Chapter 1
Introduction

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Overview

This initiative is the result of the March 2010 United States (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 12-Month Finding, USFWS concluded that Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) was "warranted, but precluded" for listing as a threatened or endangered species. The USFWS reviewed the status and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). Of the five listing factors reviewed, 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" in land use plans (LUPs) posed "**a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future**" (emphasis added). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) as conservation measures in LUPs. Conservation measures would include both restrictions on land uses and programs that affect GRSG and measures to reduce the impacts of BLM/Forest Service programs or authorized uses. Because the BLM and Forest Service manage 50 percent of GRSG habitat across the range, the agencies have begun the process of amending their LUPs to include the addition of GRSG conservation measures.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the BLM to develop and periodically revise or amend its Resource Management Plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered public lands. For the purpose of this document, the term RMP applies to all BLM LUPs, including the BLM's older Management Framework Plans. The National Forest Management

Act of 1976 (NFMA) directs the Forest Service to develop and periodically revise or amend its Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans), which guide management of National Forest System lands. These two agencies' plans are generically referred to as LUPs throughout the remainder of this document.

In response to the USFWS findings, the BLM and the Forest Service intend to prepare LUPAs (LUPAs) with associated environmental impact statements (EISs) to incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with national BLM and Forest Service policy. The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of BLM and Forest Service LUPs and address, as necessary, amendments throughout the range of the GRSG (with the exceptions of the bi-state population in California and Nevada and the Washington State distinct population segment, which will be addressed through other planning efforts). The BLM is the lead agency, and the Forest Service is a cooperating agency in developing these EISs. These EISs have been coordinated under two administrative planning regions: the Rocky Mountain Region and the Great Basin Region. These regions are drawn roughly to correspond with the threats identified by USFWS in the 2010 listing decision, along with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Management Zones (MZs) framework (Stiver et al. 2006).

The Rocky Mountain Region comprises LUPs in the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and portions of Utah. This region comprises the WAFWA MZs I (Great Plains), II (Wyoming Basin) and a portion of VII (Colorado Plateau). The Northwest Colorado planning area overlaps two WAFWA MZs, II and VII. Refer to **Figure 1-1**, Greater Sage-Grouse WAFWA MZs and Colorado MZs. The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, the greatest of which are habitat loss and fragmentation caused by development (e.g., oil and gas development, energy transmission, and wind energy development).

The Great Basin Region comprises LUPs in California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Utah and Montana. This region comprises the WAFWA MZs III (Southern Great Basin), IV (Snake River Plain), and V (Northern Great Basin). The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, the greatest of which are 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) EIS analysis is being done at the sub-regional level. These sub-regions are generally based on the identified threats to the GRSG and the WAFWA MZs.

In addition to the WAFWA MZs, the BLM/Forest Service have also identified 21 Colorado MZs based on data from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in which they identified priority habitat (PH), general habitat (GH), and linkage/connectivity habitat. The Colorado MZs

are used in the analysis to identify site-specific impacts and to differentiate between different areas of identified habitat. Refer to **Figure 1-1**. **Table 1.1** represents acres per Colorado MZ and field office.

Table 1.1
Colorado GRSG Management Zones

Colorado Management Zone	Field Office	Acres (All Ownership)	Acres (BLM/Forest Service Surface)
1	LSFO	15,200	8,400
2	LSFO	172,900	120,100
3	LSFO	547,400	461,800
4	LSFO	244,400	111,100
5	LSFO	258,300	123,100
6	LSFO	307,900	50,600
7	LSFO/Routt National Forest	83,300	18,000
8	LSFO	252,300	4,700
9	LSFO	372,400	150,000
9	WRFO	50,800	21,800
10	LSFO	3,700	100
10	WRFO	282,000	190,300
11	KFO/Routt National Forest	413,200	138,600
12	KFO	18,300	6,800
13	KFO/Routt National Forest	272,400	72,900
14	CRVFO	97,300	41,000
14	LSFO	51,000	2,300
14	KFO/Routt National Forest	0	0
15	WRFO	47,600	3,000
16	WRFO	11,300	11,300
17	CRVFO	37,600	23,900
17	GJFO	78,600	14,500
17	WRFO	237,500	75,900
18	WRFO	19,200	13,000
19	CRVFO	5,400	2,100
19	WRFO	219,800	62,400
19	LSFO	0	0
20	LSFO	40,600	2,200
21	KFO	10,700	2,200
Total		**4,151,100**	**1,732,100**

On a sub-regional level, the BLM Northwest District and the Routt National Forest are proposing to complete this Northwest Colorado EIS to analyze the effects of amending up to six LUPs in order to provide Northwest Colorado-wide consistent management of GRSG habitat for all included BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. These Proposed LUPAs would identify and incorporate appropriate regulatory mechanisms to conserve, enhance, and/or restore GRSG habitat, and would be designed to eliminate, reduce, or minimize

threats to GRSG priority and general habitats on BLM and National Forest System lands in Northwest Colorado. The Proposed LUPAs address both Listing Factors A and D (above). The BLM and Forest Service intend to issue separate Records of Decision (RODs) for the LUPAs of each agency, and expect that they could provide a basis to reduce the need for USFWS to list GRSG as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA. The following LUPs are proposed to be amended during this effort to incorporate appropriate conservation measures:

- BLM Colorado River Valley RMP (projected to be completed in 2015)
- BLM Grand Junction RMP (projected to be completed in 2015)
- BLM Kremmling RMP (projected to be completed in 2015)
- BLM Little Snake RMP (BLM 2011a)
- BLM White River RMP (BLM 1997) and associated amendments (White River Oil and Gas Amendment projected to be completed in 2015; Proposed Plan released in March 2015)
- Routt National Forest Plan/Oil and Gas Leasing Availability Decision, and associated amendments (Forest Service 1997)

While the BLM and Forest Service propose to amend the existing LUPs, there could be conservation measures contained in the LUPs that the BLM and Forest Service consider protective of GRSG and/or GRSG habitat that the BLM and Forest Service would choose not to amend.

Due to the ongoing planning effort on the Roan Plateau RMP and EIS (BLM 2007d), the BLM has analyzed impacts on GRSG habitat in the Roan Plateau planning area but does not anticipate making a decision on these lands during this planning process. Separate decisions will be made for this area in the revised or amended Roan Plateau RMP/EIS (Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register on January 25, 2013).

This LUPA/EIS undertaking is one of seven that are ongoing within the eleven western states that have GRSG occupied habitat. A goal of all such LUPAs is to ensure consistency across each sub-region, as well as across the range of the GRSG.

BLM Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy (BLM 2012a) (included as Appendix A to the Draft LUPA/EIS) provides direction for considering GRSG conservation measures in the land use planning process. The Instruction Memorandum advises that the BLM consider conservation measures when revising or amending LUPs in GRSG habitat. The conservation measures that should be considered were developed by the Sage-Grouse National Technical Team (NTT), a group of resource

specialists, land use planners, and scientists from the BLM, state fish and wildlife agencies, USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and US Geological Survey. The report drafted by the NTT, A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (NTT 2011) provides the latest science and best biological judgment to assist in making management decisions relating to the GRSG. The Instruction Memorandum requires that the BLM consider all applicable conservation measures developed by the NTT when revising or amending its LUPs in GRSG habitat.

This LUPA addresses GRSG habitat within the Northwest District. The BLM's Northwest District office and the Routt National Forest have preliminarily mapped this habitat in coordination with the CPW. GRSG habitat falls into one of the two following categories:

- **Priority habitat (PH)—**Areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations; these areas include breeding, late brood-rearing, and winter concentration areas
- **General habitat (GH)—**Areas of seasonal or year-round habitat outside of priority habitat
- **Linkage/Connectivity Habitat—**Areas that have been identified as broader regions of connectivity important to facilitate the movement of GRSG and maintain ecological processes

The current delineations of GRSG habitat may be refined in collaboration with CPW, Forest Service, and USFWS as additional information is gained and data are refined regarding GRSG habitats and use.

Through this land use planning process an LUPA, the BLM and Forest Service will refine PH and GH data to: (1) delineate priority habitat management areas (PHMA) and analyze actions within PHMA to conserve GRSG habitat functionality, or where possible, improve habitat functionality; (2) identify general habitat management areas (GHMA) and analyze actions within GHMA that provide for major life history function (i.e., breeding, migration, or winter survival) in order to maintain genetic diversity needed for sustainable GRSG populations; and (3) identify linkage/connectivity habitat management areas (LCHMA) and analyze actions within LCHMA that provide for major life history function (i.e., breeding, migration, or winter survival) in order to maintain genetic diversity needed for sustainable GRSG populations.

According to the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook, the BLM regulation in 43 CFR 1610.5-4 provides that land use plan decisions and supporting components can be maintained to reflect minor changes in data. Maintenance is limited to further refining, documenting, or clarifying a previously approved decision incorporated in the plan. Maintenance must not expand the scope of resource

uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved plan.

Plan maintenance is not considered a plan amendment and does not require formal public involvement, interagency coordination, or the NEPA analysis required for making new land use plan decisions. Maintenance actions must be documented in the plan or supporting components (i.e., recorded so that the change and Field Manager concurrence are evident). Examples of maintenance actions in the context of this LUPA include:

1. Correcting minor data, typographical, mapping, or tabular data errors in the planning records after a plan or plan amendment has been completed
2. Applying an existing oil and gas lease stipulation to a new area prior to the lease sale based on new inventory data (e.g., apply an existing protective stipulation for GRSG to a newly discovered GRSG lek)
3. Refining the known habitat of a special status species addressed in the plan based on new information
4. Modifying or waiving the lease stipulation language in the LUP consistent with the criteria outlined in the LUP

Plan maintenance must occur continuously so that the LUPA and its supporting records reflect the current status of decision implementation and knowledge of resource conditions. See BLM Planning Process, below.

