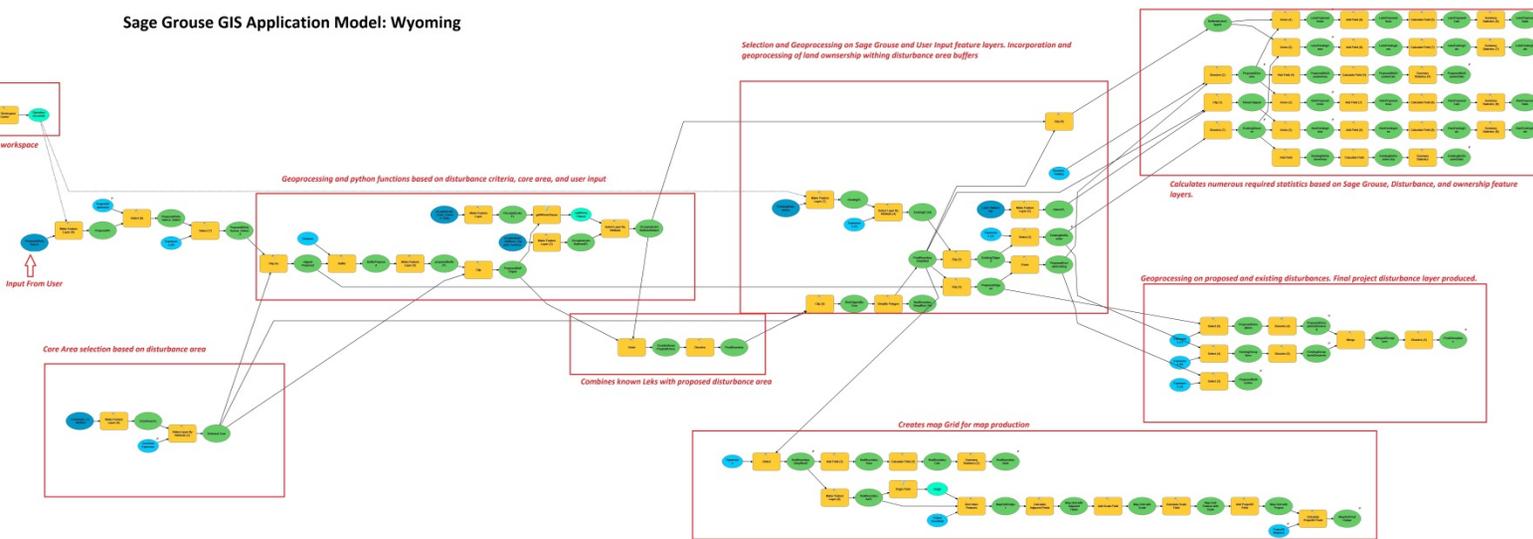


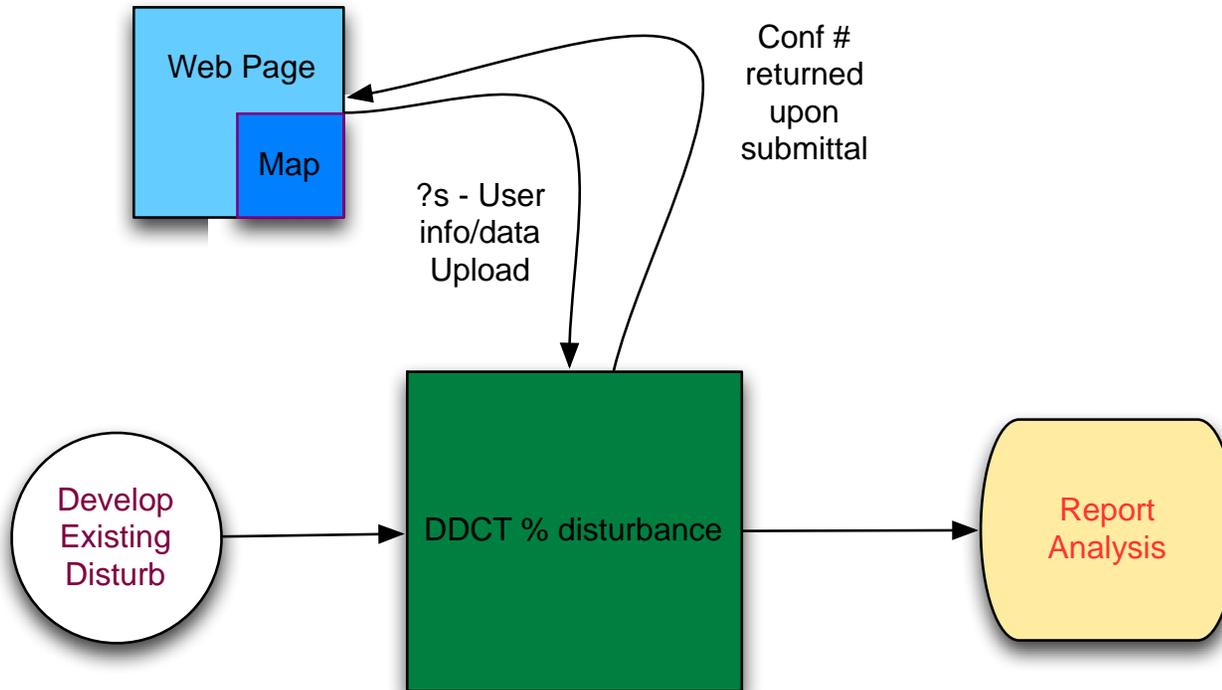


Montana Sage Grouse Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT)

Sage Grouse GIS Application Model: Wyoming



