

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.I INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (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, Forest Service (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 will be generically referred to as land use plans (LUPs) throughout this document, unless the reference is to a specific BLM or Forest Service LUP.

The BLM and Forest Service Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Proposed Plan provides a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for GRSG in the most valuable habitat. Land use allocations in the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA), while minimizing disturbance in General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA). In addition to establishing protective land use allocations, the Proposed Plan would implement a suite of management tools, such as disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives and monitoring, mitigation approaches, adaptive management triggers and responses, and other protective measures throughout the range. These overlapping and reinforcing conservation measures would work in concert to improve and restore GRSG habitat condition and provide consistency in how the BLM and Forest Service manage activities in GRSG habitat in the planning area.

ES.1.1 Rationale for the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy and Land Use Plan Amendment

This land use plan amendment (LUPA) 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). In that finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered species. A warranted, but precluded determination is one of three results that may occur after a petition is filed by the public to list a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This finding indicates that immediate publication of a proposed rule to list the species is precluded by higher-priority listing proposals; that is, a species should be listed based on the available science, but listing other species takes priority because they are more in need of protection.

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. Of the five listing factors reviewed, 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” (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and Forest Service as conservation measures in LUPs.

Consistent with the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011),¹ the BLM as the lead agency, together with the Forest Service as a cooperating agency, is preparing 15 environmental impact statements (EISs), with associated plan amendments and revisions. These documents provide a set of management alternatives focused on specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG (see **Figure ES-1**, Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Boundaries).

Science-based decision-making and collaboration with state and local partners are fundamental to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The 15 GRSG LUP/EISs address threats to GRSG identified by state fish and wildlife agencies, the BLM National Technical Team, and the USFWS in the context of its listing decision and the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report. The COT report was prepared by wildlife biologists from state and federal agencies and provides a blueprint for the overall conservation approach set forth in the BLM and Forest Service GRSG LUP/EISs (USFWS 2013).² Where consistent with

¹ BLM (US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management). 2011. Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National. Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy. Washington, DC. December 27, 2011.

² USFWS (US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2013. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. USFWS, Denver, Colorado. February 2013.

conservation objectives, the GRSG LUP/EISs adopt unique state- and stakeholder-developed approaches and priorities. Additional science-based reviews by the US Geological Survey and related scientific literature provided further guidance on specific issues that arose in developing the final BLM and Forest Service GRSG LUP/EISs. In addition, regular meetings with the Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force provided additional opportunities for coordination with member states.³

Figure ES-1



ES.1.2 Description of the Planning Area and Habitat Management Areas

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM and Forest Service will make decisions during this planning effort. The planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction. The Northwest Colorado sub-regional GRSG planning area covers all or a portion of 10 counties in northwestern Colorado: Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Larimer, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit. While the planning area consists of all lands

³ The Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force works to identify and implement high priority conservation actions and integrate ongoing actions necessary to preclude the need for the GRSG to be listed under the ESA. The Task Force includes designees from the 11 western states where GRSG is found as well as representatives from USFWS, BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, US Geological Survey, and Department of the Interior.

regardless of ownership, decisions resulting from this LUPA would apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in GRSG habitats (“decision area”), including surface and split-estate lands with BLM-administered subsurface mineral rights. **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment, describes the current resource and resource use conditions in the planning area.

GRSG habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the decision area consists of lands allocated as PHMA and GHMA (**Table ES-1**, Habitat Management Areas in the Northwest Colorado Planning Area, and **Figure ES-2**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas – Northwest Colorado GRGS LUPA/EIS). PHMA and GHMA are defined as follows:

- PHMA (926,700 acres)—BLM-administered and National Forest System lands identified as having the highest value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies for PHMA are derived from and generally follow the Preliminary Priority Habitat boundaries identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS (**Chapter 3**) but may be modified based on the objectives of each alternative. Areas of PHMA largely coincide with areas identified as Priority Areas for Conservation in the COT report.
- GHMA (742,900 acres)—BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that require some special management to sustain GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies GHMA are derived from and generally follow the Preliminary General Habitat boundaries identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS (**Chapter 3**) but may be modified based on the objectives of each alternative.

The planning area includes other BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that are not allocated as habitat management areas for GRSG. The Northwest Colorado LUPA/EIS does not establish any additional management for these lands; they will be managed according to the existing, underlying LUPs for the area.

