

# Ecological Site Descriptions: Acceleration of Development Efforts within NRCS

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# Ecological Site Description

Ecological site concept was introduced into NRCS manuals and handbooks in 1997.

- Initial acceptance was slow
- Developed by individual states
- No national strategy for development

# A GRASSLAND CONSERVATION PLAN FOR PRAIRIE GROUSE

North American Grouse Partnership

Compiled by

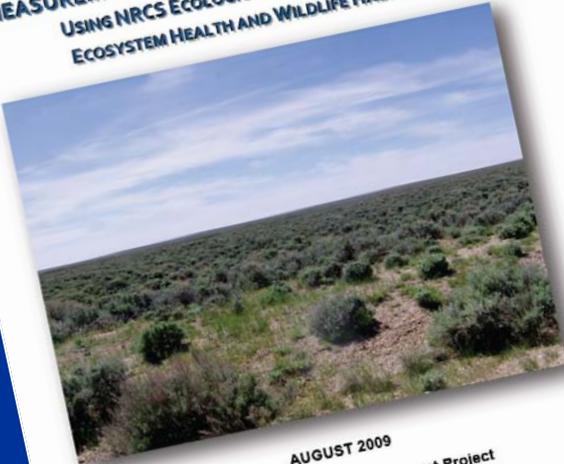
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ECOSYSTEM  
MANAGEMENT  
RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE

and J. B. Haufler, Compilers. 2007. A grassland conservation plan for prairie grouse. North American Grouse Partnership.

## A MEASUREMENT SYSTEM FOR OFFSITE MITIGATION USING NRCS ECOLOGICAL SITES TO ENHANCE ECOSYSTEM HEALTH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT



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## THUNDER BASIN WYOMING

### ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS

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ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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# Ecological Site Description

NRCS Chief White approved a Decision Memo in November 2009 to:

- Accelerate development of ESDs
- Improve quality and standardization of ESDs developed

