

Vulnerability Assessment Case Study: Greater Sage Grouse

Location/Scale: Western US – Great Basin and Rocky Mountain

Background: In March 2010 the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) published its decision on the petition to list the Greater Sage Grouse as “Warranted but Precluded.” Over 50% of this species’ habitat is located on BLM-managed lands. The FWS is scheduled to make a new listing decision in FY 2015.

In coordination with numerous state and other federal partners, the BLM is taking a strategic approach to greater sage-grouse conservation.

Scale/focus:

An initial step is to identify the most important habitat areas needed for long term conservation. The approach is to establish priority habitat areas (Wyoming calls them “Core Areas”) that encompass high-density breeding, brood rearing and other season habitats. Once identified, the BLM can then determine land uses compatible with sage-grouse conservation within and outside these areas. This will be done through review, development, amendment, or revision of approximately 70 resource management plans (RMPs) that involve Greater Sage Grouse habitat. The BLM manages vast oil and natural gas resources important to the nation, as well as significant renewable resources such as wind energy. The challenge for BLM is to consider appropriate levels of energy development while protecting important sage-grouse habitat to support sustainable populations.

Objectives:

Determine the following. Given climate change and other stressors, what habitat locations are most important to conserve? What areas are better for development? At what scale? Ultimately, what uses can be authorized, under what conditions and with what stipulations (spatial and temporal)? And, what population and/or habitat metrics are most effective to assess sustainability (e.g., how is success measured?)

Status:

The BLM had developed two management teams under a national policy team: the Great Basin Regional Management Team and the Rocky Mountain Regional Management Team. Each has formed interdisciplinary teams at subregional levels. The teams are beginning to develop a framework to address management questions as well as an RMP review/revision strategy.