Table ES-1
Habitat Management Areas in the Northwest Colorado Planning Area

Habitat Management Area	Acres of BLM-Administered/National Forest System Surface Lands	Percent of BLM-Administered/National Forest System Surface Lands in Planning Area
PHMA	926,700	53
GHMA	742,900	42
Other BLM-administered/National Forest System lands	82,000	5

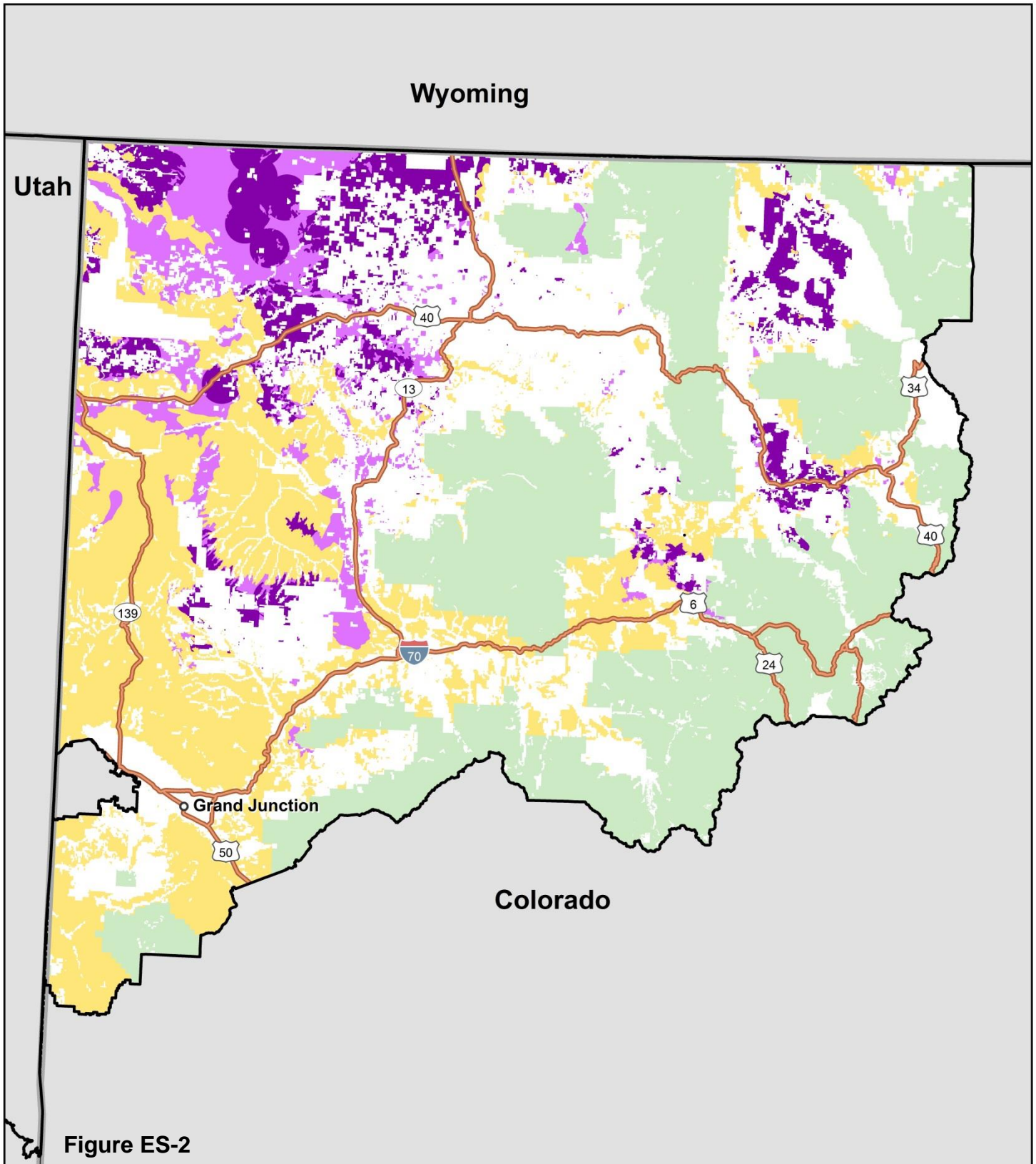
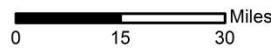


Figure ES-2

Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas - Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS

- BLM/National Forest System Priority Habitat Management Areas
- BLM/National Forest System General Habitat Management Areas
- Other BLM Lands
- Other National Forest System Lands
- Private, State, and Other Federal Lands
- EIS Boundary
- State Boundary



Map Area



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed.