# Ecological Site Description Acceleration Effort

Joint effort between two Deputy Chief areas

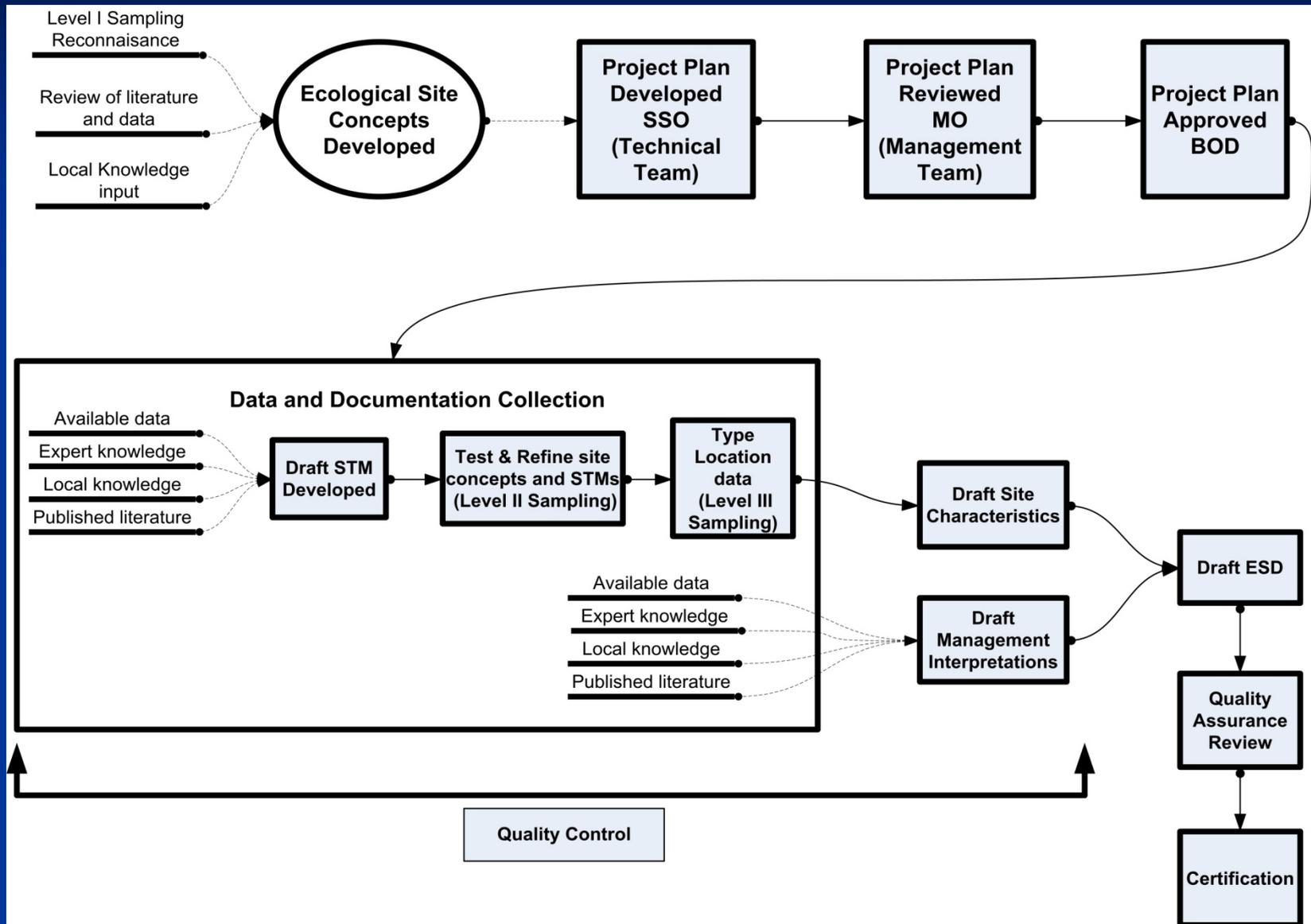
- Soil Survey and Resource Assessment (SSRA)
- Science and Technology (S&T)

