From: Carrier, Michael
To: Mackey, Dennis; Kathleen Hendricks
Subject: Re: Idaho Plan
Date: Monday, March 16, 2015 4:29:53 PM
Attachments: IdahoPlanWorksFinalDraft 3_16_15_MCEdits.docx

My edits. More extensive than I planned but I reordered paragraphs because we were jumping around a little on describing Core and Important.

On Mon, Mar 16, 2015 at 4:09 PM, Mackey, Dennis <dennis_mackey@fws.gov> wrote:

> Mike:
>
> Here is what Kathleen and I came up with to go along with the map. I think it still needs a bit of work, but BLM and the State should be able to help. Thanks.
>
> Dennis
> ---------- Forwarded message ----------
> From: **Hendricks, Kathleen** <kathleen_hendricks@fws.gov>
> Date: Mon, Mar 16, 2015 at 4:03 PM
> Subject: Idaho Plan
> To: Dennis Mackey <dennis_mackey@fws.gov>
>
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> --
> Dennis Mackey
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Elements of the Idaho Sage-grouse Conservation Plan

Idaho's Governor Otter established the Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force) comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders. The Task Force adopted the objective that conservation of year-round habitats (i.e. sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing, migration and wintering habitats to satisfy for year-round requirements-) associated with 73% of the breeding males surveyed in 2011 would provide a sustainable long-term population across the State of Idaho. The leks and associated year-round habitats necessary to support this population were mapped and delineated as a Core Management Zone. The Task Force also recognized that additional leks and associated year-round habitats must be conserved to ensure that the population objective is maintained or exceeded to offset fire-related loss of habitat in the Core Management Zone. To address this need the Task Force delineated a significant amount of what would otherwise have been designated as General Management Zone as an Important Management Zone, which includes year-round habitats necessary to support an additional 22% of the 2011 breeding males. Combined, the Core and Important Management Zones cover sage-grouse nesting, brood-rearing, migration and wintering habitats that support 95% of the breeding male sage-grouse in Idaho. ~~The remaining Idaho sage-grouse habitat has been delineated as a General Habitat Zone, which is outside of Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs),~~ The Important Management Zone is a foundational component designed to address the primary threats of wildfire and invasive annual grasses. In the Idaho Plan, the Important Management Zone habitat is managed more similarly to Core Management Zone habitat than to General habitat. The exceptions where Core and Important Management Zones are treated dissimilarly are:

1. Solar, wind, and nuclear power are excluded from Core and avoided in Important.
2. Non-energy leasables are closed to leasing in Core, and known phosphate leasing areas are open in Important, subject to standard leasing stipulations.

Comment [CM1]: Can we substitute minerals or some other term for leasables?

~~degraded and lower-quality habitat and mostly permanently isolated from the intact sage-grouse populations supported by the Core and Important Management Zone habitat.~~

The remaining Idaho sage-grouse habitat has been delineated as a General Habitat Zone, which is outside of Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs). General habitat supports only 5% of the male sage-grouse in Idaho. Most of the birds supported by General habitat are located in the

Weiser and East Idaho Uplands areas that are permanently isolated from the primary Idaho sage grouse populations. The remaining habitat is lower elevation habitat that is permanently converted to agriculture, and/or heavily impacted by fire and invasive annual plants. The conservation strategy for birds associated with the General Management Zone in the Idaho Plan calls for limited protection for leks in this habitat zone and compensatory mitigation if leks are impacted to be applied in higher value conservation areas of Important or Core habitat. While the Idaho Plan's Core and General Management Zones are equivalent in concept and application to Priority and General Habitat as delineated in the National Policy Team guidance, the guidance does not have a designation similar to the Important Management Zone proposed in the Idaho Plan.

The three zone approach is the foundation of the Plan's adaptive management strategy and was essential to securing the support and participation of the State and ~~all~~ stakeholders involved in the Task Force. This ~~effort~~approach created a substantial incentive to maximize conservation efforts in Core and Important Management Zones, especially those that address the threats of wildfire and invasive annual grasses, and meet the conservation goals of the National Tech Team Report and the Conservation Objectives Team report. Most noteworthy is that the Idaho Plan contains adaptive management triggers that are tripped at the most sensitive biological scale (Biologically Significant Units or BSU), but when tripped, result in an aggressive suite of measures at a much larger (Conservation Area) scale. Allowing some tolerance for natural sage-grouse population and habitat fluctuations, soft (10%) and hard (20%) population and habitat loss triggers are established. If a habitat or population soft trigger is tripped, an Implementation Team, informed by technical experts, will identify causal factors and actions to arrest and reverse the trend. If a habitat or population hard trigger is tripped, the Important Management Zone within the entire Conservation Area will be managed under Core Management Zone restrictions and additional necessary conservation actions will be implemented until the trigger is released. These thresholds were developed based on recent research and scientific findings, including local scientific information from Idaho. To ensure that this approach to adaptive management is implemented, the plan calls for the State of Idaho to have "cooperating agency" status in assisting in Plan implementation to include creation of an Implementation Team by executive order of the Governor.

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The goals and conservation strategy were adopted as the State of Idaho's alternative (Alternative E), one of two co-preferred alternatives, in BLM's Idaho Southwest Montana RMP/DEIS. Alternative E is being integrated into a Final Environmental Impact Statement through post-DEIS discussions with BLM and the State of Idaho into a combined alternative (Idaho Plan) and with modified zones (see attached map).

Historic large-scale infrastructure development is very limited within Idaho's two Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs). To ensure that both Core and Important Management Zones are not fragmented by such infrastructure going forward, several conservation measures have been adopted in the Idaho Plan. These include exclusion and avoidance areas, required design features, spatial/temporal buffers, a 3% anthropogenic disturbance cap, and compensatory mitigation. The mitigation standard is at a level of "net conservation benefit" for sage-grouse and allows for mitigation to occur where it will produce the greatest benefit within each of the four Conservation Areas.

~~While the Idaho Plan's Core and General Management Zones are equivalent in concept and application to Priority and General Habitat as delineated in the National Policy Team guidance, the guidance does not have a designation similar to the Important Management Zone proposed in the Idaho Plan. The Important Management Zone is a foundational component designed to address the primary threats of wildfire and invasive annual grasses. In the Idaho Plan, the Important Management Zone habitat is managed more similarly to Core Management Zone habitat than to General habitat. The exceptions where Core and Important Management Zones are treated dissimilarly are:~~

1. ~~Solar, wind, and nuclear power are excluded from Core and avoided in Important.~~
2. ~~Non-energy leasables are closed to leasing in Core, and Known Phosphate Leasing Areas are open in Important, subject to standard leasing stipulations.~~

Comment [CM2]: Can we substitute minerals or some other term for leasables?

~~The General Management Zone does not have the sage-grouse conservation value of the Core or Important Management Zone habitat. General habitat supports only 5% of the male sage-grouse~~

~~in Idaho. Most of the birds supported by General habitat are located in the Weiser and East Idaho Uplands areas that are permanently isolated from the primary Idaho sage grouse populations. The remaining habitat is lower elevation habitat that is permanently converted to agriculture, and/or heavily impacted by fire and invasive annual plants. The conservation strategy for birds associated with the General Management Zone in the Idaho Plan calls for limited protection for leks in this habitat zone and compensatory mitigation if leks are impacted to be applied in higher value conservation areas of Important or Core habitat.~~