00:45:13.310

Quincy Bahr: We will

287

00:45:13.520 --> 00:45:19.280

Quincy Bahr: receive those comments, read all the comments, analyze them, and then respond to all substantive comments,

288

00:45:19.290 --> 00:45:23.289

Quincy Bahr: make adjustments to the EIS as necessary,

289

00:45:23.460 --> 00:45:25.930

Quincy Bahr: develop proposed plans,

290

00:45:25.960 --> 00:45:31.849

Quincy Bahr: and then publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement, anticipating that later this Fall.

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00:45:32.010 --> 00:45:47.829

Quincy Bahr: That will initiate a 60-day Governor's Consistency Review and a 30-day protest period. Now, there's language and rules on that in the in the BLM's planning regulations. You're welcome to look those up. Those instructions will also be associated with a Final EIS when we release that.

292

00:45:48.590 --> 00:45:49.740

Quincy Bahr: Next slide.

293

00:45:51.240 --> 00:46:10.549

Quincy Bahr: We often do get a question, and this slide was inserted to help head off potential questions in relation to this. But in 2015 there was a one of the one of the aspects of that planning process was a recommendation to withdraw the sagebrush focal areas, the SFAs,

294

00:46:11.060 → 00:46:15.860

Quincy Bahr: from location and entry under the mineral- under the Mining Act of 1872.

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00:46:17.402 --> 00:46:28.109

Quincy Bahr: There was a separate EIS started in 2015. There was a Draft EIS published in 2016, and then later that process was terminated in 2017.

296

00:46:28.654 --> 00:46:34.430

Quincy Bahr: Through court cases, the BLM has been required to finish that NEPA process.

297

00:46:35.041 --> 00:46:58.670

Quincy Bahr: So that consideration this is kind of the difference between an RMP decision and an implementation of that RMP decision. That is the RMP decision to recommend. It doesn't have any direct effect. It doesn't preclude any uses, and it doesn't provide protection. It is the actual withdrawal that provides the effect change in management.

298

00:46:59.070 --> 00:47:11.410

Quincy Bahr: So what we're looking to do is in this EIS, as we complete it as directed by the courts, we need to complete that EIS to complete that decision making process. We will have it. It'll have its own range of alternatives.

299

00:47:11.470 --> 00:47:18.870

Quincy Bahr: And we will anticipate publishing that Draft EIS, again, asking for public input later this year.

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00:47:19.020 --> 00:47:22.275

Quincy Bahr: So just wanted to clarify

301

00:47:22.850 --> 00:47:40.580

Quincy Bahr: in in that effort. It's looking at the actual withdrawal. And in this effort we're not lumping those decisions. This is the difference between an RMP decision and implementation of those RMP decisions. So I just wanted to make you aware that this is still in the works, and to anticipate it later this summer.

302

00:47:41.350 --> 00:47:43.030

Quincy Bahr: Last slide, I believe.

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00:47:45.250 --> 00:47:48.150

Quincy Bahr: Okay. And this goes back to you, Alli.

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00:47:50.270 --> 00:47:51.539

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Quincy.

305

00:47:51.800 --> 00:48:11.160

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: So we'll now go ahead and move into our question and answer session. I'll first review some guidelines and instructions on how to submit a written question, and then we'll go ahead and begin with some answers. So like I stated earlier to submit a written question, you can go ahead and pull up the question and answer box on that Zoom toolbar at the bottom of your screen.

306

00:48:11.450 --> 00:48:32.370

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: The instructions are also on screen. And then you can go ahead and submit a question. I have noticed we're getting a couple of questions via the chat box. And we do prefer that you submit them through Q&A. It just helps us in the background track all the questions that we're getting and make sure that we are answering them in the order that we receive them.

307

00:48:33.060 --> 00:48:51.089

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And then, additionally, as this project is range wide and covers many states, if you can include as much context and information as possible in your question. That will help us develop the best answer for you, and we won't need any clarifications or anything like that. So



308

00:48:51.561 --> 00:49:00.239

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: with that, we'll start with the questions that were submitted during registration before moving on to the questions that we've been receiving so far during this webinar.

309

00:49:00.528 --> 00:49:08.979

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I do want to note, it takes us a minute or so to develop the answers to some of these questions. So we do appreciate your patience with us as we gather that information.

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00:49:09.490 --> 00:49:14.839

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I think we'll go ahead and get started with our pre-registered questions. So

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00:49:15.305 --> 00:49:18.070

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: we'll go to the next slide. Thank you.

312

00:49:18.930 --> 00:49:32.570

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our first question is, how would the BLM handle or sorry- How would they handle BLM lands surrounded by private land? How would restrictions be applied and managed? And I'll pass that over to you, Quincy.

313

00:49:33.450 --> 00:49:49.628

Quincy Bahr: So one of the aspects- BLM- this plan amendment looks at management to public lands. It does not address, it does not affect, I have to be cautious on affect, it does not apply to private lands, to state lands,

314

00:49:49.990 --> 00:49:57.790

Quincy Bahr: or even to the Forest Service lands. The BLM plans apply only to lands and minerals upon which the BLM has jurisdiction.

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00:49:58.420 --> 00:50:13.150

Quincy Bahr: We cannot manage those other lands. However, we do recognize- and this is why I hesitated a second ago- We do recognize that there can be an effect as public lands, especially in heavily mixed ownership areas. There can be effect of how public lands are managed,

316

00:50:13.310 --> 00:50:18.310

Quincy Bahr: can affect how adjacent private lands or non-paid BLM lands

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00:50:18.580 --> 00:50:27.759

Quincy Bahr: can also be developed or managed. And so we have tried, in our impact analysis to account for some of those effects

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00:50:27.820 --> 00:50:52.850

Quincy Bahr: and encourage you to read those sections and identify if we've if we missed some aspects. We recognize that if we close mineral estate in a mixed ownership area, it could create problems in relation to development on private lands. And so we've tried to capture that as far as reductions, not just in lost opportunities on public lands, but also adjacent lands. And so that's part of the impact analysis component. But in the end

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00:50:52.870 --> 00:50:59.810

Quincy Bahr: the management associated with these amendments only apply where BLM has jurisdiction.

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00:51:02.050 --> 00:51:03.050

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Thanks, Quincy.

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00:51:03.530 --> 00:51:13.140

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, how will the preferred alternative affect Greater Sage-Grouse population levels and habitat availability? And we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

322

00:51:14.510 --> 00:51:19.619

Patricia Deibert: Thanks, Alli. I'll try my camera again here, but we'll see what the internet does for me with my bandwidth.

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00:51:20.647 --> 00:51:23.092

Patricia Deibert: So thank you for the question.

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00:51:23.640 --> 00:51:38.470

Patricia Deibert: The BLM is going to be implementing strategies that slow or reduce decline of greater sage-grouse on BLM lands while still trying to meet multiple use mandate. The local flexibilities that we are providing through our preferred alternative does

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00:51:38.640 --> 00:51:45.669

Patricia Deibert: allow for that discussion and local coordination of conservation that makes sense at that local level.

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00:51:46.032 --> 00:52:07.650

Patricia Deibert: And while BLM is working very hard to conserve the habitat, the question also, population trends. Population trends reflect habitat, and that's what we're responsible for. So we are working very

hard to conserve that habitat and the lands that we administer. I do want to remind folks that as hard as we're working on that, we have management of 47% of the birds habitat and

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00:52:07.800 --> 00:52:12.889

Patricia Deibert: that we're doing everything we can on our multiple use mandate to make sure that conservation occurs.

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00:52:16.010 --> 00:52:16.870

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Thanks, Pat.

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00:52:17.568 --> 00:52:24.849

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, how will the BLM manage the overlap of solar projects on sage-grouse habitat?

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00:52:25.050 --> 00:52:26.759

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I'll just pass it back to you.

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00:52:27.630 --> 00:52:50.730

Patricia Deibert: Yeah. So, Section 2.5.8 outlines all of our land use allocations related to our energy development in sage-grouse habitat management areas which vary, depending on the type of habitat management area you are in. They do include pollution or avoidance and PHMA depending on the alternative or avoidance or open with minimization measures in GHMA.

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00:52:50.950 --> 00:52:58.060

Patricia Deibert: And just to let folks know, we've been working. Mostly we've been coordinating very closely internally with our Solar PEIS folks,

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00:52:58.070 --> 00:53:04.170

Patricia Deibert: so that we make sure we're not being inconsistent in the development of our Environmental Impact Statements.

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00:53:07.280 --> 00:53:11.389

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. And I'll have you answer our next question as well, which is.

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00:53:11.460 --> 00:53:17.569

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: What do the habitat management areas of New Mexico look like? Can you provide shape files for those areas?

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00:53:18.880 --> 00:53:38.100

Patricia Deibert: So the EIS planning effort is limited to the Greater Sage-Grouse range, excluding the California/Nevada bi-state populations and the Washington State population. Sage-grouse do not occur in New Mexico, and therefore we do not have any habitat management areas in that State, and no shapefiles.

337

00:53:40.950 --> 00:53:42.039

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat.

338

00:53:42.910 --> 00:53:50.240

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, are density caps incorporated under all alternatives? And we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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00:53:51.000 --> 00:53:54.610

Quincy Bahr: So, yes. Short answer, yes.

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00:53:54.965 --> 00:54:09.270

Quincy Bahr: I mentioned briefly that if there is not a set of management that is specific from 2015 or 2019, that we don't call out specifically in these alternatives, it would fall back to whatever is in the no action.

