



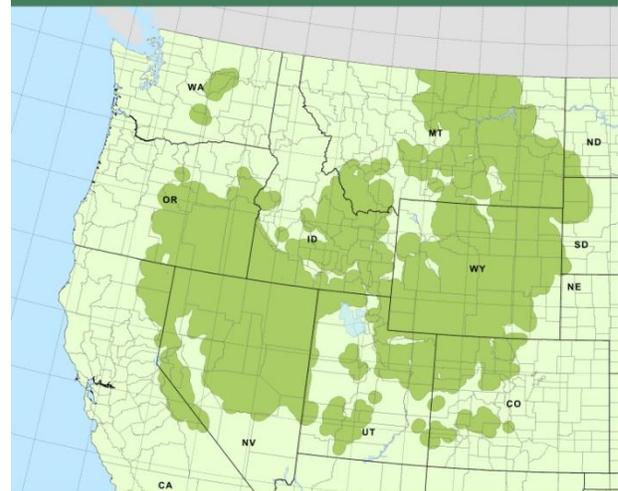
Greater Sage-Grouse

Listing Status: Candidate

**California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana,
Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota,
Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming**

Focal Area Map

Greater Sage-Grouse



Background

The greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), an iconic ground-dwelling bird native to the arid sagebrush plains of the American West, has experienced significant population declines over the last fifty years, making it a candidate for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The population declines have resulted from habitat loss and fragmentation associated with land conversion, energy development, urbanization, wildfire, conifer encroachment, and invasive species.

Although sage-grouse occupy extremely large landscapes (186 million acres), a quarter of all sage-grouse live within 4 percent of the range (7 million acres), and 75 percent of birds are concentrated within 27 percent (50 million acres) of their distribution. In 2010, the NRCS launched the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) to strategically focus conservation efforts to maximize biological benefits to sage-grouse populations. Conservation activities include establishing conservation easements to prevent working ranches from being subdivided; implementing sustainable grazing systems to improve hiding cover for birds; removing invasive conifers from grasslands to allow birds to recolonize otherwise suitable habitat; and marking or moving “high-risk” fences near breeding sites to reduce bird collisions. The Sage-Grouse Initiative capitalizes on the strong link between management required to support healthy sage-grouse habitat and sustainable ranching operations.

In August 2010, NRCS and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service completed a Conference Report on the sage-grouse. The Conference Report gives certainty to landowners that implementing conservation practices to restore and enhance sage-grouse habitat will be in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. NRCS is working to ensure that landowner contributions to sage-grouse conservation are considered in future listing decisions, with the hope of reducing the need to list the bird altogether. Working Lands for Wildlife will provide additional, targeted financial and technical support.

Goals / Objectives

Healthy working rangelands are key to conserving this species. Partnering with ranchers and using win-win conservation solutions that benefit grazing lands and sage-grouse habitat. Working Lands for Wildlife seeks to proactively conserve the species and keep populations healthy enough to avoid an Endangered Species Act listing.



Actions

- Establish conservation easements to prevent large and intact working ranches from being converted into subdivisions.
- Remove encroached conifers, improving habitat for sage-grouse and other wildlife and increasing forage availability for livestock.
- Improve grazing systems management, increasing rangeland plant diversity, cover for birds and forage availability for livestock.
- Identify and mark fences where sage-grouse collisions are likely reduce accidental mortality caused by fence strikes.
- Increase connectivity of existing core habitat.
- Improve weed and invasive species management.
- Restore and promote healthy, productive springs and seeps.

Core Practices	384 Forest Slash Treatment	516 Pipeline
645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	388 Irrigation Field Ditch Irrigation System	528 Prescribed Grazing
Supporting Practices	390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover	533 Pumping Plant
314 Brush Management	394 Firebreak	548 Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment
315 Herbaceous Weed Control	410 Grade Stabilization Structure	550 Rangeland Planting
327 Conservation Cover	430AA-GG Irrigation Water Conveyance-Pipeline	560 Access Road
328 Conservation Crop Rotation	441 Irrigation System, Micro Irrigation	574 Spring Development
338 Prescribed Burning	442 Irrigation System, Sprinkler System	614 Watering Facility
340 Cover Crop	443 Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface	642 Water Well
342 Critical Area Planting	449 Irrigation Water Management	643 Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
378 Pond	472 Access Control	644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
380 Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	500 Obstruction Removal	654 Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment
382 Fence	511 Forage Harvest Management	734 Fish and Wildlife Structure
	512 Forage and Biomass Planting	

Outcomes and Impacts

Working Lands for Wildlife will enhance NRCS' ongoing conservation efforts to support sage-grouse recovery by strategically focusing resources to promote healthy grazing lands management. Anticipated long-term outcomes of this initiative are: improved rangeland health; greater connectivity of core sage-grouse habitat; and stabilization and recovery of sage-grouse populations.

Additional species benefiting in this focal area are: wild turkey, pronghorn antelope, mourning dove, rabbit, trout, and black bear.



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