From:	Lyons, James
To:	Noreen Walsh
Subject:	Re: GRSG: COT slides
Date:	Tuesday, June 10, 2014 7:23:12 AM
Attachments:	STATE.FED_GSGTFMeeting_6.11.14.pptx

Noreen --

Thanks for sending me this.

I think your presentation, BLMs and mine dovetail well.

I am attaching a draft of mine, but given your coverage of the details of the COT report, I think I will modify mine to reduce my coverage of the specifics of the COT report and defer to your presentation. So, I will make modifications and send you revisions later today.

I actually think - if Jeremiah would agrees -- to have your presentation follow mine. Then the BLM presentation could follow to help the states see the complete picture. What do you think?

Jim

On Tue, Jun 10, 2014 at 9:06 AM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

> Slides about COT, some or all of which I might use, depending on the conversation
>
> I notice this item is no longer explicitly on the agenda…..nonetheless I plan to bring these.
>
> Noreen
>
> Noreen Walsh
>
> Regional Director
>
> Mountain-Prairie Region
>
> U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
>
> 303 236 7920
>
> ***The Mountain-Prairie Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service:*** *We provide conservation stewardship of some of America's most scenic lands, to ensure healthy fish and wildlife for the enjoyment and benefit of all*

> *people.*

--

Jim Lyons
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for Land and Minerals Management
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Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy

State/Federal
Sage Grouse
Task Force
Meeting

Colorado Springs, CO
June 11, 2014

Background

- 2006 WAFWA Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy
- March 23, 2010 FWS “warranted but precluded” determination
- December 2011, Federal/state partnership meeting
- December 2011, BLM releases NTT report
- 2013, USGS “Summary of Science, Activities, Programs, and Policies That Influence the Rangewide Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse”
- March 2013, Conservation Objectives Team report

Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report

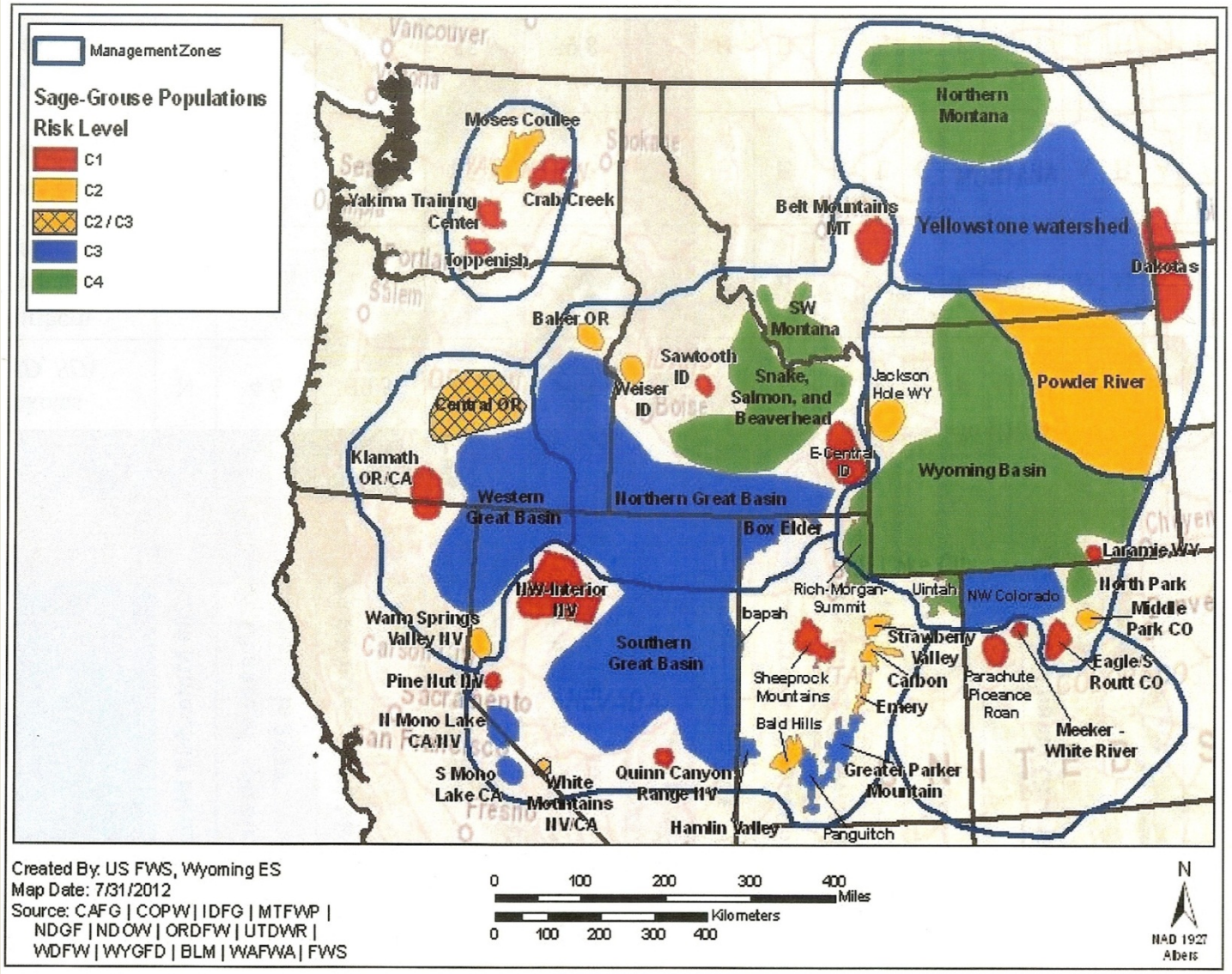
- **Collaboration of 10 state F&W and 5 FWS members**
- **Built on the 2006 WAFWA** Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive **Conservation Strategy**

  <u>Objective</u>: "reverse negative population trends and achiev[e] a neutral or positive population trend"
- **Identified Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs): "key habitats that are essential for sage-grouse conservation"**
- **Encourages "that important habitats outside of PACs be conserved to the extent possible"**
- **Identifies conservation threats and conservation objectives and measures for each SG population**