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00:54:09.590 --> 00:54:17.080

Quincy Bahr: And so in this instance, management not carried forward in our alternatives would be unchanged by this planning effort

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00:54:17.120 --> 00:54:19.220

Quincy Bahr: that includes the density cap.

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00:54:21.640 --> 00:54:27.569

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Right, and I'll pass this next question to you as well. Will there be an in-person meeting in California?

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00:54:28.610 --> 00:54:35.341

Quincy Bahr: So as we were looking at where to hold the public meetings, that this is a challenging question, as far as looking to how, where to put them.

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00:54:35.950 --> 00:54:53.050

Quincy Bahr: Between the 2 virtuals and 11 in-persons, we identified the locations throughout the range. We ended up as saying that consistent with our 2015 and 2019 planning efforts, California and Nevada are a planning subunit.

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00:54:53.380 --> 00:55:04.509

Quincy Bahr: And so we held one meeting in that subunit. Again, with some of those populations crossing those borders there. That was in Sparks that we held that one, just outside of Reno.

347

00:55:04.530 --> 00:55:20.295

Quincy Bahr: And we felt in that location best because of the relationship, as you look at that subunit, 20,000,000 acres in Nevada and about 2 million acres in California. It wasn't-

348

00:55:20.880 --> 00:55:36.169

Quincy Bahr: basically that that's where we felt in relation to that planning area that subunit. Nevada/California subunit was the best location in relation to being able to capture the kind of a central location for some of the users in that state, and the interests.

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00:55:38.370 --> 00:55:39.390

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Right, thanks

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00:55:40.010 --> 00:55:52.550

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question. And we've gotten a couple of questions along this theme. Has it been proven that OHV travel on existing routes impacts the sage-grouse? And we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

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00:55:53.660 --> 00:56:04.459

Patricia Deibert: So there are multiple studies which have concluded that noise and track, although not specifically OHVs, have impacts to sage-grouse, particularly nesting hens,

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00:56:04.500 --> 00:56:13.510

Patricia Deibert: Noise near the leks- lekking can't limit the ability of females to hear males of the lek, or even attract hens to the lek.

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00:56:13.660 --> 00:56:25.869

Patricia Deibert: It can also result in increased predation on adult birds, and then there can also be masking noise that can reduce the presence of predators to broods and therefore result increase predation on those birds.

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00:56:26.030 --> 00:56:28.120

Patricia Deibert: We also know that road traffic

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00:56:28.230 --> 00:56:43.880

Patricia Deibert: increases stress to nesting hens which can eventually result in nest abandonment. However, let me clarify that, and it depends on how close the hen is nesting to the road, and what the frequency traffic is on that road as to what the actual impact

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00:56:43.910 --> 00:56:52.039

Patricia Deibert: is. Traffic frequency is not very well studied at all on this, but there is some information suggesting that

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00:56:52.120 --> 00:56:59.760

Patricia Deibert: intermittent unpredictable frequency does have a negative impact on sage-grouse.

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00:57:00.720 --> 00:57:21.559

Patricia Deibert: We are not considering changes to OHV management and Greater Sage-Grouse habitat management areas. But we do want to remind folks that local restrictions will still be applicable for management of OHV use in sagebrush and other senses of species' habitat. Even though we're not proposing any changes in this particular effort.

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00:57:23.940 --> 00:57:25.537

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. Thanks, Pat.

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00:57:26.580 --> 00:57:33.130

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, are you allowing grazing on land you propose to shut off from public access?

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00:57:33.140 --> 00:57:35.360

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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00:57:38.770 --> 00:57:41.780

Quincy Bahr: Sorry, I should stay closer to my buttons.

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00:57:42.310 --> 00:57:50.980

Quincy Bahr: So none of the alternatives that we're considering, consider or propose a removal of public access.

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00:57:53.440 --> 00:58:03.348

Quincy Bahr: We are considering amendments to management actions for a variety of different uses described, those different management actions are described in Chapter 1, Section 1.3.

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00:58:03.800 --> 00:58:09.249

Quincy Bahr: That's where the purpose and need is, as we talk about the specific actions that we're focusing on.

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00:58:09.330 --> 00:58:24.499

Quincy Bahr: We have alternatives to those actions that's there in Section 2.5. And so that does include a range of alternatives in relation to livestock grazing. That is included there in Section 2.5.10.

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00:58:28.780 --> 00:58:30.040

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Quincy.

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00:58:31.300 --> 00:58:42.900

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Next question is, how can I plan and prepare accordingly for how proposed alternatives may impact mineral exploration projects, and we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

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00:58:43.610 --> 00:58:44.840

Patricia Deibert: Thanks, Alli.

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00:58:44.890 --> 00:58:51.690

Patricia Deibert: So for existing permits and authorizations there's little, if any, effect at all. We are going to honor

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00:58:51.720 --> 00:58:57.629

Patricia Deibert: the legal protections associated with those existing leases and valid existing rights.

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00:58:58.110 --> 00:59:14.478

Patricia Deibert: For new projects, the alternatives include a range of potential actions from including new leasing under Alternative 3 to applying protections for sage-grouse, while providing for consideration of site specific data.

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00:59:15.060 --> 00:59:20.820

Patricia Deibert: So that we can locate project areas that we have little or no impact to Greater Sage-Grouse in

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00:59:20.870 --> 00:59:22.870

Patricia Deibert: our other alternatives.

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00:59:23.350 --> 00:59:35.350

Patricia Deibert: There will be impacts on exploration activities that are going to be varied, depending on the alternative selected. Again, it's going to go from no impact to possible impacts on that.

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00:59:35.863 --> 00:59:42.759

Patricia Deibert: If you'd like, you could take a look through the alternatives and described impacts for these kinds of activities.

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00:59:42.850 --> 01:00:04.400

Patricia Deibert: And hopefully, you can make sure that the effects are presented and dissipate what's going to happen in the different alternatives. We would appreciate receiving any feedback as well for what those alternatives can do to ensure that we both consider sage-grouse and allow for some additional mineral exploration, particularly for critical minerals.

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01:00:06.260 --> 01:00:14.620

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat, and just a note for you- your audio is a little bit choppy, so it may be better if you keep camera off, unfortunately.

379

01:00:14.620 --> 01:00:17.069

Patricia Deibert: I will turn it off. Thank you.

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01:00:18.270 --> 01:00:26.230

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. We'll move on to our next question, which is, is this project mission critical? And we'll hear from Quincy for that.

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01:00:31.150 --> 01:00:34.131

Quincy Bahr: You will, you will, I promise, if I can

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01:00:34.690 --> 01:00:37.869

Quincy Bahr: click the right buttons. Okay, So

383

01:00:40.582 --> 01:00:47.440

Quincy Bahr: we're following our mission. So what we're looking at in relation to mission critical.

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01:00:47.660 --> 01:00:55.209

Quincy Bahr: This plan amendment directly does relate to the BLM's congressionally mandated multiple use and sustained yield mission.

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01:00:55.450 --> 01:01:04.050

Quincy Bahr: As well as our responsibilities under the FLPMA, to manage public lands in a manner that will provide for food and habitat for wildlife.



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01:01:04.300 --> 01:01:11.460

Quincy Bahr: While also recognizing the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, and fiber from those public lands.

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01:01:11.750 --> 01:01:20.960

Quincy Bahr: So in the context of, does this relate to our mission it? This absolutely does relate to the BLM's mission of multiple use and sustained yield.

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01:01:23.670 --> 01:01:26.730

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great we'll go ahead and move on to

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01:01:26.870 --> 01:01:29.610

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: our next question, which is.

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01:01:29.650 --> 01:01:37.719

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: How will this impact notices or other 3809 or locatable minerals projects? And I'll pass that back to you Quincy.

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01:01:37.720 --> 01:01:38.229

Quincy Bahr: Yep.

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01:01:39.080 --> 01:01:47.319

Quincy Bahr: So the Mining Law of 1872, as well as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, they outline a very specific process

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01:01:47.350 --> 01:01:51.800

Quincy Bahr: in relation to closing public lands to locatable mineral entry.

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01:01:52.295 --> 01:02:04.420

Quincy Bahr: The BLM land use planning process, as I mentioned a bit ago, it allows the BLM to recommend an area for withdrawal, but that has no legal effect, as far as effect on the ground of conservation or limiting use.

395

01:02:04.500 --> 01:02:14.139

Quincy Bahr: To enact such a withdrawal, enacting a withdrawal would close an area to future mining claims.

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01:02:14.330 --> 01:02:20.619

Quincy Bahr: But to do that you would have to follow the process outlined in the Mining Law of 1872. This is where it goes into the Secretary's authorities.

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01:02:21.050 --> 01:02:27.330

Quincy Bahr: As such, for existing notices and existing claims, there will be little direct effect

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01:02:27.440 --> 01:02:36.819

Quincy Bahr: from this RMP Amendment other than that our staff will continue working with claimants and operators to apply those measures that minimize impacts to grouse.

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01:02:37.150 --> 01:02:39.879

Quincy Bahr: We cannot require those,

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01:02:40.180 --> 01:02:51.949

Quincy Bahr: given the limitations related to the mining law. However, we can work with our claimants and operators to apply them to the extent possible that we can come to those agreements.

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01:02:52.400 --> 01:03:01.060

Quincy Bahr: The 2015 plans, they include some language regarding these limitations. Those are specifically mentioned in relation to valid existing rights

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01:03:01.290 --> 01:03:04.309

Quincy Bahr: that we will honor,

403

01:03:04.789 --> 01:03:09.460

Quincy Bahr: as well as how we will work with claimants and operators.