On November 21, 2014, the USGS published "Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse—A Review" (Manier et al. 2014). The USGS review provided a compilation and summary of 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 Draft Northwest Colorado LUPA. Based on this review, when analyzing BLM 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 report (Manier et al. 2014) when analyzing impacts of proposed projects with potential to impact GRSG or GRSG habitat (Open File Report 2014-1239) in both PHMA and GHMA, as detailed in [**Appendix B**, Buffer Distances and Evaluation of Impacts on Leks].

While habitat loss and fragmentation have been identified as the primary threat to the GRSG within its eastern range, this area is not immune to the threat of wildfire. Within the Rocky Mountain region, wildfire was identified by the COT report (USFWS 2013) as a present and widespread threat in 7 of 13 Priority Areas for Conservation and as a present but localized threat in the remaining Priority Areas for Conservation. While fire is a naturally occurring disturbance

in the sagebrush steppe, the incursion of nonnative annual grasses is facilitating an increase in mean fire frequency, which can preclude the opportunity for sagebrush to become re-established. As such, the LUPA includes requirements (**Appendix O**, Greater Sage-grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessment) that landscape-scale fire and invasive species assessments be completed and updated regularly to more accurately define specific areas to be treated to address threats to sagebrush steppe habitat. Within the Rocky Mountain region, assessments have not yet been completed but will be scheduled based on the need to identify and address potential threats. Additionally, the Secretary of 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, GRSG 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 LUPA and improving the BLM and Forest Service's ability to protect sagebrush steppe from damaging wildfires.

1.1.2 Partner Agency Involvement

Forest Service Involvement

The Forest Service is a cooperating agency with BLM as part of the GRSG planning strategy. Across the range of the GRSG, the Forest Service manages approximately 8 percent of the total GRSG habitat, that combined with the approximately 50 percent managed by the BLM, represents approximately 58 percent GRSG habitat across its range.

The Forest Service has partnered with the BLM to help complete the LUPAs and EISs to implement the GRSG planning strategy. As part of the initial Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register on December 9, 2011, numerous Forest Service LUPs were identified to be amended through this combined effort. After further evaluation, a Notice of Correction was published in the Federal Register on February 10, 2012, which added several additional Forest Service LUPs to the list of plans to be amended through this process.

The Forest Service has structured their involvement similar to the BLM strategy, with involvement at the national, regional and sub-regional levels. Since December 2011, the BLM and Forest Service have been working jointly through scoping, issue and alternative development, impact analysis, and document completion. At the culmination of this process, the Forest Service intends to issue Forest Service-specific RODs to amend Forest Service LUPs based on the analysis and evaluation presented in the Draft and Final EISs.

US Fish and Wildlife Service Involvement

The USFWS is a cooperating agency with the BLM as part of the GRSG planning strategy. The USFWS is ultimately responsible for the evaluation and findings regarding potential ESA listing of the GRSG. The March 2010 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) indicated that GRSG is warranted for listing but precluded by higher-priority listing actions ("warranted but precluded"). This designation placed the GRSG on the federal list of candidate species.

The USFWS, in a separate but related effort, created the Conservation Objectives Team to identify conservation objectives to ensure the long-term viability of the GRSG. Recognizing the management expertise and authority of state wildlife agencies, this team is composed of state and USFWS representatives. The Conservation Objectives Team identified the major threats to each GRSG population across the range of the species, identified range-wide conservation objectives for the GRSG, and defined "…the degree to which threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve [GRSG] so that it is no longer in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future." Those range-wide conservation and objectives for GRSG were published in the final Conservation Objectives Team Report (COT report) in February 2013 (USFWS 2013). The COT report is built on the guiding concepts of redundancy – multiple, geographically dispersed population and habitats across a species' range; ecological diversity; and resilience – and the ability of the species and/or its habitat to recover from disturbances. The COT report includes areas identified as priority areas for conservation, the most important areas needed for maintaining GRSG representation, redundancy, and resilience across the landscape. The COT report also identifies conservation objectives that are targeted at maintaining redundant, representative, and resilient GRSG habitats and populations. The priority areas for conservation and the conservation objectives are incorporated into the planning strategy as appropriate for assessment and evaluation in the EIS. The alternatives included in this EIS were developed directly in response to the specific threats and conservation objectives identified in the COT report for GRSG populations in Northwest Colorado.

In 2012, the Director of the USFWS asked the Conservation Objectives Team, 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 2013) provides objectives based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release. The BLM/Forest Service planning decisions analyzed in the LUPA/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 at the following Internet website:

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 MZ 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.

Within Northwest Colorado, Priority Areas for Conservation consist of 2,274,000 acres, regardless of ownership. Under the Proposed LUPA, Priority Areas for Conservation consist of 914,000 acres of PH managed by the BLM/Forest Service. There are no acres of GH managed by the BLM/Forest Service, and there are 600 acres of non-habitat managed by the BLM/Forest Service within Priority Areas for Conservation.

The USFWS will evaluate the adequacy of the BLM and Forest Service LUPAs by determining if listing the GRSG as threatened or endangered under the ESA is warranted.

Colorado Department of Natural Resources Involvement

The Colorado Department of Natural Resources is involved as a cooperating agency with the BLM as part of the GRSG planning strategy.

In 2008, the Colorado Division of Wildlife (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife) developed a comprehensive Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan. Among the components of that plan is a section entitled "Conservation Strategy," which identifies key issues facing GRSG conservation and tasks designed to address those issues. In a separate but related effort, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources created the "Colorado Package." The Colorado Package was assembled by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources in conjunction with relevant county, state, federal, and private entities. For each issue identified in the Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan, described above, Colorado Department of Natural Resources compiled information from those stakeholders. The information included a comprehensive list of whether the implementation task had been completed and to what extent, and included the effectiveness of the efforts for

conservation of GRSG or GRSG habitat. The list of tasks and supporting evidence are included in the Colorado Package (**Appendix C**).

The Colorado Package was compiled to help inform the USFWS of GRSG conservation efforts happening in Colorado on mainly state and private lands, but also relevant actions on federal lands. The Colorado Package was intended to bring up to date the status of conservation efforts for GRSG in Colorado and to compliment the Northwest Colorado LUPA process.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Involvement

CPW is involved as a cooperating agency with the BLM as part of the GRSG planning strategy. CPW is also participating in the process through membership on the Regional Management Team and the Regional Interdisciplinary Team. CPW identified PH, GH, and linkage/connectivity areas. These delineations of habitat are used in the analysis to identify site-specific impacts and to differentiate between different areas of identified habitat.

1.2 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The BLM and Forest Service are preparing LUPAs with associated EISs for LUPs containing GRSG habitat. This effort responds to the need to inform USFWS's March 2010 "warranted, but precluded" ESA listing petition decision. Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a significant threat in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the GRSG. The need is to ensure that the BLM and Forest Service have adequate regulatory mechanisms in its LUPs for consideration by USFWS a year in advance of its anticipated 2015 listing. 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 that are anticipated across the species' range. These LUPAs will focus on areas affected by threats to GRSG habitat identified by USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision.

The purpose of these plan amendments is to identify and incorporate appropriate Sage-grouse conservation measures into the plans. Consistent with Instruction Memorandum 2012-044 guidance, the measures to be considered include appropriate conservation measures developed by the NTT. For the purposes of this planning effort, conservation measures include both restrictions on land uses and programs that affect GRSG and measures to reduce the impacts of BLM/Forest Service programs or authorized uses. The BLM and Forest Service will consider such measures in the context of their multiple-use missions and propose to incorporate measures that will help conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANNING AREA

1.3.1 Overview

The Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS planning area is part of the larger Rocky Mountain Region and encompasses approximately 15 million acres, including 8.5 million acres of public lands managed by five BLM field offices (Colorado River Valley, Grand Junction, Kremmling, Little Snake, and White River) and the Routt National Forest in the 10 northwest Colorado counties of Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Larimer, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco, Routt, and Summit. In addition, the planning area encompasses National Park Service, US Department of Defense, USFWS, State of Colorado, County, City, and private lands (**Table 1.2**), totaling an additional approximately 7 million acres. A map of the planning area is provided as **Figure 1-2** in **Appendix A**, Figures.

The planning area encompasses a diverse range of elevations and habitat types. Elevations in the planning area range from approximately 4,000 to over 9,000 feet above sea level. Habitat types range from desert scrub in the low deserts to aspen groves and conifer forests in the higher elevations.

The planning area includes PH, the historic GRSG distribution zone (GH), linkage/connectivity habitat, and additional non-habitat lands. Though the planning area includes private and other lands, decisions in this LUPA are only made for BLM-administered and National Forest System surface (totaling approximately 1.7 million acres) and BLM-administered federal mineral estate that may lie beneath other surface ownership (approximately 2.9 million acres) within PH, GH, or linkage/connectivity habitat; these comprise the decision area.

GRSG habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the planning area consists of 926,700 acres (921,500 acres BLM and 5,200 acres Forest Service) of PH, 742,900 acres (728,100 acres BLM and 14,800 acres Forest Service) of GH, and 82,000 acres of linkage/connectivity habitat (all BLM acres; there are no National Forest System lands within linkage/connectivity habitat). PH, GH, and linkage/connectivity habitat were mapped in cooperation with the CPW. **Table 1.2** provides acres of PH and GH by landowner. **Table 1.3** provides acres of PH and GH by type of subsurface federal mineral estate in the decision area.

