# Chapter 1
# Introduction

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page


**1. INTRODUCTION ..... 1-1**

1.1 Introduction ..... 1-1
1.1.1 National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy ..... 1-2
1.1.2 Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-regional Strategy ..... 1-3
1.1.3 Relationship to other GRSG Supporting Science Documents ..... 1-9
1.2 Description of the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG Planning Area ..... 1-10
1.3 Purpose and Need ..... 1-15
1.4 Planning Process ..... 1-16
1.4.1 BLM Planning Process ..... 1-16
1.4.2 US Forest Service Planning Process ..... 1-20
1.4.3 Ecoregional Context and Landscape Planning Approach ..... 1-22
1.5 Development of Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment ..... 1-23
1.5.1 Development of Planning Criteria ..... 1-23
1.5.2 Development of Draft EIS Alternatives Including the Preferred Alternative ..... 1-27
1.5.3 Selection of the Preferred Alternative for the DEIS ..... 1-33
1.5.4 Development of the Proposed LUPA/ Final EIS ..... 1-33
1.6 Relationship to Other Policies, Plans, and Programs ..... 1-35
1.6.1 Programmatic Documents ..... 1-35
1.6.2 State Plans ..... 1-35
1.6.3 Local Land Use Plans ..... 1-36
1.6.4 Other Federal Plans ..... 1-38
1.6.5 Fish and Wildlife Species Recovery or Management Plans ..... 1-38
1.6.6 Tribal Plans ..... 1-40
1.6.7 Memorandums of Understanding ..... 1-40
1.6.8 Activity Plans and Amendments ..... 1-41
1.6.9 Habitat Management Plans ..... 1-44
1.6.10 Secretarial Order 3336 ..... 1-45
1.7 Vegetation Management Policies ..... 1-45


# TABLES

Page


1-1 Sage Grouse Habitat Terminology Changes between the Draft LUPA/EIS, the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS ..... 1-6
1-2 Land Management in the Planning Area ..... 1-11
1-3 Acres PHMA, GHMA and OHMA per Alternative in the Decision Area ..... 1-12
1-4 Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area ( BLM and FS Lands only) ..... 1-12
1-5 Acres of GRSG Habitat by BLM District/Field Office in the Decision Area ..... 1-14
1-6 Acres of Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat by Forest in the Decision Area ..... 1-14

## FIGURES

Page

1-1 BLM and USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries ..... 1-3
1-2 Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-region Habitat within the Planning Area ..... 1-7
1-3 Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-region Habitat within BLM-administered and National Forest System Lands ..... 1-8
1-4 Nine-Step Planning Process ..... 1-17

**Changes to Chapter 1 between draft and final EIS:**

- Added references, such as the USGS Open File Report 2014-1239 "Conservation Buffer Distance; Estimates for Greater Sage Grouse-A Review" (Mainer et al. 2014)
- Updated original habitat categories based on USGS-*A Spatially Explicit Modeling of Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat in Nevada and Northeastern California: A Decision Support Tool for Management (Coates et al. 2014)* and clarified habitat definitions;
- Introduced the concept of sagebrush focal areas (SFAs);
- Finalized the planning criteria; and
- Updated, as appropriate, based on public comments received on the DEIS.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the US Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its resource management plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) directs the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service to develop and periodically revise or amend its land and resource management plans (LRMPs), which guide management of National Forest System lands. These two agencies' plans are generically referred to as land use plans (LUPs) throughout this document, unless the reference is to a specific BLM RMP or Forest Service LRMP.

This initiative is the result of the March 2010 US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as Threatened or Endangered (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010; USFWS 2010a). In that finding, the USFWS concluded that the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) was "warranted, but precluded" for listing as a threatened or endangered species.

The USFWS reviewed the status of and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. The USFWS determined that Factor A, "the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the GRSG," and Factor D, "the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms," posed "a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future" (USFWS 2010a). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and Forest Service as conservation measures in LUPs.

### 1.1.1 National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

On December 9, 2011, a notice of intent was published in the *Federal Register* to initiate the BLM and Forest Service GRSG Planning Strategy across northeast California, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, and southwest Montana in the Great Basin Region and northwest Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota in the Rocky Mountain Region.

The BLM is the lead agency for this planning effort, and the Forest Service is a cooperating agency. On February 10, 2012, the BLM published a notice of correction that changed the names of the regions that are coordinating the environmental impact statements (EISs), extended the scoping period, and added 11 Forest Service LRMPs to this process. This Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region Greater Sage-Grouse Proposed LUP Amendment (LUPA) and Final EIS is one of fifteen separate EISs that are being developed to analyze and incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with BLM and Forest Service national policies.

**Figure 1-1** shows the boundaries of the fifteen sub-regions. The blue lines in **Figure 1-1** depict the seven management zones developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) in its Greater Sage-grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy (Stiver et al. 2006); these zones are described in more detail below.

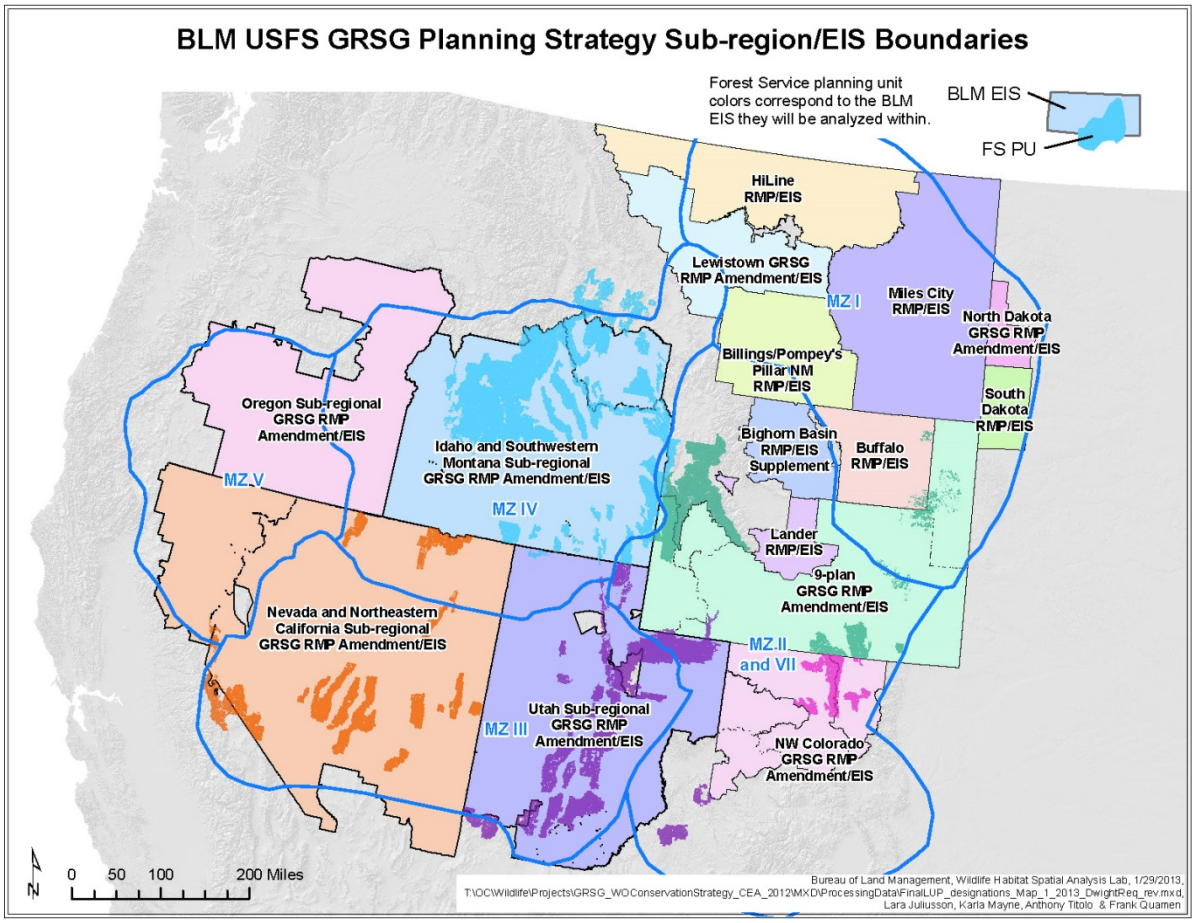
On December 27, 2011, the BLM released Instruction Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-044. It directed all of the planning on BLM-administered lands across the GRSG range to include all applicable conservation measures when RMPs in GRSG habitat are revised or amended (BLM 2011a). It included the measures developed by the interagency National Technical Team (NTT) that were presented in its December 2011 document, A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (NTT 2011).

Along with the applicable measures outlined in the NTT report, planning for this national GRSG planning strategy will also include an analysis of applicable conservation measures. These measures were submitted to the BLM and Forest Service from various state governments and from citizens during the public scoping process. It is the goal of the BLM and Forest Service to make a final decision on these plans by summer 2015 in order for the FWS to consider as it evaluates whether the species is warranted to be listed under the ESA.

The Rocky Mountain and Great Basin Regions are drawn roughly to correspond with the threats identified by the USFWS in the 2010 listing decision and COT report (USFWS 2013a), along with the WAFWA Management Zones (Stiver et al. 2006). The Rocky Mountain Region is composed of the WAFWA Management Zones I (Great Plains), II (Wyoming Basin), and a portion of VII (Colorado Plateau; see **Figure 1-1**). The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, the major ones being habitat loss and fragmentation caused

by development (e.g., oil and gas development, energy transmission, and wind energy development).

**Figure 1-1 BLM and USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries**




The Great Basin Region is composed of WAFWA Management Zones III (Southern Great Basin), IV (Snake River Plain), and V (Northern Great Basin). The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, including wildfire, loss of native habitat to invasive species, and habitat fragmentation.

Both the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin regions are further divided into sub-regions; this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is being conducted on the sub-region level. These sub-regions are generally based on the identified threats to the GRSG and the WAFWA Management Zones.

### 1.1.2 Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-regional Strategy

On a sub-regional level, the staff of the BLM Nevada State Office, BLM California State Office, and Forest Service Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest have completed this Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region Proposed LUPA/Final EIS to analyze the effects of amending up to 13 LUPs. Its purpose is

to provide consistent sub-region-wide management of GRSG habitat for all included BLM-administered and National Forest System lands.

This Proposed LUPA/Final EIS identifies and incorporates appropriate conservation measures to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat. It is designed to eliminate, reduce, or minimize threats to GRSG habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the sub-region.

The LUPA addresses both listing factors A and D (above) and are intended to provide consistency in managing GRSG habitats across the Nevada and northeastern California sub-region, BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. The BLM Nevada, BLM California, and Forest Service each will issue separate records of decision (RODs) for the LUPA. The targeted time for finalizing the RODs is summer 2015. As described in detail in **Section 1.3**, Purpose and Need, one of the purposes of this planning effort is to provide sufficient evidence for the USFWS to consider precluding a potential listing for GRSG as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA.

The following LUPs are proposed to be amended to incorporate appropriate conservation measures:

***California RMPs***

- Alturas RMP (BLM 2008a)
- Eagle Lake RMP (BLM 2008b)
- Surprise RMP (BLM 2008c)

***Nevada RMPs***

- Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area RMP (BLM 2004a)
- Carson City Consolidated RMP (BLM 2001a)
- Elko RMP (BLM 1987a)
- Ely RMP (BLM 2008d)
- Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (MFP; BLM 1982a)
- Shoshone-Eureka RMP (BLM 1986a)
- Sonoma Gerlach MFP (BLM 1982b)
- Tonopah RMP (BLM 1997a)
- Wells RMP (BLM 1985a)

***Forest Service Plans***

- Humboldt National Forest LRMP (Forest Service 1986a)
- Toiyabe National Forest LRMP (Forest Service 1986b)

***Habitat Delineation***

The BLM and Forest Service have identified GRSG habitat in coordination with respective state fish and wildlife agencies. This habitat falls into one of the following categories:

- Preliminary priority habitat (PPH)—Areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. These areas include breeding, late brood-rearing, winter concentration areas and migration or connectivity corridors.
- Preliminary general habitat (PGH)—Areas of occupied seasonal or year-round habitat outside of PPH.