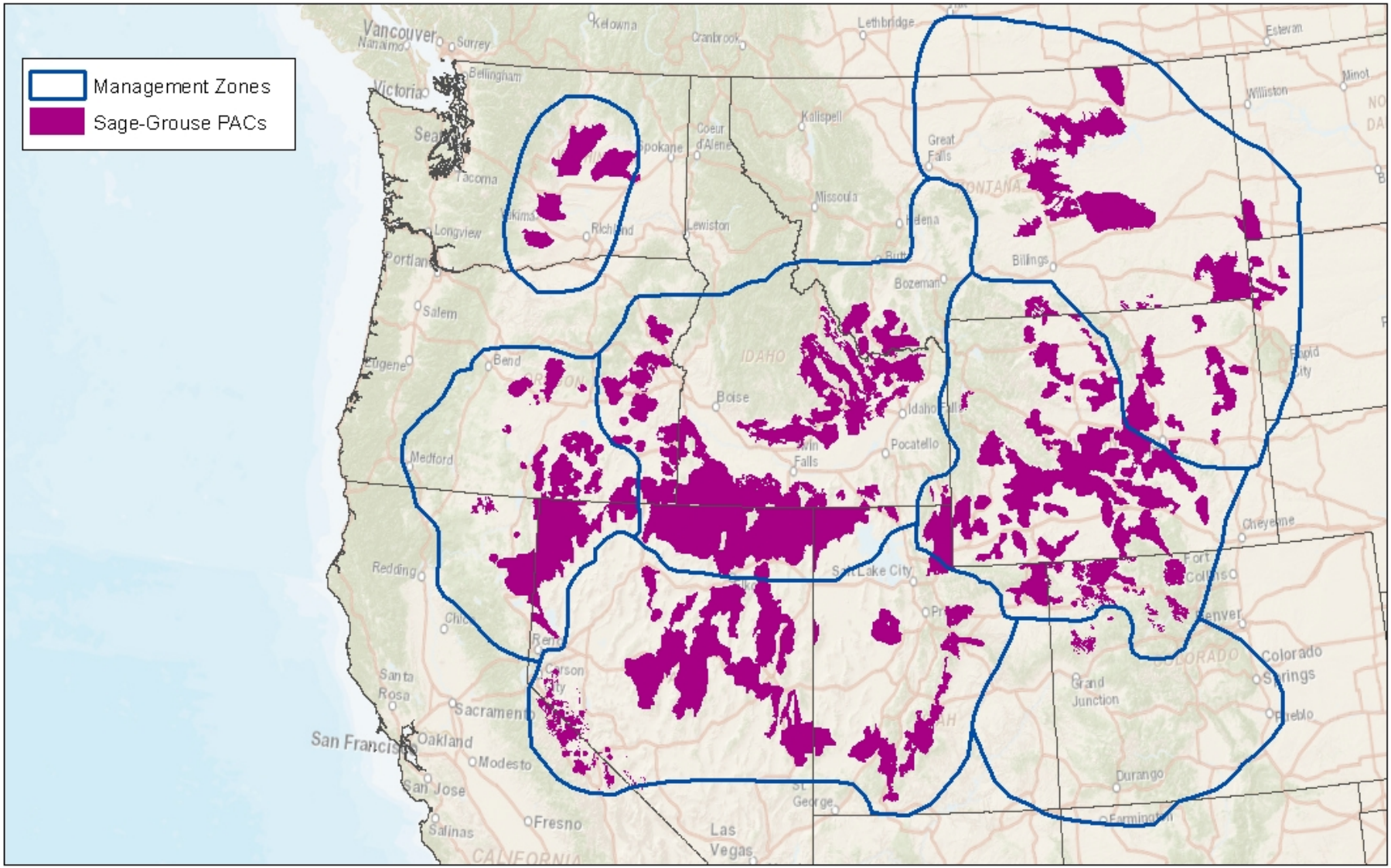
COT Conservation Objectives

1. **"Stop the bleeding"** –
   a. **"<u>Requires</u> eliminating activities known to negatively impact sage-grouse and their habitats or re-designing these activities to achieve the same goal"**
   b. **<u>"Maintenance of the integrity of PACs is the essential foundation for sage-grouse conservation"</u>**
2. Implement **targeted habitat restoration**
3. Develop and implement **state and federal strategies, incentive-based conservation actions and regulatory mechanisms**
4. Develop and implement **proactive, voluntary conservation actions**
5. Develop and implement **monitoring plans**
6. Prioritize, fund, and implement **research to address uncertainties**

Figure 2. Sage-grouse population risk levels. All PACs within each population was assigned the same risk level as the population.



COT - Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs)



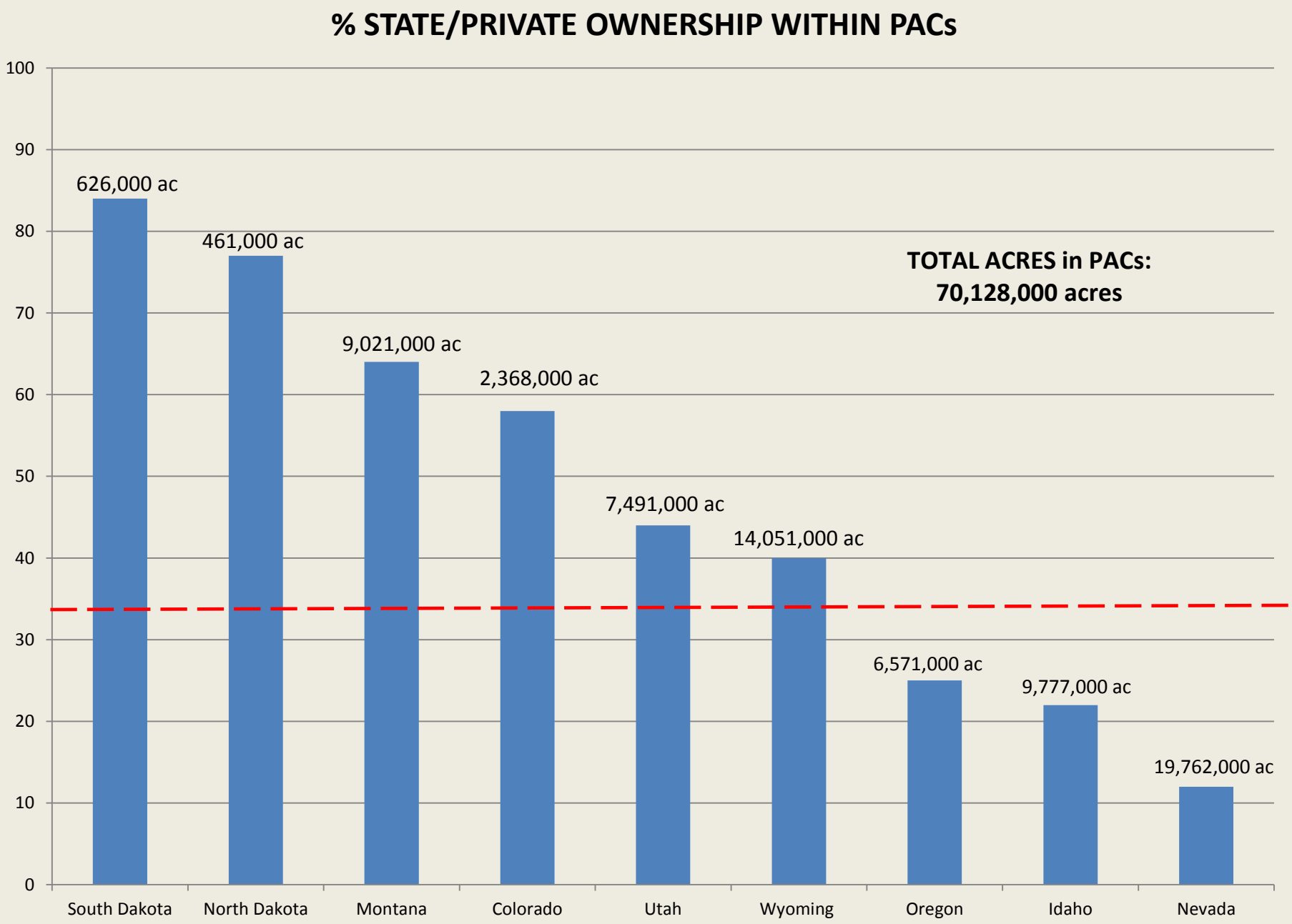
Created By: US FWS, Wyoming ES
Map Date: 3/6/2013
Source: CAFG | COFW | IDFG | MTFWP | NDGF | NDOW | ORDFW | UTDWR | WDFW | WYGFD | BLM | WAFWA | FWS

