WHO'S ON THE LEK
A GUIDE TO PLAYERS

Notes from the Lek

Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Primer Series
Primer # 2

The conservation of sage-grouse and sagebrush ecosystems has many proponents The following summary of players and their role in conservation is meant only as a guide to the many diverse entities. This is by no means a complete list – there are several local entities, industries and non-governmental organizations with sage-grouse committees. However, this list is intended as a guide to some of the stakeholders that have either been important in the long-term management of sage-grouse and sagebrush, or are actively engaged in affecting conservation.

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). Western state and provincial wildlife agencies have the authority for managing populations of Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse. However, these species form a small portion of WAFWA's responsibilities. (http://www.wafwa.org)

- *Sage and Columbian sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee*. This team has been in existence for 58 years and is composed of game-bird and research biologists from each state and province within the range of the sage- and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. They are the technical experts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse management that provide data and supporting information for range-wide management of these species. Other members of the team include representatives of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service (FS), and Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

- *Range-wide Interagency Sage-Grouse Conservation Team (RISCT)*. This team is a subset of the technical committee (above). Their primary responsibility is technical implementation of the 2006 Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. States, Provinces, BLM, FWS, FS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Services Agency (FSA), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) are represented on this team.

- *Executive Oversight Committee (EOC*). This committee is composed of State and Provincial wildlife agency directors, and delegated representatives for the Directors of BLM, FWS, FS, NRCS, USGS, FSA, and USGS. Their primary responsibility is oversight of the implementation of the 2006 Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. The EOC oversees the RISCT.

- *Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy (2006)*. This interagency document provides the strategy to develop the associations among local, state, provincial, tribal, and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and individual citizens necessary to design and implement cooperative actions to support robust populations of sage-grouse and the landscapes and habitats upon which they depend. There are 7 primary components to the strategy, including: Conservation planning, monitoring the implementation of conservation actions, monitoring the effectiveness of conservation actions, adaptive management, research needs and technology, communication and outreach and funding.

- *WAFWA Sage-Grouse Coordinator*. This is a position maintained by WAFWA, and supported by the EOC member agencies to facilitate WAFWA's efforts in sage-grouse conservation actions and the implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. This position is currently held by San Stiver.

Local Working Groups. Local working groups are comprised of local stakeholders, most of whom have developed community based conservation plans to address local sage-grouse conservation issues. The following link will connect to a geographically-linked database that describes Local Working Groups and what types of projects and

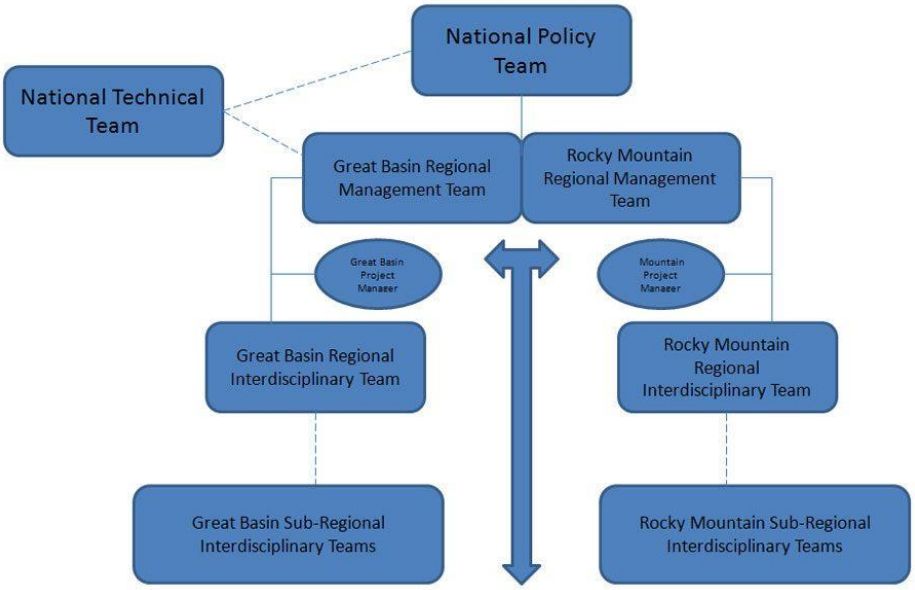
conservation efforts have been identified in their area. (http://greatbasin.wr.usgs.gov/LWG/ and linked in the Conservation Strategy)