ES.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this LUPA is to identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by reducing, minimizing, or eliminating threats to that habitat. The BLM and Forest Service will consider such measures in the context of the multiple-use and sustained yield mandates of FLPMA and the requirements in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The major threats identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision that apply to the Northwest Colorado Sub-region include:

- Wildfire—Loss of large areas of GRSG habitat due to wildfire
- Invasive species—Conversion of GRSG habitat to invasive annual grass- (e.g., cheatgrass) dominated plant communities
- Conifer invasion—Encroachment of pinyon and/or juniper into GRSG habitat
- Infrastructure—Fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to human development activities such as right-of-way (ROW) and renewable energy development
- Climate change—Fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to climate stress
- Grazing—Loss of habitat components due to improper livestock, wild horse and burro, and large wildlife use
- Hard rock mining—Fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to mineral exploration and development
- Oil and gas development—Fragmentation of GRSG habitat due to mineral exploration and development
- Human uses—Fragmentation of GRSG habitat and/or modification of GRSG behavior

This LUPA with associated EIS is needed to respond to the USFWS's March 2010 "warranted, but precluded" ESA listing petition decision (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant factor in its finding on the petition to list the GRSG. In its listing decision, the USFWS noted that changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of GRSG populations. Changes in land allocations and conservation measures in the BLM and Forest Service LUPs provide a means to implement regulatory mechanisms to address the inadequacy identified by the USFWS.

ES.3 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed federal action is the Proposed Plan, which identifies resource management actions in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained yield mandates of FLPMA and requirements in the NFMA. The proposed action is

intended to provide a consistent framework for managing GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. The alternatives, including the Proposed Plan, comprise desired future outcomes and a range of management actions, allowable uses, and land use allocations that guide management on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands to conserve, restore, and enhance GRSG habitat. The Proposed Plan (see **Section ES.6**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment and Environmental Effects, and **Chapter 2**) represents the agencies' approach for addressing the purpose and need.

ES.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE LUPA/EIS

ES.4.1 Scoping

The BLM and Forest Service initiated the LUPA/EIS process on December 9, 2011, with the publication in the *Federal Register* of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to begin a planning effort. A public scoping process began in January 2012 and included a series of seven public meetings in various locations throughout the planning area. 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. The scoping process included soliciting input from interested state and local governments, tribal governments, other federal agencies and organizations, and individuals to identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the plan amendment and to assist in the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives (See **Section 6.5.1**, Scoping Process).

The final Scoping Summary Report, available online at <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html>, was prepared in conjunction with all the GRSG LUPAs. It summarizes the scoping and issue-identification process and describes 13 broad issue categories identified during the scoping process (see also **Section 1.5.2**, Issues Identified for Consideration in the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments).

ES.4.2 Cooperating Agency Collaboration

Throughout this planning effort, the BLM and Forest Service have engaged with multiple federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as Native American tribes. Consistent with the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) and FLPMA and Forest Service Manual 1920 and the NFMA, cooperating agencies share knowledge and resources to achieve desired outcomes for public lands and communities within statutory and regulatory frameworks. A total of 22 agencies and tribes signed Memoranda of Understanding to formalize their cooperating agency relationship. The BLM and Forest Service met with and provided relevant information to cooperating agencies throughout the planning process. For more information, see **Chapter 6**, Consultation and Coordination.

ES.4.3 Development of the Draft LUPA/EIS

Development of Management Alternatives

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations (40 CFR, Part 1500), the Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS planning team considered public input and developed a reasonable range of alternatives for the Draft LUPA/EIS.

