

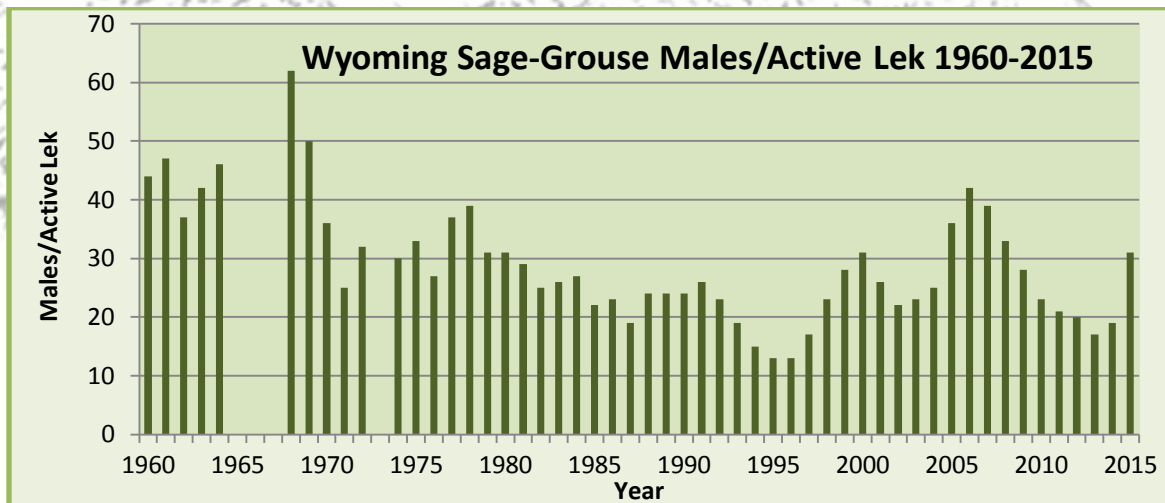
Greater Sage-grouse in Wyoming

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

August 2015

Greater Sage-grouse

- The greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) is a large upland game bird that depends on sagebrush throughout its life cycle. This dependence makes it a sagebrush “obligate”. Sage-grouse are also considered a “landscape species”, meaning they use widespread areas of sagebrush habitats. Sage-grouse are often migratory, with movements up to 100, but usually less than 20, miles between winter and summer ranges.
- Sage-grouse are a “lekking species”. During the spring breeding season, males gather together to perform courtship displays on traditionally used sites called “leks”.
- Sage-grouse populations have declined in Wyoming and across the West over the last half-century.
- The figure below generally illustrates this decline as measured by the average number of males documented on sage-grouse leks in Wyoming from 1960-2015. The population was at its lowest in the mid-1990s. From 1996-2006 however, the average size of leks increased to levels not seen since the 1970s. From 2006-2013, average lek size declined though not to levels recorded in the mid-1990s. In 2014 and 2015 average lek size again increased.



- These trends are valid at the statewide scale. Trends are more varied at the local scale. Sub-populations more heavily influenced by human impacts (sub-divisions, intensive energy development, large-scale conversion of habitat from sagebrush to grassland or agriculture, Interstate highways, etc.) have experienced declining populations or extirpation.

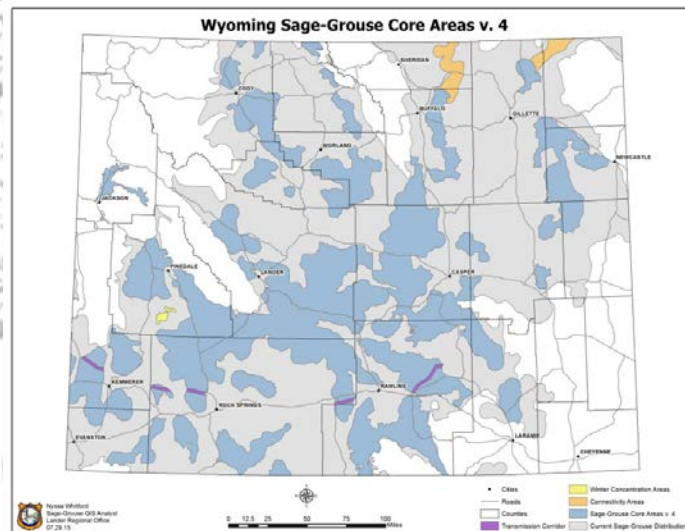
Endangered Species Act Status

- In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued its decision of “warranted but precluded” for listing greater sage-grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. This means greater sage-grouse have become a “candidate” for listing but are precluded from immediate listing due to higher priorities.

- In its decision document, the Service specifically cited Wyoming's core area strategy (described below) as a mechanism that, if implemented as envisioned, should ensure conservation of sage-grouse in Wyoming and therefore help preclude a future listing.
- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Commission maintain management authority over candidate species and management emphasis focuses on implementation of the core area strategy.
- A federal court stipulated agreement requires the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to reevaluate the status of greater sage-grouse by September 30, 2015.

Conservation Efforts

- Governor Matt Mead issued a new Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order on July 29, 2015 that updated Wyoming's core area strategy with the assistance of the Wyoming Sage-Grouse Implementation Team and the local sage-grouse working groups. The core area strategy addresses the threats (habitat loss and fragmentation and insufficient regulatory mechanisms) specifically identified by the Service in their 2010 listing decision.



- Local planning areas were established in 2004. Conservation plans were completed for all eight local planning areas by 2008. These plans were updated in 2014.
- From 2005-2014, Local Working Groups were allocated ~\$5.2 million to support implementation of local sage-grouse conservation projects. The source of this funding was the State of Wyoming General Fund. Over 175 projects have been implemented most of which include multiple cost-sharing partners. Projects include habitat manipulation and restoration, grazing plan implementation, education, and applied research (development impacts, predation, disease, reclamation, management effectiveness).
- Other western states, as well as the federal government and private interests, are implementing similar conservation measures across the range of sage-grouse in what has become the largest single species conservation effort ever undertaken.

The Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order, maps, GIS files and other sage-grouse information can be found at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Habitat/Sage-Grouse-Management> .