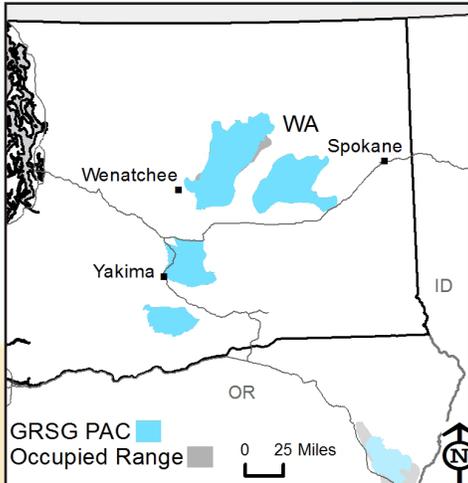
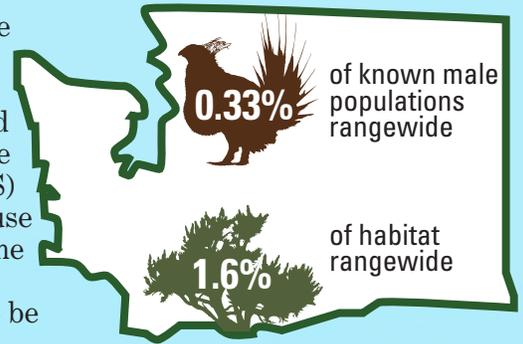




Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation in Washington



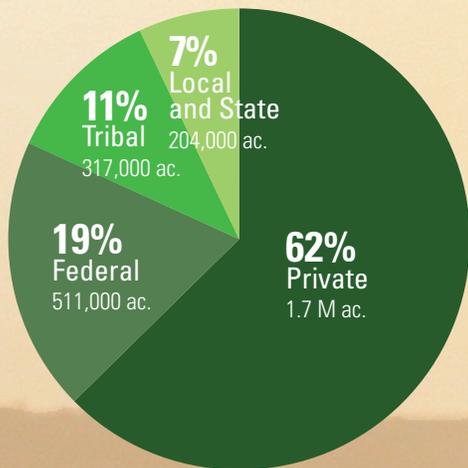
Washington has been an active partner in the collaborative, science-based conservation campaign to protect the greater sage-grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem. Due to the collective efforts of federal, state and private partners across its range, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has found that the greater sage-grouse does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Greater sage-grouse will continue to be managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Important Conservation Areas and Occupied Range for Greater Sage-Grouse in Washington

Land Ownership

Total Occupied Range: 2.76 million acres



Greater Sage-Grouse in Washington

Greater sage-grouse still occur in just four, small and relatively isolated populations in the eastern part of Washington. The current range is approximately eight percent of the presumed historic range. Two of the four populations contain native populations; the other two are reintroduction sites where greater sage-grouse were extirpated less than 30 years prior. Leks in the state are among the least well-connected in the sage-grouse's range.

Unlike other states, greater sage-grouse in Washington are primarily found on a fragmented landscape of private lands. In 2015, the Service evaluated multiple factors and found that the population in the Columbia Basin, while geographically separate, is not biologically significant to greater sage-grouse rangewide and is therefore not a Distinct Population Segment.

Primary Threats

Loss and fragmentation of sagebrush caused by:

- Increased frequency, severity and size of wildfires (associated with cheatgrass invasion);
- Invasive plants: cheatgrass;
- Infrastructure associated with energy development and transmission, roads and fences;
- Urbanization;
- Agricultural conversion; and
- Small population size and isolated nature of population locations contributes to loss of genetic variability.

Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy in WA



Greater sage-grouse on a lek

STATE AND PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

Overview of State Actions

- Washington has protected greater sage-grouse as a state-listed threatened species since 2004. The state has established recovery goals based on populations and active leks. The state, the Army and the Yakima Nation has had an active greater sage-grouse reintroduction program for eight years.
- The state is developing a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for private landowners and state wildlife areas within central Washington to minimize or remove threats to greater sage-grouse associated with agriculture and grazing.
- In addition, the FWS has worked with the Foster Creek Conservation District in Douglas County to develop a multi-species conservation plan to maintain or improve habitat on private lands for greater sage-grouse, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbits, sharp-tailed grouse and other species. The proposed plan will cover up to approximately 879,000 acres of private agricultural lands and provide assurances to landowners that their ongoing agricultural activities are in compliance with the ESA while supporting sustainable agricultural operations.

There is no high and medium oil and gas potential in Washington.