Figure 1-3 and **Figure 1-4** in **Appendix A** depict areas mapped as PH, GH, and linkage/connectivity habitat. **Table 1.4** provides acres of habitat within each BLM Field Office and the Routt National Forest.

Table 1.2
Planning Area Land Ownership and GRSG Habitat (in Acres)

County	GRSG Habitat Type	BLM[1]	Forest Service[1]	National Park Service	USFWS	State	State, County, and City	Private	Unclassified
Eagle	PH	20,900	0	0	0	700	0	15,100	0
	GH	16,100	2,500	0	0	0	0	15,600	0
	Linkage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Garfield	PH	24,800	0	0	0	0	300	123,700	0
	GH	35,900	0	0	0	0	600	35,600	0
	Linkage	0	0	0	0	0	45	7600	0
Grand	PH	60,700	1,000	0	0	20,300	5,200	116,500	0
	GH	11,300	1,600	0	0	2,300	0	40,500	0
	Linkage	6,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jackson	PH	137,600	800	0	22,800	25,200	2,600	195,100	0
	GH	1,100	100	0	0	8,000	500	27,000	0
	Linkage	2,200	0	0	0	1,000	0	7,500	0
Larimer	PH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	GH	6,700	0	0	0	2,100	2,100	9,400	0
	Linkage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mesa	PH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	GH	4,500	300	0	0	0	800	8,700	0
	Linkage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moffat	PH	623,300	0	3,600	0	116,200	13,900	540,400	200
	GH	542,000	0	6,300	11,900	53,500	1,000	357,000	100
	Linkage	1,700	0	0	0	0	0	5,300	0
Rio Blanco	PH	36,400	0	0	0	0	5,500	52,300	0
	GH	108,800	200	0	0	0	1,800	83,600	0
	Linkage	69,100	0	0	0	0	6,100	147,900	0
Routt	PH	17,100	600	0	0	25,100	1,300	151,600	0
	GH	1,600	10,200	0	0	5,400	0	74,500	0
	Linkage	2,200	0	0	0	3,600	0	34,800	0
Summit	PH	700	2,800	0	0	0	0	1,800	0
	GH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Linkage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total[2]		**1,731,400**	**20,100**	**9,900**	**34,700**	**263,400**	**41,745**	**2,051,500**	**300**

Source: CPW 2012

[1]BLM and Forest Service subsurface federal mineral estate data

[2]There is no PH or GH on US Department of Defense lands in the planning area

*Decisions in this document apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System surface and split-estate lands

Table 1.3
Decision Area Subsurface Federal Mineral Estate and GRSG Habitat (in Acres)

County	GRSG Habitat Type	All Minerals	Coal, Oil and Gas	Coal	Oil and Gas	Other	No Minerals	Decision Area Subtotal PH + GH	Decision Area Total
Eagle	PH	27,200	0	0	2,200	0	7,300	**56,600**	**857,000**
	GH	26,600	0	0	700	0	7,000		
Garfield	PH	28,800	0	0	0	23,900	96,200	**107,900**	**1,262,700**
	GH	11,400	500	0	0	43,300	16,800		
Grand	PH	89,100	700	10,200	2,400	1,100	99,000	**127,000**	**768,700**
	GH	22,100	300	400	600	80	30,500		
Jackson	PH	190,000	400	11,800	2,000	14,800	164,900	**230,200**	**442,900**
	GH	10,100	200	700	200	10	25,600		
Larimer	PH	0	0	0	0	0	0	**11,800**	**364,400**
	GH	11,800	0	0	0	0	6,500		
Mesa	PH	0	0	0	0	0	0	**6,600**	**1,447,700**
	GH	6,500	0	0	100	0	7,600		
Moffat	PH	804,500	11,000	162,900	17,000	9,200	293,000	**1,801,800**	**703,800**
	GH	653,400	7,800	131,000	5,000	100	174,400		
Rio Blanco	PH	43,300	300	900	300	17,300	32,100	**222,600**	**1,560,300**
	GH	132,200	1,300	2,600	800	23,600	33,900		
Routt	PH	54,000	1,600	43,500	400	800	95,500	**141,600**	**868,300**
	GH	21,900	200	18,100	1,100	70	50,200		
Summit	PH	4,800	0	0	300	0	200	**5,200**	**314,100**
	GH	0	0	0	0	0	0		
TOTALS		**2,137,700**	**24,300**	**382,100**	**33,100**	**134,260**	**1,140,700**	**2,711,300**	**8,589,900**

Table 1.4
Total Priority Habitat and General Habitat in the Planning Area

BLM Field Office or National Forest	All Surface Land Ownership (Acres)			BLM-Administered or National Forest System Surface Estate (Acres)		
	PH	GH	Nonhabitat	PH	GH	Nonhabitat
Colorado River Valley	69,800	62,400	1,167,100	24,700	40,200	502,100
Grand Junction	49,300	29,000	1,940,400	5,600	8,900	1,263,100
Little Snake	1,353,100	928,400	1,101,800	570,400	479,700	288,900
Kremmling	585,800	106,800	648,900	198,900	18,900	161,100
White River	299,100	328,900	1,664,000	122,000	180,200	1,154,400
Routt National Forest	5,200	14,900	1,364,800	1,600	10,900	1,242,500
White River National Forest*	3,700	4,000	2,405,200	2,800	2,800	2,215,000
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison National Forest*	0	200	380,800	0	200	372,600
Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest*	1,000	1,000	789,200	700	800	745,900
Pike San Isabel National Forest*	0	0	70	0	0	70
Manti La Sal National Forest*	0	0	1,800	0	0	1,800
Total	**2,367,000**	**1,475,600**	**11,464,070**	**926,700**	**742,600**	**7,947,470**

Source: CPW 2012
*National Forests not participating in the Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS

Colorado River Valley Field Office

Current populations within the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) are north of Eagle, Gypsum, and Wolcott on scattered BLM-administered and private lands. This habitat is where the majority of the mapped PH falls within the CRVFO boundary. Based on 2004 lek counts, this population of GRSG numbers from 304 to 489 (CPW 2004).

The Northern Eagle/Southern Routt GRSG population is one of the smaller populations in Colorado. A significant portion of remaining GRSG habitat in the Northern Eagle portion of the population is managed by the CRVFO.

Grand Junction Field Office

The southern end of the Parachute-Piceance-Roan Plateau population of the GRSG occurs on the northeastern side of the Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO), and Colorado has identified 5,600 acres of PH and 8,900 acres of GH. Sixteen active and inactive GRSG leks occur within the GJFO; three occur on BLM-administered lands, and thirteen occur on private lands. Of these 16 leks, 7 are considered active. One of the active leks occurs on BLM-administered lands on 4A ridge. In winter 2008, GRSG droppings were found within the GJFO just

north of the town of Mesa (Sunnyside) in an area between occupied Gunnison sage-grouse habitat and GRSG habitat. A follow-up study was conducted in winter 2009 by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory where numerous droppings and cecal casts were discovered, suggesting the area is an important wintering area. Genetic information could not be collected from the droppings and cecal casts; therefore, the species of sage-grouse (Gunnison or Greater) is still unknown (Beason 2009). However, it is believed to be GRSG; as a result, this area has been mapped as GH.

Kremmling Field Office

In Jackson County, there are approximately 32 active leks, 5 inactive leks, and 19 historic leks (CPW 2010). Of the active leks, 20 are on BLM-managed public lands. In Grand County, there are 19 active leks, 1 inactive lek, and 41 historic leks (2010 data). Seven of those 19 leks are on BLM-managed public lands. In Larimer County, there is 1 historic lek (last active in the 1960s). In Summit County there is 1 active lek and 1 historic lek (2010 data). In Eagle County, there are no leks within the planning area. Sagebrush habitat in Jackson County is largely intact, and there is little threat of fragmentation. Currently, oil and gas development and related infrastructure is low; however, in 2006, there was an increased interest in coal bed methane exploration. In Grand County there is a high risk of habitat fragmentation and loss due to urban development and related infrastructure, especially at the east end of the county.

Little Snake Field Office

In Routt County, there are four distinct GRSG groups:

- two areas with fair population density (near the towns of Toponas and Hayden) and approximately equal numbers and range;
- one area in the upper Slater Creek and Snake River areas in the extreme northern part of Routt County with a light population in the summer months and a wintering area near the Wyoming line; and;
- one area north of Steamboat Springs and west of Clark on Deep Creek with small range and numbers.

The highest concentration of GRSG in the county was in the Twentymile area southeast of Hayden on the upper Sage and Fish Creek drainages.