The planning team developed four unique alternatives, including one No Action Alternative and three action alternatives, which were subsequently analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS. Each of the preliminary action alternatives was designed to:

- Respond to USFWS-identified issues and threats to GRSG and its habitat, including specific threats identified in the COT report
- Address the 13 range-wide issues
- Fulfill the purpose and need for the LUPA
- Meet the mandates of the FLPMA and the NFMA

Collectively, the three action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D) analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS offer a range of possible management approaches for responding to the purpose and need, as well as the planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping. While the overarching goal of the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions, which if selected as the final plan, would constitute a unique LUPA.

Publication of Draft LUPA/EIS

Public Comment Period

A Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft LUPA/EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on August 16, 2013. The NOA initiated a 90-day public comment period, which was extended to December 2, 2013, resulting in a 108-day comment period. The BLM and Forest Service also held four three-hour public comment open houses for the Draft LUPA/EIS in October 2013.

Comment Analysis

During the Draft LUPA/EIS public comment period, the BLM and Forest Service received thousands of written comments by mail, e-mail, and submissions at the public meetings. This included 329 unique comment letters, forms, and e-mails and 7,270 form letters. Comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns. Upon receipt, the BLM and Forest Service reviewed the comments, grouped similar substantive comments under an appropriate topic heading, and evaluated and wrote summary responses addressing the comment topics. The response indicated whether the commenters' points would result in new information or changes being included in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS. Chapter 6, **Section 6.5.4**, Public Comment on the Draft LUPA/EIS, provides a detailed description of the comment analysis

methodology and an overview of the public comments received on the Draft LUPA/EIS. Complete comment summaries and responses, including rationale and any associated changes made in the Proposed LUPA/FEIS, can be found in **Appendix P**.

ES.5 LUPA/EIS ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

ES.5.1 Alternative A: No Action

Under Alternative A, neither the BLM nor Forest Service would develop new management actions to protect GRSB habitat. No PHMA or GHMA would be delineated. Management of existing threats to GRSB populations and habitat, such as infrastructure, invasive species, grazing, mineral development, and wildfire, would continue in accordance with existing land use planning documents.

ES.5.2 Alternative B

GRSB conservation measures in *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures* (NTT 2011)⁴ were used to form BLM/Forest Service management direction under Alternative B. Conservation measures under Alternative B are focused on PHMA (areas that have the highest conservation value to maintaining or increasing GRSB populations). Alternative B would apply management actions to PHMA and GHMA, including actions that would exclude ROW development in PHMA and avoid development in GHMA, would close PHMA to fluid mineral leasing, mineral material sales, and nonenergy leasable minerals, and would recommend proposed withdrawal from locatable mineral entry in PHMA. These management actions would reduce surface disturbance in PHMA and would minimize disturbance in GHMA, thereby maintaining GRSB habitat.

ES.5.3 Alternative C

Alternative C is the most restrictive approach to GRSB conservation. Conservation measures under Alternative C are focused on PHMA. These conservation measures include creating an ACEC for all PHMA and a grazing closure over all GRSB habitat in the planning area. Alternative C would eliminate all future ROWs, fluid mineral leasing, nonenergy leasable mineral development, and mineral material sales on GRSB habitat. Alternative C would also recommend proposed withdrawal from locatable mineral entry for all GRSB habitat. This alternative would substantially reduce surface disturbance in all GRSB habitat. Under Alternative C, the BLM would take a passive management approach to vegetation management.

⁴ NTT (Sage-Grouse National Technical Team). 2011. *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures*. December 2011.

ES.5.4 Alternative D

Alternative D, the agencies' preferred alternative from the Draft LUPA/EIS, seeks to allocate resources among competing human interests and land uses and the conservation of natural resource values, including GRSG habitat. At the same time, it would sustain and enhance ecological integrity across the landscape, including plant, wildlife, and fish habitat. Alternative D incorporates local adjustments made in concert with the cooperating agencies in *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures* (NTT 2011).⁵ The purpose is to provide a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses. Conservation measures under Alternative D are focused on both PHMA and other GRSG habitat. Alternative D would limit disturbance in GRSG habitat by excluding wind and solar energy development, avoiding all other ROW development, applying no surface occupancy stipulations to fluid mineral development in PHMA and GHMA, and closing PHMA and GHMA to nonenergy leasable mineral development and mineral material sales. These management actions would protect GRSG habitat while allowing other activities, subject to conditions.

