

News Release



Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office
Portland, Oregon 97266
Phone: 503-231-6179
<http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/>

February 23, 2015

Media contacts:

Elizabeth Materna (503) 231-6912 or Elizabeth_Materna@fws.gov

Anna Harris (503) 231-6208 or Anna_Harris@fws.gov

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Oregon Department of State Lands *Protection of Greater Sage-Grouse across Oregon Closer to Completion*

PORTLAND, Oregon –The State of Oregon now adds to the landmark agreements putting all non-federal sage-grouse habitat in Oregon into voluntary protection that will offer protections for both the bird and ranchers.

Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) is entering into a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and will enroll state-owned lands throughout southeastern Oregon under this CCAA.

Under these agreements, DSL will voluntarily agree to graze livestock and manage habitat in a way that removes or reduces threats to sage-grouse, and will receive assurances that they will not face additional regulatory requirements should the species ever be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

“These conservation partnerships provide tools for landowners in the rural west who rely on sagebrush habitat for their economic livelihoods as well as their way of life,” said Paul Henson, Oregon State Supervisor for the Service. “Enrollment is voluntary and the peace-of-mind it provides to grazers to avoid additional government regulation is a powerful incentive.”

The Department of State Lands CCAA includes approximately 633,000 acres. In combination with Soil and Water Conservation District CCAAs for 8 counties, once finalized, more than 4 million acres will be covered under these conservation agreements. All federal lands in Oregon are covered in parallel conservation agreements such that the entirety of greater sage-grouse habitat on private, state, and federal land will be covered under conservation agreements that provide these assurances.

Mary Abrams, Oregon Department of State Lands Director, said: “We believe these federal, state, and local government partnerships with stakeholders are essential to meaningful on-the-ground conservation for sage grouse. Allowing stakeholders the opportunity to enroll under these conservation agreements is providing them with choices, and most people prefer choices over regulation.”

Cattle producers who enroll will develop site-specific plans that address threats to sage-grouse and maintain or improve habitat. The major threats to sage-grouse in Oregon are wildfire and a resulting increase of exotic grasses and juniper encroachment. All participating enrollees will agree to maintain contiguous habitat and avoid further fragmentation. Other activities that may be included in the plans include juniper removal, invasive grass and weed control, and marking fences known to be a strike hazard for sage-grouse.

Greater sage-grouse currently occur in 11 states and two Canadian provinces. In Oregon, greater sage-grouse were once found in most sagebrush habitats east of the Cascades.

The announcement of the draft Department of State Lands CCAA, published in the Federal Register on February 23, 2015, opens a 30 day public comment period. Public comments will be accepted through Mar. 25, 2015. To submit written comments, please use one of the following methods and refer to “DSL CCAA.”

- Email: Jeff_Everett@fws.gov.
- U.S. Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, 2600 SE 98th Ave, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97266.
- Fax: 503-231-6195.

For more information about greater sage-grouse, visit <http://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels at [facebook.com/USFWSPacific](https://www.facebook.com/USFWSPacific), [flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwspacific/), [tumblr.com/blog/usfwspacific](https://www.tumblr.com/blog/usfwspacific) or twitter.com/USFWSPacific.

– FWS –