

Data Request for the Annual Review of the Greater Sage-Grouse Candidate Status

The following is a general outline of items for which we are seeking information. We understand that not every responder will need to address every issue or have knowledge of some issues in their locale. Please provide the information that is applicable for your area of jurisdiction. We are requesting information you may have collected between January 2011 and February 2012. Please submit all information by March 1, 2012, to the following address:

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attention: Lynn Gemlo, Biologist
5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A
Cheyenne, WY 82009
Phone Number: (307) 772-2374, Extension 228
E-Mail: lynn_gemlo@fws.gov

In regard to conservation efforts, we are requesting any updates to the information provided in the conservation efforts database in 2009 as well as new conservation efforts. We will continue to use the conservation efforts database for collecting this information with the exception of those actions that are implemented and are now known (not predicted) to be effective at improving the status of sage-grouse. Information regarding projects previously entered into the conservation efforts database for which effectiveness is now known should be appended to this request.

Data Request:

Population status, trends and numbers: This section is primarily directed towards State and Provincial agencies for response.

1. What are the population trends for your State or Province? If describing by population, please use the population descriptions identified in the 2006 WAFWA Conservation Strategy.
 - a. Is the trend expected given weather conditions and population cycling?
2. Has there been any significant change in the populations in your State or Province (more than normal annual fluctuations)?
 - a. If yes, do you know the cause of the population change? Please describe.

Habitat status and trends: To the extent possible, for each of items listed below please provide locations, populations affected, acreage affected and geospatial data if available. The primary focus of these questions is directed at occupied habitats (at least during one season) or

sagebrush habitats that are essential for long-term species persistence (e.g. connectivity corridors).

1. Areas of sagebrush lost due to permanent conversion (e.g. agricultural lands, subdivisions). In addition to the information requested above, please identify the stage of loss (e.g. proposed, in NEPA review, completed).
 - a. Please identify proposed areas of conversions that have a high certainty of occurrence.
2. Please identify areas that will be converted in association with Farm Bill Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP).
3. For areas where CRP has/is providing habitat for grouse, have there been areas where the lands have been put back into production, resulting in a loss of habitat? If so, please estimate the number of acres potentially lost.
4. Acres of occupied sagebrush habitats that were lost to fire (either wild or prescribed fires).
5. Expansion of conifers or cheatgrass into sagebrush.
6. Incursion of other invasive species that affects habitat quality and utility for sage-grouse. Please identify the invasive species.
7. Proposed energy developments within occupied sagebrush habitats. In addition to the items requested above, please identify the type (oil, gas, wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal, uranium, etc.) and stage of development, well/turbine/development density, and life of project.
8. Please provide information regarding new, proposed, or expanded mining activities.
9. Transmission corridors for energy transmission. Include status (e.g. NEPA completed, under construction, proposed), and any efforts to minimize impacts to sage-grouse and sagebrush
10. Grazing impacts – any significant changes that affect habitat abundance and quality. We are particularly interested in sagebrush treatments that either remove sagebrush habitats or alter their ability to provide current seasonal habitats (e.g. converting winter habitat to more open canopies that may support brood-rearing).
 - a. Please include treatments conducted for the benefit of wild ungulates.
 - b. Please identify any changes in wild equid status.
11. Please identify any known losses of habitat connectivity, both within and between populations.

Changes in Regulatory Mechanisms: Regulatory mechanisms are those that are enforceable by state or provincial statute, federal land management documents, etc. They do not include voluntary efforts; however, please provide information on any voluntary efforts that may be affecting sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. If these efforts have not yet been implemented,

or not yet shown to be effective, please identify those projects within the conservation efforts database.

1. Identify the status of BLM RMP revisions that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (either positive or negative), if any.
2. Identify any changes in the status of regulatory mechanisms that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (positive or negative) on other Federal lands (e.g. FS, NPS, military lands).
3. Identify any new regulatory mechanisms that minimize impacts from fire, invasives, energy development, etc. If new regulatory mechanisms are being considered, you should also identify those, along with the certainty of application.
4. Any new State, Provincial, or other local (e.g. county) efforts to address threats?

Hunting and other uses: (Please identify state or province)

1. Have there been any changes to hunting regulations for sage-grouse? If so, please identify the reason behind the change, and if applicable, any results.
2. Have there been any changes in recreational impacts (positive or negative) or in religious use of sage-grouse?
3. Please identify current research projects on sage-grouse in your State or Province, and whether or not the project includes bird capture or collaring.

Disease and Predation: (please provide locations where appropriate)

1. Please report any West Nile virus outbreaks in 2011.
2. Are you aware of any new diseases/parasites that have population-level effects?
3. Do you have any data that suggests that predators may be limiting sage-grouse in any part of the range, independent of habitat conditions?
4. Do you have data that supports increases in predator populations that are affecting sage-grouse as the result of habitat alterations?

Other Factors:

Do you have any new information regarding negative effects of pesticides, contaminants, recreational activities or other human disturbance, drought and other climatic conditions on the Greater sage-grouse?

Please report any new information on the impacts of climate change on sage-grouse or their habitats.

Literature:

Please identify any pertinent literature you feel is important for our review. In addition to citations, if you have cited any literature above, please provide the page numbers of the actual citation.

Contact person(s):

Please provide contact(s) information concerning data collection in case questions arise after the data has been reviewed.