

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** May 22, 2015

**FROM:** Sage-grouse Species Lead Team

**TO:** Assistant Regional Directors, Ecological Services, Regions 1, 6, and 8

**SUBJECT:** Draft Greater Sage-grouse Species Report

Attached to this memo are 5 files that form the primary components of our preliminary Draft Species Report for Greater Sage-grouse for your review in advance of our meeting next week. They are organized as follows: (1) Introduction, (2) Impacts Analysis, (3) Regulatory Mechanisms and Non-Regulatory Conservation Efforts, (4) Synergistic and Cumulative Effects, and (5) Appendices. As we have forecasted and discussed, the report is incomplete (due largely to delays in receiving information and models needed for our analysis) and should be considered preliminary and pre-decisional. We are providing it to you at this time and in this form to facilitate a deliberative discussion at our meeting. We anticipate updating and finalizing the document following discussions with you, the Regional Directors and the Director. Below we highlight the key missing sections and information, by section. It is also worth noting that the document has not yet gone through technical editing, and we anticipate providing a more concise and clean document for your review this summer, including complete citations and literature cited section, once all of the following gaps are filled.

### **INTRODUCTION**

We have included a placeholder for an Executive Summary. This section is typically written last, after the analyses are complete and when the main messages of the document can be distilled into a concise summary. Aside from that piece the introduction is largely complete, with one important exception – we have not yet received several population trend analyses, including the trend analysis from WAFWA or trend analyses from the Nature Conservancy. While we have received a unpublished and not-yet-peer-reviewed trend analysis from Oz Garton et al., we have not included the results of that analysis in the Introduction due to its preliminary nature. We have included a placeholder for our trend assessment by included the information we received from the States during our data call, but expect to update that largely qualitative analysis when we receive the various trend analyses that are pending.

### **IMPACTS ANALYSIS**

There are several components of the impacts analysis that are still missing or which need additional work, including:

- The oil and gas modeling analysis.
- The fire spatial analysis (fire rates by occupied range, breeding distribution, and population index).
- The GIS analysis for mining.
- The GIS analysis for secondary roads in the Infrastructure chapter.



- The Small Population chapter.

In addition, the Regulatory Mechanisms and Non-regulatory Conservation Efforts subsections of each impact chapter needs additional work and we have not yet cross-walked those subsections with the Regulatory Mechanisms and Non-regulatory Conservation Efforts sections.

## **REGULATORY MECHANISMS/NON-REGULATORY CONSERVATION EFFORTS**

The Regulatory Mechanism and Non-regulatory Conservation Efforts section has been drafted but given the fluid state of affairs relative to Federal and State planning efforts, this section will require revision as plans are revised and finalized this summer. We also believe that these chapters would benefit from additional review by our FOs to ensure they are accurate given the nuances of some of the planning language across the range of sage-grouse.

The land use allocations for BLM and Forest Service plans have been summarized using data provided by the BLM National Operations Center and intersecting that data with the modeled breeding distribution of sage-grouse. We are in the process of intersecting that data with the population index model, but that analysis is incomplete and has not been included in this version of the species report. We have left a placeholder for the summary of changes to Federal plans between 2010 and now, and intend to complete that section when the population index information is available.

The figure we included to show biologically significant units was based on data received from the BLM National Operations Center, and does not include units for Montana. Our understanding is that Montana is still working on defining their biologically significant units which will be used for implementing a monitoring and adaptive management strategy on BLM and Forest Service lands.

We have provided a summary of the information in the Conservation Efforts Database; but, as noted in that section, we only reviewed a portion of the data in the CED given time constraints (prioritizing the largest and most important projects for review). During our review, the difficulties of ensuring consistency in determining whether projects were reasonably certain to be effective became evident. Therefore, we took a conservative approach and only certified the effectiveness of those projects in the CED where we were confident that the projects were effective at ameliorating a priority threat within each Management Zone. Therefore, the total acres provided in the CED write up should be considered preliminary and minimum estimates.

## **SYNERGYSTIC AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

We have provided a framework for our Management Zone-by-Management Zone analysis of cumulative effects, but it is incomplete. The primary missing components are the inclusion of regulatory mechanisms and non-regulatory conservation efforts, and GIS analyses to overlay multiple threats and summarize the impacts of habitat fragmentation in each Management Zone.



## **APPENDICES**

Appendix F will be a description of the oil and gas model. We have not yet received this information from the modelers.

## **CONCLUSION**

We will write the conclusion section following our deliberations in June and after we have completed our analyses.

## **REVIEW**

We understand you will have many comments and suggestions on this initial, pre-decisional species report draft. We have provided it to you in an Adobe format, and with line numbers. Please provide any comments to the Species Lead Team via a memorandum noting the line and page numbers associated with your comments. This is simply to allow us to continue updating the “Word” versions of the species report without concern for version control.