The Draft LUPA/EIS proposed management for PPH and PGH were identified as preliminary priority management areas (PPMA) and preliminary general management areas (PGMA). The Draft also identified "unmapped habitat," which is defined as GRSG habitat in the planning area that is not considered to be PPH or PGH but where GRSG use has been observed or suspected.

In October 2014, the BLM updated the habitat category delineation, based on the GRSG habitat suitability map that was prepared in cooperation the US Geological Survey (USGS), the States of Nevada and California, and the BLM (see Appendix A). Mapping incorporated updated telemetry data (1998-2013), landscape habitat mapping (which included vegetation mapping and topography and land features), and GRSG lek[1] data. As a result of mapping, the BLM delineated the habitat that was previously identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS as unmapped.

In the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS GRSG habitat nomenclature has been changed from PPMA to priority habitat management area (PHMA) and PGMA to general habitat management area (GHMA), and unmapped habitat has been changed to other habitat management areas (OHMA).

**Table 1-1** illustrates the difference in GRSG habitat terminology between the Draft LUPA/EIS, the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, and the State of Nevada alternative habitat categorization.

**Figure 1-2** displays GRSG habitat in the planning area and **Figure 1-3** displays GRSG habitat within BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. **Appendix A** contains a more detailed discussion of the habitat delineation process used to develop the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS.

[1]A patch of ground that male GRSG use for communal display in the breeding season.

**Table 1-1**
**Sage Grouse Habitat Terminology Changes between the Draft LUPA/EIS, the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS**

| Draft LUPA/EIS Habitat Management Category | | Proposed LUPA/Final EIS Habitat Management Category | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***BLM Preferred*** | ***State of Nevada Alternative*** | ***BLM Proposed*** | ***State of Nevada Alternative*** |
| PPMA | Occupied | PHMA | Core |
| PGMA | Suitable | GHMA | Priority |
| Unmapped | Potential/non-habitat | OHMA | General |
| N/A | Non-habitat | Not applicable | Non-habitat |

Note: PPMA and PGMA were renamed to PHMA and GHMA.

Through this LUPA process, the BLM and Forest Service identified and analyzed management actions in GRSG habitat. They were designed to conserve and, where appropriate, improve GRSG habitat functionality. These actions are intended to provide for major life history requirements and movements (e.g., breeding, migration, and winter survival) to maintain genetic diversity needed for sustainable GRSG populations.

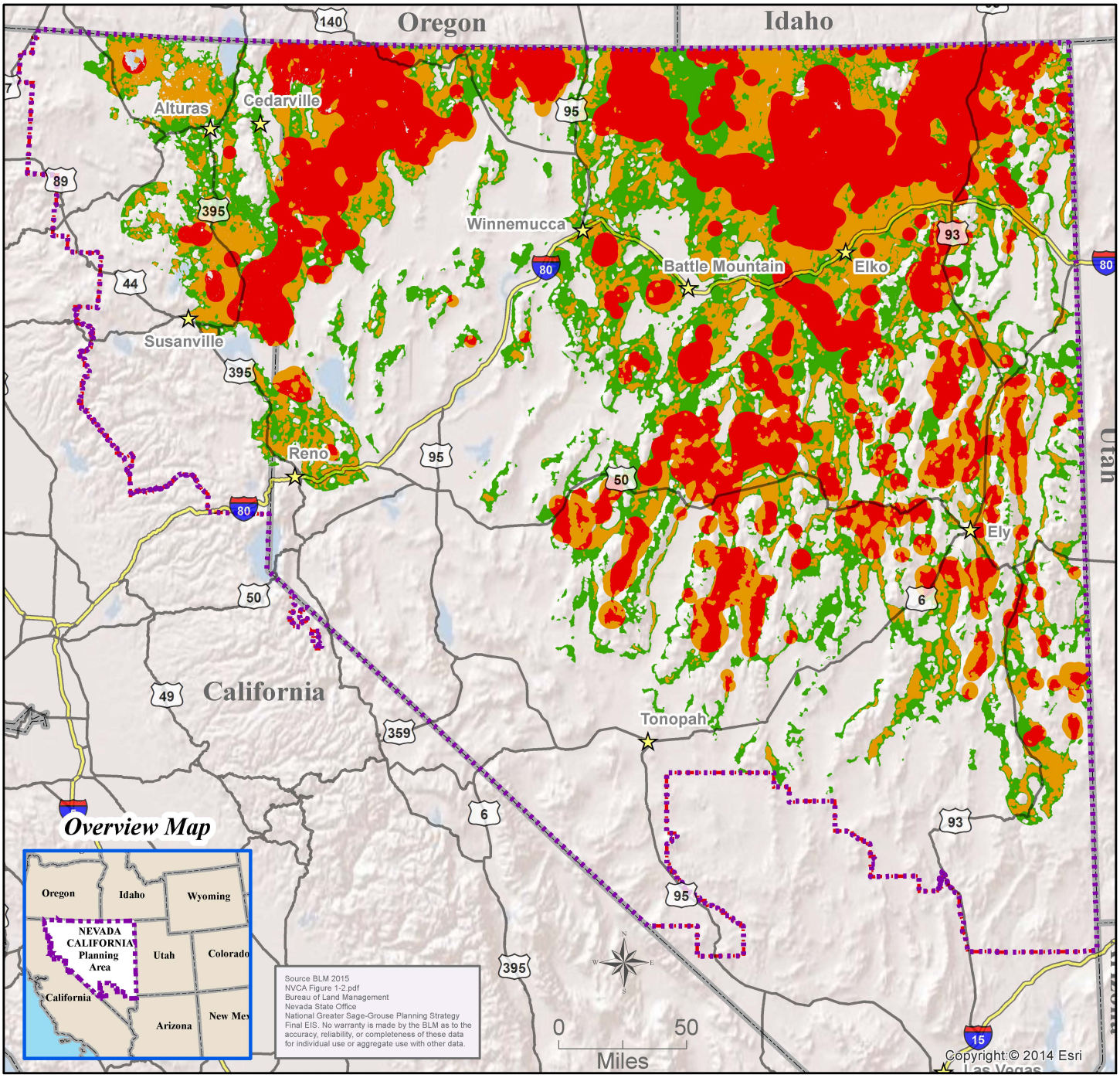
On October 27, 2014, the USFWS provided the BLM and Forest Service a memorandum titled "Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes". The memorandum and associated maps can be accessed at the following website:

http://www.fws.gov/greatersagegrouse/documents/ESA%20Process/GRSG%20Strongholds%20memo%20to%20BLM%20and%20USFS%20102714.pdf

The memorandum and associated maps provided by the USFWS identify areas that represent recognized "strongholds" for GRSG that have been noted and referenced as having the highest densities of GRSG and other criteria important for the persistence of the species. The Nevada and Northeastern California planning area includes areas that have been identified as "strongholds" for GRSG.

On November 21, 2014, the USGS published Open File Report 2014-1239, Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse—A Review (Mainer et al. 2014). The USGS review provided a compilation and summary of existing published scientific studies that evaluate the influence of anthropogenic activities and infrastructure on GRSG populations. The BLM has reviewed this information and examined how lek buffer-distances were addressed through land use allocations and other management actions in the Nevada and Northeastern California Draft LUPA/EIS. Based on this review, in undertaking BLM management actions, and consistent with valid and existing rights and applicable law in authorizing third-party actions, the BLM will apply the lek buffer-distances in the USGS Open File Report in both GHMA and PHMA, as detailed in [**Appendix B**].

Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse
Sub-region region Habitat within the Planning Area



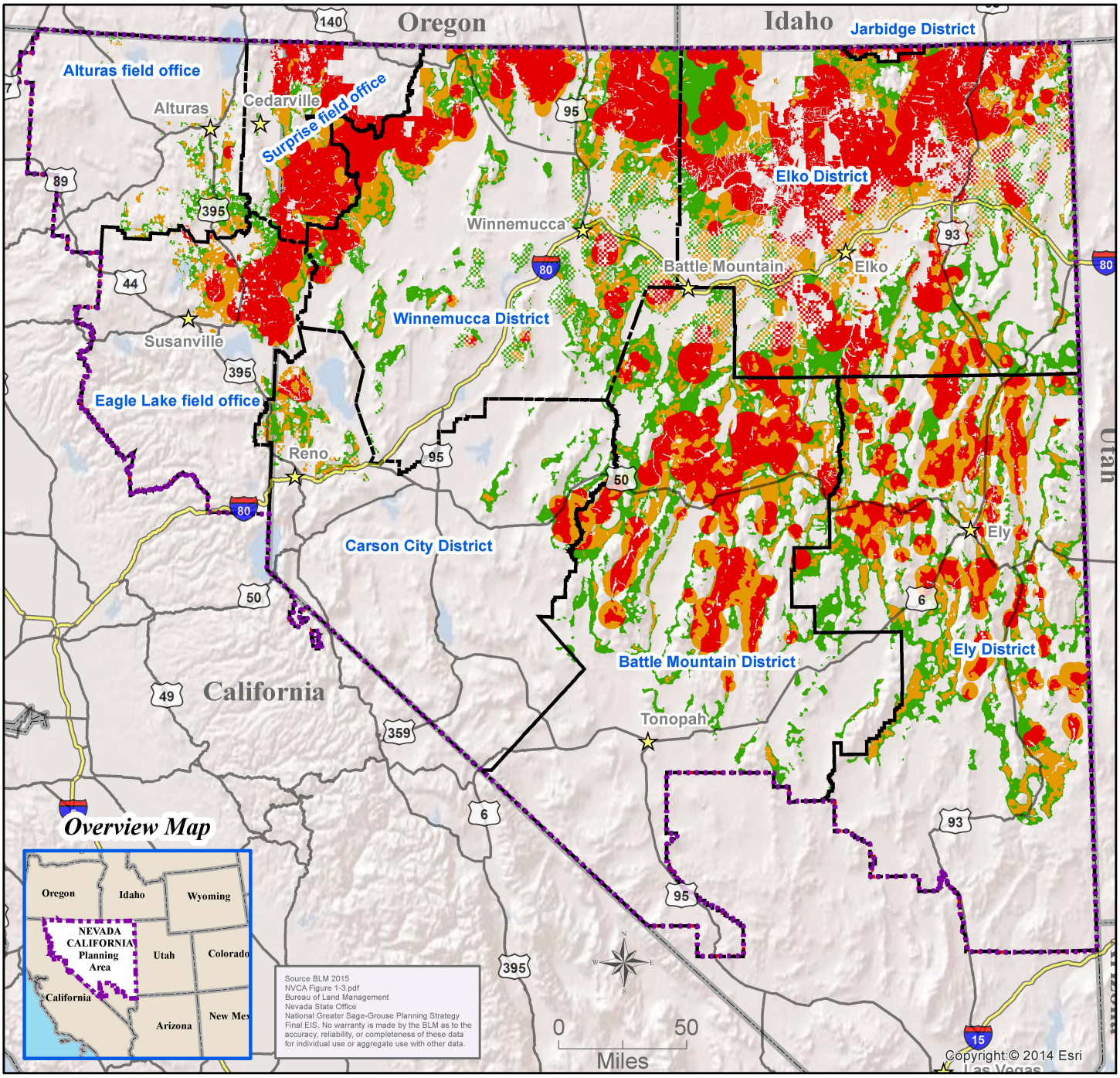

## Legend

**All Land Status**

- Priority Habitat Management Area ( PHMA)
- General Habitat Management Area (OHMA)

- City/Town
- Interstate
- US Route
- States
- Planning Area

Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse
Sub-region Habitat within BLM-administered and National Forest System Lands




## Legend

- Nevada District Offices and Northeastern California Field Offices
- Priority Habitat Management Area ( PHMA)
- General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)
- Other Habitat Management Area (OHMA)
- City/Town
- Interstate
- US Route
- States
- Planning Area

### 1.1.3 Relationship to other GRSG Supporting Science Documents

***GRSG Conservation Objectives: Priority areas for conservation and how they correlate with priority and general habitat management areas***

In 2012, the Director of the USFWS asked the Conservation Objectives Team (COT), consisting of state and USFWS representatives, to produce recommendations regarding the degree to which the threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve GRSG so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The COT report (USFWS 2013a) provides objectives based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release. The BLM/FS planning decisions analyzed in the LUP/EISs are intended to ameliorate threats identified in the COT report and to reverse the trends in habitat condition. The COT report can be viewed online at the following address:

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

The highest level objective in the COT report is identified as meeting the objectives of WAFWA's 2006 GRSG comprehensive strategy of "reversing negative population trends and achieving a neutral or positive population trend."