0 125 250 375 500 Miles

0 125 250 375 500 Kilometers

N

NAD 1927 Albers


% STATE/PRIVATE OWNERSHIP WITHIN PACs
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
626,000 ac
461,000 ac
9,021,000 ac
2,368,000 ac
7,491,000 ac
14,051,000 ac
6,571,000 ac
9,777,000 ac
19,762,000 ac
TOTAL ACRES in PACs:
70,128,000 acres
South Dakota
North Dakota
Montana
Colorado
Utah
Wyoming
Oregon
Idaho
Nevada

PAC integrity is function of state, private, and federal management direction

Illustrate PAC land management from MT, ID, or OR

Table 2. Sage-grouse quasi-extinction risk (from Garton *et al.* 2011), and threats, by management zone and population. Populations are those defined by Garton *et al.* (2011), although in some cases sub-populations were identified to help refine threat characterization (see Figure 3). Population estimates and quasi-extinction risk estimates are from Garton *et al.* (2011). Threats are characterized as: Y = threat is present and widespread, L = threat present but localized, N = threat is not known to be present, and U = Unknown.

Population	Unit Number	Population Abundance and Estimated Quasi-extinction Risk					Management Zone	Threats												
		<200 Males/500 Birds	% Chance of <50 birds/ 20 males in 2037	% Chance of <500 birds/ 200 males in 2037	% Chance of <50 birds/ 20 males in 2107	% Chance of <500 birds/ 200 males in 2107		Isolated/Small Size	Sagebrush Elimination	Agriculture Conversion	Fire	Conifers	Weeds/Annual Grasses	Energy	Mining	Infrastructure	Grazing	Free-Roaming Equids	Recreation	Urbanization
Management Zone I: Great Plains			*9.5*	*11.1*	*22.8*	*24*														
Dakotas (*ND, SD*)	1	N	4.6	39.5	44.6	66.3	I	Y	L	L	Y	U	L	Y	Y	Y	L	N	N	N
Northern Montana (*MT*)	2	N	0	0	0.2	2.0	I	N	L	L	L	N	L	Y	N	Y	Y	N	L	N
Powder River Basin (*WY*)	3	N	2.9	16.5	85.7	86.2	I	N	L	N	L	L	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	L
Yellowstone Watershed (*MT*)	4	N	0	8.1	55.6	59.8	I	N	L	Y	L	L	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	L	N

Conservation Threats: Zone I

APPENDIX A—MANAGEMENT ZONE AND POPULATION RISK ASSESSMENTS

See Figure 3 for a map of management zones and populations.

MANAGEMENT ZONE I: GREAT PLAINS

This management zone consists of four sage-grouse populations as identified by Garton *et al.* (2011), including the Dakotas, Northern Montana, Powder River Basin, and Yellowstone Watershed populations. All of these populations cross state or provincial boundaries. Garton *et al.* (2011) predicted an 11.1 percent chance this Management Zone will fall below 200 males by 2037, and a 24.0 percent chance it would fall below 200 males by 2107. Privately-owned lands are a major constituent of sagebrush landscapes in the Great Plains (66 percent), followed by BLM (17 percent), and then other ownerships (Knick 2011). After Management Zones II and IV, this zone contains some of the most connected networks of sage-grouse leks in the range (Knick and Hanser 2011). On the other hand, sagebrush habitat in 37 percent of this zone is 75-100 percent similar to sagebrush habitat in areas where extirpation has occurred (Wisdom *et al.* 2011). Generally, areas in this zone that are least similar to extirpated parts of the range include the western portions of Northern Montana and Powder River populations and the southeast corner of the Yellowstone Watershed population (Wisdom *et al.* 2011, Figure 18.5).

Conservation Threats: Dakotas Population

Dakotas

The Dakotas's population occurs on the far eastern edge of the range of sage-grouse. Much of the population occurs in the Cedar Creek Anticline. Garton *et al*. (2011) reported the minimum male count for this population at 587 and predicted a 66 percent chance that this population would dip below 200 males in the next 100 years. Population counts in 2012 for North and South Dakota were approximately 300, so this population as a whole very likely still exceeds 500 birds. Priority areas for conservation (PACs) in North and South Dakota are connected by general habitat consisting of limited sagebrush habitat. Sage-grouse movements generally occur east and west between the Dakotas's population and Montana. Connectivity between the sub-populations occurs through Montana's portion of the population (Knick and Hanser 2011). This area was identified as a PAC in Montana due to historically high density of sage-grouse and for the seasonal habitat it provides for birds from North Dakota, a likely conduit for genetic connectivity. The area is heavily influenced by oil and gas development and conversion of native rangeland to cropland is a major threat to the persistence of this sage-grouse population. Over-grazing in localized areas has degraded the sagebrush habitat and can reduce nesting success. Nesting success was positively correlated to grass cover in North Dakota (Herman-Brunson 2007). Overall, this population is small and at high risk.