Under Alternative D, the BLM management would support sagebrush/perennial grass ecosystems enhancements, would increase fire suppression in PHMA and GHMA, and would manage livestock grazing to maintain or enhance sagebrush and perennial grass ecosystems.

ES.6 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PROPOSED PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

In consideration of public comments, best available science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service developed this Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan ("Proposed Plan"). The Proposed Plan represents the BLM's and Forest Service's proposed approach for meeting the purpose and need consistent with the agencies' legal and policy mandates.

The BLM and Forest Service Proposed Plan addresses threats to GRSG and its habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision that apply to the northwest Colorado planning area, as well as threats described in the COT report. The Proposed Plans seek to provide greater regulatory certainty for management actions intended to conserve the GRSG (**Table ES-2**, Key Components of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats). In making its determination of whether the GRSG is warranted to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, the USFWS will

⁵ NTT (Sage-Grouse National Technical Team). 2011. *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures*. December 2011.

evaluate the degree to which the land use planning decisions proposed in this LUPA/EIS address threats to GRSG and its habitat.

The Proposed Plan would maintain and enhance GRSG populations and habitat. It would apply management actions, subject to valid existing rights, to other uses and resources, such as:

- Providing a framework for prioritizing areas in PHMA and GHMA for wildfire, invasive annual grass, and conifer treatments
- Managing areas as ROW avoidance or exclusion for certain types of lands and realty uses, requiring specific design features, and limiting new development where a disturbance cap has been reached
- Adjusting grazing practices as necessary based on GRSG habitat objectives, Land Health Standards, and ecological site potential
- Applying no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations, with limited exceptions, to fluid mineral development in PHMA and closing PHMA to nonenergy leasable development and mineral material sales

The Proposed Plan would also establish screening criteria and conditions for new anthropogenic activities in PHMA and GHMA to ensure a net conservation gain to GRSG. The Proposed Plan would reduce habitat disturbance and fragmentation through limitations on surface-disturbing activities, while addressing changes in resource condition and use through monitoring and adaptive management.

The Proposed Plan adopts key elements of the State of Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Steering Committee 2008)⁶ by establishing conservation measures and focusing restoration efforts in the same key areas most valuable to the GRSG.

For a full description of the BLM and Forest Service Proposed Plan, see **Chapter 2**.

⁶ Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Steering Committee. 2008. Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan. Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, Colorado.

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
All threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Adaptive Management Plan, which allows for more restrictive land use allocations and management actions to be implemented if habitat or population hard triggers are met. • Require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to GRSG. • Monitor implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures in GRSG habitats according to the Habitat Assessment Framework. • Apply buffers necessary based on project type and location to address impacts on leks when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. • Apply Required Design Features (RDFs) when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat. (BLM only) • Incorporate RDFs as land use plan guidelines. (Forest Service only) • Prioritize the leasing and development of fluid mineral resources outside of GRSG habitat. (BLM only) • Work with the operator to locate fluid mineral development outside GRSG habitat. (Forest Service only)
All development threats, including mining, infrastructure, and energy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Implement the disturbance cap, which provides an anthropogenic disturbance cap of 3% within the Biologically Significant Unit and proposed project analysis areas. • PHMA: Implement a density cap of an average of 1 energy and mining facility per 640 acres.
Energy development—fluid minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation without waiver or modification, and with limited exception. • GHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to Timing Limitation stipulations. Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to NSO with waiver, modification, or exception within 2 miles of active leks.
Energy development—wind energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for wind energy development under any conditions) • GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for wind energy development with special stipulations)
Energy development—solar energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions) • GHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions)
Infrastructure—major ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations) • GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations)

