

## Bullet statements

Preferred Alt

Recent discussions

Statement on consistency & adequacy

Northwest Colorado BLM/USFS GRSG EIS update, February 2014.

- The BLM/USFS preferred alternative, released last August, proposed a variety of protections for GRSG. Most importantly: 1) NSO for new oil and gas leases throughout PPH, 2) All PPH would be designated an Avoidance Area for ROWs, 3) All PPH would be designated an Exclusion Area for large transmission lines, except a corridor to allow for upcoming projects such as the TransWest Express, 4) A 5% cap for anthropogenic disturbances would be established in PPH.
- We have had recent discussions with BLM/USFS on the crafting of their proposed plan. They now are formulating a somewhat more lek-based protection approach. For active leks they are contemplating a 1-mile no-lease, a 2-mile NSO without exceptions, and a 4-mile NSO with exceptions (and consultation with CPW) protective buffer. Although we have not heard of this approach being taken in other states, this would increase protection for GRSG habitat within 2-miiles of active leks (in PPH and PGH). A 3% disturbance cap would be established; no new leases would be offered or ROWs granted in any management zone that has reached 3% anthropogenic disturbance. BLM would not include fire or agriculture in their disturbance calculations. As with the preferred alternative, a 4-mile Timing Limitation would also be established around active leks for the breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing seasons.
- Throughout this process we have continually worked with and provided comments to BLM on their efforts. We have repeatedly mentioned that consistency with other BLM plans is important, although local variation can be warranted with good reason and proper justification. Ultimately, sufficient protection for GRSG is most important. We have also repeatedly made recommendations on how to increase protection for GRSG in their planning; they generally incorporate our suggestions. The details of their proposed plan are not yet finalized; it probably won't be "perfect" but overall it looks like it will result in strong protections for GRSG.
- As a whole, the number of GRSG in Colorado has fluctuated over the past 17 years since lek count data have been standardized, but has not definitively increased or decreased. The new BLM/USFS EIS would add significantly to the protections previously provided on Federal lands.