Conservation Measures: Energy

Energy Development

The increasing demand for renewable and non-renewable energy resources is resulting in continued development within the greater sage-grouse range, resulting in habitat loss, fragmentation, direct and indirect disturbance. Development results in sage-grouse population declines.

Conservation Objective: Energy development should be designed to ensure that it will not impinge upon stable or increasing sage-grouse population trends.

Addressing energy development and any subsequent successful restoration activities in sagebrush ecosystems will require consideration of local ecological conditions, which cannot be prescribed on a range-wide level. Where state sage-grouse management plans have already identified an effective strategy for energy development that meets the above objective, the strategies in those plans should be implemented. In all other situations, the following measures should be considered to avoid, reduce, or mitigate impacts from energy development.

Conservation Measures:

1. Avoid energy development in PACs (Doherty *et al*. 2010). Identify areas where leasing is not acceptable, or not acceptable without stipulations for surface occupancy that maintains sage-grouse habitats.
2. If avoidance is not possible within PACs due to pre-existing valid rights, adjacent development, or split estate issues, development should only occur in non-habitat areas, including all appurtenant structures, with an adequate buffer that is sufficient to preclude impacts to sage-grouse habitat from noise, and other human activities.
3. If development must occur in sage-grouse habitats due to existing rights and lack of reasonable alternative avoidance measures, the development should occur in the least suitable habitat for sage-grouse and be designed to ensure at a minimum that there are

   no detectable declines in sage-grouse population trends (and seek increases if possible) by implementing the following:
   a. Reduce and maintain the density of energy structures below which there are not impacts to the function of the sage-grouse habitats (as measured by no declines in sage-grouse use), or do not result in declines in sage-grouse populations within PACs.
   b. Design development outside PACs to maintain populations within adjacent PACs and allow for connectivity among PACs.
   c. Consolidate structures and infrastructure associated with energy development.
   d. Reclamation of disturbance resulting from a proposed project should only be considered as mitigation for those impacts, not portrayed as minimization.
   e. Design development to minimize tall structures (turbines, powerlines), or other features associated with the development (e.g., noise from drilling or ongoing operations; Blickley *et al*. 2012).

Planning Area Structure

2 Regions

Great Basin
Rocky Mountain

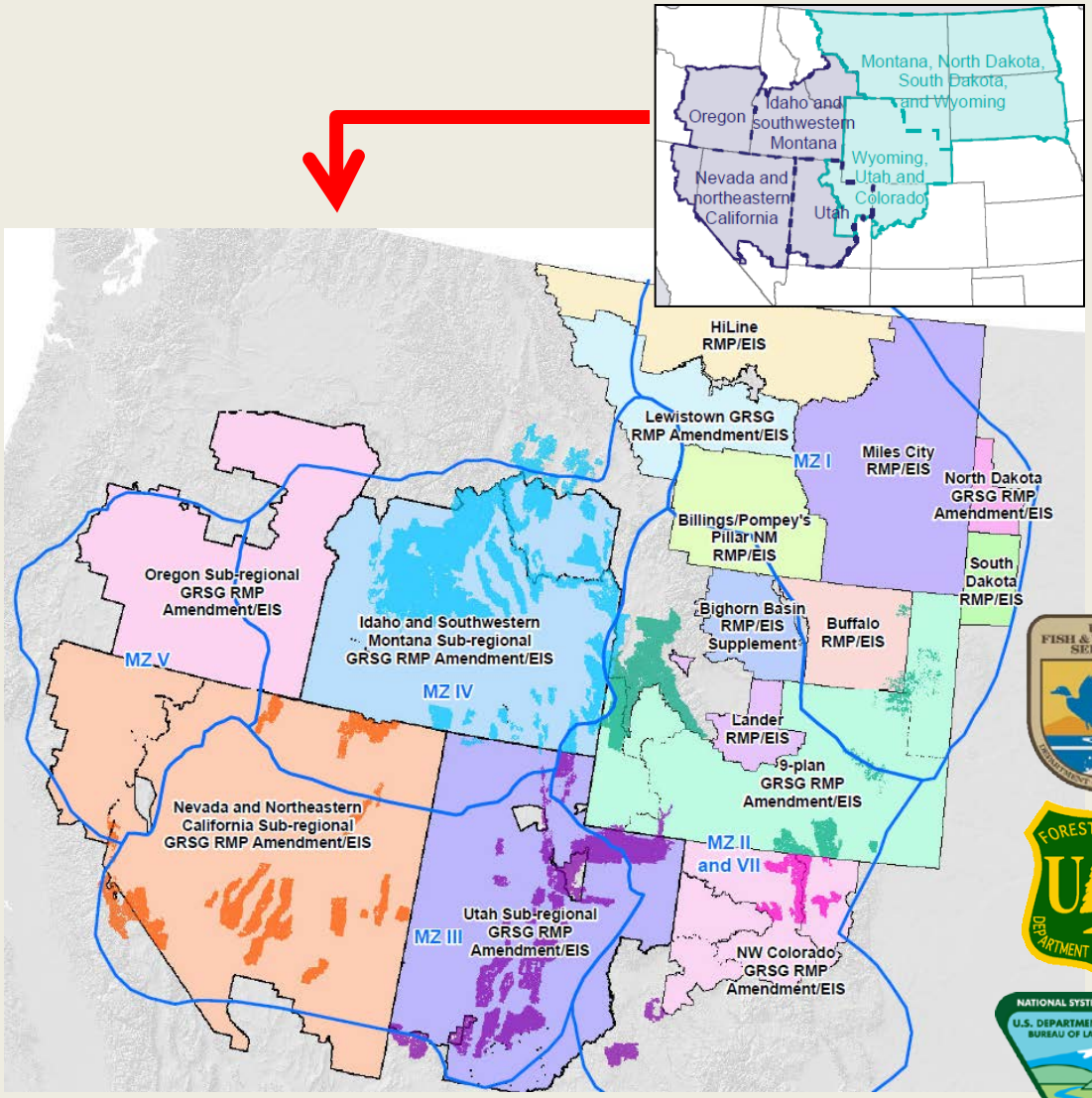
15 Sub-regions/EISs

<u>Great Basin (All Amendments)</u>
Oregon, Nevada/NE California, Idaho/SW Montana, and Utah