Greater sage-grouse hen in sagebrush

NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative

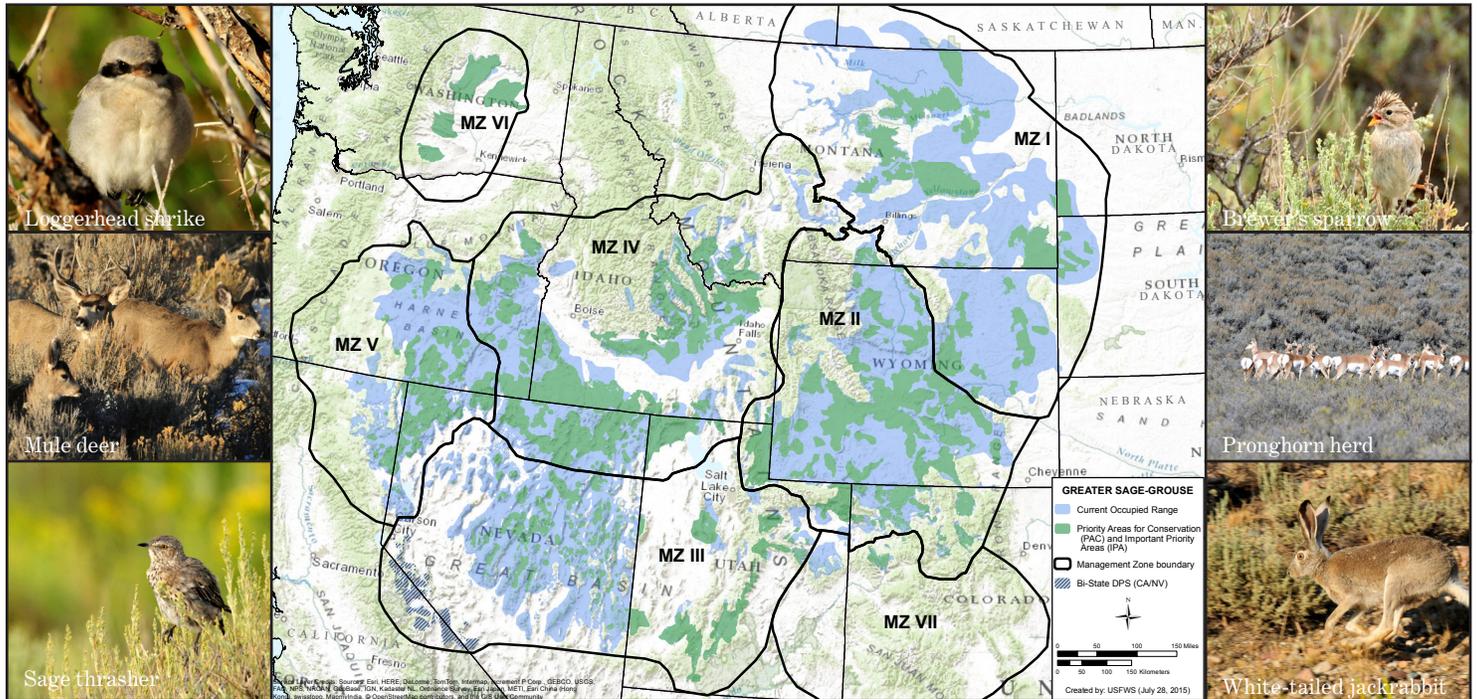
The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) has been a catalyst for sagebrush conservation across the West. SGI's vision of wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching provides win-win solutions for ranchers, greater sage-grouse and 350 other species. With more than 1,120 participating ranches in 11 western states, SGI and its partners have invested \$424.5 million in greater sage-grouse conservation on 4.4 million acres of private ranchlands.

In Washington, greater sage-grouse declines reversed following maturation of 1.5 million acres of Conservation Reserve Program lands, planted through USDA's Farm Service Agency, to restore cropland to perennial grasses and sagebrush. As CRP contracts expire, SGI has helped maintain these habitats by turning 83,000 CRP acres into working lands where sustainable grazing for cattle and greater sage-grouse is the predominant land use.



Pygmy rabbit before release into the wild

The Future for Greater Sage-Grouse in WA



Redefining the Future of Conservation

FWS is confident that the unparalleled conservation effort by federal, state, and private partners has addressed the major threats to greater sage-grouse by putting the right protections in the most important places. A sustained commitment to sagebrush conservation is needed to ensure effective conservation for greater sage-grouse and the hundreds of other wildlife that depend on sagebrush habitat.

Implementation

Partners will now begin to implement their commitments whether under state and federal plans, individual conservation agreements, or the Rangeland Fire Strategy. The BLM and USFS plans will be implemented in close coordination with state and local partners, as well as through continued collaboration with the Sage Grouse Task Force and local working groups. FWS will remain an active partner in the sagebrush conservation effort, funding new research, providing on-the-ground support for private landowners, as well as federal, state, industry and conservation partners.

Enduring Benefits for All

Restoring the greater sage-grouse will benefit hundreds of other native plants and animals and communities across the West. What's more, these conservation efforts are led and strengthened by effective partnerships – ensuring that the gains we make for the greater sage-grouse will endure.



Greater sage-grouse in flight

All photos credit to and courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service unless specified otherwise.

Sage Grouse Initiative 2.0

Since 2010, SGI has focused on arresting habitat loss in the highest priority areas for conservation from ex-urban development and conifer encroachment, and on reducing greater sage-grouse collisions with high-risk fences.

NRCS has committed to invest another \$211 million in SGI 2.0, with an expanded mission of addressing the synergistic problems of invasive weeds and wildfires, on slowing the loss of sagebrush to agricultural conversion and on protecting wet meadow habitat critical for brood-rearing. The program's goal is to bring the total amount of private land under conservation to 8 million acres.

SGI 2.0 provides additional easement resources in Washington to maintain restored grazing lands in perpetuity.