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01:03:09.810 --> 01:03:14.800

Quincy Bahr: In the end, though we can't require or deny in most instances.

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01:03:15.340 --> 01:03:26.060

Quincy Bahr: This is the case for most new notices and claims under this Draft EIS and the various alternatives here. I will say, with one exception.

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01:03:27.290 --> 01:03:31.690

Quincy Bahr: So if we select an alternative that includes ACECs.

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01:03:32.357 --> 01:03:34.149

Quincy Bahr: If the ACEC

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01:03:34.290 --> 01:03:43.079

Quincy Bahr: were selected in the final decision, that would require a plan of operation for all notice level activity.

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01:03:43.210 --> 01:03:55.539

Quincy Bahr: And we're getting to some of the terminology issues here. So that's basically, anything greater than casual use would require a plan of operation inside an ACEC, with inside to that that designated ACEC.

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01:03:55.950 --> 01:03:57.821

Quincy Bahr: This is tied to

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01:03:58.520 --> 01:04:05.190

Quincy Bahr: Federal regulation, not the plan itself. Other than that the plan designates the ACEC.

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01:04:06.150 --> 01:04:09.877

Quincy Bahr: Given all this I do want to make sure I clarify.

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01:04:10.320 --> 01:04:25.280

Quincy Bahr: On public lands, there are multiple authorizations for some various uses. And so in relation to locatable mining development, there are BLM RMP decisions where it has those limitations that I've outlined.

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01:04:25.290 --> 01:04:31.109

Quincy Bahr: However, we don't identify or include, other than in the in the cumulative impact section,

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01:04:31.270 --> 01:04:33.769

Quincy Bahr: the authorities that a state government

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01:04:33.790 --> 01:04:57.049

Quincy Bahr: may require, in relation to certain conservation measures, such as a disturbance cap, or mitigation requirements. And I am aware that several states do have requirements related to their permitting authorities, that is allowable under the mining law. So I just wanted to make sure there was an awareness between the differences between Federal and state authorities and jurisdictions.

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01:04:59.970 --> 01:05:11.410

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright thanks, Quincy for that answer. We'll move on to our next question, which is, what are BLM's future plans on preservation and protection of sage-grouse habitat?

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01:05:11.460 --> 01:05:13.779

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

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01:05:15.370 → 01:05:38.410

Patricia Deibert: So our immediate plans are to try to finish this planning effort. Make a final planning decision that will promote the conservation while meeting our multiple use mandate. But we're also working very closely with our state agency partners. Very close coordination because they actually have the management authority for Greater Sage-Grouse. We manage the habitat.

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01:05:39.016 --> 01:05:58.289

Patricia Deibert: So we're going to continue to monitor population habitat management trends to see if our actions are being effective, that we implement from this effort, and we have an adaptive management strategy as part of this planning effort that allows us to change things should we find that our habitat management is not being effective.

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01:05:58.955 --> 01:06:26.009

Patricia Deibert: Additionally, we, through a not a planning effort, but through everyday activities of BLM, we put a lot of conservation actions, a lot of conservation money on the ground to do habitat restoration for Greater Sage-Grouse. And we're coordinating across multiple Federal agencies and wildlife agencies and some private entities to make sure that we're putting that money in the right place. To make sure we do the long-term conservation for the species.

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01:06:28.460 --> 01:06:29.400

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Thanks, Pat.

423

01:06:29.770 --> 01:06:39.869

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question, which I'll give back to you as well is, there are sage-grouse in the proposed area. What is being done to mitigate the habitat loss?

424

01:06:41.330 --> 01:06:48.370

Patricia Deibert: So we're not quite sure what the questioner was referencing relative to the proposed area.

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01:06:48.937 --> 01:06:57.029

Patricia Deibert: So first, we'd like to emphasize. You know that if you have concerns that there have been changes in the habitat management area boundaries

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01:06:58.480 --> 01:07:20.120

Patricia Deibert: that you don't think are appropriate. We would really like to get your input back on that, along with the justification as to why those changes were not appropriate. We did work very closely with the state wildlife management agents making those adjustments. So any additional data that you can provide us that we may have missed would be very, very helpful moving forward.

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01:07:20.857 --> 01:07:40.032

Patricia Deibert: Otherwise, if there are sage-grouse present and development is occurring, we are going to implement our mitigation hierarchy, where we do try to avoid impacts. First and foremost, that is our primary goal. If that is not possible, then we go to minimization of that

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01:07:40.440 --> 01:07:56.140

Patricia Deibert: or of those impacts again to try to reduce any potential impact on Greater Sage-Grouse. And then, lastly, we would go to compensatory mitigation for any residual impacts that we can't minimize or avoid.

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01:07:57.200 --> 01:08:02.880

Patricia Deibert: We're going to apply this strategy to all the projects where BLM has the authority to do so.

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01:08:03.622 --> 01:08:16.720

Patricia Deibert: But we're really going to focus on this hierarchy. And of course, that that varies across the alternatives as to how that hierarchy is applied relative to habitat management areas.

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01:08:17.850 --> 01:08:27.759

Patricia Deibert: But, please, if you have concerns about a change in a habitat management area. We'd love to get your information and any additional data you may have through the comment process.

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01:08:30.729 --> 01:08:49.899

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, and our next question, and this will be our last pre-register question before we begin answering the questions we've received in this webinar. This last question is, do wind farms have a greater impact on grass populations than hunting? and I'll pass that one back to you as well, Pat.

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01:08:50.189 --> 01:09:04.379

Patricia Deibert: You bet. So there's almost there's incredibly small or very little published research on the effects of wind energy development on Greater Sage-Grouse and reports of any collisions with the actual

434

01:09:04.379 --> 01:09:23.869

Patricia Deibert: turbine blades. Excuse me, are anecdotal, and they're incredibly rare. And sometimes it's just assumed, if they find a dead bird under a turbine, that it died because it collided with the turbine. And then we can't actually validate that information. So it's really hard for us to compare

435

01:09:24.358 --> 01:09:29.289

Patricia Deibert: wind energy development and impacts on greater stage-grouse numbers to hunting.

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01:09:29.409 --> 01:09:41.419

Patricia Deibert: And again, want to remind folks that the state wildlife agencies actually have management authority for the birds. They're the ones responsible for setting hunting regulations and the amount of take.

437

01:09:42.749 --> 01:09:58.129

Patricia Deibert: They consider all kinds of information and establishing those hunting regulations, and, in fact, in some areas hunting has been closed, due to lower declining population numbers or loss of habitat, such as wildfire.

438

01:09:58.629 --> 01:10:20.209

Patricia Deibert: So it's really tough to compare these two items that our questioner has asked us about. And really encourage you if you have concerns with hunting to talk to your state wildlife management agency, or if you have any data relative to the impact of wind farms and Greater Sage-Grouse that we're unaware of, please share that with us.

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01:10:23.000 --> 01:10:24.580

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Pat.

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01:10:25.350 --> 01:10:41.170

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: So now I'll go ahead and move into the questions we've been receiving live during this webinar and begin answering those. It looks like we have about 50 min or so left in our meeting time this evening. So confident we can get through these questions.

441

01:10:42.060 → 01:10:54.430

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our first one is, across the vast majority of BLM sage grouse habitat, livestock grazign and the cheat grass invasion it causes are the only departure from natural conditions.

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01:10:54.440 --> 01:10:58.930

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Sage-grouse populations are declining in these areas as in others.

443

01:10:59.130 --> 01:11:08.210

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: If habitat objectives are eliminated as under the preferred alternative, how will the ARMPA address problems with livestock grazing?

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01:11:08.260 --> 01:11:10.709

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I'll pass that back to you as well, Pat.

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01:11:10.940 --> 01:11:20.880

Patricia Deibert: So we're not eliminating habitat objectives under the preferred alternative, and I apologize that that is what I said. That was not at all the intent.

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01:11:21.530 --> 01:11:32.200

Patricia Deibert: Our habitat objectives are still part of Alternative 5. And we're working on strengthening them and making them more consistent from our previous planning efforts.

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01:11:32.650 --> 01:11:45.639

Patricia Deibert: We also now have multi-scale habitat objectives related to sage-grouse use across the landscape. Which we will be implementing more fully or will implement more fully in the proposed alternative.

448

01:11:45.970 --> 01:11:53.040

Patricia Deibert: For this assessment framework site scale. We're looking at a suite of indicators and benchmarks which are in Appendix 8,

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01:11:53.080 --> 01:11:59.919

Patricia Deibert: and those are tailored to the ecology of each state. And I encourage you to visit the appendix for additional information.

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01:12:00.772 --> 01:12:16.780

Patricia Deibert: The Draft EIS also references existing grazing policy. Where we know that there is a response to grazing that is affecting, that there's a causal factor in not achieving our land health standards in that area.

451

01:12:20.370 --> 01:12:21.679

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Pat.

452

01:12:22.300 --> 01:12:29.840

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: The next question is, will a recording of this be available afterwards? And we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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01:12:31.470 --> 01:13:00.590

Quincy Bahr: And we do have a couple of other questions about that further down asking about the recording and transcript for the first one. So the answer is, yes. Similar to the scoping meetings that we held. You can go and watch Pat and I discuss that as well, and you can read the transcript. In prepping these for posting on the public websites, we do need to make sure we're complying with the various policies and laws. Specifically ADA, and making sure that these are

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01:13:00.905 → 01:13:10.049

Quincy Bahr: compliant for those who may have various impairments. And so that takes a little bit of time. I actually just received a version of the first meeting.

