

Greater Sage-Grouse

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Ranch Management

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Ranchland Conservation
Measures Listed and Explained
How Does a Rancher Deal with
Federal Grazing Permits on BLM
and Forest Service Lands?

What is a Federal Nexus?

A federal nexus occurs when a federal agency funds, authorizes or carries out a program or project on private lands, including the issuance of permits and licenses. A number of farmers and ranchers work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency to implement Farm Bill funded projects. Projects such as improved irrigation systems or water development and livestock distribution projects on private lands funded by the federal government would trigger a federal nexus and requires the agency to consult with the Service to ensure an endangered species or their designated critical habitat are not negatively impacted by the funded project. Again, a federal nexus only occurs if federal projects were implemented on private lands. Landowners without federal assistance on their property are exempt.

What Information Does the Public Have Access to Regarding a Ranch with a CCAA?

Private landowners are understandably cautious about what and how much information they provide to government agencies. Personal information including social security numbers, addresses, and number of livestock are protected through the Federal Privacy Act of 1974, while other information such as lek count data for sage-grouse, collected on private property by agencies, consultants, etc. will be publicly available on-line or if requested.

Ranchers interested in participating in a CCAA should understand early on that the Service will collect and house the CCAA related information from private property, such as vegetative monitoring data, lek count data and implementation of conservation measures. This information is then available to interested parties through a written request using the Freedom Of Information Act, more commonly referred to as FOIA. Ranchers are encouraged to discuss what data is collected and how the data is used by either the Service or the public.



Mark Gocke, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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Wyoming Department of Agriculture

What Are Conservation Measures?

Conservation Measures are agreed upon management actions the landowner will implement on their private lands to directly benefit sage-grouse or their habitat. Each threat identified by the Service on a ranch will have a corresponding conservation measure to remove or reduce the threat. Each landowner will have individualized conservation measures as identified from the list in the CCAA document.

The only exception to this approach is the conservation to reduce or remove the threat of habitat fragmentation. Since the primary threat to sage-grouse is habitat fragmentation, all ranchers who enroll their property in a CCAA will “maintain contiguous habitat by avoiding fragmentation (e.g. will not subdivide property, consider implementation of conservation easements, etc.).”

Do Ranchers Receive Credit for Removing Predators?

For the purposes of this CCAA, participating ranchers will not receive “credit” as a conservation measure for removing predators on their land. While predator control may lead to a temporary increase in local sage-grouse abundance, the control fails to correct the habitat fragmentation. It is important to note, ranchers are not restricted by the CCAA to use legal methods to control predators.

What is an Incidental Take Permit?

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) definition of “Take” is to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect any threatened or endangered species. Landowners approved for a CCAA will receive an incidental take permit under Section 10 of the ESA. The take permit is in addition to receiving assurances from the Service, which allows landowners the ability to continue their current agricultural practices on their properties.

An incidental take permit covers accidental “harm” to sage-grouse. Examples of ranch related coverage might include, birds killed by haying equipment, drowning of birds in stock tanks, birds hit by ranch vehicles, etc.

Development of CCAA



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