Tom Christiansen
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07/30/2012 10:12 AM

To pat_deibert@fws.gov
cc bbudd@wyo.gov, terry.creekmore@wyo.gov, jbohne@silverstar.com
bcc
Subject Re: help with a population description

Hi Pat,

A few comments:

1) North Laramie - Nyssa is working on the peak male count for this area (pending tech issues today with the internet in Lander). Certainly it will be over 200 males.

2) North Laramie - I don't know this country well so I hope Terry Creekmore is able to chime in regarding threats and their potential severity. This could impact your risk assessment.

3) Jackson - I hope Joe Bohne will be able to review and comment but I think you also need to consider the fact the Grand Teton National Park policies also provide habitat protection in addition to the risks you describe. The Park covers a larger proportion of this population (72% of leks) than you are giving it credit for. This could impact your risk assessment.

4) Wyoming Basins - I argue with the "current management" statement given that Garton's "current management" did not acknowledge/consider the Wyoming Core Area Strategy since the strategy was too new for him to consider. Please reword this statement with this in mind.

That's it. Thanks.

Tom

On Fri, Jul 27, 2012 at 5:30 PM, <pat_deibert@fws.gov> wrote:

Hey folks -

I'm writing up brief population descriptions for a report that is due Tuesday, July 31 (the dreaded COT report). The population descriptions are to be used to describe population and habitat condition, trends, and threats. They will be included in an appendix of this report. Bob Lanka helped me with numbers, and I used the 2007 JCR to fill in the gaps. The risk assessments are on a range-wide scale and therefore may not necessarily reflect the state assessments.

Please take a look and please provide me feedback if you can!

Thanks!

pat

The Laramie population is a small population in the foothills of the Laramie Range, north of Laramie, Wyoming. This population is isolated by distance and topography from adjacent populations (Connelly et al. 2004). Fragmentation within the population is limited. However, habitat quality has declined due to drought conditions and increased human-caused

disturbances, including energy development and in some areas overgrazing by domestic and native ungulates. There is increasing ex-urban development outside the city of Laramie which may contribute to habitat loss on the southern portion of this population. Population trends have fluctuated but in general declined in recent years. Most of the breeding habitat in this population is contained within a state designated core area (PCA). However, the preponderance of private lands in this population habitat improvement efforts are challenging. Due to the isolated nature of this population and increasing human-caused disturbances this population is considered at risk (C2).

The Jackson Hole population is a small population located near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This population is geographically isolated due to surrounding topography and limited habitat. This population consists of 17 leks, of which only one is considered large (averaging over 40 birds). Population trend information indicates that this population is increasing slightly. Nearly all of the breeding habitat in this population is contained within a state core area (PCA). Threats to this population consist of internal habitat fragmentation resulting urban development and recreational activities. Grand Teton National Park is on the western edge of this population, and Yellowstone National Park is just to the north, making Jackson Hole a popular tourist destination. Skiiing is a prime recreational activity during winter. Urban development is limited as a result of limited private lands within this population. Recently, energy development has begun on in the southern edge of this population. Population estimates, based on male lek counts, indicate that the total population numbers fluctuate, with a high of approximately 500 birds. Modeled population forecasts suggest that populations will decline, and long-term persistence is unlikely (Garton et al. 2011). Due to low population numbers, population isolation and a high degree of threats, this population is considered high risk (C1).

This large population covers approximately 2/3 of the State of Wyoming. It extends into Montana, Idaho, Utah and Colorado. The population is separated from adjacent populations by distance and topography (Garton et al. 2011). Sage-grouse habitats are expansive and relatively intact outside of energy development areas. This population is the largest population within the species' range (> 20,000 males attending leks annually), and is very robust. However, long-term population trends are slightly downward, although recent counts suggest an increase. Population modeling suggest that declines will continue under current management strategies, with some models suggesting this population may face a risk of extirpation in 100 years (Garton et al. 2011). The primary threats to this population are energy development and transfer, including both renewable and non-renewable resources, long-term drought, and brush eradication programs. Population declines of sage-grouse near oil and gas fields in this area have been well documented (Lyon 2000, Holloran 2005, Holloran and Anderson, Kaiser 2006). Residential development has also been identified as a threat. Recent conservation actions, including the Wyoming Governor's Executive Order designating protective stipulations for core areas (PCAs) and the implementation of conservation easements within these areas have reduced the threat risk to this area. Designated state core areas (PCAs) adequately capture redundancy and representation for the Wyoming portion of this population. Due to the large size of this population, the presence of large, contiguous

habitats, and regulatory measures providing habitat protection, this population is considered low risk (C4).

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