

Bureau of Land Management National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

Charter
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I. Introduction

In April 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published its listing decision for the greater sage-grouse as “Warranted but Precluded.” Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a major threat in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the greater sage-grouse. The USFWS has identified the principal regulatory mechanism for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as conservation measures in Resource Management Plans (RMPs). For the purpose of this document, the acronym RMP applies to all BLM land use plans. Based on the identified threats to the greater sage-grouse and the USFWS’s timeline for making a listing decision on this species, the BLM needs to incorporate explicit objectives and adequate conservation measures into RMPs within the next three years in order to conserve greater sage-grouse and avoid a potential listing under the Endangered Species Act. The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of BLM RMPs and address, as necessary, revisions and amendments throughout the range of the greater sage-grouse (with the exception of the Gunnison population, the bi-state population in California and Nevada, and the Washington state distinct population segment, which will all be addressed through other planning efforts).

Greater sage-grouse habitat covers 73 BLM land use planning units (not including the excepted populations noted above). Within these areas, 22 are managed under Management Framework Plans or RMPs completed before 2000 and 21 are managed under RMPs completed since 2000. Currently, the BLM has 28 plans under revision. Twenty of these plans are in the Pre-Draft stage; five are between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); and two are between the Final EIS and the Record of Decision. In addition, BLM Wyoming is currently undertaking a programmatic EIS specific to the greater sage-grouse that will amend six completed plans and that will be incorporated into the revisions of four other plans.

II. Objective

The BLM’s objective for chartering this planning strategy effort is to develop new or revised regulatory mechanisms, through RMPs, to conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM-administered lands on a range-wide basis over the long-term.

III. Purpose

This Charter establishes the teams, team membership and team operating procedures for the BLM's National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy.

IV. Teams – Membership, Roles and Responsibilities

A. National Policy Team

The National Policy Team (NPT) will provide overall national policy guidance throughout the planning process. The NPT members (or their official designee) are composed of the Washington Office (WO) Assistant Directors (AD) from Renewable Resources and Planning, Minerals and Realty Management, Fire and Aviation Management, and National Landscape Conservation System and Community Partnerships, Division Chiefs for Decision Support and Planning, Rangeland Resources, Fish, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Fluid Minerals, Solid Minerals, Lands, Realty and Cadastral Survey, the Manager of the Renewable Energy Coordination Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representatives, a Director of a state fish and wildlife agency within the range of the greater sage-grouse, and the State Directors serving as the East and West Regional Management Team Leaders. The team is co-chaired by the AD for Renewable Resources and Planning, the AD for Minerals and Realty Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Regional Director Mountain-Prairie Region. The team serves as a Washington-level leadership forum to:

- Provide consistent national policy and guidance on the conservation of greater sage-grouse in the form of clear goals, objectives, and management considerations for planning.
- Oversee the development of consistent regulatory mechanisms across the range of the greater sage-grouse.
- Issue, through a national Instruction Memorandum (IM), interim direction to the field pending the completion of planning.
- Secure and allocate Bureau resources (staff and funding) to implement the national greater sage-grouse strategy.
- Ensure a direct interface between the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Ensure Bureau-wide communication and coordination both internally and externally throughout the planning process.

After the initial planning effort, the NPT will continue to monitor the planning process and development of Records of Decision as well as implementation of the regulatory mechanisms.

B. National Technical Team

The National Technical Team (NTT) serves as an independent, technical and science-based team to ensure the best information related to greater sage-grouse management is fully reviewed, evaluated and provided to the BLM for consideration in the land use planning process. Non-

BLM members of the NTT serve in an advisory capacity only, and their participation does not constitute endorsement of final agency recommendations or decisions. The team lead for the NTT will be the BLM Nevada, Deputy State Director for Resources. Meetings of this team will be on an as-needed basis and at the request of either the NPT or the Regional Management Teams (RMT). Members of the NTT will be composed of subject matter experts who have extensive technical expertise in their disciplines. Members include BLM representatives from the states within the range of greater sage-grouse, the BLM's National Operations Center (NOC), Fire and Aviation Management Directorate, state wildlife agencies, other Federal agencies (such as the Agricultural Research Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey). The membership of this team is expected to vary in response to specific issues or topics which may surface during the course of the planning effort.

