

FY 2026 Greater Sage Grouse Initiative Practice Eligibility Criteria

Every contract developed under the Greater Sage Grouse Initiative (GSGI) must include the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management practice (645). Upland Wildlife Habitat Management is critical to addressing the targeted resource concerns for GSGI and achieving the desired environmental outcomes. All conservation plans used to support GSGI must include documentation that an alternative containing the core practices was presented to the decision maker. Upland Wildlife Habitat Management will be contracted or must be supported by a conservation plan.

Every contract developed under GSGI with facilitative grazing management practices must include Prescribed Grazing practice (528). Prescribed Grazing will be contracted for a minimum of 3 years. If Prescribed Grazing has already been applied to the land under contract it must be included in the conservation plan.

Brush Management 314

- Removal of woody invasive species from prime sage grouse habitat. Tree species that can be removed through GSGI include Russian olive, juniper and elm. Other species need prior approval from the ND GSGI Lead.
- Do not implement from March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek. Big sagebrush may not be removed. Provide conservation plan details to the ND GSGI Lead who will consult with ND Game & Fish Department to develop site-specific installation guidelines.

Cover Crop 340 – Multiple Species Only

- Full Season: Multiple species cover crop seeded on cropland. Cover crop planted in the spring of the year, by no later than June 1, and maintained throughout the growing season to provide sage grouse with foraging areas. The cover crops will also improve soil health and provide erosion control. No grazing until after September 1.

Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation 380

- Establishment of a farmstead/feedlot windbreak consisting of trees and shrubs. Windbreaks cannot be established on rangeland for GSGI. Woody block wildlife plantings and windbreak renovations are not eligible for GSGI.
- Site-specific installation guidelines must be developed in cooperation with the ND Game & Fish Department. Provide conservation plan details to the ND GSGI Lead who will consult with ND Game & Fish.

Enclosure

Fence 382

- Electric Wire New or Replacement Fence – Establish a one or two wire electric fence in sage grouse habitat to avoid sage grouse collisions and to facilitate grazing distribution. A scenario for new fence with markers is available.
- Barbed Wire – Establish a 3-wire wildlife friendly fence (bottom wire smooth) to facilitate grazing distribution.
- Improve visibility enhancement of existing fences within ¼ mile of lek to avoid sage grouse collisions by adding six-inch vinyl markers to the top two wires.
- Do not construct new fences from March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.
- Do not locate new fences within ¼ mile of an active lek.

Riparian Herbaceous Cover 390

- Native grass, shrubs and forb seeding designed to utilize the best suited mix according to the soil types present on the site including Wyoming Big Sage Brush if applicable to the site.
- No conditions or installation timing restrictions.

Access Control 472

- Practice is authorized for financial assistance only when the practice will be used to exclude animals from an area to address identified resource concerns. This is for facilitating exclusion of animals to protect or enhance natural resource values. Control will be by temporary electric fence. Any need for permanent fencing will be planned and installed using the Fence practice 382.
- Used to exclude, significantly restrict, or control grazing on environmentally sensitive areas where grazing is historically conducted.
- Do not construct or move fences from March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.

Obstruction Removal 500

- Steel-Concrete or Wood Structure Removal – remove buildings and structures (from native rangeland only) which create predator habitat for sage grouse.
- Power line Removal – removal of power lines that are a threat to sage grouse.
- Removal and Disposal of Fence – removal of fences that are a threat to sage grouse.
- Do not remove obstructions from March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.

Forage Harvest Management 511

- Delay haying/mowing – leave a minimum of 10% of alfalfa hayland unharvested until after September 1 for sage grouse to utilize for foraging. Remaining hayland acres will not be hayed during the primary nesting season April 15 – August 1. Requires a minimum of 6 inches height prior to freeze up. New perennial seedings will be eligible for this payment during the second growing season.

Pasture and Hayland Planting 512

- Grass/Alfalfa mixtures – seed mix consisting of 70% alfalfa (where soils permit) to provide forage area sage grouse. Other mixes are allowed if soils will not allow for 70% alfalfa.
- 70% alfalfa is for hayland only, it is not for pastureland use.
- 10% will be left unharvested until after September 1.

Pipeline 516

- Pipelines are only eligible to implement grazing systems or to facilitate the removal of livestock from sage grouse wintering habitat.
- Do not install from March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.
- Do not install pipeline through an active lek.

Prescribed Grazing 528

- **Every contract developed under GSGL which includes facilitative grazing management practices must include 3 years of Prescribed Grazing. If the Prescribed Grazing is already contracted on those acres or already applied, it will be included in the conservation plan.**
- Prescribed Grazing (choose the applicable scenario depending on the grazing system) – Prescribed grazing system with management conducted to incorporate a rotational grazing system to enhance sage grouse habitat.
- Prescribed Grazing Habitat Management – Development and implementation of a grazing system to restore and/or enhance habitat specific to sage grouse. Prescribed grazing system with management will incorporate a rotational grazing system with deferment of 20% (April 1 through July 15 of the following year) of the acres to enhance sage grouse habitat. The 20% deferment acreage will not be the same acres during the 3 years of payment incentive. Deferment is implemented under 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Pumping Plant 533

- Windmill – to be installed with new wells and watering facilities or converting electric to wind power.
- Solar – to be installed with new wells and watering facilities or converting electric to solar.
- Do not install from March – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.
- No windmills will be placed within 1 mile of an active lek and all new windmills must have anti-raptor perch devices installed on them.
- No gas or propane plants will be installed within 1.5 miles of an active lek.

Range Planting 550

- Native grass, shrub, and forb seedlings designed to utilize the best suited mix according to the soil types present including Wyoming big sage in the mix.
- New plantings must contain a minimum of 10% forbs.
- No conditions or installation timing restrictions.

Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment 548 – No Financial Assistance through GSGI

- Must meet the guidelines within North Dakota Grazing Lands Mechanical Treatment (548) standard.
- Cannot be used to remove Big Sagebrush
- Site-specific installation guidelines must be developed in cooperation with the ND Game & Fish Department. Provide conservation plan details to the ND GSGI Lead who will consult with ND Game & Fish Department.

Watering Facility 614

- New watering facilities area only eligible through GSGI to implement grazing systems or to facilitate the removal of livestock from sage grouse wintering habitat. All must be installed with wildlife escape ramps.
- No wintering tanks will be placed on native rangeland through GSGI.
- Do not construct during March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.
- No placement within ¼ mile of an active lek.

Enclosure

Well 642

- Only eligible through GSGI to implement grazing systems or to facilitate the removal of livestock from sage grouse wintering habitat.
- Do not construct during March 1 – June 30 within 1.5 miles of an active lek.
- No placement allowed within ¼ mile of an active lek.
- No gas or propane plants allowed within 1.5 miles of an active lek.

Prescribed Burning 338

- Only eligible where there is no Big Sagebrush present.
- Provide conservation plan details to ND GSGI Lead who will consult with ND Game & Fish.