

Process Framework for the Greater Sage-Grouse 2015 Status Review

DRAFT ROUGH OUTLINE SKELETON FRAMEWORK – Need to incorporate additional info (COT Report, Predicting into the Future, Incorporate Kevin D. work)

- *Determine a population level/ “unit of bird”*
- *Define relative importance of those populations to the overall population (high, medium, low)*
- *Need to assess the change from 2010:*
 - *Change in Baseline (numbers/distribution)*
 - *Change in Threats*
 - *Change in Regulatory Certainty*
 - *Change in Conservation Benefits*
 - *Predict into the Future*
- *Is the species threatened/endangered/not warranted range-wide*
 - *If not warranted, is it warranted at DPS/SPR*

There two levels of the framework that is going to be discussed here. The first is a policy level framework regarding how the Service might think about certain policy questions. Also, part of the policy framework is how the Service is going to account for prior work such as the 2010 finding and, most recently, the development of the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report. The second part of the framework is the analytical approach that will support the policy framework.

Regarding the policy framework there are a number of items that the Service is thinking about and will be developing position papers around. These items include Distinct Population Segment (DPS), Significant Portion of the Range (SPR), foreseeable future, how the Service might evaluate conservation actions, and lastly how things items relate to the definitions of threatened or endangered. It is important to note that we do not plan on defining these items at this time. Rather describing the thought processes that may go into how we define them, potentially identifying the criteria that might be employed to determine these policy outcomes and what have we done in the past that might inform how we might come to some decisions on these policy issues. At the appropriate time in the decision framework process the Service would then apply those policies to determine the appropriate outcomes.

From there, there are several points that the Service will utilize in establishing the starting point for the analytical framework and the policy application. First off, the Service will start with the 2010 finding which concluded that the species of greater sage-grouse is warranted but precluded for protection under the ESA. The task of the Service is to determine the scope and magnitude of any change in the species status (including abundance and distribution) since that time and projecting into the future our determination of the long-term persistence of the species into the foreseeable future in relation to the definitions of threatened or endangered. This will require the Service to establish a baseline condition for the species at the time of the 2010 finding. The principle factors leading to the 2010 finding were habitat fragmentation, principally due to invasive species and fire, energy development and associated infrastructure, and sage brush conversion due agricultural practices, along with a lack of adequate