The COT report provides a WAFWA management zone and population risk assessment. The report identifies localized threats from sagebrush elimination, fire, conifer encroachment, weed and annual grass invasion, mining, free-roaming wild horses and burros, urbanization, and widespread threats from energy development, infrastructure, grazing, and recreation (USFWS 2013a, p. 18).

Key areas across the landscape that are considered "necessary to maintain redundant, representative, and resilient populations" are identified within the COT report. The USFWS in concert with the respective state wildlife management agencies identified these key areas as priority areas for conservation (PACs).

Within In the Nevada and Northeastern California Draft LUPA/EIS, the PACs consist of a total 21,227,100 acres, regardless of ownership. Under the Proposed Plan, the PACs are comprised of 9,386,600 acres of PHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, 3,785,800 acres of GHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, 2,095,500 acres of OHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, and 2,014,500 acres of non-habitat managed by the BLM and Forest Service.

***Baseline Environmental Report***

The Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies that Influence the Rangewide Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), often referred to as the baseline environmental report or BER (Manier et al 2013), is a USGS- and BLM-produced document. It examines each threat identified in the 2010 USFWS listing decision at the national and WAFWA MZ level. The BER report provided information for the existing environment in

Chapter 3 and informed the No Action Alternative. The purposes of this environmental report are to describe the affected environment and to provide a baseline for the cumulative impacts analysis.

For each threat, the report summarizes the current scientific understanding of various impacts on GRSG populations and habitats. Patterns, thresholds, indicators, metrics and measured responses that quantify the impacts of each specific threat are recognized when available. Then the location, magnitude, and extent of the threat are shown for each management entity and in each MZ.

***WAFWA Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004) and WAFWA Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy (Stiver et al. 2006).***

WAFWA prepared a conservation assessment for GRSG and its habitat in two phases. Phase I (Connelly 2004) is an assessment of GRSG populations and sagebrush habitats on which they depend, and Phase II (Stiver et al. 2006) is a conservation strategy for GRSG and sagebrush habitats. The habitat delineations in the WAFWA Conservation Assessment were used in the GRSG analysis for all alternatives in Chapter 4.

## 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE NEVADA AND NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA GRSG PLANNING AREA

The planning area is the geographic area in which the BLM and Forest Service will make decisions during this planning effort (see **Figure 1-2**). The planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction; for this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, the planning area is the entire sub-region. Addressed in the LUPA are BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in GRSG habitats, including surface and split-estate lands with BLM subsurface mineral rights. Any decisions in the LUPA would apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands, including split-estate lands (the decision area). The LUPA is limited to providing land use planning direction specific to conserving GRSG and their habitat.

The Battle Mountain, Carson City, Elko, Ely, and Winnemucca BLM District Offices in Nevada and the Alturas, Eagle Lake, and Surprise BLM Field Offices in California administer the 11 pertinent RMPs being amended by this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. In addition, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest administers two forest LRMPs that will also be amended by this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. The Nevada and northeastern California sub-regional GRSG planning area covers all or a portion of 16 counties in northern Nevada and portions of five counties in northeastern California; 17 of these 21 counties contain GRSG habitat managed by BLM or Forest Service. Lands in the planning area are a mix of private, federal, and state lands (see **Table 1-2**; however, decisions related to this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands (Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest) within the planning area and is referred to as the 'Decision Area'.

**Table 1-2**
**Land Management in the Planning Area**

| Surface Land Management | Total Surface Land Management Acres |
|---|---|
| BLM | 45,359,000 |
| Forest Service | 9,719,900 |
| Private | 11,857,800 |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs (tribal) | 922,000 |
| USFWS | 805,900 |
| Other | 326,100 |
| State | 195,600 |
| National Park Service | 160,100 |
| Other federal | 3,200 |
| Bureau of Reclamation | 431,200 |
| Local government | 17,800 |
| Department of Defense | 402,000 |
| **Total acres** | **70,200,600** |

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2013

This Proposed LUPA/Final EIS analyzes the impacts of seven alternatives (A-F and the Proposed Plan) for the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG LUPA, including the No Action Alternative. **Table 1-3** depicts PHMA, GHMA and OHMA in the decision area per alternative.

GRSG habitat is widely dispersed throughout the decision area, which covers portions of two states, 17 counties, 10 BLM land management units, and the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. **Table 1-4**, **Table 1-5** and **Table 1-6** summarize the distribution of GRSG habitat throughout the decision area by County, BLM units and Forest Service unit respectively.

There are approximately 77,800 acres of public lands in Elko County, Nevada that lie north of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and south of the Idaho-Nevada state line, in the Bruneau and Jarbidge BLM Field Offices in Idaho. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the BLM Nevada and BLM Idaho State Offices transfers administration of those lands to the BLM Idaho State Office. This is due to their remoteness from other BLM-administered lands in Nevada and because they are contiguous with major blocks of public lands in Idaho.

Planning for these lands will occur through the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. The Jarbidge and Bruneau BLM Field Offices in Idaho will implement and administer the regulatory measures and decisions that are put in place for the GRSG through the ROD. Therefore, the mapped decision and analysis area for the Nevada and Northeastern California Proposed LUPA/Final EIS will include lands administered by the Jarbidge and Bruneau BLM Field Offices in Nevada and will end at the Nevada/Idaho state line.

**Table 1-3**
**Acres PHMA, GHMA and OHMA per Alternative in the Decision Area**

| Surface Land Management | PHMA (Alternatives A to F) | GHMA (Alternatives. A to F) | OHMA (Alternatives D and E only) | PHMA (Proposed Plan) | GHMA (Proposed Plan) | OHMA (Proposed Plan) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BLM | 8,759,400 | 6,067,100 | 6,007,500 | 9,309,700 | 5,720,600 | 5,876,600 |
| Forest Service | 813,900 | 886,300 | 701,600 | 986,400 | 796,100 | 621,400 |
| **Total acres** | **9,573,300** | **6,953,400** | **6,709,100** | **10,296,100** | **6,516,700** | **6,498,000** |

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2015

**Table 1-4**
**Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area ( BLM and FS Lands only)**

| County Name [1] | Alternative A to F | | | | Proposed Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PHMA | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL | PHMA [2] | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL |
| Churchill | 74,900 | 78,200 | 171,500 | 324,600 | 74,900 | 78,200 | 171,500 | 324,600 |
| Elko | 3,379,300 | 1,538,100 | 1,376,700 | 6,294,100 | 4,069,300 | 1,133,600 | 1,165,900 | 6,368,800 |
| Eureka | 649,400 | 557,700 | 389,100 | 1,596,200 | 649,400 | 557,700 | 389,100 | 1,596,200 |
| Humboldt | 1,271,300 | 731,300 | 773,600 | 2,776,200 | 1,302,900 | 700,400 | 773,300 | 2,776,600 |
| Lander | 819,700 | 693,900 | 655,700 | 2,169,300 | 819,700 | 693,900 | 655,700 | 2,169,300 |
| Lassen | 333,100 | 278,800 | 283,700 | 895,600 | 333,100 | 278,800 | 283,700 | 895,600 |
| Lincoln | 151,400 | 464,000 | 376,400 | 991,800 | 151,400 | 464,000 | 376,400 | 991,800 |
| Lyon | - | 600 | 1,400 | 2,000 | - | 600 | 1,400 | 2,000 |
| Mineral | - | - | 5,800 | 5,800 | - | - | 5,800 | 5,800 |
| Modoc | 56,900 | 93,400 | 64,800 | 215,100 | 56,900 | 93,400 | 64,800 | 215,100 |
| Nye | 454,200 | 627,900 | 1,009,300 | 2,091,400 | 454,200 | 627,900 | 1,009,300 | 2,091,400 |
| Pershing | 64,200 | 168,800 | 502,200 | 735,200 | 64,200 | 168,800 | 502,200 | 735,200 |
| Plumas | - | - | 1,800 | 1,800 | - | - | 1,800 | 1,800 |
| Sierra | - | 300 | 200 | 500 | - | 300 | 200 | 500 |

**Table 1-4**
**Acres of GRSG Habitat by County in the Decision Area ( BLM and FS Lands only)**

| County Name [1] | Alternative A to F | | | | Proposed Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PHMA | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL | PHMA [2] | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL |
| Storey | - | 300 | 700 | 1,000 | - | 300 | 700 | 1,000 |
| Washoe | 1,287,300 | 467,700 | 308,300 | 2,063,300 | 1,288,500 | 466,500 | 308,300 | 2,063,300 |
| White Pine | 1,031,600 | 1,252,300 | 787,900 | 3,071,800 | 1,031,600 | 1,252,300 | 787,900 | 3,071,800 |
| **Grand Total** | **9,573,300** | **6,953,300** | **6,709,100** | **23,235,700** | **10,296,100** | **6,516,700** | **6,498,000** | **23,310,800** |

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2015
[1]The following counties in the planning area do not contain mapped GRSG habitat: Carson City, Douglas, Esmeralda, and Siskiyou.
[2]PHMA acres in the proposed plan include 2,797,400 acres in Elko, Humboldt and Washoe Counties associated with SFAs.

**Table 1-5**
**Acres of GRSG Habitat by BLM District/Field Office in the Decision Area**

| BLM Office | Alternative A to F | | | | Proposed Plan | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PHMA | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL | PHMA[1] | GHMA | OHMA | TOTAL |
| Alturas Field Office | 12,200 | 127,700 | 178,000 | 317,900 | 12,200 | 127,700 | 178,000 | 317,900 |
| Battle Mountain District Office | 1,547,000 | 1,018,300 | 1,164,500 | 3,729,800 | 1,549,600 | 1,014,300 | 1,163,600 | 3,727,500 |
| Carson City District Office | 115,000 | 231,100 | 309,400 | 655,500 | 115,000 | 231,100 | 309,400 | 655,500 |
| Eagle Lake Field Office | 474,300 | 242,800 | 147,700 | 864,800 | 474,300 | 242,800 | 147,700 | 864,800 |
| Elko District Office | 3,064,400 | 1,518,000 | 1,282,800 | 5,865,200 | 3,586,900 | 1,203,600 | 1,152,500 | 5,943,000 |
| Ely District Office | 1,176,600 | 1,742,600 | 1,487,600 | 4,406,800 | 1,176,000 | 1,741,800 | 1,486,200 | 4,404,000 |
| Jarbidge Field Office[2] | 32,700 | 10,000 | 900 | 43,600 | 32,700 | 10,000 | 900 | 43,600 |
| Bruneau Field Office[2] | 7,700 | | 300 | 8,000 | 7,700 | 0 | 300 | 8,000 |
| Surprise Field Office | 861,300 | 216,600 | 100,400 | 1,178,300 | 862,500 | 215,400 | 100,400 | 1,178,300 |
| Winnemucca District Office | 1,468,200 | 960,000 | 1,335,900 | 3,764,100 | 1,492,800 | 933,900 | 1,337,600 | 3,764,300 |
| **Total Acres** | **8,759,400** | **6,067,100** | **6,007,500** | **20,834,000** | **9,309,700** | **5,720,600** | **5,876,600** | **20,906,900** |

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2015
[1] Includes 2,797,400 acres of SFAs in Surprise Field Office, Winnemucca District Office and Elko District Office.
[2] Only that part of the Idaho BLM Jarbidge and Bruneau Field Offices that falls in the Nevada state line.