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01:13:10.340 --> 01:13:15.510

Quincy Bahr: And so now that that as we receive those versions that

456

01:13:15.907 --> 01:13:18.480

Quincy Bahr: meet those requirements. We will post those

457

01:13:19.052 --> 01:13:35.477

Quincy Bahr: as soon as we can. Like I said, I just received the one from meeting one a little bit earlier today. So we'll be posting those over the next- tomorrow. I'll post meeting one tomorrow and then as we finish

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01:13:36.290 --> 01:13:44.500

Quincy Bahr: cleaning up, making sure that that we fix all of my stammering in the transcript, and then make sure that it meets our ADA requirements.

459

01:13:44.660 --> 01:13:46.350

Quincy Bahr: We will post that as well.

460

01:13:48.700 --> 01:13:50.089

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright! Thanks, Quincy.

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01:13:50.880 --> 01:13:56.470

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, is there anything being done to stop development in sage-grouse habitat?

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01:13:56.660 --> 01:13:58.850

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I'll pass this one over to Pat.

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01:14:00.390 --> 01:14:07.959

Patricia Deibert: So our current range of alternatives do build on our efforts from our previous amendments, 2015 and 2019.

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01:14:08.410 --> 01:14:21.040

Patricia Deibert: And we are considering a variety of approaches to address the threats to sage-grouse in their habitat associated with development. Trying to make those threats from that development

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01:14:21.100 --> 01:14:26.610

Patricia Deibert: to be a level such that we are minimizing or eliminating impact to Greater Sage-Grouse.

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01:14:27.240 --> 01:14:42.630

Patricia Deibert: The Bureau of Land Management is a multi-use management agency, and we are directed by our organic law of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to allow for multiple types of uses on public lands. So eliminating development completely is probably not feasible.

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01:14:42.740 --> 01:15:05.640

Patricia Deibert: However, we are applying different tools to make sure we're trying to reduce or eliminate the impact to Greater Sage-Grouse. For example, a disturbance cap that limits activities in priority habitat management areas. And working very closely with our state wildlife management agencies on their implementation of their Greater Sage-Grouse management plans.

468

01:15:05.640 --> 01:15:21.629

Patricia Deibert: We're trying to manage development as much as we can to minimize impacts on sage-grouse, work with our state agencies to enhance management of Greater Sage-Grouse on BLM and other lands, and still comply with our multiple use mandate.

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01:15:24.290 --> 01:15:25.670

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Pat.

470

01:15:26.690 --> 01:15:41.189

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question. And this question came in during the presentation. So I think it refers back to some earlier slides we were talking about. But the question is, what partners? What are their names? And I'll pass that one back to you as well, Pat.

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01:15:41.610 --> 01:15:46.120

Patricia Deibert: You bet, and I apologize again for not clarifying that during the presentation.

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01:15:46.587 --> 01:15:59.089

Patricia Deibert: We have worked very, very closely with cooperating agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act. We've worked very closely with our state wildlife management agencies, because again, they have authority for managing the bird.

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01:15:59.577 --> 01:16:09.870

Patricia Deibert: We've also worked with the Western Governors Task Force and other state agencies which qualifies cooperating agencies under NEPA.

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01:16:10.270 → 01:16:23.949

Patricia Deibert: I'd like to direct the person who asked this question to Chapter 5.1. It provides a really comprehensive list of our cooperating and partner agencies with the special expertise and jurisdiction.

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01:16:24.536 --> 01:16:27.380

Patricia Deibert: Which we're required to include by law.

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01:16:27.460 --> 01:16:36.250

Patricia Deibert: So I would definitely encourage the reader to go there to get a detailed list for those individuals and those groups that we worked with.

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01:16:38.680 --> 01:16:39.799

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat.

478

01:16:40.910 --> 01:16:52.640

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: We'll move on to our next question, which is, are you able to address how this effort interacts with the almost final BLM public lands role? And we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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01:16:53.970 --> 01:16:55.480

Quincy Bahr: Yeah, so

480

01:16:55.750 --> 01:16:58.912  
Quincy Bahr: as simply as possible.

481  
01:17:00.030 --> 01:17:05.590  
Quincy Bahr: this plan was developed under the rules and policies in place at the time.

482  
01:17:06.030 --> 01:17:07.543  
Quincy Bahr: And so,

483  
01:17:08.550 --> 01:17:10.099  
Quincy Bahr: we did not.

484  
01:17:10.730 --> 01:17:27.628  
Quincy Bahr: That was a draft rule, and so we haven't been complying because it wasn't in place yet. That said, as we do move forward. There are concepts or measures in the public lands rule that could be complementary to the range of alternatives in the Draft EIS. They could be some of the tools.

485  
01:17:28.465 --> 01:17:39.629  
Quincy Bahr: And when that rule becomes final, that's when we'll consider how it applies in guiding our decisions going forward until it is.

486  
01:17:39.830 --> 01:17:42.620  
Quincy Bahr: We follow the policies and regulations in place

487  
01:17:43.072 --> 01:17:44.639  
Quincy Bahr: at this time. So

488  
01:17:44.890 --> 01:17:56.600  
Quincy Bahr: when it comes to mitigation and that concept of net gain, we have tried to leave, we've tried in this effort to set the standard.

489  
01:17:57.258 --> 01:18:05.581  
Quincy Bahr: Establish that, but not establish the rules or approach specific approaches that would be necessary to accomplish that standard.

490  
01:18:06.270 --> 01:18:13.759  
Quincy Bahr: We've left that and recognize that there's a lot of different potential approaches that could be applied to meet that standard. And

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01:18:13.820 --> 01:18:25.059

Quincy Bahr: yeah, those vary. Right now they vary, state to state with different strategies. And so whether the public lands rule could be complementary into that we'd have to determine it as that becomes final.

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01:18:27.730 --> 01:18:31.889

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Thanks, Quincy. Our next question, which I'll hand back over to you is.

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01:18:32.000 --> 01:18:37.799

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: can you give a more elaborate list than just alternative 1, 2, 3, etc.?

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01:18:38.810 --> 01:18:56.370

Quincy Bahr: So this is us trying to decide what to include in a presentation to the public. It's always a challenge, as far as how detailed do we get? I could, and peers can attest to this, I struggle in being more succinct and concise. I could go on and on.

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01:18:57.240 --> 01:19:06.299

Quincy Bahr: We do want folks to make sure that they're commenting, not necessarily on whether it be a public meeting board or what we're saying here. We want,

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01:19:06.370 --> 01:19:09.859

Quincy Bahr: on under our rules, we have to document

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01:19:09.870 --> 01:19:19.539

Quincy Bahr: what leads to our decision. And so that's where I would direct you to Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS. Specifically, there's a summary

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01:19:19.800 --> 01:19:41.799

Quincy Bahr: in Chapter 2, in Section 2.2, right at the front of Chapter 2. The first couple of pages that does go through a high-level summary comparison between the alternatives that's also in the executive summary. And then, as you're wanting to know the differences between the alternatives by issue or by concept, by management action.

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01:19:42.380 --> 01:19:48.389

Quincy Bahr: Section 2.5 is separated into each of those range-wide considerations

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01:19:48.400 --> 01:19:50.219

Quincy Bahr: that are

501

01:19:50.330 --> 01:19:54.259

Quincy Bahr: being considered. And so we have the alternatives for each of those

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01:19:54.500 --> 01:20:02.480

Quincy Bahr: grazing disturbance, cap, etc. So there is more detail, both in the summaries there in the

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01:20:02.500 --> 01:20:18.570

Quincy Bahr: section in Chapter 2, as well as the executive summary, and then all the detail you'd want into the body itself of the Draft EIS. But in the end that's what we need to use to be able to document and support our decision. So that's what we want the public to be able to dive into and comment on.

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01:20:18.810 --> 01:20:31.319

Quincy Bahr: And then, as ever, if you have some questions, you're welcome to reach out to us if you're looking for specific information or content in the Draft EIS.

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01:20:33.940 --> 01:20:35.529

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright thanks, Quincy.

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01:20:36.120 --> 01:20:48.400

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, and this kind of goes into the earlier question about it being submitted during the presentation. So the context of it is kind of where we were in the presentation. So,

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01:20:49.910 --> 01:20:58.160

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: from 2015, I thought, we have new sciences. So why are we going off of the 2015 plan? And we'll pass that over to Pat.

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01:20:58.640 --> 01:21:10.259

Patricia Deibert: Thanks, Alli. So the new science that we have been tracking and gathering over the last few years builds on our accumulated knowledge of Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse health habitat management.

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01:21:10.470 --> 01:21:19.970

Patricia Deibert: We're using the best available information. Which includes not only the new science, but also a lot of experiences, lessons learned out there on the ground.

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01:21:20.620 --> 01:21:44.019

Patricia Deibert: For the topics that we did not bring forward, that we identified in this presentation, we identified what we did bring forward. There were a lot of things we did not bring forward. And that's simply because the new science does not support changing those management actions from 2015. It does not support that any of those changes would make our management more effective for conservation of sage-grouse.

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01:21:44.590 --> 01:21:53.909

Patricia Deibert: If you'd like to take a look in depth of what the new sciences that we did consider. I would encourage you to check out Chapter 1 and Section 1.2.3

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01:21:53.970 --> 01:21:57.919

Patricia Deibert: for the list of the new science we did consider and incorporate.