# Ecological Site Description Acceleration Effort

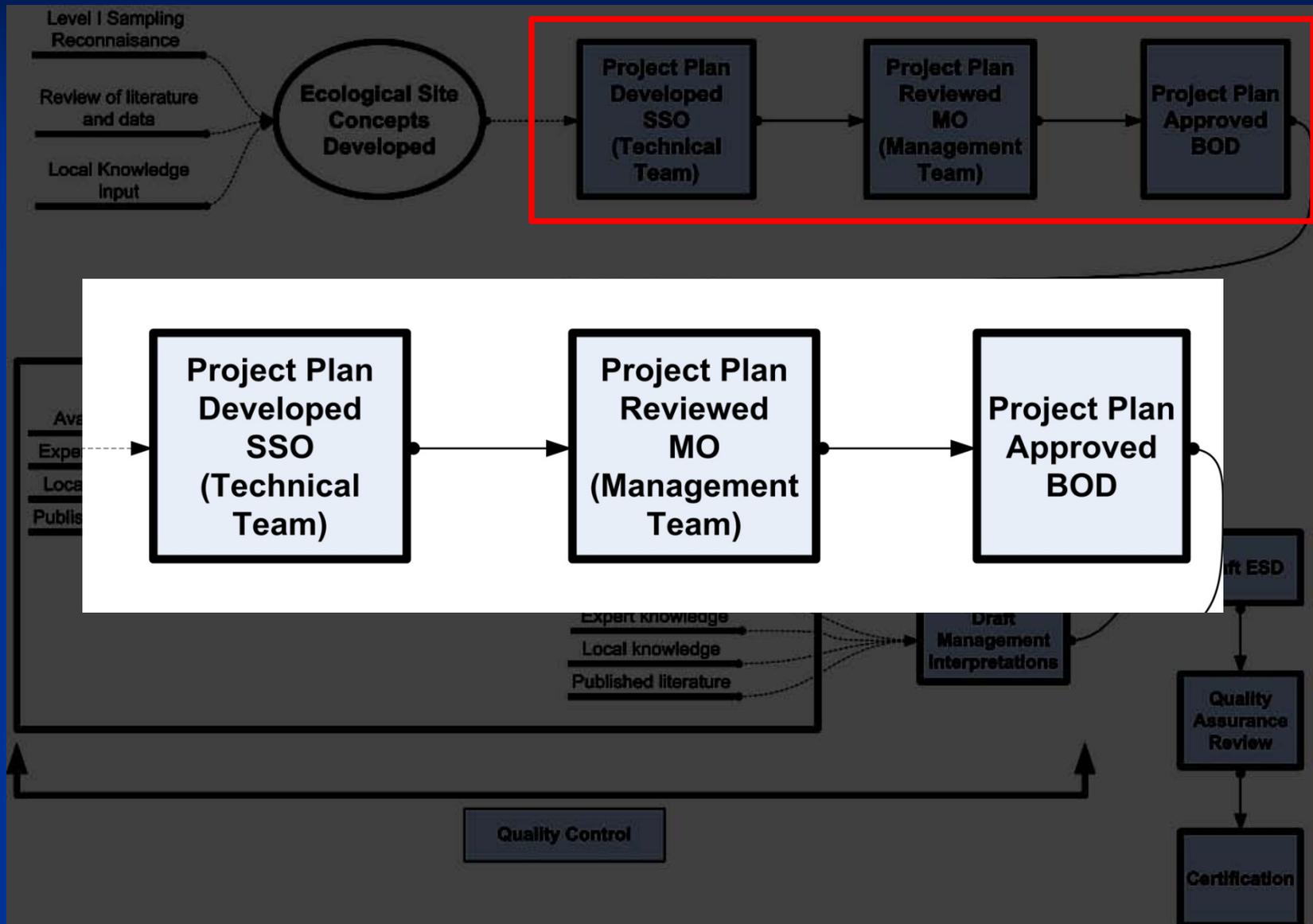
SSRA established:

- Soil Ecology Team – National Soil Survey Center
- ESI Specialist – MLRA MO offices (quality assurance)
- ESI Specialist – MLRA SSO offices (quality control)

# Accomplishing the Task



# Accomplishing the Task



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## Management (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
- Management Team
- Technical Team

# Accomplishing the Task

## Management (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
  - State Conservationists

Grouped by 18 MLRA Region Offices

- Management Team
- Technical Team

# Accomplishing the Task

## Management (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors

- Management Team

  - MO Region Leader provides coordination of team

  - Team determines which soils and ESD's identified by Technical Team are to be collected and prioritized for BOD approval

- Technical Team

# Accomplishing the Task

## Management (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
- Management Team
- Technical Team

MLRA Soil Survey Leader provides coordination of team

Prepares initial long range and project plans

Local input with knowledge of ecological sites and management

# Accomplishing the Task

ESD Development – identified in Project Plan

- ESI Specialists – SSO
- Other NRCS Specialists
- Other Agency Specialists
- Partners
- Contractors or others



Involve experts  
from the area  
and other  
interested parties



# Accomplishing the Task

- Multidisciplinary
- Interagency effort
- Involve others such as university, research, private groups, etc.

# Accomplishing the Task

Linking

Scientific Knowledge

with

Local Knowledge

# Potential Uses for ESDs

- Standard reference for natural resource information for all federal agencies and other interested groups/organizations
- Training tool and information source
- Tool to assess lands for potential values or resource specific concerns
  - wildlife habitat
  - carbon sinks
  - vulnerability to loss or degradation
  - Site restoration
- Tool to prioritize and target activities



# The Work Ahead

- Continued development of standards
- Continue to implement Interagency efforts
- Incorporation of culturally managed lands: cropland, hayland, pastureland

# Questions