**Table 1-6**
**Acres of Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat by Forest in the Decision Area**

| Forest | PHMA Acres (Alternatives A to F) | GHMA Acres (Alternatives A to F) | OHMA Acres (Alternatives A to F) | Total Acres (Alternatives A to F) | PHMA Acres (Proposed Plan) | GHMA Acres (Proposed Plan) | OHMA Acres (Proposed Plan) | Total Acres (Proposed Plan) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Humboldt Toiyabe Forest | 813,900 | 886,300 | 701,600 | 2,401,800 | 986,400 | 796,100 | 621,400 | 2,403,900 |

Source: BLM and Forest Service GIS 2015

## 1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED

The BLM and the Forest Service are preparing LUPAs with associated EISs for LUPs containing GRSG habitat. This is needed to respond to the USFWS's March 2010 "warranted, but precluded" ESA listing petition decision. Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a significant threat in the finding. The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and the Forest Service as conservation measures embedded in LUPs. Changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of populations across the species' range. These LUPAs focus on areas affected by threats to GRSG habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision and in the USFWS COT Report (USFWS 2013a).

The major threats identified in BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the Nevada and northeastern California sub-region are the following (the major threats were identified by the BLM interdisciplinary team in coordination with the USFWS):

- Wildfire—loss of large areas of GRSG habitat due to wildfire
- Invasive species—conversion of GRSG habitat to cheatgrass-dominated plant communities
- Conifer invasion—encroachment of pinyon or juniper into GRSG habitat
- Infrastructure—fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to development, such as rights-of-way and renewable energy development
- Grazing—loss of habitat components due to improper livestock grazing
- Wild horses and burros—loss of habitat components due to excessive grazing
- Hard rock mining—fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to mineral exploration and development
- Fluid mineral development—fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to mineral exploration and development
- Human uses—fragmentation of GRSG habitat or modification of GRSG behavior due to human presence and activities
- Climate change–fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to climate stress

The purpose for the LUPAs is to identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures in LUPs to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to GRSG habitat. The BLM will consider such measures in the context of its multiple use and sustained yield mandates under FLPMA. The USFS will consider such measures in the context of its mandates pursuant to NFMA.

Because the BLM and Forest Service administer a large portion of GRSG habitat in the affected states, changes in GRSG habitat management are anticipated to have a considerable beneficial impact on present and future GRSG populations..

## 1.4 PLANNING PROCESS

### 1.4.1 BLM Planning Process

FLPMA requires the BLM to use LUPs as tools by which "present and future use is projected" (43 USC, Part 1701[a][2]). FLPMA's implementing regulations for planning state that LUPs are a preliminary step in the overall process of managing public lands in a way that is "designed to guide and control future management actions and the development of subsequent, more detailed and limited scope plans for resources and uses" (43 CFR, Part 1601.0-2). Public participation and input are important components of land use planning.

Under BLM regulations, approval of an LUP revision or amendment is considered a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment; therefore, it requires disclosure and documentation of environmental effects, as described in NEPA. The BLM has determined that an EIS is the appropriate NEPA analysis.

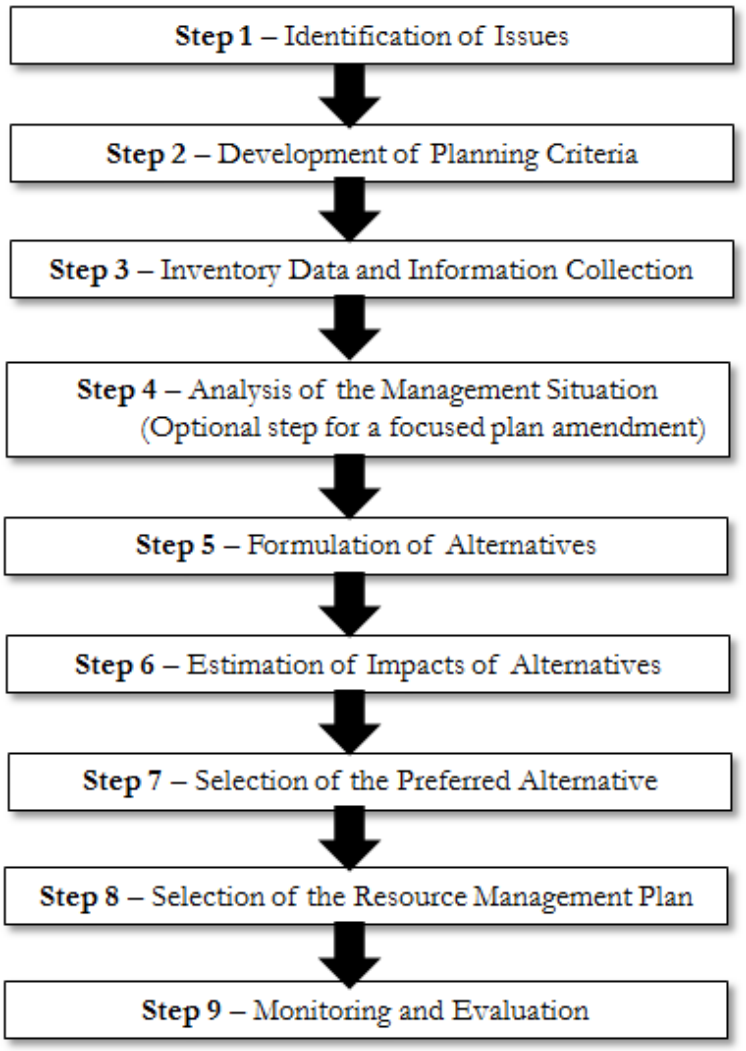
This EIS accompanies the amendment of the existing LUPs and analyzes the impacts of seven alternatives (A-F and the Proposed Plan) for the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG LUPA, including the No Action Alternative.

The BLM uses a nine-step planning process (**Figure 1-4**) to develop or revise LUPs (43 CFR, Part 1600; BLM Handbook H-1601-1 [BLM 2005a]). The planning process is designed to help the BLM identify the uses of BLM-administered lands desired by the public. The planning process also takes into consideration these uses to the extent that they are consistent with the laws established by Congress and the policies of the Executive Branch of the federal government.

Once a LUP is approved, it may be changed through an amendment. An amendment can be initiated in response to monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, a change in circumstances, or a proposed action that may change the scope of resource uses or the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved plan. If the BLM decides to prepare an amendment and associated NEPA analysis, the process will follow the same procedures required for preparation and approval of the plan, but the focus will be limited to that portion of the plan being amended (43 CFR, Part 1610.5-5).

As depicted in **Figure 1-4**, the planning process is issue-driven (Step 1). The process is undertaken to resolve management issues and problems and to take advantage of management opportunities. The BLM uses the public scoping process to identify planning issues to direct a revision or amendment of an existing plan. The scoping process is also used to introduce the public to

**Figure 1-4 Nine-Step Planning Process**




Source: 43 CFR 1610.4

preliminary planning criteria, which set the parameters for conducting the planning process (Step 2).

The BLM uses data from files and other sources and collects new data to address planning issues and to fill gaps identified during public scoping (Step 3). Using these data, information concerning the resource management programs, and the planning criteria, the BLM completes an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS; Step 4) to describe current management and develop or inform the affected environment portion of the LUP.

Typically, the AMS is conducted at the outset of planning for an entire LUP or LUP revision and is incorporated by reference into development of a single focus

plan amendment. AMSs are required for plan revisions but not necessarily for plan amendments. In this case, direction for the plan amendment is provided through new national policy (BLM 2011a), and an AMS will not be written. The affected environment is also incorporated by reference into the amendment and is updated with new information to the degree necessary to set the context for the accompanying EIS analysis.

Results of the first four steps of the planning process clarify the purpose and need and identify key planning issues to be addressed by the amendment. These issues reflect the focus of the LUPA and are described in more detail in **Section 1.5.2**.

Alternatives constitute a range of management actions. These actions set forth different priorities and measures to emphasize certain uses or resource values over others (usually representing a continuum from extraction and development to preservation and conservation). This is all in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate. This requires that certain goals or objectives be achieved and that they be consistent with the purpose and need.

During the formulation of alternatives (Step 5), the BLM collaborates with cooperating agencies to identify goals and objectives (or desired outcomes) for resources and resource uses in the planning area. The alternatives represent a reasonable range of planning strategies for managing resources and resource uses. **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, describes and summarizes the Preferred Alternative and the other alternatives considered in detail.

This Proposed LUPA/Final EIS also estimates the impacts of alternatives in **Chapter 4**, Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Plan and Draft Alternatives (Step 6). The BLM and Forest Service identified and recommended a Preferred Alternative from among the alternatives presented in the EIS (Step 7). The agencies did this with input from their own specialists and from cooperating agencies. They considered planning issues, planning criteria, and the impacts of alternatives and documented it all in the draft LUPA/EIS. This document was distributed for a 90-day public review and comment period.

Step 8 occurs following receipt and consideration of public comments on the draft LUPA/EIS. In preparing the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, the BLM considered all comments received during the public comment period. The Proposed LUPA/Final EIS has been crafted from the draft alternatives.

Step 9 is the monitoring and evaluation process. Monitoring is the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time; evaluation is a process in which the plan and monitoring data are reviewed to see if management goals and objectives are being met and if management direction is sound. Monitoring data gathered over time are examined and used to draw conclusions on whether management actions are meeting stated objectives and if not, why. Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current

management or to decide what management changes need to be made to meet objectives.

The two types of monitoring that are tied to the planning process are implementation and effectiveness monitoring. LUP monitoring is the process of tracking the implementation of land use planning decisions and collecting and assessing information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of land use planning decisions.

Implementation monitoring is the most basic type of monitoring; it simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. (Some agencies call this compliance monitoring.) This monitoring documents the BLM's progress toward full implementation of the LUP decision. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for this type of monitoring.

Effectiveness monitoring is done to determine whether implementing activities has achieved the desired goals and objectives. Effectiveness monitoring asks the question "Was the specified activity successful in achieving the objective?" This requires knowledge of the objectives established in the LUP, as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists to address specific questions and thus to focus on collecting only necessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving desired future conditions established by the plan.

Regulations at 43 CFR, Part 1610.4-9, require that the proposed plan establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluating the plan, based on the sensitivity of the resource decisions involved. Progress in meeting the plan objectives and adhering to the management framework established by the plan is reviewed periodically.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to ensure that their decisions are carried out and that they should do so in important cases (40 CFR, Part 1505.2[c]). To meet these requirements, the BLM will review the plan on a regular schedule in order to consistently track accomplishments and provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.

The BLM would use LUP evaluations to determine if the decisions in the LUP, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, are still valid. The LUP would generally be evaluated every five years, in accordance with BLM policy, unless unexpected actions, new information, or significant changes in other plans, legislation, or litigation triggers an evaluation.

LUP evaluations determine if decisions are being implemented, if mitigation measures are satisfactory, if there are significant changes in the related plans of

other entities, if there are new data of significance to the plan, and if decisions should be changed through amendment or revision.