Consequently, NTT work is anticipated to be of short-duration and high-intensity at various stages of the planning process. Overall, the NTT will serve as a scientific and technical forum to:

- Understand current scientific knowledge related to the greater sage-grouse.
- Provide specialized sources of expertise not otherwise available.
- Provide innovative scientific perspectives concerning management approaches for the greater sage-grouse.
- Provide assurance that relevant science is considered, reasonably interpreted, and accurately presented; and that uncertainties and risks are acknowledged and documented.
- Provide science and technical assistance to the RMT and Regional Interdisciplinary Team, on request.
- Articulate conservation objectives for the greater sage-grouse in measurable terms to guide overall planning.
- Identify science-based management considerations for the greater sage-grouse (e.g., conservation measures) that are necessary to promote sustainable sage-grouse populations, and which focus on the threats in each of the management zones.

C. Regional Management Teams

The Regional Management Teams (RMT), East and West are established to reflect the uniquely different threats to the greater sage-grouse across its range. The role of the RMTs is to provide overall leadership and guidance for the planning process to ensure that adequate conservation measures are developed and incorporated into RMP amendments/ revisions. East RMT members (or their official designee) include the BLM State Directors from Wyoming (Team Leader), Montana/Dakotas, Colorado, and Utah, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Regional Director Mountain-Prairie Region, the state wildlife agency Directors for Wyoming Game and Fish, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife.

West RMT members (or their official designee) include the BLM State Directors from Nevada (Team Leader), Idaho, Oregon/Washington, California, Utah, and Montana/Dakotas, the BLM Assistant Director for Fire and Aviation Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Regional Directors Pacific Region and Pacific Southwest Region, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Regional Director Mountain-Prairie Region, the state wildlife agency Directors for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Fish and Game, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. These RMTs provide regional leadership forums to:

- Develop shared goals, objectives, priorities, and direction across the states and Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (WAFWA) management zones within the region.
- Coordinate planning, analyses, and plan implementation to ensure consistency within each WAFWA management zone across the region.
- Build regional awareness to facilitate the sharing of effective practices and strategies.
- Secure and allocate agency resources (staff and funding) across each region.
- Interface directly with the National Policy Team and the Executive Leadership Team.
- Facilitate partner engagement in the BLM planning process and foster broad collaboration for sage-grouse conservation.

The immediate focus of the RMTs for the development of RMP amendments/revisions will be as follows:

- The RMT Team Leaders will finalize RMT membership by August 31, 2011. Team Leaders may adjust RMT membership to ensure appropriate representation of federal, state or other cooperating agencies.
- Provide overall direction for initiation of the planning effort, including the establishment of sub-regional planning area boundaries by September 1, 2011.
- Evaluate the adequacy of current plans and ongoing revisions to determine the level of revision or amendment needed.
- Provide direction for a consistent Purpose and Need statement (for revisions underway, the teams should determine whether they can be synchronized with the regional effort or supplemented through the regional effort).
- Provide direction for the planning alternatives developed.
- Provide direction for analysis of the alternatives.
- Provide direction for a regional cumulative effects analysis of the plan decisions.
- Coordinate the selection of the Preferred Alternative for each Environmental Impact Statement.
- Appoint Regional Project Managers.

After the planning effort is completed, the RMTs will monitor implementation of the final plan decisions and will coordinate direction on emerging issues.