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01:22:00.070 --> 01:22:01.130

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat.

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01:22:01.770 --> 01:22:22.080

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, can you please speak to the differences in HMA between Alternatives 4 and 5/6? Specifically, was PHMA more extensive in Alternative 4 on a state by state basis, especially in Wyoming, where BLM's analysis indicates that there should be more PHMA?

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01:22:22.460 --> 01:22:24.720

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: and we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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01:22:25.400 --> 01:22:38.919

Quincy Bahr: So for this one I would direct folks to Appendix 3. Appendix 3, if you look at any of the maps, you should note fairly quickly how in different states

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01:22:39.230 --> 01:22:41.910

Quincy Bahr: how the HMAs look is different.

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01:22:42.040 --> 01:22:49.589

Quincy Bahr: Some include far larger polygons, far more inclusive. Some are far more detailed.

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01:22:50.168 --> 01:22:52.810

Quincy Bahr: This is a direct indication

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01:22:52.890 --> 01:23:01.579

Quincy Bahr: of how we work with our state partners in coming up with those boundaries initially, and how we've looked to adjust. Based on the new science in this effort.

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01:23:01.630 --> 01:23:15.430

Quincy Bahr: So Appendix 3 lays out the different strategy that each state took initially in coming up with the HMAs, and then also how we varied consideration in the different alternatives.

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01:23:15.650 --> 01:23:26.209

Quincy Bahr: As I mentioned earlier, Alternatives 4 and 5 are fairly similar in a lot of aspects in trying to find that that concept of trying to find that balance between conservation and use.

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01:23:26.250 --> 01:23:29.183

Quincy Bahr: Alternative 5 was generally more

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01:23:30.493 --> 01:23:36.899

Quincy Bahr: flexibility in identifying the opportunities given site specific information.

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01:23:37.260 --> 01:23:56.420

Quincy Bahr: and one of the other aspects in relation to Alternative 5 is if we had a state agency provide us with a layer of the state's mapped HMAs. Those were considered under Alternative 5. And so we're looking at a difference in

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01:23:56.831 --> 01:24:08.869

Quincy Bahr: interpretation of how- not in not interpretation- A difference on how that new science, as far as balancing those uses were applied? As far as looking at how

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01:24:09.360 --> 01:24:13.349

Quincy Bahr: conservation prioritization may look on the landscape.

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01:24:13.650 --> 01:24:16.809

Quincy Bahr: That's the biggest issue there is

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01:24:16.830 --> 01:24:39.110

Quincy Bahr: similar science guiding it. But again, with this concept of prioritization, it can be prioritized at different levels of sensitivity. And so we had two alternatives there to be able to make sure we can consider how it may look, being a little more inclusive, or being a little less inclusive as far as where those prioritizations are most needed, looking in the long term.

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01:24:41.960 --> 01:24:43.000

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Thanks, Quincy.

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01:24:43.620 --> 01:24:53.510

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question, and I'll throw this one back to you as well Quincy, is this about sage-grouse, or about changing borders and rules regarding what can be done on the land?

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01:24:53.870 --> 01:24:54.790

Quincy Bahr: So there's

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01:24:54.940 --> 01:25:06.529

Quincy Bahr: hopefully not a distinction when it comes to a land management agency like the BLM. We don't manage the grouse itself. The populations are managed by the states. And so for us,

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01:25:06.570 --> 01:25:08.819

Quincy Bahr: we're looking at what habitat

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01:25:08.920 --> 01:25:13.970

Quincy Bahr: management needs to be conducted to support the state's populations of grouse.

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01:25:15.930 --> 01:25:30.339

Quincy Bahr: If you look at page 1-5, this is in Section 1.3, there is a section that talks about the purpose and need, and how we work with the states, and how we're looking at the different aspects in relation to those habitat uses

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01:25:30.670 --> 01:25:33.819

Quincy Bahr: and those activities that the BLM considers.

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01:25:33.950 --> 01:25:39.510

Quincy Bahr: How those need to be addressed in order to find that conservation use balance.

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01:25:43.310 --> 01:25:57.310

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. And our next question, which will also go back to you, is, can you explain the difference in the comment period for the ACECs versus the overall EIS that seems to add confusion to the public review of an already complicated process?

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01:25:57.310 --> 01:26:10.949

Quincy Bahr: And I apologize for the confusion. So in in the BLM's planning regulations there is a section that requires the BLM to offer a 60-day comment period for ACECs.

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01:26:11.660 --> 01:26:19.209

Quincy Bahr: We identified that in the Notice of Availability, and we asked per the regulations for comments in those 60 days.

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01:26:19.360 --> 01:26:22.639

Quincy Bahr: But we also have in the BLM planning regulations

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01:26:22.990 --> 01:26:28.969

Quincy Bahr: requirement to provide 90 days for comment periods for Draft EIS.

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01:26:29.820 --> 01:26:34.719

Quincy Bahr: We're required by NEPA to respond to all substantive comments.

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01:26:35.160 --> 01:26:44.460

Quincy Bahr: And so simply put, If you provide me a substantive comment related to ACECs on day 89, I will consider it.

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01:26:44.590 --> 01:27:02.799

Quincy Bahr: Again, I apologize for the confusion that that breathes out of our regulatory language, that we included both those regulation time periods. In the end, we need to consider substantive comments provided on the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS includes ACECs, and we have a 90-day comment period.

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01:27:05.160 --> 01:27:08.989

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great alright, and this next question for you as well is.

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01:27:09.150 --> 01:27:12.939

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Is Appendix 8 now the old table 2.2?

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01:27:12.940 --> 01:27:17.336

Quincy Bahr: Yes, and I love that those 2015 references come back.

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01:27:18.043 --> 01:27:34.149

Quincy Bahr: We work hard as an agency across the range in 2015 to make sure that Table 2-2 was the same thing in each state effort. And that was

where we had the very specific tables related to the indicators, sagebrush, height, sagebrush, density, grass, height, etc.

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01:27:34.480 --> 01:27:40.790

Quincy Bahr: And then we had language around those tables that kind of put it into context of how those tables should be used.

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01:27:41.170 --> 01:27:48.719

Quincy Bahr: In this effort, as I mentioned earlier, our objective is to manage for suitable habitat at multiple scales.

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01:27:49.170 --> 01:28:00.009

Quincy Bahr: At the site scale, that's where that information related to sagebrush hiding, sagebrush, density, etc. That becomes helpful in defining what suitable habitat looks like.

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01:28:00.180 --> 01:28:04.920

Quincy Bahr: So if you do go to Appendix 8, you will see, and it is a really long appendix,

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01:28:05.940 --> 01:28:10.300

Quincy Bahr: But if you are concerned with one state, if you're concerned with Wyoming.

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01:28:10.760 --> 01:28:19.449

Quincy Bahr: Skip all the tables for everyone else and go down to the Wyoming. In our state specific RODs, we won't include Colorado's table in Wyoming, we'll include Wyoming's table.

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01:28:19.600 --> 01:28:27.380

Quincy Bahr: So Appendix 8, lays out a lot of those caveats on how these tables should be used in informing

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01:28:27.570 --> 01:28:30.729

Quincy Bahr: the habitat assessment framework evaluation.

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01:28:31.120 --> 01:28:40.513

Quincy Bahr: How that is helpful to inform other land use evaluations, whether it be land, health standards, or sage-grouse habitat objectives.

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01:28:40.960 --> 01:28:45.679

Quincy Bahr: That lays out how these numbers should be used,

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01:28:45.790 --> 01:29:07.019

Quincy Bahr: and in time should be used with caution. And how this should be updated in time, that as we get more science related to a local area. We should be updating and saying, based on this study, this is what sage grass are looking for in this area. We should update these through plan maintenance in relation to what reflects suitable science in this area.

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01:29:07.330 --> 01:29:17.059

Quincy Bahr: So yeah, in general, Appendix 8 is where a lot of those Table 2-2 is. If you're looking for that table, it's in Appendix 8.

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01:29:17.451 --> 01:29:32.259

Quincy Bahr: And then we've made adjustments to those tables based on science that's come out since then. And so you'll see that kind of information, that level of detail that informs that site scale suitability, determination is in Appendix 8.

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01:29:34.440 --> 01:29:36.040

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, Thanks, Quincy.

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01:29:36.410 --> 01:29:44.010

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, has any consideration been given to furthering the distance of disturbance from known leks?

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01:29:44.030 --> 01:29:46.070

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

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01:29:46.750 --> 01:29:57.380

Patricia Deibert: Thanks, Alli, we are not considering, or we don't identify specific buffers for each state in this amendment across the range of the species.

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01:29:57.570 --> 01:30:11.648

Patricia Deibert: Lek buffers are really hard to pin down. A one size fits all may not be appropriate, depending on where you are. So across our range of alternatives we have and in our lek buffer appendix,

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01:30:12.250 --> 01:30:23.559

Patricia Deibert: we have a lot of information on how to address the lek buffer question depending on your local implementation scale, your project level scale.

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01:30:24.990 --> 01:30:46.500

Patricia Deibert: Range by requirements are tough, because it is not one site. There's a lot of different things that affect the efficacy of your

lek buffer. So I understand the individuals asking if we're going to increase the distance of lek buffers. A lot of that is going to be dependent on your site specific development,

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01:30:46.880 --> 01:30:51.429

Patricia Deibert: and how that will affect the conservation of the birds.