Evaluations follow the protocols established by the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a) in effect at the time the evaluation begins. Specific monitoring and evaluation needs are identified by resource and uses throughout Chapter 2.

### 1.4.2 US Forest Service Planning Process

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the NFMA (16 USC, Section 1600 et seq.), requires the Forest Service to develop, maintain, and, as appropriate, revise LRMPs. A key element of the Forest Service planning process is to ensure that species' viability is maintained (36 CFR, Part 219.19). Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 USC, Section 528-531), the overall goal of managing National Forest System lands is to sustain the multiple uses of its renewable resources in perpetuity, while maintaining the long-term productivity of the land. LRMPs provide broad guidance and information for project and activity decision-making. In particular, LRMPs coordinate outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness. Public participation and input are important components of land use planning.

The process of amending a LRMP is outlined in 36 CFR 219. The current version of this regulation states that plan amendments that were initiated before May 9, 2015, may be developed in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation. Therefore, the LRMP amendments in this document were developed according to direction in the 1982 version of the CFR 25 219.

A LRMP includes plan components, proposed and possible actions, the monitoring program, and maps.

The objectives of LRMPs are:

1. Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Multiple Use Goals and Objectives, including Desired Conditions.
2. Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Management Requirements, including standards and guidelines.
3. Establishment of Management Area direction, including prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines.
4. Identification of lands suitable or unsuitable for various uses.
5. Recommendations for any Wilderness, Wild-Scenic, or other designated areas.
6. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluation.

A forest plan does not authorize projects or activities or commit the Forest Service to take action. However, a plan may constrain the agency from authorizing or carrying out projects and activities or the manner in which they may occur.

The NFMA requires plans to be maintained, amended, and revised. Adaptive management requires ongoing adjustment of goals, objectives, management area prescriptions, standards, and guidelines constraining land uses. An amendment can be started in response to monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, a change in circumstances or because approval of a project or activity is dependent on a change in the forest plan such that the approved project or activity is consistent with the forest plan.

The responsible Forest Service official may amend a plan in response to the need for change. For this amendment, the process involves eight steps:

1. Considering the need for change
2. Notifying the public of initiating plan amendment
3. Developing the proposed plan amendment
4. Documenting the affected environment and environmental consequences in an EIS
5. Notifying the public of the proposed plan amendment, draft EIS, and 90-day comment period
6. Responding to comments
7. Notifying the public of the beginning of the 60-day objection period (this begins with issuance of the final EIS and the draft plan decision document; this amendment is subject to the objection procedures in 36 CFR, Part 219, Subpart B; the disclosure is in addition to the public notice that begins the objection filing period, as required at 36 CFR, Part 219.16)
8. Approving the plan, on resolution of any objections (36 CFR, Part 219, Subpart B)

Because the Forest Service is a cooperating agency and thus a participant in the multi-federal agency effort, its responsible officials have waived the objection procedures of 36 CFR, Part 219, Subpart B, and have adopted the administrative review procedure of the BLM, as provided for by 36 CFR, Part 219.59(a). This is in agreement with the responsible BLM officials. A joint agency response will be provided to those who file for administrative review of this effort.

Under Forest Service regulations, an LRMP revision or amendment is a federal action requiring appropriate NEPA documentation. This Proposed LUPA/Final EIS provides the NEPA documentation for amending the Toiyabe National Forest LRMP (Forest Service 1986b) and the Humboldt National Forest LRMP (Forest

Service 1986a). This Proposed LUPA/Final EIS analyzes the impacts of various alternatives for the plan amendment, including the No Action Alternative.

### 1.4.3 Ecoregional Context and Landscape Planning Approach

Public lands are undergoing complex environmental challenges that go beyond traditional management boundaries. In response, the BLM is instituting a landscape-scale management approach, which evaluates large areas to better understand the ecological values, human influences, and opportunities for resource conservation. This approach frequently allows identification of environmental changes that might not be apparent in smaller areas.

The BLM's landscape approach includes rapid ecoregional assessments (REAs), which provide a framework for integrating science and management. REAs evaluate landscape-scale ecoregions, which are large areas with similar environmental characteristics. The BLM has initiated 14 REAs since 2010. The Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region lies in the Central Basin and Range (CBR) and the Northern Great Basin (NGB) ecoregions.

REAs synthesize the best available information to examine ecological values, conditions, and trends in the ecoregion. Assessments of these larger areas provide land managers with additional information and tools to use in subsequent resource planning and decision-making.

REAs describe and map conservation elements, which are areas of high ecological value. REAs look across all lands in an ecoregion to identify regionally important habitats for fish, wildlife, and species of concern. REAs then gauge the potential of these habitats to be affected by four overarching environmental change agents: climate change, wildfires, invasive species, and development (both energy development and urban growth). REAs also help identify areas that do not provide essential habitat and that are not ecologically intact or readily restorable and areas where development may be directed to minimize impacts on important ecosystem values.

In the Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region, the CBR REA has been completed (Comer et al. 2012a); the NGB REA is still in progress. The CBR REA will be used to inform and enhance the quality of resource management and environmental analysis at the landscape level. The REA information is considered in developing management objectives that can be adapted to the changing environment. This REA will aid in identifying priority areas for conservation and development, including important areas for wildlife habitat and migration corridors. It also might aid in identifying sites for mitigation.

The Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region covers a vast territory, and the BLM and Forest Service are responsible for managing approximately 70 percent of it. In order to effectively manage it, the BLM and Forest Service are taking a cohesive approach, based on partnerships and built on the principles of conserving and improving natural resources across the landscape. The

landscape-level REAs allow the BLM and Forest Service to collaborate beyond the usual jurisdictional boundaries, with the goal of conserving the native ecological communities and traditional uses and helping to maintain the rural culture that makes this area unique.

For additional information about the BLM's landscape approach see the website at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/Landscape_Approach.html.

As REAs are completed, the information is posted on the REA website, which includes published REA reports and the REA data portal. The data portal provides access to an interactive map and downloadable data at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/Landscape_Approach/reas.html.

## 1.5 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

### 1.5.1 Development of Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are based on appropriate laws, regulations, BLM and Forest Service manual and handbook sections, and policy directives. It is also based on public participation and coordination with cooperating agencies, other federal agencies and state and local governments, and Native American tribes. Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and factors used as a framework to resolve issues and develop alternatives. Planning criteria are prepared to ensure decision-making is tailored to the issues and to ensure that the BLM and Forest Service avoid unnecessary data collection and analysis. Preliminary planning criteria were included in the draft LUPA/EIS and have been further refined for the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS.

Planning criteria developed for this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS are as follows:

- The BLM and Forest Service will use the WAFWA Conservation Assessment of GRSG and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004; Coates and D. J. Delehanty 2004, 2008, 2010) and any other appropriate resources to identify GRSG habitat requirements and required design features.
- The approved LUPA will be consistent with the BLM's National GRSG Conservation Strategy.
- The approved LUPA will comply with BLM direction, such as FLPMA, NEPA, and CEQ regulations at 40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508; DOI regulations at 43 CFR, Parts 4 and 1600; the BLM H-1601-1 Land Use Planning Handbook, "Appendix C: Program-Specific and Resource-Specific Decision Guidance Requirements" for affected resource programs (BLM 2005a); the 2008 BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1; BLM 2008e); and all other applicable BLM policies and guidance.

- The approved LUPA will comply with Forest Service direction, such as NFMA, NEPA, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508; Regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture at 36 CFR, Part 219; Forest Service NEPA regulations at 36 CFR, Part 220; Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1909.15 (Forest Service 2012a); FSM 1920 (Forest Service 2006a); Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12 (Forest Service 2006b); and all other applicable Forest Service policies and guidance.
- The LUPA will be limited to providing direction specific to conserving GRSG species and habitats.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consider land allocations and prescriptive standards to conserve GRSG and its habitat, as well as objectives and management actions to restore, enhance, and improve GRSG habitat.
- The LUPA will recognize valid existing rights.
- The LUPA will address BLM-administered and National Forest System land in GRSG habitats, including surface and split-estate lands with BLM subsurface mineral rights. Any decisions in the LUPA will apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands.
- The BLM and Forest Service will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach, where appropriate, to determine the desired future condition of BLM-administered and National Forest System lands for conserving GRSG and their habitats.
- As described by law and policy, the BLM and Forest Service will strive to ensure that conservation measures are as consistent as possible with other planning jurisdictions within the planning area boundaries.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consider a range of reasonable alternatives, including appropriate management prescriptions that focus on the relative values of resources, while contributing to the conservation of the GRSG and GRSG habitat.
- The BLM and Forest Service will address socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives. Socioeconomic analysis will use such tools as the input-output quantitative models IMPLAN and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's Jobs and Economic Development Impact model (JEDI) for renewable energy analysis, where quantitative data is available.
- The BLM and Forest Service will use the best available scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventory, monitoring, and coordination to inform appropriate local and regional management strategies that will enhance or restore GRSG habitats.

- The BLM will be consistent with the objectives in BLM Manual 6840 which are to: 1) preserve the ecosystem upon which species depend, and 2) initiate proactive conservation measures that minimize listing of the species under the ESA.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with designated Wilderness Areas on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands will be guided by BLM Manual 6340 Management of Designated Wilderness Areas (BLM 2012b) and Forest Service Manual 2300—Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management, Chapter 2320—Wilderness Management (Forest Service 2007a). Land use allocations made for GRSG must be consistent with BLM Manual 6340 and Forest Service Manual 2300 and other laws, regulations, and policies related to wilderness area management.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with National Conservation Areas (NCAs) on BLM-administered lands will be guided by BLM Manual 6220, Management of National Conservation Areas (BLM 2012c). Land use allocations made for GRSG must be consistent with BLM Manual 6220 and other laws, regulations, and policies related to NCA management.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with eligible, suitable, or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) will be guided by BLM Manual 6400, Wild and Scenic Rivers—Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, Planning, and Management (BLM 2012d). Land use allocations made for GRSG must be consistent with BLM Manual 6400 and other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSR management.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with National Historic Trails (NHT) or trails under study for possible designation (study trails) will be guided by BLM Manual 6280, Management of National Scenic and Historic Trails and Trails Under Study or Recommended as Suitable for Congressional Designation (BLM 2012e). Land use allocations made for GRSG must be consistent with BLM Manual 6280 and other laws, regulations, and policies related to NHT management.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with Lands with Wilderness Characteristics on BLM-administered lands will be guided by BLM Manuals 6310 and 6320, Conducting Wilderness Characteristics Inventory on BLM Lands and Considering Lands with Wilderness Characteristics in the BLM Land Use Planning Process (BLM 2012f, 2012g). Land use allocations made for GRSG must be consistent with BLM Manuals 6310 and 6320 and other laws, regulations, and policies related to Lands with Wilderness Characteristics management.

- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with wilderness study areas (WSAs) on Public lands administered by the BLM will be guided by the Manual 6330, Management of Wilderness Study Areas. Land use allocations made for WSAs must be consistent with the Manual 6330 and with other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSA management.
- For BLM-administered lands, all activities and uses in GRSG habitats will follow existing land health standards. Standards and guidelines (S&G) for livestock grazing and other programs that have developed S&Gs will be applicable to all alternatives for BLM-administered lands. For National Forest System lands, all activities in GRSG habitat will achieve the GRSG habitat objectives.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consult with Native American tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage in GRSG habitats.
- The BLM and Forest Service will coordinate and communicate with state, local, and tribal governments to ensure that the BLM and Forest Service consider providing pertinent plans, seek to resolve inconsistencies between state, local, and tribal plans, and provide ample opportunities for state, local, and tribal governments to comment on the development of amendments.
- The LUPA will incorporate the principles of adaptive management.
- Reasonable Foreseeable Development (RFD) Scenarios and planning for fluid minerals will follow the BLM Handbook H-1624-1 and current fluid minerals manual guidance (oil and gas, coal-bed methane, oil shale) and geothermal resources (BLM 1990a). For lands that it administers, the Forest Service will comply with 36 CFR, Part 228.102, and other applicable environmental requirements for making decisions about the availability of lands for leasing.
- Data used in developing the EIS/LUPA will be consistent with the principles of the Information Quality Act of 2000 (Public Law [PL] 106-554, Section 515); state data was used as the basis for PPH and PGH identification.
- State fish and wildlife agencies' GRSG data and expertise will be considered in making management determinations on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands.
- Where more restrictive land use allocations or decisions are made in existing RMPs, those more restrictive land use allocations or decisions will remain in effect and will not be amended by this LUPA.