D. Regional Project Managers

The Regional Project Managers (PM) will lead the Regional Interdisciplinary Teams (RIDT) and attend sub-regional public and cooperator meetings to ensure consistency across their respective regions. The PMs will also act as advisors and consultants to their respective Regional Management Teams (RMT) and ensure that RMT direction and decisions are incorporated into the planning efforts. The PMs will call RIDT meetings, consulting with members in regard to the agendas. They will also closely monitor the planning efforts of the two regions throughout the process to maintain an appropriate level of consistency between the two regions. Additionally, the PMs may call upon Sub-regional Interdisciplinary Team members to collaborate on various issues throughout the process.

E. Regional Interdisciplinary Teams

The Regional Interdisciplinary Teams (RIDTs), East and West are also established to reflect the uniquely different threats to the great sage-grouse across its range. The primary role of the RIDTs is to ensure consistency between the Sub-regional Interdisciplinary Teams (SIDT) (e.g., use of information, data, mapping, analyses, management actions and assumptions), to the maximum extent practical. It is expected that any inconsistencies within and between regions will be based on distinct ecological differences that are recognized and supported by RIDT experts. It is expected that RIDTs would be formed at the direction of the RMTs and composed of a representative staff from the SIDTs within each of the regions. The RIDTs will propose, for Regional Management Team (RMT) approval, the mechanics for incorporating direction and policy provided by the RMTs and National Policy Team into sub-regional analyses (for RMP amendments/ revisions) to ensure consistency within WAFWA management zones across the region. For RMP amendments, this may involve similar versions of Chapter 1 (Introduction, including Purpose and Need), Chapter 2 (Proposed Action and Alternatives), and cumulative effects analyses within a region or across the range of the greater sage-grouse.

F. Sub-regional Interdisciplinary Teams

The role of the Sub-regional Interdisciplinary Teams (SIDT) is to provide the sub-regional analyses to transform goals, objectives, management planning considerations, and conservation measures into the necessary regulatory mechanisms to conserve the greater sage-grouse on BLM-administered lands within and across the respective states and WAFWA management zones within their respective regions. The SIDTs will complete the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis (EISs) to develop the new or revised regulatory mechanisms, through RMPs, in order to conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM-administered lands on a range-wide basis over the long term. The SIDTs will be composed of BLM staff from each of the sub-regions, as well as representatives of state wildlife agencies and the USFWS. Team members will be selected by each BLM State Office based on planning needs. The teams would generally include the Deputy State Director for Resources or a Branch Chief, and appropriate Program Leads from the BLM State Offices, as well as BLM District/ Field Office staff. These interdisciplinary teams are expected to operate collectively and separately during various stages of the planning process, as appropriate. The Regional Project Managers will provide overall leadership and direction to the SIDTs.

G. Team Operating Procedures

National Policy Team (NPT) Meetings

- The NPT will meet regularly on a schedule jointly developed by the Assistant Directors for WO-200, and WO-300. Meetings will address a wide range of topics, focusing on critical, policy related issues.
- The first meeting of the NPT will be held the week of September 5, 2011.

Regional Management Team (RMT) Meetings

- The individual RMTs will convene together in one location a minimum of two times during the year.
- Spring meetings will be held in Reno, NV (West RMT) and Cheyenne, WY (East RMT). A winter meeting will rotate among the states within each region. To the extent possible, meetings will be scheduled one year in advance.
- Regional Management Team meetings will focus on strategic issues, business issues, and the exchange of information.
- The hosting office will arrange administrative and logistical support for the Regional Management Team meetings.
- The East and West RMT leaders will chair the meetings and approve agendas. The RMT leaders will also provide an Executive Secretary to provide administrative support functions for the RMTs.
- Regional Management Team agenda items will be submitted to the Executive Secretary using a standard format. Each agenda item will have a RMT sponsor who will be responsible for the item being presented to the RMT.
- Agendas and advanced reading materials will be distributed by the Executive Secretary at least two weeks prior to each meeting.
- Meeting minutes will be summarized in sufficient detail to capture all items discussed, and recommendations, decisions, and assignments made.
- Attendance at meetings is critical and expected. When a member cannot attend, an acting member will be prepared and present with the appropriate authority to represent the member in discussions and decision making.

