

NEWS RELEASE

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Comment Solicited on Proposed Agreement to Conserve Greater Sage-Grouse in West-Central Idaho

Public comment period closes August 24, 2009

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced the publication of a Notice of Availability of a draft programmatic Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in west-central Idaho.

The proposed 30-year agreement between the Service and Idaho Department of Fish and Game would facilitate conservation actions on private lands in portions of Idaho's Adams, Gem, Payette and Washington counties. Under the proposed agreement, Idaho Department of Fish and Game would have primary responsibility for working with private landowners in the West Central Planning Area (WCPA) to develop site-specific plans to conserve sage-grouse. The WCPA includes 509,707 acres that could be considered for enrollment in the programmatic CCAA. If approved, this CCAA would be the first such agreement for greater sage-grouse across the range of the species.

“The proposed CCAA would offer an opportunity for non-federal property owners and government agencies to work together voluntarily to implement measures to conserve greater

sage-grouse and their habitat across the WCPA,” said Jeff Foss, Idaho State Supervisor. “We encourage the public to review the draft agreement and associated documents and submit comments by the deadline.”

Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances encourage non-federal property owners to voluntarily implement conservation efforts for candidate or at-risk species by assuring property owners they will not be subjected to increased regulations if the covered species is listed in the future for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Greater sage-grouse is a species currently being considered for listing.

The draft CCAA, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s application for a 10(a)(1)(A) permit under section 10 of the Endangered Species Act, and the Service’s draft Environmental Assessment to evaluate the impacts of the permit are available for public inspection by appointment during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709. Or they may be viewed on the internet at: <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>.

Written comments should be addressed to Kendra Womack, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Boise, Idaho 83709. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at 208-378-5262 or by email at fw1srbocomment@fws.gov. Comments must be submitted by August 24, 2009.

For further information, please contact Kendra Womack at 208-378-5243. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), please call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.

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