### 1.5.2 Development of Draft EIS Alternatives Including the Preferred Alternative

***Scoping and Identification of Issues for Developing the Preferred Plan and Draft Alternatives***

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues to consider in the planning process. Scoping identifies the concerns of the public and agencies, defines the relevant issues and alternatives that would be examined in detail in the EIS, and eliminates those that are not significant or that have been covered by prior environmental review.

A planning issue is defined as a major controversy or dispute regarding management or uses on public lands that can be addressed through a range of alternatives. The environmental impacts of these alternative management scenarios are analyzed and addressed in this Proposed LUPA/Final EIS.

A public scoping period for the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG Draft LUPA/EIS began on December 9, 2011, with the publication in the *Federal Register* of a notice of intent to begin. Scoping is designed to be consistent with the public involvement requirements of FLPMA, NFMA, and NEPA.

The process included soliciting input from interested state and local governments, tribal governments, other federal agencies and organizations and individuals. The scoping process is to identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the plan amendment and to assist in the formulation of reasonable alternatives.

The scoping process is an excellent method for opening dialogue between the BLM and Forest Service and the general public. The subject of the dialogue is managing GRSG and their habitats on public lands and identifying the concerns of those who have an interest in GRSG conservation and habitat. As part of the scoping process, the BLM also requested that the public submit nominations for potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) for GRSG and their habitats.

The scoping period was extended through a notice of correction published February 10, 2012, and ended on March 23, 2012. Scoping included scheduled open-house meetings in the following locations:

- Tonopah, Nevada, January 9, 2012
- Ely, Nevada, January 10, 2012
- Elko, Nevada, January 11, 2012
- Winnemucca, Nevada, January 12, 2012
- Alturas, California, January 18, 2012
- Susanville, California, January 19, 2012

- Reno, Nevada, January 30, 2012

Comments obtained from the public during the scoping period were used to define the relevant issues that would be addressed by a reasonable range of alternatives. The BLM and Forest Service published the final scoping summary report in May 2012 (BLM and Forest Service 2012). This report is available at the BLM's GRSG conservation website (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/documents_and_resources.html).

***Issues Identified for Consideration in the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG LUPA***

Some important issues to be addressed in the LUPA were identified by the public and the agencies during the range-wide public scoping process and during statewide planning. The final scoping summary report, prepared in conjunction with the LUPA, summarizes the scoping and issue identification process. The issues identified in the scoping report were grouped into 13 broad categories. Other resource and use issues are also identified in the BLM Planning Handbook and Manual (H-1610-1, BLM 2005a).

All of the following issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward for analysis:

- GRSG and GRSG habitat—Using sound science to determine habitat requirements and restrictions needed to protect GRSG habitat
- Energy and mineral development—Limiting energy and mineral development
- Livestock grazing—Restricting forage availability, grazing practices and facilities, and the socioeconomic impacts on the ranching industry
- Vegetation management—Protecting life-stage habitat requirements for the GRSG and preventing noxious and invasive species
- Fish and wildlife—Considering predation and wildlife competition for resources
- Lands and realty—Identifying right-of-way (ROW) avoidance and exclusion areas, land disposal, and acquisition and withdrawal availability
- Social, economic, and environmental justice considerations—Limiting land uses and the socioeconomic impacts
- Recreation and travel management—Limiting off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and certain recreation activities
- Fire management—Identifying appropriate fuels management techniques and restoration

- Special Management Areas—Evaluating existing and proposing new areas for special management (e.g., ACECs)
- Water and soil—Protecting water and soil to support adequate GRSG habitat and prevent the spread of West Nile virus
- Drought management/climate change—Establishing management decisions that incorporate climate change effects on GRSG habitat
- Wild horses and burros—Increasing management of wild horses and burros in GRSG habitat

***Issues not Addressed in the LUPA***

Policy or administrative actions are implemented by the BLM or Forest Service because they are standard operating procedure, federal law requires them, or they are BLM or Forest Service policy. These issues are, therefore, eliminated from detailed analysis in this planning effort. Administrative actions do not require a planning decision to implement.

Issues raised during scoping that are considered to be policy or administrative actions are the following:

- **Reform national livestock grazing policies**—Commenters stated that national grazing policies should be reformed, as the requirements are too limiting and impact ranchers' livelihoods. Decisions about livestock grazing national policies are outside the scope of this amendment and are not made in this planning effort.

  However, reducing or eliminating livestock (i.e., permitted grazing use) in GRSG habitat is considered. This is consistent with IM No. 2012-169, RMP Alternative Development for Livestock Grazing (BLM 2012a).

- **Renewable energy policies**—Commenters stated concerns about renewable energy development, including economic instability due to government subsidies and risk of wildlife deaths, specifically bats and birds. General policy decisions about renewable energy management, such as impacts on other wildlife species on BLM-administered lands, will be determined by national policy and are not addressed in this plan amendment.

In addition, comments were received related to other out-of-scope topics that would be determined by national policy, as follows:

- Compensation of private landowners for conservation efforts and off-site mitigation
- BLM and Forest Service funding
- NEPA procedures and costs

***Issues Eliminated from Detailed Analysis and Not Addressed in the LUPA***

The following issues were determined to be outside the scope of the range-wide planning effort, including the Nevada and Northeastern California GRSG LUPA/EIS:

- **Hunting GRSG**—Commenters questioned why GRSG hunting is allowed if the bird is in need of protection. Neither the BLM nor the Forest Service regulates hunting activities on federal lands; this type of management resides with Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

  NDOW follows the guidelines established by WAFWA that suggest hunter harvest should not exceed 10 percent of the estimated fall population, populations should not be hunted where less than 300 individuals comprise the breeding population, and GRSG hunting seasons should be one to four weeks, with a low bag limit (one to two birds per day).

  The season in Nevada has generally fluctuated between 10 and 15 days for most areas, and the bag limit has remained at two per day and four birds in possession. Where GRSG populations are considered rather small or isolated, hunting seasons have been closed. In Nevada, five counties and more than 20 hunt units have been closed to GRSG hunting since 1997.

  NDOW also identified an ancillary benefit of the GRSG hunting season. Hunting license dollars are used to match federal grants (Pittman-Robertson Act) to conduct monitoring work annually, to conduct research, and to enhance and restore habitat. Additionally, wings from hunter harvested GRSG are analyzed annually to determine nest success, recruitment, and overall population viability.

  Collectively, this information helps to determine population health and formulate future management recommendations (NDOW 2012a). Cessation of hunting would likely eliminate the use of hunting license dollars as a match for federal aid grants. It would greatly reduce annual monitoring and research and habitat restoration projects that are funded through this mechanism (NDOW 2014).

  The CDFW also uses the GRSG hunting season to collect wings to estimate important demographic data. It uses a permit system that prevents legal harvest from exceeding five percent of the estimated fall population. Permit quotas are adjusted annually by the Fish and Wildlife Commission to prevent overharvest. A permit is required to hunt GRSG in all California hunt zones.

  California also complies with WAFWA guidelines, with a short season of two days and a low bag limit of two birds per permit. In

the Central and East Lassen northeastern zones, the CDFW did not authorize GRSG permits in 2012 and 2013, due to two large fires in the Buffalo Skedaddle Population Management Unit (PMU). It is unlikely that the CDFW will recommend issuing GRSG hunting permits in future years without significant habitat and population recovery in these two hunt zones.

It remains an issue whether hunting GRSG is additive, and contributes to population declines or is compensatory with other sources of mortality (e.g., predation). Research conducted on GRSG hunting indicates that local circumstances, such as overall population size and connectedness, habitat condition, and proximity to urban areas, may play an important role on whether mortality is additive or compensatory. In a long-term study conducted in Eureka County, Nevada, Blomberg et al. (2013) found that hunter harvest accounted for two percent of all mortality and did not adversely impact GRSG populations.

- **Predator population control**—Commenters stated that control was needed to protect GRSG from predation. The NDOW and CDFW primarily manage the wildlife in Nevada and California, while the BLM and Forest Service manage habitat. Consistent with an MOU between the BLM and the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Wildlife Services, the BLM and Forest Service will continue to work with the NDOW and CDFW to meet state wildlife population objectives.

  Predator control is allowed on BLM-administered lands and is regulated by NDOW and CDFW. The BLM and Forest Service will continue to work with these agencies to address current predation of GRSG. The BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the planning area will remain open to predator control under state laws.

  Goals, objectives, and actions to address predation have been included under the Proposed Plan, but predation has not been fully analyzed. Although the USFWS acknowledged that increasing patterns of landscape fragmentation are likely contributing to increased predation on the GRSG, it concluded that predation is not a significant threat to the GRSG.

  Two areas were identified where predators may be limiting GRSG populations because of intense habitat alteration and fragmentation. One of these two areas is in the Nevada and northeastern California sub-region in northeastern Nevada. Lockyer et al. (2013) conducted a predator study in the Virginia Mountains of northeastern Nevada in the Great Basin. This study revealed that common ravens accounted for 46.7 percent of nest depredations in the study area. However, Lockyer et al. clearly stated that this study was not

representative of the entire Great Basin for two main reasons. The first was due to significantly lower GRSG cumulative nest survival rates, which were documented at 22.4 percent in the study area. This survival rate is significantly lower than other published results for GRSG in the Great Basin. Second, the study area is not representative of the entire Great Basin or of the Nevada and northeastern California sub-region, due to increased human disturbances. These and raven abundance are positively associated with human-caused habitat alterations.

GRSG are susceptible to predation from egg to adult, leading to the hypothesis that predator control would be an effective conservation tool. Generally, GRSG nest success and adult survival are high; suggesting that on average predation is not a limiting factor to GRSG populations.

GRSG face a suite of predators in sagebrush communities, but none of the predators specialize in GRSG (Hagen 2011, pp. 95-100). Predator management research has not provided sufficient evidence that predator control improves GRSG populations over broad geographic or temporal scales. The limited information available suggests predator management may provide short-term relief for GRSG population sinks in the few cases where the situation has been documented (Hagen 2011, pp. 95-100).

Most GRSG research has failed to quantify predator community structure or predation rates in habitat, let alone in the landscape. Thus, it is not possible to understand relationships among habitat structure, demographic rates of GRSG, and the predator community of an area and to incorporate these into broad-scale predator management programs for GRSG.

It is critical for future GRSG conservation efforts to quantify these variables to better understand the impacts of predation on GRSG life history (Hagen 2011, pp. 95-100). The most effective long-term predator management for GRSG populations may be through maintaining connectivity of suitable habitats (Schroeder and Baydack 2001).

- **Warranted but precluded decision and management under ESA listing**—Commenters questioned population levels and the need to incorporate range-wide conservation measures. Others questioned the effectiveness of ESA listing as a method of species conservation. These comments relate to decisions under the purview of the USFWS and are not addressed in this LUPA.
- **Aircraft Overflights in PHMA and GHMA**—This is outside the scope of the Proposed Plan/Final EIS. The BLM does not have the authority to regulate aircraft activities that are under the jurisdiction

of the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Defense.