Within the Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) today, essentially all of the land west of State Highway 13 (except the area on the south side of Cold Spring Mountain and the lands closest to the Yampa and Green River drainages) is within GRSG range. The central portion of this area (north, west, and southeast of Maybell), as well as a broad area along the northern boundary of the planning area from Middle Mountain near the northwest corner of Colorado to Baker Peak east of State Highway 13, provides winter range. A number of comments in the BLM Little Snake Field Office's land health assessments focus on GRSG populations

and habitat. The following comments characterize the attention given to this species:

- Axial. GRSG habitat types in the Axial Basin Landscape include strutting grounds, brood-rearing habitat, and winter range. Thirty leks have been documented within this landscape. Of these, 11 (37 percent) are active; 6 (20 percent) are inactive (no activity the last 5 years); 11 (37 percent) are historic (no activity the last 6 years or longer), and 2 (7 percent) are unknown.
- Douglas Draw. The watershed does have potential to support GRSG near Sheephead Basin. There has not been any documented use by GRSG in this area, but treatments of encroaching juniper may make the area more attractable to GRSG.
- Cold Spring Mountain. The large expanses of sagebrush steppe intermixed with wet meadows provide important GRSG nesting and brood-rearing habitats. GRSG numbers are up since the early 1990s, with lek counts remaining stable over the last 3 years; however, GRSG are only at 50 to 60 percent of their historic population numbers for the area.
- Douglas Mountain. Sagebrush grasslands and sagebrush mixed shrub habitat types have the potential to support GRSG within this landscape. There are no known leks within the landscape; however, efforts to locate breeding GRSG in the landscape have been minimal.
- Dry Creek. The large expanses of sagebrush steppe intermixed with wet meadows provides important GRSG nesting and brood-rearing habitats along Vermillion Creek, although there are no known leks within this watershed. Heavy historic grazing, especially in mesic areas at the higher elevations, has reduced the quality of brood-rearing habitat essential for GRSG in the area.
- Four Mile Creek. The entire landscape is considered a GRSG production area, although the quality of brood-rearing habitat has been reduced by heavy historic grazing, especially in mesic areas at the higher elevations. The large expanses of sagebrush steppe intermixed with wet meadows provide important GRSG nesting and brood-rearing habitats along Timberlake Creek. Fourteen GRSG leks have been identified, and brood-rearing habitats have been documented.
- Green River. The Green River landscape provides habitat for GRSG and the various life cycle stages for which they are used. There are no known leks or nesting habitat within the landscape; however, hens with broods are often observed in the Ryegrass area. GRSG are also observed near Chicken Springs and Five Springs. A small

amount (200 acres) of winter habitat is located near Five Springs. Sagebrush in this area was in good condition, providing suitable winter habitat for GRSG. Overall, the Green River Watershed provides productive habitat for GRSG.

- Lay Creek. The majority of this watershed provides habitat for GRSG, which use the watershed throughout the year for breeding, nesting, brood rearing, and wintering. This watershed is an important production area for GRSG in Colorado. There are seven active leks within this watershed, with two additional active leks within 1 mile of the watershed boundary. Breeding, nesting, brood-rearing, and wintering habitat are all found within the boundaries of this watershed. Some portions of the watershed are capable of providing all four habitat requirements in the same area.
- Powder Wash. This is an important area for GRSG breeding, nesting, and brood rearing, containing 10 known leks and approximately 2,400 acres of GRSG winter range.
- Sand Hills. Available habitats provide winter range, nesting, and brood rearing for GRSG.
- Sand Wash. This is an import production area for GRSG nesting and winter range. The numerous historic leks on Seven Mile Ridge are no longer active.
- Williams Fork. Sagebrush grasslands and sagebrush mixed shrub habitat types have the potential to support GRSG within this landscape. There are no identified leks or critical habitat, such as nesting or winter, located in the Williams Fork watershed.

White River Field Office

The Northwest Colorado GRSG population area is composed of several distinct segments that differ widely in character for GRSG. The Blue Mountain portion of this population (higher-elevation sagebrush communities north of US Highway 40) represents the White River Field Office's (WRFO) largest continuous block of suitable and occupied GRSG habitat. Broods gradually disperse and drift to higher elevations (e.g., Moosehead Mountain), such that essentially all sagebrush habitat on Blue Mountain is considered brood range. Blue Mountain's capacity for strong production and recruitment is largely attributable to an abundance of wet meadow habitats and well-developed herbaceous understories.

The remaining segments of the Northwest Colorado population area in the WRFO consist of: (1) isolated and sporadically occupied parcels in the Douglas Creek drainage south of the White River; (2) extremely small and insular groups of birds along and probably once connected by habitats along the White River valley; (3) a sparsely populated southern extension of the larger Sagebrush Draw population located in the adjoining Little Snake Field Office; and (4) most notably, an expansive low-elevation salt-desert complex extending west from

Pinyon Ridge along the US Highway 40 corridor and south to the White River. This area supports limited year-round occupation by GRSG, but these xeric habitats, whose ground cover is often dominated by invasive annuals weeds, are considered marginal in their support of nesting and brood-rearing functions. These areas have been known to support concentrated high-density winter use. The breeding population in the western half of this area (west of Massadona) had begun to collapse prior to the mid-1970s, and this trend continued through the 1980s. The only remaining active lek is located on the far eastern end of the area. Suitable sagebrush stands along US Highway 40 are relatively limited. These predominantly salt desert habitats are characteristically traversed by deeply incised channels, which assume the role of brood habitat, although the regular occurrence of broods along the White River probably originate from the lower Red Wash and Boise Creek areas. The origin of large numbers of wintering birds in lower Wolf Creek is unclear but likely involves much of the US Highway 40 population.

The Crooked Wash complex is administratively split between the WRFO and the LSFO to the north, and is composed of a high percentage of private lands. Although upland sagebrush conditions are superficially adequate for nesting in the WRFO, upper portions of the basin are likely preferred. Late season brood use has been noted, although brood habitat conditions are considered suboptimal in portions of the basin within the WRFO. Although a number of channels in the area support persistent flow, riparian expression is extremely limited. Concentrated winter use in the Crooked Wash area is assumed to represent the major fraction of this complex. The small summer population in Black's Gulch seems to be a fragment of the Crooked Wash complex. This area has also supported concentrated winter use in the past.

The Parachute-Piceance-Roan Plateau area is comprised of roughly 152,600 acres of GRSG PH and 84,400 acres of GH. Virtually all seasonal use functions take place on relatively narrow mid-elevation ridges, with a drift toward higher elevations along the Piceance Rim and Roan Plateau through the brood and general summer use periods. Winter use appears to occur at all elevations, depending on accumulated snow depth and snow texture. Broad ridges at lower elevations may support the bulk of wintering birds during extreme conditions.

The Magnolia area has, within the past decade, become heavily industrialized. This area is comprised entirely of BLM-administered lands and contains approximately 7,500 acres of GRSG PH and 3,700 acres of GH.

The Meeker GRSG population area encompasses approximately 47,600 acres in the area outside the Piceance Basin (13,000 acres of PH and 34,600 acres GH). Federal mineral estate underlies about 15,500 acres (31 percent) of all mapped range, but estate associated with habitats currently supporting GRSG use (north of the White River and across the north flank of LO7 15 Hill) are limited to about 460 acres in 7 parcels (less than 4 percent). The largest parcel, approximately 300 acres, consists primarily of private agricultural lands but

supports consistent use by this remnant flock of birds. The BLM-administered surface estate that presently supports habitat potentially suited for this population of GRSG is limited to approximately 300 acres.

Approximately 115 leks have been identified in the WRFO, of which about 55 are active. The status of approximately 20 leks is unknown because of limited or irregular use. The count of males at leks in the WRFO in 2012 was 290 birds.

Routt National Forest

On the Routt National Forest, GRSG habitat is largely peripheral and represents extensions of GRSG habitat occurring predominately on lower-elevation non-National Forest System lands. GRSG habitat on the Routt National Forest occurs in Colorado MZs 7, 11, 13, and 14, with the majority of habitat occurring in the California Park and Slater Park areas north of Hayden in Colorado MZ 7. The Slater Park area has one historic GRSG lek, which has not been utilized for over 10 years. There are no other active or inactive GRSG leks on the Routt National Forest.

The planning area includes the Routt National Forest and portions of three other National Forests: the White River, the Arapaho Roosevelt, and the Grand Mesa-Gunnison and Uncompahgre. Early in the planning process it was decided that only the Routt National Forest would be included in this LUPA/EIS. Although most GRSG habitat on the National Forests is peripheral, the Routt National Forest was included because it had a more significant amount of GRSG habitat compared to the other Forests, as well as a historic GRSG lek. The Grand Mesa-Gunnison and Uncompahgre National Forest has only a very small amount (200 acres) of GRSG habitat, and all of it is secondary. Additionally, the Grand Mesa-Gunnison and Uncompahgre National Forest includes habitat for the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, and the Forest has additional measures in place to manage for the species. The White River National Forest has two active GRSG leks and some PH and GH. The White River National Forest Plan was revised in 2002; at that time, it included direction for GRSG habitat management based on best available science (Connelly et al. 2000). Because of this existing plan direction and limited habitat, it was determined that the management direction in the White River National Forest Plan is adequate. The Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest is not included in this amendment process because it contains very limited amounts of PH and GH and contains no active or historic GRSG leks.

On the Routt National Forest, GRSG habitat occurs within 10 management prescription designations identified in the Routt National Forest Plan, as indicated in **Table 1.5**. Wildlife habitat conservation objectives currently apply to all of these areas, with many of these areas emphasizing wildlife conservation goals and objectives. The 2.1, Special Interest Area, and 5.41, Deer and Elk Winter Range, management areas have wildlife conservation emphasis; these areas encompass 67 percent of the GRSG habitat on the Routt National Forest.

As identified in **Table 1.5**, these changes would apply to a very small percentage of acres within each of the 10 affected management prescription designations and would affect only approximately 1 percent of the land area managed by the Routt National Forest.