<u>Rocky Mountain (Revisions & Amendments)</u>
NW Colorado, WY 9 Plan, Lander Revision (WY), Bighorn Basin Revision (WY), Buffalo Revision (WY), Billings/Pompey's Pillar NM Revision (MT), Lewistown Amendment (MT), HiLine Revision (MT), Miles City Revision (MT), South Dakota Revision, North Dakota Amendment

98 LUPs Being Amended (includes BLM and FS)

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Management Zones outlined in Blue



- FS - USFWS

Powder River Population

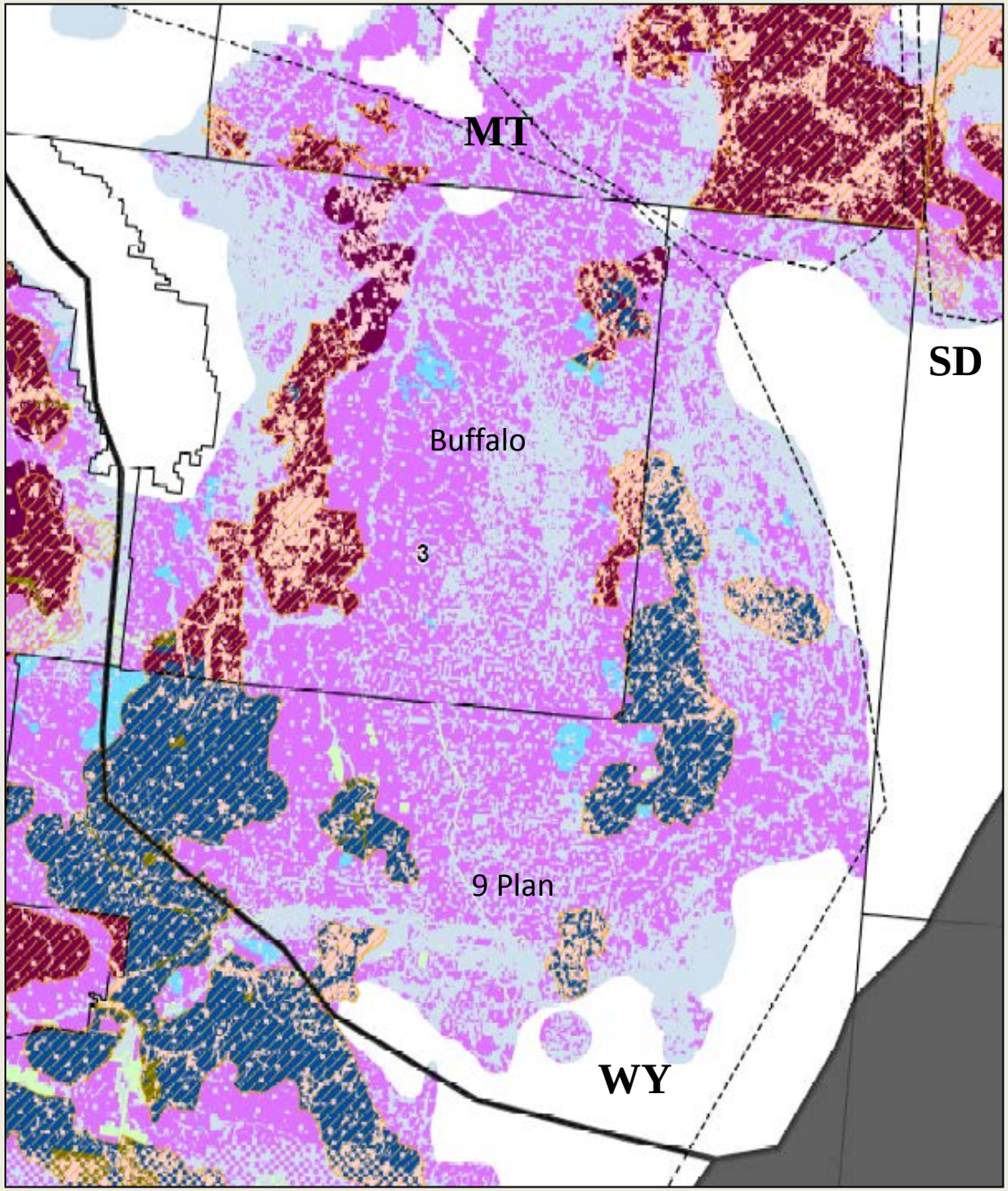
Mining Threat

Potential Inconsistency:

Buffalo FO Open to Locatable Minerals; WY 9-Plan Recommends Withdrawals for Locatable Minerals

Legend

- Open in Priority Habitat
- Open in General Habitat
- Recommended Withdrawals in Priority Habitat
- Recommended Withdrawals in General Habitat
- Existing Withdrawals in Priority Habitat
- Existing Withdrawals in General Habitat
- Priority Habitat
- General Habitat
- COT Populations (Labeled by Population Number)
- Priority Areas of Conservation (PAC)
- EIS Boundary
- WAFWA Management Zones