Regional Management Team (RMT) Conference Calls

- In the initial phases of the planning process, the East RMT conference calls will be held each Monday at 3:00 pm, Mountain Time. West RMT conference calls will be held each Thursday at 9:00 a.m., Pacific Time. The conference call schedule may be adjusted during the course of the planning process as appropriate.
- Regional Management Team Leaders will chair the meetings and approve the agenda.
- The RMT Executive Secretary will solicit agenda items and distribute agendas and advance reading materials for each conference call.
- Meeting minutes will be summarized in sufficient detail to capture all items discussed, and recommendations, decisions, and assignments made.

- Attendance at conference calls is critical and expected. When a member cannot attend, an acting member will be prepared and present with the appropriate authority to represent the member in discussions and decision making.

National Technical Team (NTT) Meetings

- The NTT meetings will focus on technical and scientific issues, and the exchange of information.
- Meetings of the NTT will be held as needed (issue or topic-based) and coordinated by the team leader (BLM Nevada, DSD for Resources). Requests for NTT meetings will be sent to the NTT leader for review and approval by either the National Policy Team or the Regional Management Teams, as appropriate. Concurrence between the East and West RMTs is required.
- Agendas and advanced reading materials will be distributed by the team leader at least one week prior to each meeting.
- Meeting minutes will be summarized in sufficient detail to capture all items discussed (including different perspectives), recommendations, and assignments made.
- Members will be allowed to review, amend and approve meeting minutes before they are finalized.
- The first meeting of the NTT will be held on August 29, 2011 in Denver, CO.

Regional Interdisciplinary Teams (RIDT) and Sub-regional Interdisciplinary Teams (SIDT)

- The Regional Project Managers in conjunction with the RIDTs and SIDTs will be responsible for establishing their own meeting and conference call schedules.
- The RIDT meetings should primarily focus on topics or issues related to consistency between the SIDTs (e.g., use of information, data, mapping, analyses, management actions and assumptions). Any identified inconsistencies between analysis areas should be addressed and an action plan developed (if necessary) to resolve or validate these inconsistencies. Inconsistencies should be documented and based on distinct ecological differences that are recognized and supported by RIDT experts.
- The SIDTs will complete the required NEPA analysis (EISs) for their respective sub-regions to develop new or revised regulatory mechanisms, through land use plans (RMPs), in order to conserve and restore the greater sage-grouse and its habitat on BLM-administered lands on a range-wide basis over the long term.

Decision Making

- Teams will operate using the consensus decision-making model. When consensus cannot be reached, the topic may be elevated to the next highest level in the organization for review and final decision. Issues will be presented to the next highest level in writing using a Decision Memo format. Issues raised will be clearly framed, will fully articulate different perspectives and will include a full range of options, solutions and desired outcomes.
- The RIDT and SIDTs do not have delegated authority for making final agency decisions. However, these teams are expected to formulate substantive recommendations for decisions which may be made by either the RMTs or the NPT. As such, the RIDT and SIDTs will use the consensus model for making their team recommendations and the same issue elevation process described above.

Consensus is a process that encourages critical discussion, leading to a broader, clearer perspective; the result is a decision constituting substantial agreement within a group. In this context, consensus is further defined as a decision whose implementation will be actively supported by all team members. In addition, consensus includes benefits of contributing to teamwork, encouraging trust, and engendering commitment from those making the decision. The person(s) who usually makes the decision must participate as an equal and accept the decision reached by the group for the process to be true consensus.

V. Funding

Funding for the Greater Sage-Grouse National Planning Strategy will be contained in the annual budget allocation supplied to each BLM State Office. The funding covers the salary for the BLM team members and includes funding to cover travel expenses for all BLM team members and State wildlife agency team members. Project planning, implementation and monitoring may be funded by existing and future program areas, initiatives and strategic funds.

VI. Charter Establishment

The establishment of the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy is effective upon signature of the Deputy Director of Operations.



Mike Pool, Deputy Director of Operations



Date