### 1.5.3 Selection of the Preferred Alternative for the DEIS

For the Draft EIS/LUPA, the BLM and Forest Service identified Alternative D as their Preferred Alternative. Even so, it was not a final agency decision; instead it indicated the agencies' preliminary approach to achieve their goals and policies, to meet the purpose and need, to address the key planning issues, and to consider the recommendations of cooperating agencies and BLM and Forest Service specialists.

The alternatives analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS presented a range of management actions to achieve the goal of conserving GRSG for the Nevada and northeast California sub-region. Major planning issues addressed in the document correspond with threats identified in a report by the USFWS's Sage-Grouse Conservation Objective Team (USFWS 2013a); these issues are wildland fire management, livestock grazing, vegetation management, and lands and realty actions.

### 1.5.4 Development of the Proposed LUPA/ Final EIS

With input from the public, other agencies, and tribes on the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service have developed the Proposed Plan. The Proposed Plan is a variation of the preferred alternative (Alternative D) from the Draft LUPA/EIS and includes elements of other alternatives to meet the purpose and need and to create a management strategy that meets resource values under the agencies' applicable land use planning policies.

#### *Public Draft LUPA/EIS*

The BLM released the Draft LUPA/EIS to the public on November 1, 2013. Following the release of the Draft LUPA/EIS, there was a 90-day public comment period, which began on November 1, 2013, and ended on January 29, 2014. During this time, the BLM hosted seven open houses where the public had the opportunity to learn about the Draft LUPA/EIS, to ask questions of the BLM, the Forest Service, and the USFWS staff, and to fill out comment cards. Open houses were held in the following locations:

- Cedarville, California—December 3, 2013
- Susanville, California—December 4, 2013
- Reno, Nevada—December 5, 2013
- Tonopah, Nevada—December 9, 2013
- Ely, Nevada—December 10, 2013
- Elko, Nevada—December 11, 2013
- Winnemucca, Nevada—December 12, 2013

***Public Comment Analysis***

The BLM and Forest Service received written comments by mail, e-mail, and submitted at the public meetings. Approximately 16,920 submissions were received during the public comment period which contained 1,747 substantive comments. Using a systematic approach of labeling, reviewing, and categorizing each comment, the BLM identified and formally responded to all substantive public comments. Substantive comments were categorized based on the content of the comment. Each retained the link to the commenter.

Subsequently, the BLM and Forest Service drafted statements summarizing the issues contained in each comment category. They then developed responses to each issue statement. As part of the response statement, the BLM and Forest Service indicated whether the comments resulted in a change to the LUPA/EIS. The Comment Analysis Report in **Appendix C** contains the issue statements and summary response for each comment category.

***Development of Proposed Plan***

In addition to changes identified during the Draft LUPA/EIS public comment period, development of the proposed plan included extensive coordination among executive leadership teams from the BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, state wildlife agencies, and state governors' offices. Executive-level coordination allowed the BLM and Forest Service to provide more consistent direction to each of the four Great Basin sub-regions so that a consistent approach to GRSG conservation efforts is used across the landscape. The Nevada and northeastern California sub-region's Proposed Plan is a variation of the preferred alternative from the Draft LUPA/EIS but also includes elements of the other alternatives. **Chapter 2** contains the Proposed Plan's goals, objectives, and management actions.

***Issuance of the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS***

The Proposed LUPA will fulfill the obligations set forth by the NEPA, FLPMA, and other federal regulations. In accordance with NEPA and the BLM's planning regulations in 43 CFR, Part 1610, the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS will be made publicly available on the publication of a notice of availability in the *Federal Register*.

In accordance with the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR, Part 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process for this LUPA/EIS and has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions may protest approval of the planning decision. These persons have 30 days to file a protest, from the date the notice of availability of the ROD appears in the *Federal Register*.

At the same time as the protest period, the BLM will provide a governors' consistency review (43 CFR, Part 1610.3-2[e]). Governors will have 60 days in which to identify inconsistencies with state or local plans, policies, or programs and to provide recommendations in writing to the BLM State Director.

***Record of Decision***

The ROD serves as the final decision for land use planning decisions described in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. The ROD also describes the rationale for selecting elements of the Proposed Plan.

## 1.6 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS

This planning process will recognize the many ongoing programs, plans, and policies that are being implemented in the planning area by other land managers and government agencies. The BLM and Forest Service will seek to be consistent with or complementary to other management actions whenever possible. Plans that need to be considered during GRSG planning are listed below.

### 1.6.1 Programmatic Documents

- Approved RMP Amendments/ROD for Designation of Energy Corridors on BLM-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States (BLM 2009a)
- Programmatic EIS/ROD for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States (BLM 2012h)
- Final Programmatic EIS on Wind Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western US (FES 05-11; BLM 2005b)
- Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FES 07-21; BLM 2007a)Programmatic EIS for Geothermal Resources in the Western United States. BLM, Washington, DC (BLM and Forest Service 2008)
- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States, 1991 (common to the Proposed Plan and draft alternatives; BLM 1991a)

### 1.6.2 State Plans

The BLM and Forest Service also recognize the importance of state and local plans as well as those developed by other federal agencies and tribal governments. The BLM and Forest Service will strive to be consistent with or complementary to the management actions in these plans whenever possible. State plans considered during the GRSG planning effort are the following:

- Nevada's 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan—Assessment and Policy Plan (Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 2003)
- Nevada Comprehensive Preservation Plan (Nevada State Historic Preservation Office 2003)
- Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy (State of Nevada 2001, 2004, 2012)

- Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (State of Nevada 2014)
- Nevada's Coordinated Invasive Weed Strategy (Nevada Weed Action Committee 2000)
- Nevada Division of State Lands, Lands Identified for Public Acquisition (Nevada Department of Conservation & Natural Resources 1999)
- State of Nevada Drought Plan (Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 1993)
- Nevada Division of State Lands, Nevada Statewide Policy Plan for Public Lands (Nevada Department of Conservation & Natural Resources 1985)

### 1.6.3 Local Land Use Plans

Local land use plans considered during GRSG planning are the following:

- Carson City Comprehensive Master Plan, Nevada (Carson City 2006)
- Churchill County Master Plan, Nevada (Churchill County 2010)
- Churchill County Water Resource Plan, Nevada (Churchill County 2007)
- City of Caliente Master Plan, Nevada (City of Caliente 2011)
- Douglas County Comprehensive Master Plan, Nevada (Douglas County 2012)
- Douglas County Open Space Plan, Nevada (Douglas County 2007)
- Elko County General Open Space Plan, Nevada (Elko County 2003)
- Elko County Public Lands Policy Plan, Nevada (Elko County 2008)
- Elko County Water Resource Management Plan, Nevada (Elko County 2007)
- Esmeralda County Master Plan, Nevada (Esmeralda County 2011)
- Esmeralda County Public Lands Policy Plan, Nevada (Esmeralda County 2013)
- Eureka County Master Plan, Nevada (Eureka County 2010)
- Humboldt County Master Plan, Nevada (Humboldt County 2002)
- Humboldt County Master Plan Open Space Element Amendment, Nevada (Humboldt County 2003)
- Lander County Master Plan, Nevada (Lander County 2010)
- Lander County Policy Plan for Federally Administered Lands, Nevada (Lander County 2005)

- Lander County Water Resources Plan, Nevada (Lander County 2011)
- Lassen County Fire Safe Plan, California (Lassen County 2012)
- Lassen County General Plan, California (Lassen County 1999)
- Lincoln County Master Plan, Nevada (Lincoln County 2007)
- Lincoln County Open Space and Community Lands Plan, Nevada (Lincoln County 2011)
- Lincoln County Public Lands Policy Plan, Nevada (Lincoln County 2010)
- Lyon County Comprehensive Master Plan, Nevada (Lyon County 2010)
- Modoc County General Plan, California (Modoc County 1988)
- Nye County Comprehensive Master Plan, Nevada (Nye County 2011)
- Pershing County Master Plan, Nevada (Pershing County 2002)
- Pershing County Natural Resources Management Plan: Natural Resources and Federal or State Land Use, Nevada (Pershing County 2010)
- Shasta County General Plan, California (Shasta County 2004)
- Siskiyou County General Plan, California (Siskiyou County 2010)
- Storey County Master Plan, Nevada (Storey County 1994)
- Title 7 of the Nye County Code (Comprehensive Land Use and Management Plan for Federal and State Lands within Nye County), Nevada (Nye County 2009)
- Tri-Party Framework for Interactions to Address Public Lands Issues in Nye County, Nevada (includes Nye County, the BLM, and Forest Service), Nevada (Nye County1996)
- Truckee Meadows Regional Plan (Washoe County Only), Nevada (TMRPA 2007)
- Washoe County Comprehensive Plan, Nevada (Washoe County 2005a)
- Washoe County Open Space & Natural Resource Management Plan, Nevada (Washoe County 2008)
- Washoe County Water Resources Management Plan, Nevada (Washoe County 2005b)
- White Pine County Comprehensive Master Plan, Nevada (White Pine County 2009)

- White Pine County Public Lands Policy Plan, Nevada (White Pine County 2007)
- White Pine County Water Resources Plan, Nevada (White Pine County 2006)

### 1.6.4 Other Federal Plans

- BLM Northern California Region Fire Management Plan, 2012 (BLM 2012i)
- Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Fire Management Plan, 2013 (Forest Service 2013a)
- Rangeland Health Standards and Guidelines for California and Northwestern Nevada Final EIS (BLM 1998a)
- Sage Steppe Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Final EIS, California (BLM 2008f)
- BLM Winnemucca Resource Management Plan (ROD pending)

### 1.6.5 Fish and Wildlife Species Recovery or Management Plans

Plans related to the conservation, management or recovery of wildlife, including threatened and endangered species are prepared by the USFWS, state fish and wildlife agencies, and local governments. They are intended to manage, conserve, and, as appropriate, promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

The following wildlife conservation, management, action, and recovery plans have been identified:

- Big Spring Spinedace Recovery Implementation Plan (Draft), 1999 (USFWS 1999)
- Big Spring Spinedace Recovery Plan (USFWS 1994)
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife State Wildlife Action Plan (CDFW 2005)
- Conservation Agreement and Conservation Strategy for Columbia Spotted Frog (*Rana luteiventris*) Toiyabe Great Basin Subpopulation, Nevada (USFWS 2003)
- Conservation Strategy for Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Ecosystems within the Buffalo-Skedaddle Population Management Unit (Armentrout and Hall 2005)
- Conservation Strategy for Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Ecosystems within the Massacre Population Management Unit (Northeast California Sage-Grouse Working Group 2006a)

- Conservation Strategy for Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Ecosystems within the Vya Population Management Unit (Northeast California Sage-Grouse Working Group 2006b)
- Elko County, Nevada Division of Natural Resource Management Greater Sage Grouse Management and Conservation Strategy Plan (Elko County 2012)
- Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Species Management Plan for the Quinn River/Black Rock Basins and North Fork Little Humboldt River Sub-Basin (Sevon et al. 1999)
- Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Species Management Plan for the Upper Humboldt River Drainage Basin (NDOW 2004a)
- Management Plan for Mule Deer (NDOW 2006a)
- Nevada Elk Species Management Plan (NDOW 1997)
- Nevada Wildlife Action Plan (NDOW 2013)
- Pacific States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USFWS 1986a)
- Pahranagat National Wildlife Refuge Wildland Fire Management Plan (USFWS 2001a)
- Railroad Valley Springfish Recovery Plan (USFWS 1997a)
- Recovery Plan for the Aquatic and Riparian Species of Pahranagat Valley (USFWS 1998a)
- Recovery Plan for the Carson Wandering Skipper (USFWS 2007)
- The Revised Nevada Bat Conservation Plan (Nevada Bat Working Group 2006)
- Ruby Lake Management Plan(USFWS 1986b)
- Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge Fire Management Plan (USFWS 2001b)
- Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge Water Management Plan (USFWS 1988)
- Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS 2012)
- Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Recovery Plan (USFWS 2002)
- State of Nevada, Conservation Agreement and Conservation Strategy for Bonneville Cutthroat Trout (NDOW 2006b)
- State of Nevada, Department of Wildlife, Bighorn Sheep Management Plan (NDOW 2001)