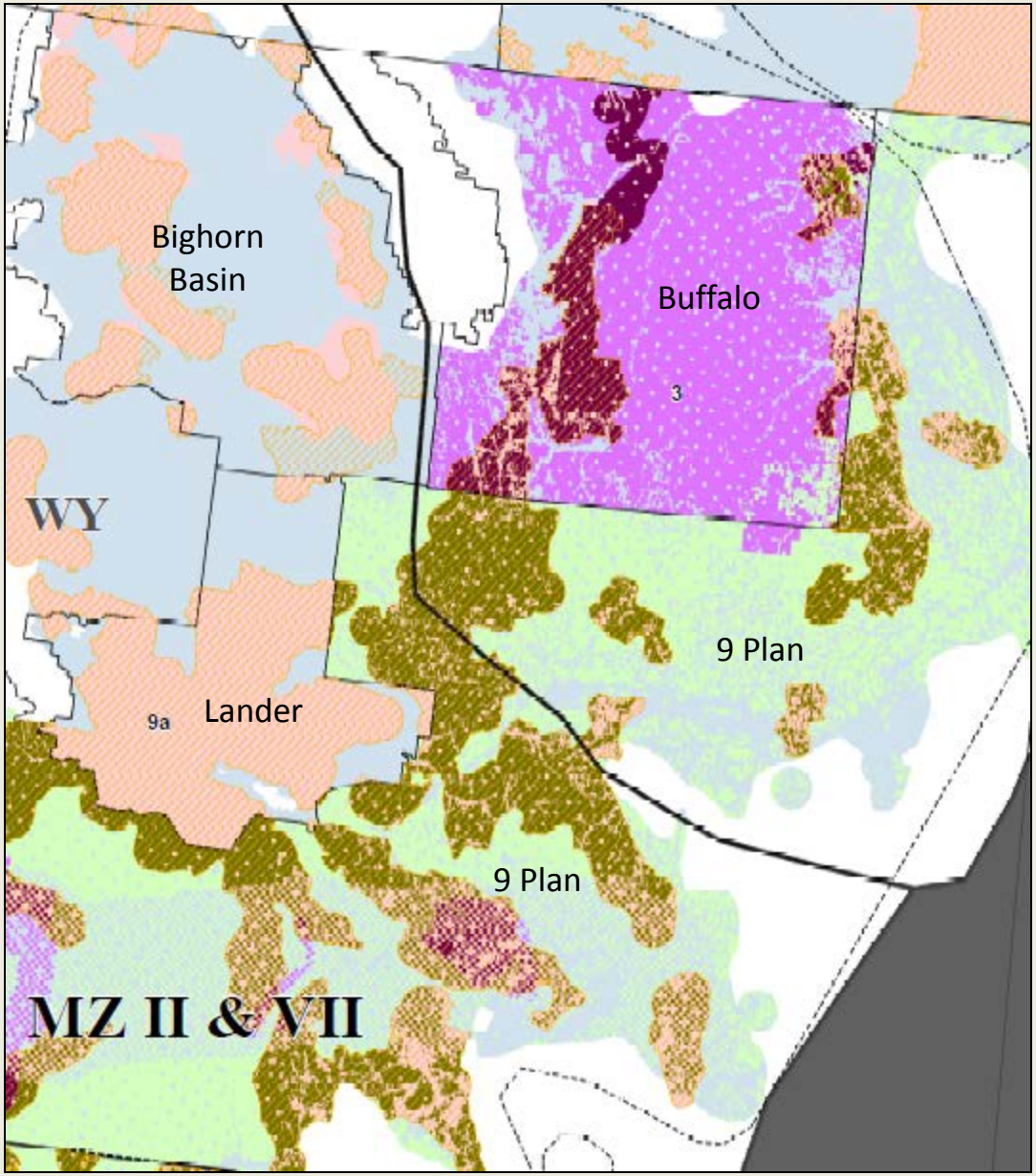


Powder River & Wyoming Basins Populations

Mining Threat

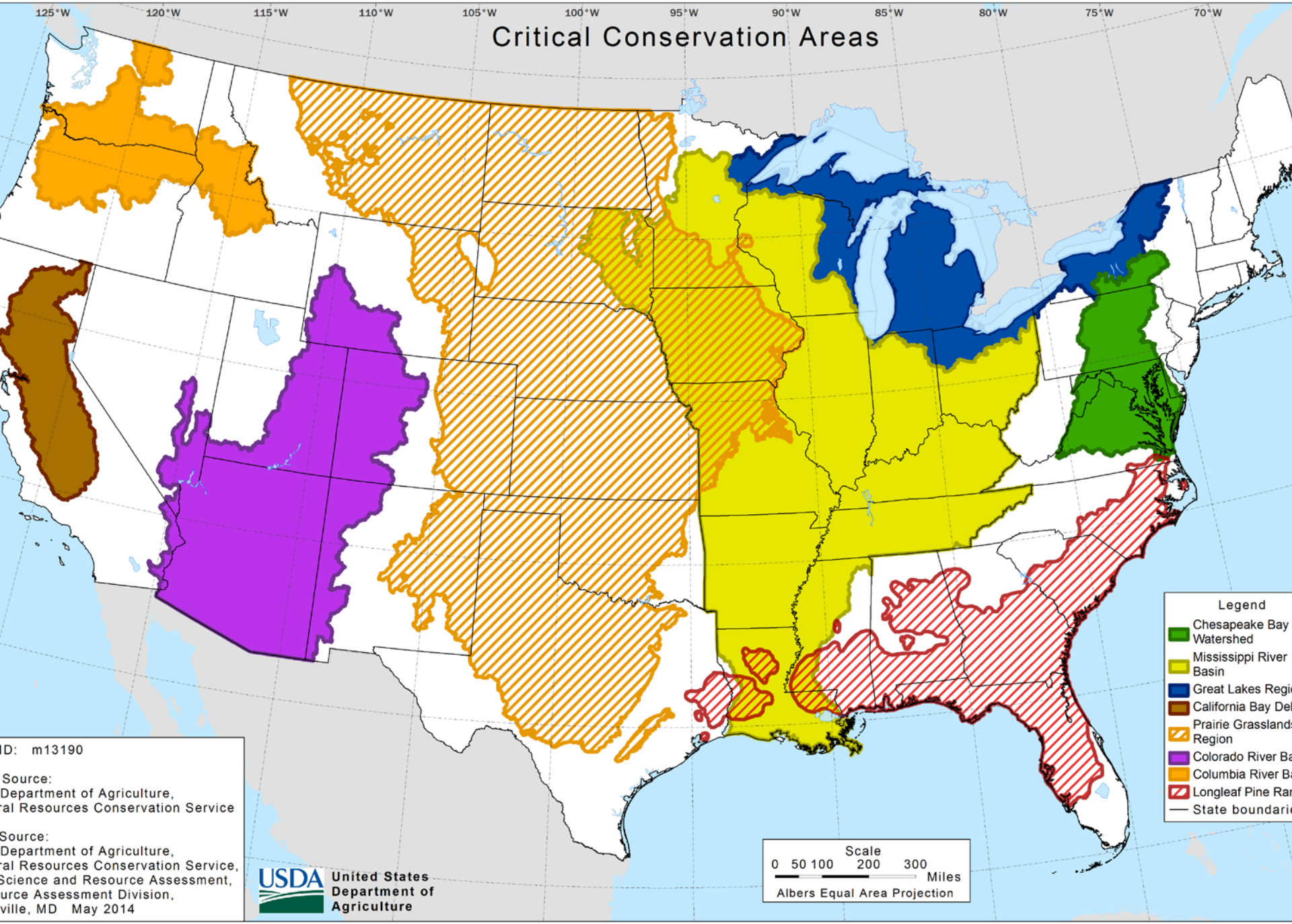
Potential Inconsistency:

Coal is Suitable in Buffalo FO; Coal is Unsuitable in remainder of WY



Legend

- Suitable in Priority Habitat
- Suitable in General Habitat
- Unsuitable in Priority Habitat
- Unsuitable in General Habitat
- Priority Habitat
- General Habitat
- COT Populations (Labeled by Population Number)
- Priority Areas of Conservation (PAC)
- EIS Boundary
- WAFWA Management Zones


Critical Conservation Areas
125°W
120°W
115°W
110°W
105°W
100°W
95°W
90°W
85°W
80°W
75°W
70°W
Legend
Chesapeake Bay Watershed
Mississippi River Basin
Great Lakes Regi
California Bay Del
Prairie Grasslands Region
Colorado River Ba
Columbia River Ba
Longleaf Pine Ran
State boundari
Scale
0 50 100 200 300 Miles
Albers Equal Area Projection
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
ID: m13190
Source:
Department of Agriculture,
ral Resources Conservation Service
Source:
Department of Agriculture,
ral Resources Conservation Service,
Science and Resource Assessment,
urce Assessment Division,
ville, MD May 2014

The Wall Street Journal - March 10, 2014

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Sage Grouse Rebellion

Will Obama use two small birds to limit oil drilling in the West?

March 10, 2014 6:52 p.m. ET

Almost half the land west of the Mississippi belongs to the federal government, including 48% of California, 62% of Idaho and 81% of Nevada. No surprise that the Obama Administration wants to control more. But the result could be to suppress the country's booming oil and gas development.

In partnership with green activists, the Department of Interior may attempt one of the largest federal land grabs in modern times, using a familiar vehicle—the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A record 757 new species could be added to the protected list by 2018. The two species with the greatest impact on private development are range birds—the greater sage grouse and the lesser prairie chicken, both about the size of a barnyard chicken. The economic stakes are high because of the birds' vast habitat.

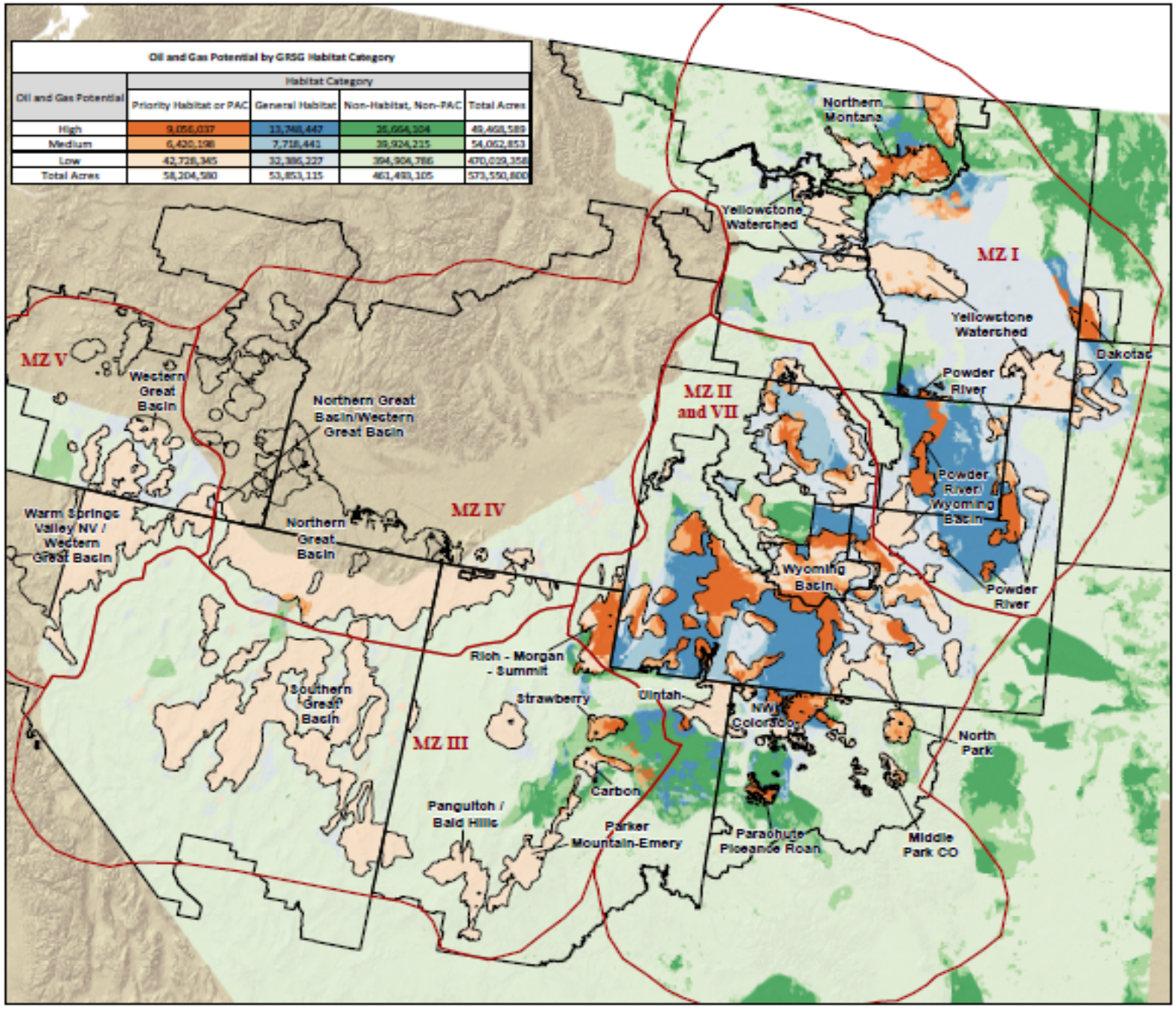
Interior is expected to decide sometime this month whether to list the lesser prairie chicken, which inhabits five western prairie states, as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. Meantime, the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service are considering land-use amendments to protect the greater sage grouse, which would lay the groundwork for an ESA listing next year.

The sage grouse is found in 11 western states—California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Most of the areas affected are federal lands routinely used for farming, ranching, mining, road building, water projects and oil and gas drilling.