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
Infrastructure—minor ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations) • GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations)
Mining—locatable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Apply RDFs to locatable minerals consistent with applicable law.
Mining—nonenergy leasable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Closed area (not available for nonenergy leasable minerals)
Mining—salable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Closed area (not available for salable minerals) with a limited exception (may remain open to free use permits and expansion of existing active pits if criteria are met)
Mining—coal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA is essential habitat for GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1)
Livestock grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the review and processing of grazing permits/leases in Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) followed by PHMA. (BLM only) • Adjust grazing management to move towards desired habitat conditions consistent with ecological site capability. (Forest Service only) • The NEPA analysis for renewals and modifications of grazing permits/leases will include specific management thresholds, based on the GRSG Habitat Objectives Table, Land Health Standards and ecological site potential, to allow adjustments to grazing that have already been subjected to NEPA analysis. (BLM only) • Consider closure of grazing allotments, pastures, or portions of pastures, or managing the allotment as a forage reserve as opportunities arise under applicable regulations, where removal of livestock grazing would enhance the ability to achieve desired habitat conditions. (Forest Service only) • Prioritize field checks in SFA followed by PHMA to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits. (BLM only)
Free-roaming equid management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in GRSG habitat within established Appropriate Management Level (AML) ranges to achieve and maintain GRSG habitat objectives. • Prioritize rangeland health assessment, gathers and population growth suppression techniques, monitoring, and review and adjustment of AMLs and preparation of Herd Management Area Plans in GRSG habitat.
Range management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow range improvements which do not impact GRSG, or which provide a conservation benefit to GRSG such as fences for protecting important seasonal habitats.

Table ES-2
Key Components of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
Addressing COT Report Threats

Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)	Key Component of the Northwest Colorado Proposed Plan
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Do not construct new recreation facilities. • PHMA: Allow special recreation permits in only if their effects on GRSG and its habitat are neutral or result in a net conservation gain.
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize areas that are vulnerable to wildfires and prescribe actions important for GRSG protection. (BLM only) • Protection of GRSG habitat should receive high consideration, along with other high values, when positioning resources. (Forest Service only) • PHMA and GHMA: Prioritize post-fire treatments. (BLM only) • Design fuel treatments to restore, enhance, or maintain GRSG habitat. (Forest Service only)
Nonnative, invasive plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve GRSG habitat by treating annual grasses. • Treat sites in PHMA and GHMA that contain invasive species infestations through an integrated vegetation management approach.
Sagebrush removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover. • All BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions regarding the actions needed to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives for GRSG.
Pinyon and/or juniper expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats, prioritizing occupied GRSG habitat.
Agricultural conversion and exurban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMA: Retain in federal management.

ES.7 SUMMARY

Since the release of the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service have continued to work closely with a broad range of governmental partners, including the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USFWS and US Geological Survey in DOI, Indian tribes, governors, state agencies, and county commissioners. Through this cooperation, the BLM and Forest Service have developed the Proposed Plan that, in accordance with applicable law, achieves the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

Conservation of the GRSG is a large-scale challenge that requires a landscape-scale solution that spans 11 western states. The Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS achieves consistent, range-wide conservation objectives, as outlined

below. Additionally, the Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS aligns with the State of Colorado's priorities and land management approaches consistent with conservation of GRSG.

Minimize additional surface disturbance. The most effective way to conserve the GRSG is to protect existing intact habitat. The BLM and Forest Service aim to reduce habitat fragmentation and protect key habitat areas. The Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS minimizes surface disturbance on over 1.7 million acres of BLM-administered and National Forest System lands by allocating lands as PHMA or GHMA with decisions that aim to conserve GRSG habitat.

The limitations on mineral and ROW development, along with the disturbance cap, lek buffers, and adaptive management, would result in a net conservation gain for GRSG. The Proposed Plan prioritizes development outside of GRSG habitat and focuses on a landscape-scale approach to conserving GRSG habitat. In the context of the planning area, land use allocations under the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbances in PHMA, while minimizing disturbance in GHMA.

Improve habitat condition. While restoring sagebrush habitat can be very difficult in the short term, particularly in the most arid areas, it is often possible to enhance habitat quality through purposeful management. The Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS commits to management actions necessary to achieve science-based vegetation and GRSG habitat management objectives established in the Proposed Plan.

Habitat restoration and vegetation management actions would improve GRSG habitat and prioritize restoration to benefit PHMA. As a result, the restoration and management of vegetation actions would focus on GRSG.

Reduce threat of rangeland fire to sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat. Rangeland fire can destroy sagebrush habitat and lead to the conversion of previously healthy habitat into nonnative cheatgrass-dominated landscapes. Experts have identified fire as one of the greatest threats to sagebrush habitat.

The Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS incorporates Secretarial Order 3336 and sets forth protocols to improve the BLM's ability to protect GRSG habitat from damaging wildfire. Prescribed fire would be used only to improve or maintain habitat for GRSG and to meet specific fuels objective standards.

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