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01:30:53.580 --> 01:30:57.789

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat. And we'll have this next question for you as well.

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01:30:57.880 --> 01:31:10.580

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Which is, the BLM has acknowledged here that 37% decline in the sage-grouse populations, and also acknowledges the general long-term decline that is occurring.

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01:31:10.640 --> 01:31:25.130

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: However, I did not see in this presentation any analysis or list of reasons why the 2015 or 2019 plans have failed to stop this decline. What, specifically were these impacts that the previous plans failed to address?

575

01:31:27.370 --> 01:31:49.779

Patricia Deibert: So thank you for the question. I would like to remind the questioner, we've never really had the opportunity to fully implement our previous plans without having them gone into litigation and having to make changes as we're starting to get the implementation on the ground. That's really challenging when you're dealing with an ecosystem like sagebrush, that does not respond quickly to management actions.

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01:31:50.010 --> 01:31:51.580

Patricia Deibert: That being said,

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01:31:51.770 --> 01:32:21.159

Patricia Deibert: the challenge for sage-grouse habitat management, there's no silver bullet. There is no one item that we can identify that's going to fix habitat across the range. Nor that, we can say is the issue addressing that population declines. We do have the loss of habitat and the degradation of habitat and decline of habitat quality. And so we're trying to address this through our management actions for the activity that occur on public lands.

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01:32:21.590 --> 01:32:26.399

Patricia Deibert: So we're implementing our strategies to sort of reduce the decline of sage-grouse on

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01:32:26.770 --> 01:32:43.969

Patricia Deibert: BLM lands. I want to remind folks again, that we also only have the management authority for 47% of the greater sage-grouse habitat. And while we can implement lots of good things, that is not necessarily mean that all managed lands are also implementing the same kinds of activities.

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01:32:44.130 --> 01:32:44.850

Patricia Deibert: So.

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01:32:50.670 --> 01:32:52.890

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Did we lose your audio there, Pat?

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01:32:52.950 --> 01:32:54.309

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I think we might have.

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01:32:54.930 --> 01:32:56.959

Quincy Bahr: I think we may have lost Pat there.

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01:32:56.960 --> 01:32:59.949

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I think we might have lost her.

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01:33:00.290 --> 01:33:00.970

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: It.

586

01:33:00.970 --> 01:33:02.350

Quincy Bahr: There, she's back

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01:33:03.120 --> 01:33:04.520

Quincy Bahr: now you're back.

588

01:33:05.140 --> 01:33:27.319

Patricia Deibert: My apologies. I don't know where I left off. But let me just say that we're going to work really hard with our state fish and game partners to monitor the species. And we have that adaptive management strategy, so that if we are finding that somehow our management is not helping and reducing this population to clients, we can change management moving forward.

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01:33:28.880 --> 01:33:34.449

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat, and I have this next question teed up for you as well.

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01:33:34.520 --> 01:33:37.240

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Which is, can you discuss why

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01:33:37.370 --> 01:33:48.639

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: the standard changed from net gain to no net loss? And can you please give examples of where mitigation has been successful? Meaning where you have data show birds have responded?

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01:33:50.540 --> 01:34:01.159

Patricia Deibert: So both net gain and no, excuse me, no net loss are within our range of alternatives. So both are still on the table moving forward.

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01:34:01.578 --> 01:34:13.009

Patricia Deibert: And as we put it out in some states, they actually have now legal requirements for mitigation standards that exceed one or of those standards.

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01:34:13.170 --> 01:34:17.189

Patricia Deibert: And we have agreed to stop those in the states where this will happen.

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01:34:19.240 --> 01:34:33.389

Patricia Deibert: Restoration efforts that include conifer encroachment or improving mesic areas, etc., have been successful. We will continue to consider those in applying, you know, mitigation to greater stage habitats.

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01:34:33.570 --> 01:34:39.110

Patricia Deibert: We do not, however, include specific examples of mitigation in the Draft EIS.

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01:34:39.516 --> 01:34:58.929

Patricia Deibert: It's not an appropriate venue for that. But we really encourage you to reach out to your BLM, your local BLM person, or state agents personnel to talk about particular projects that can look at monitor or that can report to you the success and monitor the results long-term.

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01:35:00.790 --> 01:35:01.880

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat.

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01:35:03.720 --> 01:35:05.659

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: This next question is

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01:35:05.690 --> 01:35:13.969

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: more precisely what is the current status of the SFA Withdrawal EIS NEPA process? Is it currently in development?

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01:35:14.090 --> 01:35:25.009

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: As a cooperating agency, Humboldt County has asked multiple times for updates on this effort and requested timely notification, so we can ensure our cooperating agency engagement.

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01:35:25.120 --> 01:35:34.029

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Does the BLM plan on inviting cooperating agencies as part of the DOI regulations for this NEPA process. And we'll hear from Quincy for that answer.

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01:35:34.280 --> 01:35:45.740

Quincy Bahr: So on the cooperating agency side. Short answer, yes. There has been a series of items as far as, does the agency have a draft in development?

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01:35:46.150 --> 01:35:50.869

Quincy Bahr: Again, going back to how I presented this in the in the presentation.

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01:35:51.630 --> 01:35:54.269

Quincy Bahr: There was a Draft EIS in 2016,

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01:35:54.620 --> 01:36:09.449

Quincy Bahr: and the agency was in the process of developing a Final EIS when we decided to terminate. So there is a draft. It needs to be updated, obviously. And we need to work with our cooperating agencies to update that.

607

01:36:09.670 --> 01:36:26.170

Quincy Bahr: So we have been working with a variety of agencies to make sure we have the right information we need. One of the next steps is to reach out to our cooperating agencies and make sure that we have the information pertinent to that decision making process

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01:36:26.470 --> 01:36:29.120

Quincy Bahr: in relation to socioeconomics

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01:36:29.694 --> 01:36:37.969

Quincy Bahr: and mineral potential and sage-grouse effects. So very short answer there is yes, we will reach out to those cooperating agencies.

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01:36:38.170 --> 01:36:44.280

Quincy Bahr: And as far as is there a draft? Yes, that's what- that's what the courts told us to complete.

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01:36:44.710 --> 01:37:04.440

Quincy Bahr: You will notice in the range of alternatives for this effort. We, we do have SFAs in some alternatives and not in others. And so again, those are separate decisions, separate processes. But in relation to the corporate agency engagement. We will reach out to our cooperating agencies and make sure we get the input

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01:37:04.530 --> 01:37:07.920

Quincy Bahr: to make that document as

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01:37:08.587 --> 01:37:10.200

Quincy Bahr: defensible as possible.

614

01:37:12.410 --> 01:37:26.619

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Quincy. This next question is teed up for you as well. Can you explain a little more under the preferred alternative? What that means, where there are exceptions allowed to a disturbance cap based on local conditions?

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01:37:28.090 --> 01:37:39.839

Quincy Bahr: I can point you to Chapter and verse Section 2.5.5, on pages 2-34. That'd be 2-34 through 2-239.

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01:37:40.395 --> 01:37:47.849

Quincy Bahr: That is the section where we have the range of alternatives in relation to the exception component of the disturbance cap.

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01:37:48.828 --> 01:38:01.800

Quincy Bahr: That's where we do talk about some of the caution and documentation that needs to occur prior to granting an exception. This is where we're looking at making sure to

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01:38:03.150 --> 01:38:14.141

Quincy Bahr: working with our partners, looking at documenting specific conditions on the ground. We do document, in certain circumstances it may, not be.

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01:38:16.120 --> 01:38:23.849

Quincy Bahr: For example, the habitat has to be compensated for in relation to the population being affected.

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01:38:24.080 --> 01:38:29.500

Quincy Bahr: That is a preference everywhere. It's a requirement for the exception.

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01:38:29.580 --> 01:38:40.930

Quincy Bahr: However, there are circumstances in the West where there's not sufficient habitat to compensate, just given the ecological standards and ecological conditions.

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01:38:41.551 --> 01:38:47.179

Quincy Bahr: There's not sufficient habitat to restore, to offset potential effects.

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01:38:47.190 --> 01:38:55.649

Quincy Bahr: And in those scenarios that would be a criteria that you couldn't document, and therefore you couldn't provide that exception. So that section there

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01:38:55.720 --> 01:39:05.749

Quincy Bahr: on pages 2-34 through 2-39 is where we identify the specific considerations that would need to be taken into account at that project level.

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01:39:06.120 --> 01:39:11.059

Quincy Bahr: And they do vary between 4 and 5. 5 provides a little bit more flexibility there.

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01:39:12.025 --> 01:39:12.920

Quincy Bahr: But

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01:39:13.617 --> 01:39:20.799

Quincy Bahr: yeah, to point you to those sections there, those 5 pages again, most of those are in Alternative 4.

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01:39:21.085 --> 01:39:30.659

Quincy Bahr: And that sits it's it sounds like it's 5 pages. But it's not really 5 pages of text. It's a narrow column related to Alternative 4, and then that as adjusted in 5.

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01:39:33.020 --> 01:39:33.882

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. Thanks Quincy.

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01:39:34.170 --> 01:39:36.098

Quincy Bahr: I think I'm staying on right now. So.

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01:39:36.340 --> 01:39:40.240

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: I think you are. Our next question is,

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01:39:40.280 --> 01:39:45.400

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: what lessons learned in Idaho for saleable minerals are you referring to?