Table 1.5
Management Areas on the Routt National Forest with GRSG Habitat

Management Area Code	Management Area Description	Forest-wide Management Area Acres	Acres in GRSG Habitat	Portion Affected by the Proposed LUPA
1.32	Backcountry Recreation Nonmotorized with Limited Motorized Use in Winter	261,500	200	0.1%
1.5	National River System Wild Rivers Designated and Eligible	5,400	200	3.9%
2.1	Special Interest Areas Limited Use and Interpretation	28,700	6,700	23.4%
3.31	Backcountry Recreation Year-Round Motorized	27,800	600	2.2%
4.2	Scenery	29,700	2,300	7.6%
4.3	Dispersed Recreation	40,200	30	0.1%
5.11	General Forest and Rangelands Forest Vegetation Emphasis	273,600	300	0.1%
5.12	General Forest and Rangelands Range Vegetation Emphasis	37,800	400	1.1%
5.13	Forest Products	203,700	40	0.0%
5.41	Deer and Elk Winter Range	53,800	1,700	3.2%

Source: Forest Service 2013

1.3.2 Land Uses

Major land uses on public and private lands within the planning area include, but are not limited to:

- Leasable minerals development, including fluid mineral and coal exploration and development
- Livestock grazing
- Rights-of-way (ROWs), including roads, power lines, pipelines, and communication sites
- Recreation, including hunting, hiking, and camping
- Locatable and salable mineral development

1.4 PLANNING PROCESSES

1.4.1 BLM Planning Process

The FLPMA requires the BLM to use RMPs as tools by which "present and future use is projected" (43 United States Code [USC] 1701[a][2]). FLPMA's implementing regulations for planning (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1600) state that LUPs are a preliminary step in the overall process of managing public lands "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, all RMP revisions and any RMP amendments to existing plans that have significant environmental effects require preparation of an EIS under NEPA. This EIS accompanies the amendment of the existing RMPs and analyzes the impacts of various numbers of alternatives for the Northwest Colorado LUPAs, including the no action alternative.

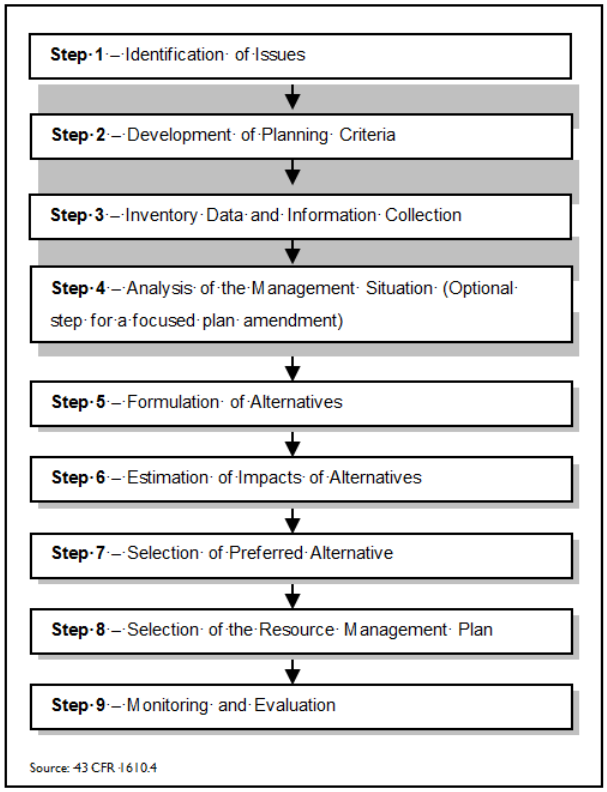
The BLM uses a nine-step planning process (**Diagram 1-1**) to develop or revise RMPs (43 CFR Part 1600 and planning program guidance in the BLM Handbook H-1601-1, Land Use Planning Handbook [BLM 2005a]). The planning process is designed to help the BLM identify the uses of BLM-administered lands desired by the public and to consider 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 an RMP is approved, it may be changed through 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 result in a change in the scope of resource uses or a change in the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved plan. If the BLM decides to prepare an EIS, the amending process shall follow the same procedure required for preparation and approval of the plan, but the focus shall be limited to that portion of the plan being amended (43 CFR 1610.5-5).

As depicted in **Diagram 1-1**, the planning process is issue-driven (**Step 1**). The planning process is undertaken to resolve management issues and problems as well as to take advantage of management opportunities. The BLM utilizes the public scoping process to identify planning issues to direct (drive) a revision or amendment of an existing plan. The scoping process also is used to introduce the public to preliminary planning criteria, which set the parameters, or sideboards, for conducting the planning process (**Step 2**).

The BLM uses existing data from files and other sources and collects new data to address planning issues and to fill data gaps identified during public scoping (**Step 3**). Using these data, information concerning the resource management

Diagram 1-1. Nine-Step Planning Process



programs, and the planning criteria, the BLM completes an Analysis of the Management Situation (**Step 4**) to describe current management and develop or inform the affected environment portion of the RMP. Typically, the Analysis of the Management Situation is conducted at the outset of planning for an entire RMP or RMP revision and is incorporated by reference into development of a single-focus RMPA. In this case, direction for the RMPA is provided through new national policy (BLM Instruction Memorandum 2012-044; BLM 2012a). The affected environment is also incorporated by reference into the RMPA and updated with new information to the degree necessary to set the context for the analysis in the accompanying EIS. The GRSG EISs may not conduct formal Analyses of the Management Situation, as Analyses of the Management Situation are required for RMP revisions but not necessarily for RMPAs.

Results of the first four steps of the planning process clarify the purpose and need and identify key planning issues that need to be addressed by the amendment. Key planning issues reflect the focus of the LUPA and are described in more detail in **Section 1.5.2**, Issues Identified for Consideration in the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments.

Alternatives constitute a range of management actions that set forth different priorities and measures to emphasize certain uses or resource values over other uses or resource values. The alternatives usually represent a continuum

from extraction and development to preservation and conservation, pursuant to the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate, so as to achieve certain goals or objectives consistent with the purpose and need. During alternative formulation (**Step 5**), the BLM collaborates with cooperating agencies to identify goals and objectives (desired outcomes) for resources and resource uses within the planning area. The alternatives represent a reasonable range of planning strategies for managing resources and resource uses. **Chapter 2** of this document, Alternatives, describes and summarizes the preferred alternative and the other draft alternatives considered in detail.

The Draft LUPA/EIS included an analysis of the impacts of the preferred alternative and the other draft alternatives in **Chapter 4**, Environmental Consequences (**Step 6**). With input from cooperating agencies and BLM specialists, and consideration of planning issues, planning criteria, and the impacts of alternatives, the BLM identified and recommended a preferred alternative from among the alternatives presented in the EIS (**Step 7**). This is documented in the Draft LUPA/EIS, which was then distributed for a 90-day public review and comment period.

Step 8 of the land-use planning process occurs following receipt and consideration of public comments on the Draft LUPA/EIS. In preparing the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, the BLM has considered all comments it received during the public comment period. The Proposed LUPA 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 what changes need to be made in management practices to meet objectives.

The two types of monitoring that are tied to the planning process include implementation and effectiveness monitoring. LUP monitoring is the process of (1) tracking the implementation of land use planning decisions and (2) collecting and assessing the information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of land use planning decisions.

- **Implementation Monitoring:** Implementation monitoring is the most basic type of monitoring and simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. Some agencies call this compliance monitoring. This monitoring documents 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:** Effectiveness monitoring is aimed at determining if the implementation of 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 RMP as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists in order to address specific questions and, thus, to focus on collection of only necessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving desired future conditions established by the plan.

Regulations in 43 CFR 1610.4-9 require that the Proposed LUPA establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, based on the sensitivity of the resource decisions involved. Progress in meeting the plan objectives and adherence to the management framework established by the plan is reviewed periodically. Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases (40 CFR 1505.2[c]). To meet these requirements, the BLM and Forest Service will review the plan on a regular schedule in order to provide consistent tracking of accomplishments and provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.

LUPAs. LUP decisions are subsequently changed through either an LUPA or another LUP revision. The process for conducting LUPAs is basically the same as the land use planning process used in developing or revising LUPs. The primary difference is that circumstances may allow for completing a LUPA through the environmental assessment (EA) process, rather than through an EIS. LUPAs (43 CFR 1610.5-5) change one or more of the terms, conditions, or decisions of an approved LUP. LUPAs are most often prompted by the need to consider a proposal or action that does not conform to the LUP; implement new or revised policy that changes LUP decisions; respond to new, intensified, or changed uses on BLM land; or consider significant new information from resource assessments, monitoring, or scientific studies that change LUP decisions.

LUPA Maintenance. During the life of the LUP, the BLM expects that new information gathered from field inventories and assessments, other agency studies, and other sources will update geographic information system data and best management practices. To the extent that this new information or actions address issues covered in the plan, the BLM will integrate the data through plan maintenance. BLM regulations in 43 CFR 1610.5-4 provide that LUP decisions and supporting actions can be maintained to reflect minor changes in data. Maintenance is limited to further refining, documenting, or clarifying a previously

approved decision incorporated in the LUP. Maintenance must not expand the scope of resource uses or restrictions or change the terms, conditions, and decisions of the approved LUP.

LUP evaluations will be used by the BLM and Forest Service to determine if the decisions in the LUPA, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, are still valid. Evaluation of the LUPA will generally be conducted every 5 years per 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, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, whether there are new data of significance to the plan, and if decisions should be changed through amendment or revision. Evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 (BLM 2005a) in effect at the time the evaluation is initiated. Specific monitoring and evaluation needs are identified by resource/uses throughout **Chapter 2**, Alternatives.

