

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Greater Sage-grouse 2011



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# FWS is Responsible for Endangered Species

- FWS evaluates the status of wildlife, fish and plants to determine if they need the legal protections of the Endangered Species Act
- March 2010 the FWS determined that the Greater Sage-grouse warrants that protection
- Greater Sage-grouse is now a 'candidate' for listing as an endangered or threatened species



# What is a Candidate species?

- Candidate species are those for which there is sufficient information on the biological status and threats to formally propose for listing, but the development of a final regulation putting the species on the Endangered Species List is precluded by higher priority actions.
- Prioritizing actions is needed because of budgetary or staff constraints.
- Candidate species receive NO protections under the Endangered Species Act. They are on a waiting list until a final listing regulation is completed.



# Why is the Sage-grouse a Candidate?

- Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation due to:
  - Energy Development
  - Invasive species (e.g. cheat grass) and fire
  - Cultivation agriculture



- Inadequate regulatory mechanisms to prevent loss/deterioration of habitat



# Listing Priority Number



- Each candidate is given a listing priority number to determine order of review when funding and time becomes available
- Priority numbers are based on threats – the magnitude (geographic extent) and imminence (are they happening now?)
- Numbers range from 1 to 12, with 1 being the highest priority
- Sage-grouse priority number is low – 8





# Where do we go from here?

- Sage-grouse remain under management of state wildlife agency
- FWS reviews status every year and will increase the listing priority if necessary
- Encourage conservation – keep the good GOOD!



# Conservation Opportunities

## Happening Now

- BLM core area mapping identifies key areas for sage-grouse conservation
- BLM revisions of resource management plans to address core area conservation
- NRCS Sage-grouse Initiative
- Individual states developing strategies to guide energy development (Wyoming and Oregon)



# Conservation Opportunities

## Happening Now

- Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA)
- CCAA's are between private landowners and FWS stating conservation measures landowners apply voluntarily on their lands to protect sage-grouse
- In return, landowners get assurances that no other actions would be necessary if and when the sage-grouse becomes listed as long as the agreement criteria are applied
- At this time, there are only a few CCAAs in existence or in development for sage-grouse and they all apply to grazing practices in some parts of Idaho and Wyoming.





# Uncertainties

- Litigation – two lawsuits filed against FWS seeking to list sage-grouse immediately
- When or how these lawsuits will be resolved is unknown at this time, but a court could order FWS to proceed with a final regulation to list



# **For more information**

US Fish and Wildlife Service website at  
<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>

or

US Fish and Wildlife Service's Montana Field  
Office at 406-449-5225