- State of Nevada, Department of Wildlife, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for Nevada and Eastern California (NDOW 2004b)
- State of Nevada, Department of Wildlife, Lincoln County Elk Management Plan (NDOW 1999a)
- State of Nevada, Department of Wildlife, Pahranagat Valley Native Fishes Management Plan (NDOW 1999b)
- State of Nevada, Department of Wildlife, White Pine County Elk Management Plan (NDOW 1999c)
- State of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, Nevada Smoke Management Program Plan (Nevada Division of Environmental Protection 1999)
- State of Nevada, Division of Environmental Protection, Solid Waste Management Plan (Nevada Division of Environmental Protection 2007)
- State of Nevada Strategic Plan for Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse (State of Nevada 2012)
- USFWS Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki henshawi*) Recovery Plan (USFWS 1995)
- USFWS Recovery Plan for the Native Fishes of the Warner Basin and Alkali Subbasin (USFWS 1998b)
- USFWS Recovery Plan for the Rare Species of Soldier Meadows (USFWS 1997b)

### 1.6.6 Tribal Plans

Tribal plans considered during the GRSG planning effort are the following:

- Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation Comprehensive RMP (Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and USDA 2005)
- Summit Lake Paiute Land Use Plan (Summit Lake Paiute Tribal Council et al. 2000)

### 1.6.7 Memorandums of Understanding

The following MOUs have been identified as being applicable to the GRSG planning effort:

- MOU between the BLM and the Forest Service (BLM and Forest Service 2011)—The MOU documents the cooperation between the parties to plan, develop, implement, and monitor landscape-level programs and projects in accordance within the following initiatives:
  - BLM REAs

  - Forest Service Climate Change Strategy
  - Landscape Conservation Cooperatives
  - Pinyon-Juniper Partnership Project
  - BLM Nevada's Landscape Approach
  - GRSG Conservation

- MOU between the BLM and the Forest Service concerning oil and gas leasing operations—The purpose of this MOU is to establish joint BLM and Forest Service policies and procedures for managing oil and gas leasing and operational activities, in accordance with oil and gas leases on National Forest System lands consistently with applicable law and policy. The MOU was signed in 2006 for the purpose of efficient effective compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The MOU establishes the roles of the Forest Service and the BLM in processing applications for permits to drill and review of subsequent operations.
- MOU between the DOI, the USDA, and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—Through the MOU, Regarding Air Quality Analyses and Mitigation for Federal Oil and Gas Decisions through the National Environmental Policy Act Process, the signatories commit to a clearly defined, efficient approach to complying with the NEPA regarding air quality and air quality related values (AQRVs), such as visibility, in connection with oil and gas development on federal lands (BLM, Forest Service, and EPA 2011).
- MOU for Water Quality Management Activities within the State of Nevada, September 2004 (BLM and Nevada Department of Environmental Protection 2004).

The BLM also entered into MOUs with cooperating agencies and entities (see Chapter 6, Consultation and Coordination). The purpose of these MOUs is to establish cooperating agency and entity relationships to cooperate in and conduct an environmental analysis and prepare the draft and final programmatic EIS for the Nevada and Northeast California GRSG amendments.

### 1.6.8 Activity Plans and Amendments

Both agencies have a number of activity-level plans and amendments that implement their respective resource management plan direction. Similar to the broad-scale plans, these activity-level plans may also be amended to reflect new information or changed circumstances. The need to amend will be determined on a site-specific analysis.

The BLM and Forest Service develop activity-level plans to provide more specific direction to localized management units for the implementation of RMPs. As part of this project, existing allotment management plans and herd management plans

that fall within occupied GRSG habitat would be evaluated for consistency with management actions set forth in this plan and updated as needed.

The BLM and Forest Service have identified the following activity plans from forest, district, and field offices in the sub-regional planning areas as being applicable to the Nevada and northeastern California GRSG planning:

- Battle Mountain District Office
  - Battle Mountain Drought Environmental Assessment (BLM 2012j)
  - Central Nevada Communications Sites Amendment (BLM 1998b)
  - Geothermal Leasing Shoshone-Eureka Planning Area (BLM 2002a)
  - Geothermal Leasing—Tonopah Planning Area (BLM 1997b)
  - Alturas Field Office Integrated Weed Management Program (BLM 2009b)
  - Oil and Gas Leasing—East side Shoshone-Eureka Planning Area (BLM 2006)
  - Oil and Gas Leasing—West side Shoshone Eureka Planning Area (BLM 2008g)
  - Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary (BLM 1988a)
  - Shoshone-Eureka RMP Amendment (BLM 1987b)
  - Shoshone-Eureka RMP Amendment for Fire Management (SERA FLUPA and Decision Record) (BLM 2002b)
  - Shoshone-Eureka Wilderness Recommendations (BLM 1987d)
- Carson City District Office
  - BLM/Navy Fallon Range Training Complex Requirements EIS (BLM and US Navy 2000)
  - Carson City District Drought Management Plan (BLM 2013a)
  - Carson City District 2011 Geothermal Leasing (BLM 2010a)
  - Carson City Field Office Fire Management Plan (BLM 2004b)
  - Denton-Rawhide Mine Land Sale Plan Amendment (BLM 2007b)
  - Desatoya Mountains Ecosystem Management Plan (BLM 1999)

  - Geothermal Resources Leasing in Churchill, Mineral, and Nye Counties, Nevada (BLM 2008h)
  - Interdisciplinary Management Plan for the Silver Saddle Ranch and the Ambrose Carson River Natural Area (BLM 2000)
  - North Douglas County Specific Management Plan Amendment (BLM 2001b)
  - Southern Washoe County Urban Interface Plan Amendment (BLM 2001c)
- Eagle Lake Field Office
  - Eagle Lake Basin Plan (BLM 1991b)
  - Nobles Trail/Humboldt Wagon Road Management Plan (BLM 2011b)
  - Pine Dunes Research Natural Area Management Plan (BLM 1987c)
- Winnemucca District Office
  - Geothermal Leasing Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Low Sensitivity Application (BLM 2002b)
  - Normal Year Fire Rehabilitation Plan (BLM 2004c)
  - Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Assessment (BLM 2005c)
  - Pine Forest Recreation Management Plan (BLM 1992a)
  - Pine Forest Recreation Activity Plan for Pine Forest Recreation Area (BLM 2001d)
  - Water Canyon Implementation Plan Amendment (BLM 2005d)
  - Water Canyon Management Plan (BLM 1997c)
  - Winnemucca District Office Forestry Plan Amendment (BLM 2003a)
- Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
  - Aurora Area Geothermal Leasing Project (Forest Service 2011a)
  - Austin and Tonopah Ranger Districts Combined Travel Management Project (Forest Service 2009b)
  - Elkhorn Vegetation Treatment Project (Forest Service 2010)
  - Ely Ranger District Travel Management Project (Forest Service 2009c)

- Geothermal Leasing On the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (Forest Service 2012b)
- McGinness Hills Geothermal Power Plant Project (Forest Service 2011b)
- Mountain City, Ruby Mountains, and Jarbidge Districts Combined Travel Management Project (Forest Service 2012c)
- North Schell Restoration Project (Forest Service 2012d)
- Santa Rosa Ranger District Travel Management Plan (Forest Service 2007a)
- White Pine and Grant-Quinn Oil and Gas Leasing Project (Forest Service 2007b)

### 1.6.9 Habitat Management Plans

A habitat management plan provides guidance for managing a defined habitat for a target wildlife species, protecting and improving habitat for that species and for other species using the habitat. These plans are usually written in coordination with state fish and wildlife agencies.

- Aquatic Habitat Management Plan; Mahogany Creek Revised, Nevada (BLM 1974)
- Aquatic Habitat Management Plan; North Fork, Little Humboldt River, Nevada (BLM 1982c)
- Big Game Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (NDOW 1993)
- Condor Canyon Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1990b)
- Desatoya Range Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (NDOW 1986)
- Habitat Management Plan, Disaster Peak Wildlife Habitat Area, Nevada (BLM 1969)
- Fox Mountain-Granite Range Habitat Management Plan, Nevada 1970 (revised 1989)
- Jackson Mountains Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, Nevada 1979 (revised 1981)
- Little Owyhee/Snowstorm Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1987e)
- Montana-Double H Wildlife Habitat Area (BLM 1990c)
- North Eccles Pronghorn Antelope HMP (1989)
- Bighorn Sheep Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (NDOW 2001)
- Owyhee Desert Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1976)

- Pine Forest Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1981)
- Pine Nut Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1987f)
- Soldier Meadows Desert Dace Habitat Management Plan, Nevada 1983
- Sonoma Creek Aquatic Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1985b)
- Sonoma Mountain Habitat Management Plan, Nevada (BLM 1975)

### 1.6.10 Secretarial Order 3336

Wildfire has been identified as one of the primary factors linked to loss of sagebrush-steppe habitat and corresponding population declines of greater sage-grouse (Connelly and Braun, 1997; Miller and Eddleman, 2001). While fire is a naturally occurring disturbance in the sagebrush steppe, the incursion of non-native annual grasses has facilitated an increase in mean fire frequency which can preclude the opportunity for sagebrush to become re-established. As such, the RMP includes requirements (referred to as Greater Sage-grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessment in appendices in Draft documents) - that landscape scale Fire and Invasives Assessments be completed and updated regularly to more accurately define specific areas to be treated to address threats to sagebrush steppe habitat from wildfire. Within the Great Basin, the first five priority areas of conservation (PACs) were singled out for the initial round of assessments because fire was identified as a primary threat to greater sage-grouse habitat and the first phase of these assessments were completed in March of 2015. Additionally, the Secretary of Interior issued Secretarial Order 3336 on January 5, 2015 which establishes the protection, conservation and restoration of "the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem and, in particular, greater sage-grouse habitat, while maintaining safe and efficient operations as a critical fire management priority for the Department". The Secretarial Order will result in a final report of activities to be implemented prior to the 2016 Western fire season. This will include prioritization and allocation of fire resources and the integration of emerging science, enhancing existing tools to implement the Resource Management Plan and improve our ability to protect sagebrush-steppe from damaging wildfires.

## 1.7 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT POLICIES

BLM vegetation management involves all programs that rely on healthy plant species and communities to meet their objectives. The BLM's overarching goal for vegetation management is to plan and implement, through an interdisciplinary collaborative process, a set of actions that improve biological diversity and ecosystem function and promote and maintain native plant communities that are resilient to disturbance and invasive species (BLM 2007a).

Federal laws and regulations guiding vegetation management are the following:

- Carlson-Foley Act, 1968

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 1976
- Section 15 of the Federal Noxious Weed Act, 1974
- National Environmental Policy Act, 1969
- Noxious Weed Control Act, 2004
- Plant Protection Act, 2000
- Public Rangelands Improvement Act, 1978
- Taylor Grazing Act, 1934
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-148)

Vegetation treatment is fundamental to BLM vegetation management. Policies and plans related to vegetation treatment are the following:

- A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (Forests and Rangelands 2006)
- BLM Manual 620—Wildland Fire Management, Chapter 3, Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BLM 2003b)
- BLM Manual 9015, Integrated Weed Management (BLM 1992b)
- Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1; BLM 2007c)
- EIS Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (BLM 1991a)
- Interagency Burned Area Rehabilitation Guidebook (DOI 2006)
- National Fire Plan (DOI et al. 2001)
- Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire Adapted Ecosystems: A Cohesive Strategy (Forest Service 2000)
- Pulling Together: National Strategy for Management of Invasive Plants (BLM 1998c)