1.4.2 Forest Service Planning Process

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the NFMA (16 USC 1600 et seq.), requires the Forest Service to develop, maintain, and, as appropriate, revise land and resource management plans (Forest Plans) for units of the National Forest System using a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences. Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 USC 528-531), the overall goal of managing the National Forest System is to sustain the multiple uses of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term productivity of the land. Forest Plans provide broad guidance and information for project and activity decision-making. In particular, Forest Plans 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 an 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. An LRMP includes plan components, proposed and possible actions, the monitoring program, and maps. The objectives of LRMPs are:

1. Establishing Forest-wide or Grassland-wide multiple use goals and objectives, including desired conditions
2. Establishing Forest-wide or Grassland-wide management requirements, including standards and guidelines

3. Establishing management area direction, including prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines
4. Identifying lands suitable or unsuitable for various uses
5. Recommending any Wilderness, rivers eligible or suitable for designation under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, or other designated areas
6. Establishing requirements for monitoring and evaluation

Forest Plans are never completed or final, as 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 a proposed action that may result in a change in the scope of resource uses, or a change in the standards and guidelines of the approved plan. Plan revisions and amendments are part of the collaborative and adaptive cycle of planning: plan development; plan implementation; plan monitoring, inventory, and assessment; and plan review and evaluation.

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

1. Public notice for initiating plan amendment;
2. Consideration of need for change;
3. Documentation of affected environment and environmental consequences in an EIS;
4. Development of the proposed LUPA;
5. Public notice for proposed LUPA, draft EIS, and 90-day comment period;
6. Response to comments;
7. Public notice of the beginning of the 60-day objection period before approval and availability of the plan amendment, EIS, and draft plan decision document; and
8. Upon resolution of the objection (36 CFR 219 subpart B), approval of the plan by the responsible official.

Under Forest Service regulations, a Forest Plan revision or amendment of an existing plan is a federal action requiring appropriate NEPA documentation. Thus, this EIS accompanies the amendment of the Routt National Forest Plan (Forest Service 1997). This EIS analyzes the impacts of various alternatives for the LUPA, including the no action alternative. The Proposed LUPA direction, Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, is described for Alternative D in **Chapter**

2, **Section 2.6.3**, Forest Service Proposed Plan Amendment. Regulations at 36 CFR 228.102 require the Forest Service to decide which National Forest System lands are administratively available for oil and gas leasing. This decision includes identifying necessary lease stipulations to protect surface resources. The oil and gas leasing availability decision for the Routt National Forest was originally made in March 1993 and was updated in February 1998 when the Forest Plan was revised. In addition to amending the Routt National Forest Plan, the decision resulting from this analysis will also amend the Routt National Forest's leasing availability decision to incorporate necessary GRSG conservation measures as required lease stipulations. For simplicity throughout this EIS, a reference to amending the Routt National Forest Plan also refers to amending its oil and gas leasing decision. An amendment to the Routt National Forest Plan to include direction for GRSG conservation is anticipated to be a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan under the NFMA (which is a different determination than significance under NEPA).

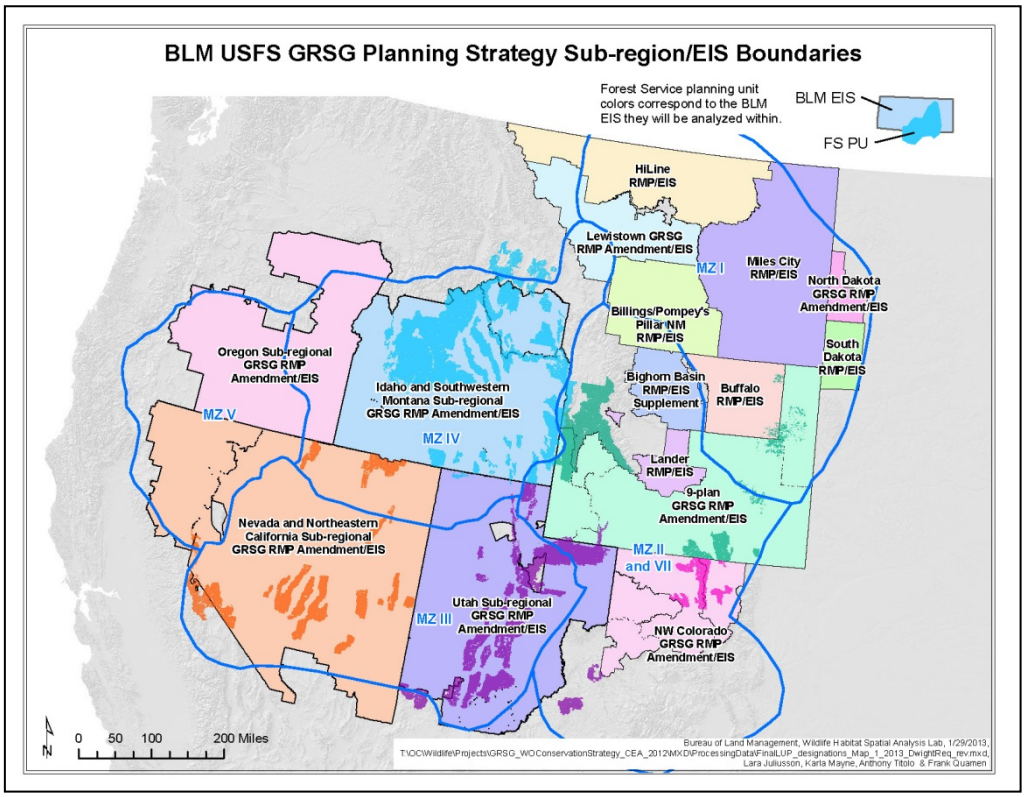
1.4.3 National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

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 nine western states, including 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. This Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPA/EIS is 1 of 15 separate EISs that are currently being conducted to analyze and incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with National BLM and Forest Service policy (**Diagram 1-2**).

On December 27, 2011, the BLM Washington Office released Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy (BLM 2012a), which recommended that all of the planning efforts across the GRSG range to consider all applicable conservation measures when revising or amending its LUPs in GRSG habitat, including the measures developed by the NTT that were presented in their December 2011 document, A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (NTT 2011). Instruction Memorandum 2012-044 recommended that all planning efforts associated with the national strategy consider and analyze (as appropriate) the conservation measures presented in the report.

Along with the applicable measures that were outlined in the NTT report (NTT 2011), planning efforts associated with this National GRSG Planning Strategy have also analyzed applicable conservation measures that 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 the summer of 2015, so that adequate regulatory mechanisms are incorporated in place before USFWS makes a listing decision in 2015.

Diagram 1-2. BLM/Forest Service GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries



1.5 Scoping and Identification of Issues For Development of Draft Alternatives

1.5.1 The Scoping Process

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 affected public and agency concerns, defines the relevant issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the EIS, and eliminates those that are not relevant. 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 the draft EIS.

A public scoping period was initiated on December 9, 2011, with the Federal Register publication of a Notice of Intent to begin a planning effort. Scoping is designed to be consistent with the public involvement requirements of the FLPMA, NFMA, and NEPA. The cooperative 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 LUPA, and to assist in the formulation of reasonable

alternatives. The scoping process is a method for opening dialogue between the BLM, Forest Service, and the general public about management of GRSG and their habitats on public lands, and for identifying the concerns of those who have an interest in this subject and in the GRSG habitats. 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.

Public scoping was extended through a Notice of Correction published February 10, 2012, and ended on March 23, 2012. Scoping included open-house meetings in Walden, Lakewood, Silt, and Craig, Colorado. In addition, news releases were used to notify the public regarding the scoping period and the planning process and to invite the public to provide written comments from many sources including via email, fax, and US Mail. 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.

For the Northwest Colorado planning process, scoping comments received from the public were placed in one of three categories:

1. Issues identified for consideration in the Northwest Colorado LUPAs;
2. Issues to be addressed through policy or administrative action (and therefore not addressed in the LUPAs); and
3. Issues eliminated from detailed analysis because they are beyond the scope of the LUPAs (and therefore not addressed in the LUP).

Some important issues to be addressed in the LUPAs were identified by the public and the agencies during the scoping process for the planning effort. The Scoping Summary Report (BLM and Forest Service 2012) prepared in conjunction with these LUPAs summarizes the scoping process. The issues identified in the Final Scoping Summary fall into one of several broad categories (see **Section 1.5.2**, Issues Identified for Consideration in the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments). Other resource and use issues are identified in the BLM Planning Handbook and Manual (H-1610-1) (BLM 2005a) and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15. All of these issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward for analysis.

1.5.2 Issues Identified for Consideration in the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments

The issues identified for consideration in the Northwest Colorado GRSG LUPAs are:

- GRSG habitat management
- Fluid minerals

- ROWs, including transmission
- Livestock grazing
- Locatable and salable minerals
- Fire
- Invasive species

1.6 PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are based on appropriate laws, regulations, BLM and Forest Service Manual and Handbook sections, and policy directives, as well as on public participation and coordination with cooperating agencies, other federal agencies, 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. The preliminary planning criteria are:

- The BLM and Forest Service will use the WAFWA Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004), and any other appropriate resources, to identify GRSG habitat requirements and best management practices (BMPs).
- The approved LUPAs will be consistent with BLM Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy (BLM 2012a).
- The approved LUPAs will comply with FLPMA; NEPA; CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1500–1508; US Department of the Interior regulations at 43 CFR 46 and 43 CFR 1600; Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 220; BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) (BLM 2005a), Appendix C (Program-Specific and Resource-Specific Decision Guidance Requirements) for the affected resource programs; the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) (BLM 2008a); Forest Service Handbook 1909.15; and all other applicable BLM and Forest Service policies and guidance.
- The approved Forest Plan amendments will comply with NFMA, NEPA, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1500–1508, Regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture at 36 CFR 219, Forest Service Regulation for Leasing analyses and decisions at 36 CFR 228.102, Forest Service Manual 1920, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12.
- The LUPAs will be limited to making land use planning decisions specific to the conservation of GRSG habitats.

