



## PRESS RELEASE

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February 7, 2013

### For Immediate Release

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### **Environmental Assessment and Draft Greater Sage-grouse Umbrella Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Wyoming Ranch Management**

**DENVER**--The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is making available a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and a draft umbrella conservation agreement to augment ongoing efforts to enhance the abundance and distribution of the greater sage-grouse throughout its historical range in Wyoming.

In March 2010, the Service determined that protection of the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was warranted. However, listing the greater sage-grouse at that time was precluded by the need to address other listings of higher priority. Consequently, the greater sage-grouse was added to the list of candidate species under the ESA.

The purpose of the umbrella conservation agreement, known as a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), is to encourage landowners to voluntarily implement conservation measures to conserve, restore, or enhance habitat for the greater sage-grouse on non-Federal lands in Wyoming. In return, participating landowners and land managers would receive regulatory assurances concerning land use restrictions that might otherwise apply to them should the greater sage-grouse become protected under the ESA.

The Umbrella CCAA addresses potential conservation measures pertaining to ranch management that may be implemented on voluntarily enrolled non-Federal lands in Wyoming. Livestock grazing is the dominant land use within the range of the greater sage-grouse in Wyoming. Consequently, implementation of conservation measures from the Umbrella CCAA would benefit the greater sage-grouse. The EA considers the biological, environmental, and socioeconomic effects of the Umbrella CCAA.

The Umbrella CCAA was prepared by the Service in cooperation with the Wyoming Governor's Office, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts, Wyoming Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. Under the Umbrella CCAA, each participating landowner,

with assistance from participating State and Federal agencies, would develop an individual CCAA, selecting appropriate conservation measures described in the Umbrella CCAA. Individual CCAs would be linked to the Umbrella CCAA.

The Service will issue an enhancement-of-survival permit to each enrolled landowner following approval of the individual CCAA. In the event the greater sage-grouse is listed under the ESA, the permit authorizes incidental take of the species that may result from general farming and ranching operations and recreation. The Service also will not impose commitments or restrictions of land, water, resources, or finances on the enrolled landowner beyond those agreed to in the individual CCAA. The Umbrella CCAA will be in effect for 40 years following its approval. Individual CCAs and enhancement-of-survival permits will have a duration of 20 years.

The draft Umbrella CCAA and EA are available for comment until March 11, 2013. Copies of the Umbrella CCAA and EA are available on line at <http://www.fws.gov/wyominges/>. Written comments should be submitted by mail to Tyler Abbott, Deputy Field Supervisor, Wyoming Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009, or via email to [wysagegrouseccaa@fws.gov](mailto:wysagegrouseccaa@fws.gov)

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