Oil and Gas Potential by Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Category

DRAFT

Oil and Gas Potential by GRSG Habitat Category				
Oil and Gas Potential	Habitat Category			
	Priority Habitat or PAC	General Habitat	Non-Habitat, Non-PAC	Total Acres
High	9,056,037	11,748,447	26,664,104	49,468,589
Medium	6,420,198	7,718,441	39,924,215	54,062,853
Low	42,728,345	32,386,227	394,904,786	470,019,358
Total Acres	58,204,580	53,853,115	461,493,105	573,550,800



Legend

Oil and Gas Potential and GRSG Habitat Category

- High Potential, Non-Habitat and Non-PAC
- High Potential, General Habitat
- High Potential, Priority Habitat or PAC
- Medium Potential, Non-Habitat and Non-PAC
- Medium Potential, General Habitat
- Medium Potential, Priority Habitat or PAC
- Low Potential, Non-Habitat and Non-PAC
- Low Potential, General Habitat
- Low Potential, Priority Habitat or PAC
- GRSG PACs (Labeled by Population)
- WAFWA Management Zones
- EIS Boundary

For the purposes of representation on this map all areas within PACs were grouped with the Preferred EIS priority habitat, even if the preferred habitat categories were general habitat or non-habitat.

PACs containing areas with high or medium oil and gas potential are labeled with the name of the overlapping greater sage-grouse population.

Data Sources:

Oil and Gas Potential: Copeland, H., K. Doherty, D.Naugle, A. Pocewicz, J. Kiesecker (2010), Mapping Oil and Gas Development Potential in the US Intermountain West and Estimating Impacts to Species.

PACs: COT Report GIS data files provided to the Wildlife Habitat Spatial Analysis Lab by the USFWS on Mar. 28th, 2013.

EIS Preferred Alternative Habitat Category Data: Submitted by each individual EIS between Aug. 14th, 2013 and March 5th, 2014.

N W E S

0 25 50 100 150 Miles

Summary

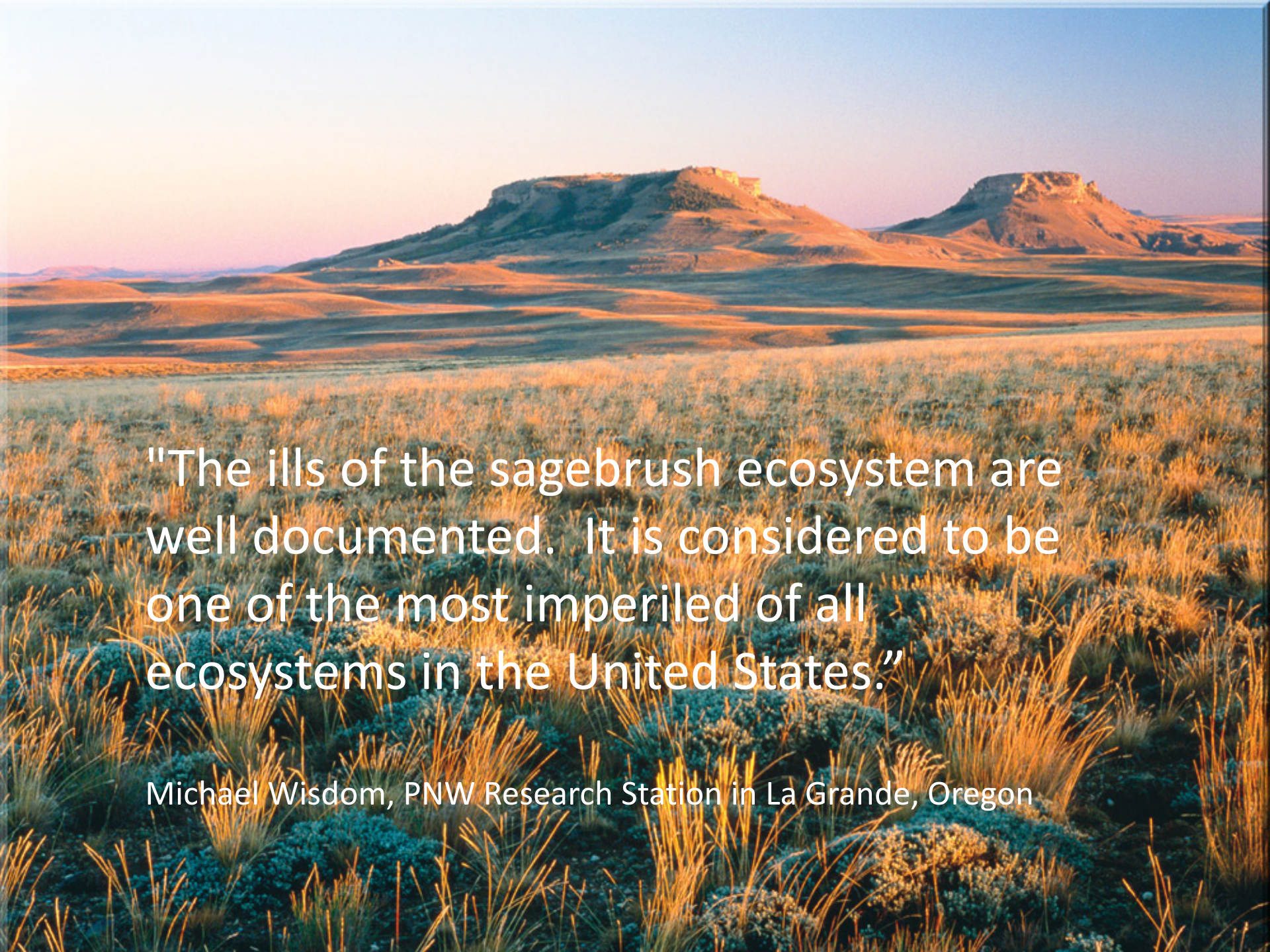
Critical next steps:

1. “Roll – up” BLM/FS plans by assessing cumulative conservation strategy for each population and WAFWA zones
2. Sit down with states to assess your contributions to GSG conservation for each population and zone
5. Together, address gaps, inconsistencies, and inadequacies in plans across all populations to complete BLM/FS and state plans
6. Deliver to FWS for listing decision

Summary

Key concerns:

1. **Delay**
2. **Addressing COT-identified threats**
3. **Ensuring that the cumulative conservation effort (BLM/FS/states) is adequate to conserve the species by eliminating or redesigning activities that negatively impact GSG and their habitat**
4. **"Stop the bleeding" - Minimize disturbance in PACs**
5. **Achieving consistent conservation outcomes**
6. **Being flexible in how we do so**
7. **Preventing rangeland fire in priority GSG habitat**
8. **Targeting conservation "$s" to critical private lands**
9. **Providing durability for conservation outcomes**
10. **Finishing where we started through a continued <u>commitment to collaboration</u>**



"The ills of the sagebrush ecosystem are well documented. It is considered to be one of the most imperiled of all ecosystems in the United States."

Michael Wisdom, PNW Research Station in La Grande, Oregon