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01:39:46.550 --> 01:39:47.680

Quincy Bahr: Okay,

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01:39:49.270 --> 01:39:52.244

Quincy Bahr: So under the 2015 effort,

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01:39:53.127 --> 01:40:10.290

Quincy Bahr: there was quite a bit of consistency when it came to saleable minerals west-wide. One of the aspects was that new free use permits. And again, free use permits are those gravel pits that local communities use in relation to maintaining county roads and ensuring public safety.

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01:40:11.330 --> 01:40:12.260

Quincy Bahr: In

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01:40:13.200 --> 01:40:22.179

Quincy Bahr: Idaho, in 2015, there was language that made it so that you could expand those sites, but you couldn't create new ones.

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01:40:22.210 --> 01:40:26.479

Quincy Bahr: especially if an area had hit an adaptive management trigger.

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01:40:26.990 --> 01:40:49.442

Quincy Bahr: That created some problems going forward when new sites were needed in relation to maintaining public access and public roads and to make that safe, that was not available. And so that is something that as we're looking in this effort was different in Idaho than in the other states. And it was largely

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01:40:49.910 --> 01:40:53.541

Quincy Bahr: a nuance of verbiage that was

641

01:40:54.600 --> 01:41:11.673

Quincy Bahr: different than the other states that we're looking at. And again, through application, we figured that this is a problem as we're looking to make sure that our public lands are safe to use for those public land users. So that's why, in Section 3, sorry Alternatives 3 to 6 in these

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01:41:12.320 --> 01:41:23.050

Quincy Bahr: Idaho State specific circumstances, Section- down in Section 2.6.1. That's why that is included in that section.

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01:41:25.300 --> 01:41:26.899

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright thanks, Quincy.

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01:41:27.960 --> 01:41:36.399

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Our next question is, why does the ARMPA exclude Washington State? And we'll hear from Pat for that answer.

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01:41:37.090 --> 01:41:38.643

Patricia Deibert: Thanks, Alli.

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01:41:39.640 --> 01:41:47.939

Patricia Deibert: So the Washington State birds, the birds that occur in Washington State are actually a distinct population segment, called the Columbia Basin distinct population segment.

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01:41:48.050 --> 01:41:54.990

Patricia Deibert: And that segment was not included in either our 2015 or 2019 plan amendments.

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01:41:55.710 --> 01:42:14.549

Patricia Deibert: So even though sage occur in the State of Washington, We have incredibly limited distribution on BLM surfaces. And most of sage occur either on private or military lands in those areas. So the actions that are influencing sage-grouse up there

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01:42:14.680 --> 01:42:20.759

Patricia Deibert: are not really related to BLM management actions, but rather to actions by other entities.

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01:42:20.840 --> 01:42:23.630

Patricia Deibert: So, therefore, we did not include them in this effort.

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01:42:26.340 --> 01:42:31.279

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, thanks, Pat. Our next question, and this will go back to you,

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01:42:31.290 --> 01:42:40.440

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: is what makes habitat reclamation or following like a wildfire and/or anthropogenic practice overly costly?

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01:42:41.890 --> 01:42:57.709

Patricia Deibert: So I think the important note here is, you know, the cost of reclamation is not a planning decision, but what is a planning decision is, how can we minimize the footprint of disturbance which results in the need for reclamation and restoration to begin with?

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01:42:58.143 --> 01:43:02.386

Patricia Deibert: And that's what we're trying to accomplish here in our planning effort.

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01:43:03.060 --> 01:43:07.939

Patricia Deibert: It's more effective to maintain sagebrush than to try to fix it, so to speak.

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01:43:08.220 --> 01:43:16.929

Patricia Deibert: However, the scale, the cost, and the feasibility of reclamation and the time required depends on the type and size of disturbance.

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01:43:16.980 --> 01:43:25.020

Patricia Deibert: And reclamation, costs are tied to price, and availability of seeds, contracts, monitoring expenses, etc.

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01:43:28.300 --> 01:43:32.550

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. And this next question I also have teed up for you, which is,

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01:43:32.780 --> 01:43:45.200

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: habitat loss due to a fire is a significant negative impact. A lot of the fire impact is caused by invasive annual grasses. Does the BLM have plans to address invasive annual grasses?

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01:43:46.340 --> 01:44:05.299

Patricia Deibert: So we did not carry that issue forward. And because both our 2019 and 2015 plan amendments included substantial vegetation and habitat management strategies for Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, and nothing that we researched suggested that those management actions would not still be effective.

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01:44:07.750 --> 01:44:20.209

Patricia Deibert: However, we are trying to indirectly manage invasive species through managing this anthropogenic sources. We are making sure that

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01:44:22.490 --> 01:44:45.950

Patricia Deibert: with the funds provided to the agency, and again, outside of our planning effort, we are very actively involved in trying to address via annual invasive grass issue on public lands, working with multiple partners and other agencies, both Federal and state, and with private partners, to ensure that we are addressing that issue where we do have invasive plans that occur.

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01:44:49.450 --> 01:44:53.349

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. And this next question is teed up for you as well.

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01:44:53.890 --> 01:45:06.819

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: If a state conservation plan has a mitigation policy that includes calculating debits and credits through a habitat quantification tool, how would the BLM interact with the state agency regarding mitigation?

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01:45:08.040 --> 01:45:17.400

Patricia Deibert: So mitigation policies do vary by state, and the methods for how they collect or calculate debits and credits vary across states as well.

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01:45:19.220 --> 01:45:43.600

Patricia Deibert: Some states have policies and methods in place, and our proposed changes acknowledges those efforts. And if they are using an HQT in a current state, BLM will continue to work with the state to identify what kind of mitigation and how much using their methodology. That's what we are currently doing, anyhow. So we will continue that coordination with the state agencies.

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01:45:45.710 --> 01:45:46.890

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Great thanks, Pat.

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01:45:47.920 --> 01:46:03.410

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: This next question is, do the criteria in your own individual annual professional evaluations include measurements of the extent to which your actions might have contributed to the increase in suitable and accessible sage-grouse habitat,

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01:46:03.480 --> 01:46:16.930

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: or to an increase in sage population? In other words, how are you judged for your successes and shortcomings with regard to the institutional goal of increasing grouse populations or reducing declines?

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01:46:17.449 --> 01:46:22.840

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Really appreciate your clarity in this presentation, and we'll hear from Quincy in that answer.

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01:46:23.590 --> 01:46:27.421

Quincy Bahr: So the individual

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01:46:28.720 --> 01:46:39.879

Quincy Bahr: performance evaluation measures, those vary by year, by priority, by individual, by manager. I do want to note that the BLM does track its RMPs,

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01:46:39.950 --> 01:46:47.599

Quincy Bahr: the effectiveness of those RMPs, and whether or not we are achieving the goals and objectives set out in those RMPs.

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01:46:48.360 --> 01:46:52.260

Quincy Bahr: Just as it's a challenge to attribute any particular action

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01:46:52.400 --> 01:47:01.929

Quincy Bahr: to declining grouse. It's also difficult to measure the contributions or related to the increases or decreases to a given population. However,

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01:47:02.350 --> 01:47:05.539

Quincy Bahr: we do have a monitoring framework in Appendix 7

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01:47:05.750 --> 01:47:14.789

Quincy Bahr: that lays out our plan to, and this is updated based on newer data, available sources as well as the changes in some of our decisions that we're proposing.

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01:47:14.860 --> 01:47:29.320

Quincy Bahr: It lays out a plan to track changes in habitat availability and suitability to help inform the RMPs tracking. Whether we're implementing it as well as whether those implementation

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01:47:29.390 --> 01:47:31.040

Quincy Bahr: actions are effective.

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01:47:31.230 --> 01:47:35.319

Quincy Bahr: The monitoring framework identifies measures, methods, and achievements

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01:47:35.520 --> 01:47:43.270

Quincy Bahr: as well as population trends. Because, as Pat said before, population trends often do align with habitat conditions.

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01:47:43.780 --> 01:47:47.659

Quincy Bahr: We want to make sure that we're monitoring those at two scales.

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01:47:47.670 --> 01:48:03.191

Quincy Bahr: One is that range wide scale, when we're looking at some of these populations that cover multiple planning areas, multiple states. But we're also looking to track it at the local land use plan scale. And so circumstances where

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01:48:03.880 --> 01:48:10.809

Quincy Bahr: looking at more smaller effects to a given field office versus larger effects to the given population.

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01:48:11.820 --> 01:48:26.069

Quincy Bahr: In addition, we're going to continue to work with our partners during implementation to make sure we're evaluating the effectiveness of our restoration efforts as well as the conservation measures to protect habitat where it's present. So in the end,

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01:48:26.610 --> 01:48:38.469

Quincy Bahr: the BLM's planning process itself has a 5-year planning evaluation process. Where we look at, do we have the right goals? And do we have the right management to help us meet those goals?

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01:48:38.730 --> 01:48:54.590

Quincy Bahr: In this context of sage grouse, we wanted to make sure that we are looking at that not only at a very small local scale related field office. And I say very small as 2 million acres. But when you're when you have sage grouse populations, you could be using multiple field offices.

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01:48:54.710 --> 01:49:04.520

Quincy Bahr: To that end, we wanted to make sure we're looking at that larger scale as well. And our Appendix 7, our monitoring framework, establishes our approach to do that.

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01:49:07.880 --> 01:49:11.939

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, and I have this next question teed up for you as well, which is,

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01:49:12.050 --> 01:49:19.889

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: in the GIS files, some of the proposed ACECs appear to be overlain on top of significant existing human disturbance.