- The BLM and Forest Service will consider allocative and/or prescriptive standards to conserve GRSG habitat, as well as objectives and management actions to restore, enhance, and improve GRSG habitat.
- The LUPAs will recognize valid existing rights.
- Lands addressed in the LUPAs will be public lands, including surface estate and split-estate lands, managed by the BLM and Forest Service in GRSG habitats. Any decisions in the LUPAs will apply only to federal lands administered by either the BLM or the Forest Service.
- 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 the conservation of 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 its habitat.
- The BLM and Forest Service will address socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives. Socioeconomic analysis will use an accepted input-output quantitative model such as impact analysis for planning (IMPLAN).
- The BLM and Forest Service will endeavor to use current scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventory, monitoring, and coordination to determine appropriate local and regional management strategies that will enhance or restore GRSG habitats.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) on BLM-administered lands will be guided by BLM Manual 6330, Management of WSAs (BLM 2012b). Land use allocations made for WSAs must be consistent with the manual and with other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSA management.
- For BLM-administered lands, all activities and uses within GRSG habitats will follow existing BLM Colorado Public Land Health Standards. Standards and guidelines for livestock grazing and other programs that have developed standards and guidelines will be applicable to all alternatives for BLM lands.

- The BLM and Forest Service will consult with Native American tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage within 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 provisions of 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 BLM and Forest Service will develop vegetation management objectives, including objectives for managing noxious weeds and invasive species, including identification of desired future condition for specific areas, within GRSG habitat.
- The LUPAs will be based on the principles of adaptive management.
- Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenarios (RFDSs) and planning for fluid minerals will follow BLM Handbook H-1624-1 and current fluid minerals manual guidance for fluid mineral (oil and gas, coal-bed methane, oil shale) and geothermal resources. For National Forest System lands, the Forest Service will use applicable and relevant policy and procedures.
- The LUPAs will be developed using an interdisciplinary approach to prepare RFDSs, identify alternatives, and analyze resource impacts, including cumulative impacts on natural and cultural resources and the social and economic environment.
- The most current approved BLM and Forest Service corporate spatial data will be supported by current metadata and will be used to ascertain GRSG habitat extent and quality. Data will be consistent with the principles of the Information Quality Act of 2000.
- State game and fish agencies' GRSG data and expertise will be utilized to the fullest extent practicable in making management determinations on federal lands. Analysis of impacts in the LUPAs will address the resources and resource programs identified in the NTT report (NTT 2011) and alternatives, which contain specific management measures for conservation of GRSG habitat.
- Resources and resource programs that do not contain specific management direction for GRSG and that may be indirectly affected by proposed management actions will be identified and discussed only to the degree required to fully understand the range of effects of the proposed management actions.
- An additional criterion was received in public scoping comments during the scoping period (December 9, 2011, to March 23, 2012)

and was added to the planning criteria. This comment was that state game and fish agencies have the responsibility and authority to manage wildlife.

- 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.

1.7 LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT APPLY TO THE LUPA

This EIS complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended; CEQ regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, outlined in 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508; DOI NEPA regulations at 43 CFR 46; DOI and BLM policies and manuals (BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1; BLM 2008c); and the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 (BLM 2005c).

Other federal laws applicable to the LUPA include, but are not limited to, the following:

- FLPMA
- Clean Water Act
- Clean Air Act
- Energy Policy Act of 2005
- Endangered Species Act
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended
- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980
- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended

1.8 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. While the BLM and Forest Service are not obligated to seek consistency, the agencies are required to describe the inconsistencies between the proposed action and other plans, policies, and controls within the EIS. This information has been updated in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS. Plans that need to be considered during the GRSG planning effort include the following:

1.8.1 Programmatic National-Level Environmental Impact Statement Documents

- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (BLM 1991) (common to the Proposed LUPA and draft alternatives)

- Final Vegetation Treatments on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic EIS and Associated ROD (FES 07-21) (BLM 2007a)
- Approved RMPAs/ROD for Designation of Energy Corridors on BLM-administered Lands in the 11 Western States (US Department of Energy, Forest Service, and BLM 2009)
- ROD and RMPAs for Geothermal Leasing in the Western US (BLM and Forest Service 2008b)
- Final Programmatic EIS on Wind Energy Development on BLM-administered Lands in the Western US (FES 05-11) (BLM 2005b)
- Final Programmatic EIS for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States (BLM 2012c)

1.8.2 State Plans (Developed by Local Working Groups)

- Middle Park Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2000)
- Northern Eagle and Southern Routt Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2004)
- North Park Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2001)
- Northwestern Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2008a)
- Parachute-Piceance-Roan Plateau Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (CPW 2008b)
- Parachute-Piceance-Roan Plateau Greater Sage-Grouse Work Group (CPW 2008c)

1.8.3 County Land Use Plans

- Eagle County Comprehensive Plan (Eagle County 2005)
- Garfield County Land Use Resolution (Garfield County 2008)
- Grand County Master Plan (Grand County 2011)
- Jackson County Master Plan (Jackson County 1998)
- Larimer County Master Plan (Larimer County 1997)
- Mesa County Master Plan (Mesa County 2000)
- Moffat County Land Use Plan (Moffat County 2001)
- Rio Blanco County Master Plan (Rio Blanco County 2011)
- Routt County Master Plan (Routt County 2003)
- Summit County General Plan (Summit County 2006)
- Garfield County Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan (Garfield County 2013) (included as an appendix to the Draft LUPA/EIS)

1.8.4 Other Federal Plans

- BLM Colorado River Valley RMP, In Progress
- BLM Grand Junction RMP, In Progress
- BLM Kremmling RMP, In Progress
- BLM Little Snake RMP (BLM 2011a)
- BLM White River RMP (BLM 1997)
- BLM White River Oil and Gas Development RMPA, In Progress
- Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Service 1997)

1.8.5 Endangered Species Recovery Plans

Endangered species recovery plans are prepared by USFWS to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species. The relevant plans include the following:

- Black-footed Ferret Recovery Plan (USFWS 1988)
- Bonytail Recovery Goals (USFWS 2002a)
- Canada Lynx Recovery Outline (USFWS 2005)
- Colorado Pikeminnow Recovery Goals (USFWS 2002b)
- Greenback Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan (USFWS 1998a)
- Humpback Chub Recovery Goals (USFWS 2002c)
- Razorback Sucker Recovery Plan (USFWS 1998b)

1.8.6 Memoranda of Understanding

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the BLM and Forest Service Concerning Oil and Gas Leasing Operations. In 2006, the BLM and the Forest Service signed an MOU Concerning Oil and Gas Leasing Operations for the purpose of efficient, effective compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. 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 pursuant to oil and gas leases on National Forest System lands that are consistent with applicable law and policy. 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 BLM and Colorado Department of Natural Resources concerning geothermal leasing, permitting, and administration in Colorado (March 2011).

- MOU among the US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Commerce, US Department of Defense, US Department of Energy, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), CEQ, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, US Department of Interior, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (October 2009) to improve coordination among project applicants, federal agencies, and states and tribes involved in the siting and permitting process; to improve uniformity, consistency, and transparency; and to provide a single point of contact for significant transmission lines defined as high voltage (generally, though not necessarily, 230 kilovolts or more) and their attendant facilities.
- MOU among the US Department of Agriculture, US Department of the Interior, and US Environmental Protection Agency regarding air quality analyses and mitigation for federal oil and gas decisions through the NEPA process.

1.8.7 Activity Plans and Amendments

- BLM Emerald Mountain Transportation Management Plan, LSFO (BLM 2007c)
- BLM Wilson Creek Travel Management Plan, WRFO (BLM 2005d)
- Northwest Colorado Fire Program Area Fire Management Plan (BLM 2012d)
- BLM White River Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment, In Progress.
- GJFO and CRVFO Fire Management Plans (updated annually).
- Routt National Forest Oil and Gas Leasing Final EIS and Record of Decision (Forest Service 1993, 1998).

1.8.8 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 other species utilizing the habitat. These plans are usually written in coordination with state wildlife agencies.

- Lower Colorado River Habitat Partnership Program Habitat Management Plan (CPW 2008c)
- Northwest Colorado Habitat Partnership Program Habitat Management Plan (CPW 2009)

1.8.9 Other Greater Sage-grouse-Specific Policies

- National Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy (BLM 2004)
- WAFWA Conservation Assessment
- BLM Special Status Species Policy (BLM Manual 6840) (BLM 2008c)

- National Greater Sage-grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011b)

1.9 DESCRIPTION OF THE PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

1.9.1 Distribution of the Draft Land Use Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement

The formal public comment period for the Draft LUPA/EIS began on August 16, 2013, with the publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register. The NOA, advertisements in local newspapers, and an email postcard sent to all those agencies, organizations, and members of the public that were on the project distribution list announced the availability of the Draft LUPA/EIS and listed the time and place for the scheduled BLM/Forest Service open house meetings.

Copies of the Draft LUPA/EIS were distributed to those who had previously requested copies and to those who submitted requests subsequent to the publication of the NOA. The Draft LUPA/EIS was also available for download from the BLM's ePlanning project website.

1.9.2 Comment Period and Open House Meetings

Under CEQ regulations, the public comment period must last for at least 45 days. Initially, the BLM/Forest Service set a 90-day public comment period. Before the end of the comment period, BLM/Forest Service received multiple requests to extend the comment period. BLM extended the comment period to December 2, 2013. The total comment period lasted 108 days.