Natural Resources Conservation Service Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI). The Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI), launched in 2010 by the NRCS, is a pro-active program strategically harnessing Farm Bill programs to address conservation on private lands for sage-grouse. To date, SGI is focused on improving grazing systems, removing encroaching conifers, and adding conservation easements, as well as working to improve our scientific knowledge of threats and their amelioration. SGI strategically focuses budgets and partner matches to provide assistance to private landowners through existing programs, and new positions to assist in on-the-ground efforts. The goal of SGI is to shore up the best private land habitat for sage-grouse by helping landowners make improvements and remain as viable operations within the sagebrush landscape. (http://sagegrouseinitiative.com/)

- *SGI Coordinator*. This NRCS position was created to facilitate implementation of the SGI program. The position is currently held by Tim Griffiths.

Bureau of Land Management Regulatory Mechanism Planning Effort. Maintaining and restoring sagebrush landscapes on public lands is the BLM's primary means of conserving sage-grouse populations and one of its most important current programs. The BLM is working in partnership with its sister agencies and the Western states to develop new or revised approaches to sage-grouse conservation through land-use plans. Working with partners, the BLM will use these land use plans to implement actions range-wide to conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM lands over the short term and the long term.
http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html)

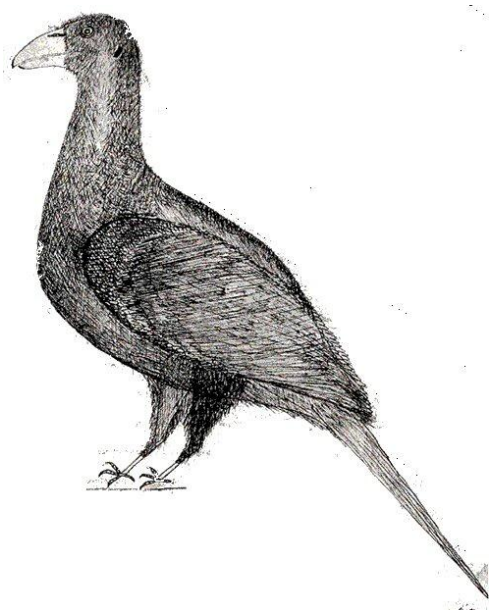
BLM's planning effort is an inter-agency, public process. The process is scheduled for completion in September 2014. The Forest Service is engaging in a similar effort, and is actively partnering with BLM in ensuring this effort transcends political boundaries. The structure of this effort is detailed in the graphic below:



- *BLM Coordinators*. BLM currently has 3 coordinator positions to ensure the success of their conservation efforts. There are two regional coordinators, one each for the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain areas. Those positions are currently held by Lauren Mermejo and Johanna Munson (respectively). The national coordinator is responsible for overseeing the entire effort, and the position is currently held by Jessica Rubado.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The FWS is the agency responsible for assessing the status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of the Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse (http://www.fws.gov/). In addition, FWS is also actively engaged in conservation activities for these species and the habitats on which they depend. For example, FWS manages about 1% of Greater sage-grouse habitats via the National Wildlife Refuge System, and has incorporated active management programs for sage-grouse conservation on all applicable refuges (http://www.fws.gov/refuges/). Additionally, the FWS's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program assists with conservation activities on private lands (http://www.fws.gov/partners/) Typically this program is engaged in activities for FWS trust resources (e.g. migratory birds), but it is now focusing significant efforts for the conservation of these candidate species.

- *National Conservation Coordinator*. The role of FWS coordinator is to work cooperatively with stakeholders in the sage-grouse realm to ensure conservation efforts for the species are meaningful and effective. This position is currently held by Pat Deibert.



"Cock of the Plains"

drawing by William Clark, March 2, 1806