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01:49:19.910 --> 01:49:23.199

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Is this an error in the GIS files or intentional?

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01:49:24.170 --> 01:49:24.775

Quincy Bahr: So,

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01:49:26.780 --> 01:49:46.949

Quincy Bahr: it depends. ACECs were evaluated by each state office. If you look at Appendix 5, there was an overarching range-wide approach. But then we asked for that input from the local offices because they have better data. They can help ground truth, whether or not those range-wide models,

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01:49:47.433 --> 01:50:03.969

Quincy Bahr: which are models, are accurate or not based on more local information. To that end, each state had a different set of data set available to them. So as they evaluated relevance and importance based on that local evaluations, data and research.

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01:50:04.200 --> 01:50:05.799

Quincy Bahr: They were able to

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01:50:06.460 --> 01:50:08.980

Quincy Bahr: apply different levels of

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01:50:09.860 --> 01:50:11.859

Quincy Bahr: screening in relation to that.

698

01:50:12.410 --> 01:50:21.219



Quincy Bahr: It is important to note that just because an area has disturbance, doesn't omit it from being considered as a potential ACEC.

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01:50:21.898 --> 01:50:31.359

Quincy Bahr: These aren't wilderness areas. We're looking at in relation to is, are these areas? Do they have substantial significance when it comes to graphs?

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01:50:31.660 --> 01:50:49.670

Quincy Bahr: Some of the criteria for importance could be in relation to existing development or potential development. There's this one of the one of the adverts is cause for concern is an area. Does a certain area have greater than local significant cause for concern?

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01:50:50.010 --> 01:51:02.119

Quincy Bahr: That could be related to the presence of habitat, of disturbances, and where additional disturbances to that area, especially if that area provides some connectivity linkages

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01:51:02.220 --> 01:51:06.000

Quincy Bahr: could be problematic. And so that could be an importance criteria.

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01:51:06.580 --> 01:51:16.109

Quincy Bahr: Also, there's another criteria that talks about if the area is exemplary if it's great. Well in that scenario,

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01:51:16.720 --> 01:51:27.330

Quincy Bahr: existing disturbance could reduce that as a potential for that criteria to be met. So a lot of this depends on what are the characteristics we looked at in relation to

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01:51:27.570 --> 01:51:31.800

Quincy Bahr: having these areas having or not having substantial significance?

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01:51:32.020 --> 01:51:35.219

Quincy Bahr: Again, that varied between states. One example,

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01:51:35.240 --> 01:51:39.260

Quincy Bahr: in Nevada, during our ACEC development,

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01:51:39.470 --> 01:51:58.120

Quincy Bahr: we didn't have the final USGS model run, we had the best available that we had at the time we used as part of that evaluation. And as that process finished, and you can go look right now at the published final data set and the steps they took between what we used and what they published.

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01:51:58.872 --> 01:52:06.890

Quincy Bahr: Some of those includes additional considerations in relation to the presence of existing disturbance.

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01:52:07.080 --> 01:52:13.439

Quincy Bahr: Now that we have the final published model, we can look at how that change

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01:52:13.770 --> 01:52:19.869

Quincy Bahr: could affect whether or not those conditions in relation to grouse importance

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01:52:19.920 --> 01:52:24.320

Quincy Bahr: may change as well. Again, we use the best available at the time.

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01:52:24.761 --> 01:52:41.780

Quincy Bahr: Just like every other state, how that changes and how we get input during this public comment period helps us inform whether or not an area should be a potential ACEC? And then beyond that, what the effects are to those ACECs in relation to their presence or absence in the different alternatives.

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01:52:44.380 --> 01:52:55.429

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright, we'll move on to our last question that we received, which is perfect timing, as we have about 5 min left here. Quincy, this question is for you as well.

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01:52:55.480 --> 01:53:01.849

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Would there be limitations for wind and solar in areas that have leks and wintering sage habitat?

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01:53:01.940 --> 01:53:12.169

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: The development of 140,000-acre wind farm in grouse habitat will directly affect the presence of grouse solely by habitat degradation.

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01:53:12.920 --> 01:53:29.340

Quincy Bahr: So good question. Again, this is one where we- this was one of the ones that was specifically- our state partner said, you really need to look at this. This is something that we're getting a lot of interest in. And we need to make sure we're clear on how it should be managed going forward.

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01:53:30.010 --> 01:53:39.899

Quincy Bahr: We do have a range of alternatives that have different levels of limitations when it comes to wind and solar in PHMA, in IHMA in Idaho, or in GHMA.

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01:53:40.440 --> 01:53:58.959

Quincy Bahr: And as you go between the states, the different strategies this is one of the interesting aspects as you're looking at the different strategies between the States when it comes to wind and solar states that are where the GHMA plays a larger role in the ecology of the grouse.

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01:53:58.960 --> 01:54:10.229

Quincy Bahr: Such as Montana, has different management in those GHMA areas than states where the GHMA, or the periphery heavily impacted areas like, yeah, Idaho or Utah.

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01:54:10.580 --> 01:54:20.570

Quincy Bahr: So in the end, if the project is on BLM lands on our preferred alternative, we need to make sure that we're analyzing all the direct and indirect effects to sage-grouse.

722

01:54:20.760 --> 01:54:37.029

Quincy Bahr: We need to make sure that any residual effects would require compensatory mitigation. Again, under the avoidance criteria in the preferred alternative, we would not be allowed to authorize that project if it would have an effect- if we anticipated, it would have an effect on the grouse population.

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01:54:37.080 --> 01:54:51.730

Quincy Bahr: Again 140,000-acre wind farm, we would need to- we would have to make sure we could document that would have no effect. And that would be challenging, given some of the research that we're looking at. So

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01:54:52.120 --> 01:54:56.869

Quincy Bahr: if it's not on BLM lands, the BLM mitigation requirements wouldn't apply.

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01:54:57.180 --> 01:55:17.239

Quincy Bahr: But any other Federal land, sorry, any other Federal land management agency or relevant state policy would have to apply in in wherever they are located. So this is an area where we need to recognize A) renewable energies, just like mineral sources, are important uses of public lands.

726

01:55:17.562 --> 01:55:34.000

Quincy Bahr: FLPMA identifies the need for those. We need to make sure that we're putting those in the right places in relation to sage-grouse conservation. We also need to recognize that the BLM manages about 46% of the habitat for sage-grouse across its range.

727

01:55:34.140 --> 01:55:36.170

Quincy Bahr: In some states it's a lot less,

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01:55:36.630 --> 01:55:44.190

Quincy Bahr: and in some states it's more. We need to make sure the point there is. We can't do this on our own. We need to work across boundaries

729

01:55:44.530 --> 01:55:46.059

Quincy Bahr: as we're looking at

730

01:55:46.710 --> 01:55:47.850

Quincy Bahr: projects

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01:55:47.950 --> 01:55:58.039

Quincy Bahr: to make sure that there's a place on the landscape for both the bird and its habitat, as well as for the uses and economic development opportunities for these local communities.

732

01:56:00.760 --> 01:56:11.089

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: Alright. Well, thanks for that answer, Quincy. And like I said, that was the last question that we've received today. So I think that will wrap up our question and answer session.

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01:56:11.170 --> 01:56:16.300

Alli Yamnitsky - AECOM: And I think at this point I will turn it back over to you, Quincy, for some closing remarks.

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01:56:16.540 --> 01:56:24.269

Quincy Bahr: Sure, and I do want to make sure if Pat has any interest in some closing remarks. But from the NEPA perspective,

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01:56:24.340 --> 01:56:30.359

Quincy Bahr: public comments are important. I have been asked several times, you know, how much value does the BLM put in these?

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01:56:30.823 --> 01:56:46.480

Quincy Bahr: We know we don't know everything. There are land users out there. There's a lot of information out there. We're looking to make sure that we've taken a hard look at both the range of alternatives and the effects of those alternatives, and considering what changes may be necessary.

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01:56:46.802 --> 01:56:59.929

Quincy Bahr: We've got a good foundation to build on as far as our previous planning efforts. This is the third time we've done this. We are looking to fine tune and make sure that as we move forward, we have those durable plans. So we do ask for your public input

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01:57:00.110 --> 01:57:05.839

Quincy Bahr: in relation to those aspects. We will read your comments. We will respond to your comments.

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01:57:06.177 --> 01:57:18.359

Quincy Bahr: And we hope to be able to have these be very informative in helping the BLM make a better decision making and better transparent decision-making process as we move forward. In the end,

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01:57:18.360 --> 01:57:37.280

Quincy Bahr: we want to make sure that that this sage-grouse itself, and specifically from the BLM perspective, the habitat upon which it relies, and which 350 other species rely, and on which multiple land users and publish love to both use and enjoy that. That landscape stays healthy

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01:57:37.560 --> 01:57:43.700

Quincy Bahr: as we go forward in this, in our endeavor to manage public lands for public uses.

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01:57:44.180 --> 01:57:46.049

Quincy Bahr: Pat, anything you want to add.

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01:57:47.110 --> 01:57:58.089

Patricia Deibert: Quincy, I think you summed it up very nicely, so thank you. But I do appreciate the time that folks have given us this evening. And I look forward to receiving your comments.

744

01:58:00.410 --> 01:58:01.839

Quincy Bahr: Yeah, thank you.

745

01:58:02.640 --> 01:58:03.472

Patricia Deibert: Thank you, everyone.