The BLM hosted four open house meetings to provide the public with opportunities to ask questions about the project and the planning process, to meet the LUPA team members, and to offer comments (see **Table 1.6**). The open house format was chosen over the more formal public meeting format to encourage broader participation and to allow attendees to ask questions of BLM/Forest Service representatives in an informal setting.

Table 1.6
Public Comment Open House Information

Venue	Location (Colorado)	Date	Number of Attendees
The Wattenburg Center	Walden	October 22, 2013	13
Lakewood Heritage Center	Lakewood	October 23, 2013	30
Colorado River Valley Field Office	Silt	October 28, 2013	24
Craig Hospital	Craig	October 29, 2013	33
		Total	**100**

Note: All meetings were held from 4:00 to 7:00 pm.

1.9.3 Comment Collection and Analysis

See **Chapter 6**, **Section 6.5.4** for a detailed description of the comments received during the public comment period, as well as the comment analysis methodology used.

1.10 CHANGES BETWEEN THE DRAFT LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND THE PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT/FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

As a result of public comments, best science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft LUPA/EIS, the BLM and Forest Service developed the Proposed LUPA for managing BLM-administered and National Forest System lands within the Northwest Colorado sub-region. Alternative D (the Preferred Alternative) from the Draft LUPA/EIS was not selected. Rather, the Proposed LUPA consists of a combination of various management actions from all the alternatives and is now considered the Proposed LUPA for managing BLM-administered and National Forest System lands within the Northwest Colorado sub-region. The Proposed LUPA focuses on addressing public comments, while continuing to meet the BLM's and Forest Service's legal and regulatory mandates.

Throughout the development of the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, editorial changes were made to improve clarity, and technical changes were made to correct errors. New information on resources or resource uses was added. New program policies were recognized.

The NEPA requires agencies to prepare a supplement to the Draft LUPA/EIS if: 1) the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or 2) if there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts. A supplement is not necessary if a newly formulated alternative is a minor variation of one of the alternatives and is qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS.

The Proposed LUPA includes components of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft LUPA/EIS. Taken together, these components present a suite of management decisions that present a minor variation of alternatives identified in the Draft LUPA/EIS and are qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed.

The BLM and Forest Service have determined that the Proposed LUPA is a minor variation and that its impacts would not affect the human environment in a substantial manner or to a significant extent not already considered in the EIS. The impacts disclosed in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS are similar or identical to those described in the Draft LUPA/EIS.

1.10.1 Changes to Geographic Information Systems Information

GIS information (e.g., acreage figures and associated quantifications) was updated as follows:

- Surface ownership data were updated per geographic coordinate database standards and land exchange information available since the Draft LUPA/EIS. This resulted in recalculating datasets, with totals reflecting these corrections.
- Datasets used in the Draft LUPA/EIS were refined with new surface ownership and federal mineral ownership layers for more accurate and specific totals.
- Some datasets were corrected because of mapping errors due to inaccurate datasets, unknown sources, or outdated information.

1.10.2 Changes to the Alternatives (Chapter 2)

Management objectives and actions in **Chapter 2** were updated. The following are the management actions and objectives that underwent the most changes between the Draft LUPA/EIS and the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS.

- Lands and Realty. The Proposed LUPA management action in line 10 of **Table 2.8**, Description of Alternatives B, C, D, and BLM and Forest Service Proposed LUPAs, was changed to: "Areas within PHMA and GHMA would be avoidance areas. No new roads or aboveground structures would be authorized within 1 mile of an active lek. 68,000 acres would be managed as avoidance areas for large transmission lines. PHMA would be exclusion areas for large transmission lines. Any new projects would be subject to the 3 percent disturbance cap. Surface occupancy and surface-disturbing activities would be prohibited within 4 miles of active leks during lekking, nesting, and early brood-rearing (March 1 to July 15)."
- Wind Energy Development/Industrial Solar. Under the Proposed LUPA, PHMA would be an exclusion area for wind energy and industrial solar development. GHMA would be an avoidance area for wind energy and industrial solar development.
- Range Management. The objective for range management was updated to: "GRSG objectives and well-managed livestock operations are compatible because forage availability for livestock, and hiding cover for GRSG, are both dependent on healthy plant communities. Agreements with partners that promote sustainable GRSG populations concurrent with sustainable ranch operations offer long-term stability. In the context of sustainable range operations, manage the range program to: 1) maintain or enhance vigorous and productive plant communities; 2) maintain residual herbaceous cover to reduce predation during GRSG nesting and

early brood-rearing; 3) avoid direct adverse impacts on GRSG-associated range project infrastructure; and 4) employ grazing management strategies that avoid concentrating animals on key GRSG habitats during key seasons."

- Fluid Minerals – Unleased Fluid Minerals. The objective for unleased fluid minerals was updated: "Manage fluid minerals to avoid, minimize, and mitigate: 1) direct disturbance, displacement, or mortality of GRSG; 2) direct loss of habitat, or loss of effective habitat through fragmentation; and 3) cumulative landscape-level impacts. Priority will be given to leasing and development of fluid mineral resources, including geothermal, outside of PHMA and GHMA. When analyzing leasing and authorizing development of fluid mineral resources, including geothermal, in PHMA and GHMA, and subject to applicable stipulations for the conservation of GRSG, priority will be given to development in non-habitat areas first and then in the least suitable habitat for GRSG. The implementation of these priorities will be subject to valid existing rights and any applicable law or regulation, including, but not limited to, 30 USC 226(p) and 43 CFR 3162.3-1(h)."

  The Proposed LUPA management action for line 46 in **Table 2.8**, Description of Alternatives B, C, D, and BLM and Forest Service Proposed LUPAs, was changed to: "No new leasing within 1 mile of active leks in ADH; NSO within 2 miles of active leks in ADH, with no exceptions anticipated; NSO on the remainder of PHMA (see **Appendix D**, Stipulations Applicable to Fluid Mineral Leasing and Land Use Authorizations); 3 percent disturbance cap in PHMA, with disturbances limited to 1 per 640 density calculated by Colorado MZ; and no new leasing in PHMA if disturbance cap exceeds 3 percent for the Colorado MZ or 1 per 640 density. In addition to NSO stipulations, no activity associated with construction, drilling or completions within 4 miles from active leks during lekking, nesting, and early brood-rearing (March 1 to July 15)."

- Fluid Minerals – Leased Fluid Minerals. The objective for leased fluid minerals was updated to: "Where a proposed fluid mineral development project on an existing lease could adversely affect GRSG populations or habitat, the BLM would work with the lessees, operators, or other project proponents to avoid, reduce, and mitigate adverse impacts to the extent compatible with lessees' rights to drill and produce fluid mineral resources. The BLM will work with the lessee, operator, or project proponent in developing an Application for Permit to Drill for the lease to avoid and minimize impacts on GRSG or its habitat and will ensure that the best information about GRSG and its habitat informs and helps guide development of such federal leases."

The Proposed LUPA management action for line 47 in **Table 2.8**, Description of Alternatives B, C, D, and BLM and Forest Service Proposed LUPAs, was changed to: "Disturbance, disruptive activities, and occupancy would be precluded within 1 mile of active leks. If it is determined that this restriction would render the recovery of fluid minerals infeasible or uneconomic, considering the lease as a whole, or where development of existing leases requires that disturbance density exceeds 1 per 640 and/or the 3 percent disturbance cap, use the criteria listed in **Chapter 2** to site proposed lease activities to meet GRSG habitat objectives and require mitigation as described in **Section 2.7.3**, Regional Mitigation. Based on site-specific conditions, prohibit construction, drilling and completion within PHMA within 4 miles of a lek during lekking, nesting, and early brood-rearing (March 1 to July 15). In consultation with the State of Colorado, this timing limitation may be adjusted based on application of the criteria. To authorize an activity based on the criteria above, the environmental record of review must show no significant direct disturbance, displacement, or mortality of GRSG."

- The disturbance cap in the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS was changed from 5 percent in lands that support sagebrush to 3 percent in PHMA. The disturbance cap was also revised to provide additional detail, such as enhanced descriptions of what types of activities would count towards the disturbance totals, where disturbance activities would count against the cap, reclamation and habitat requirements for a disturbed area for both temporary and permanent disturbance, and how the cap would be implemented and monitored. See **Appendix E**, Methodology for Calculating Disturbance Caps, for additional details about how the disturbance caps would be calculated.

1.10.3 Changes to Other Chapters and Appendices

- In **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, additional language was added describing the adaptive management approach for the LUPA/Final EIS.
- Mitigation and monitoring were further defined as a national monitoring framework and regional mitigation strategy, detailed in **Chapter 2**, Alternatives, **Appendix F**, Greater Sage-Grouse Monitoring Framework, and **Appendix G**, Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation Strategy.
- Additional literature was reviewed and added to the baseline information in **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment.

- **Chapter 4**, Environmental Consequences, was updated with new information and analysis related to the Proposed LUPA and revised for consistency with **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment.
- In **Chapter 5**, Cumulative Effects, a more comprehensive list of cumulative projects, past and future, was developed and was used to support a more detailed analysis of cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts were reviewed for consistency with the rest of the LUPA.
- Additions were made to **Chapter 6**, Consultation and Coordination, to describe the public comment process on the Draft LUPA/EIS.
- In various chapters and appendices, clarifications were made on specific topics commenters found confusing or deficiently described, including implementation-level decisions.
- All comments citing editorial changes to the document were reviewed and incorporated as appropriate. The Proposed LUPA/Final EIS was edited and revised to correct typographic errors, missing references, definitions, acronyms, calculations, and other inconsistencies.