DDCT Main Components

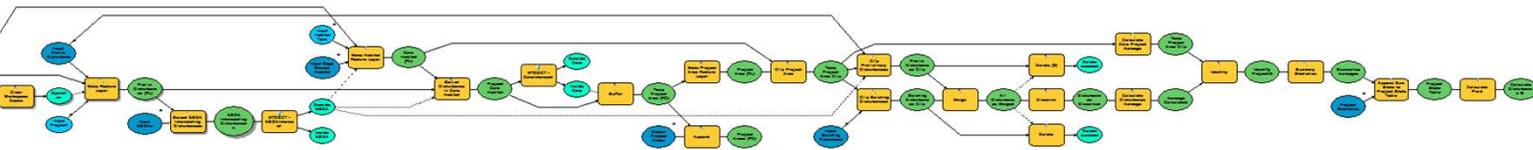


DDCT Project Phase 1

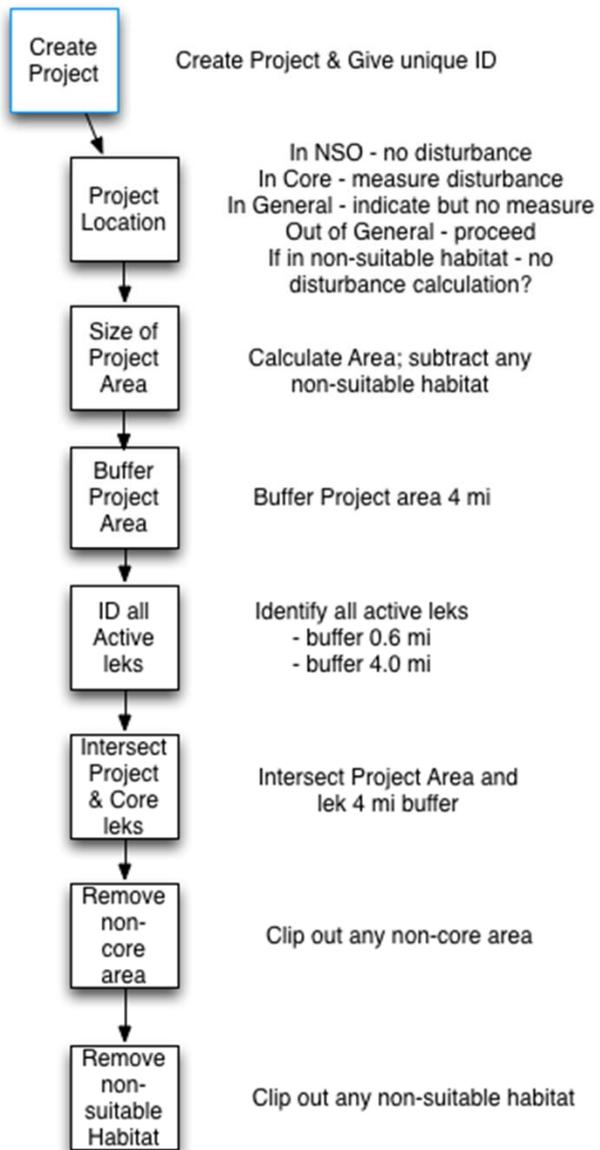
[Sage Grouse DDCT Project Plan \(High-level Outline\)](#)

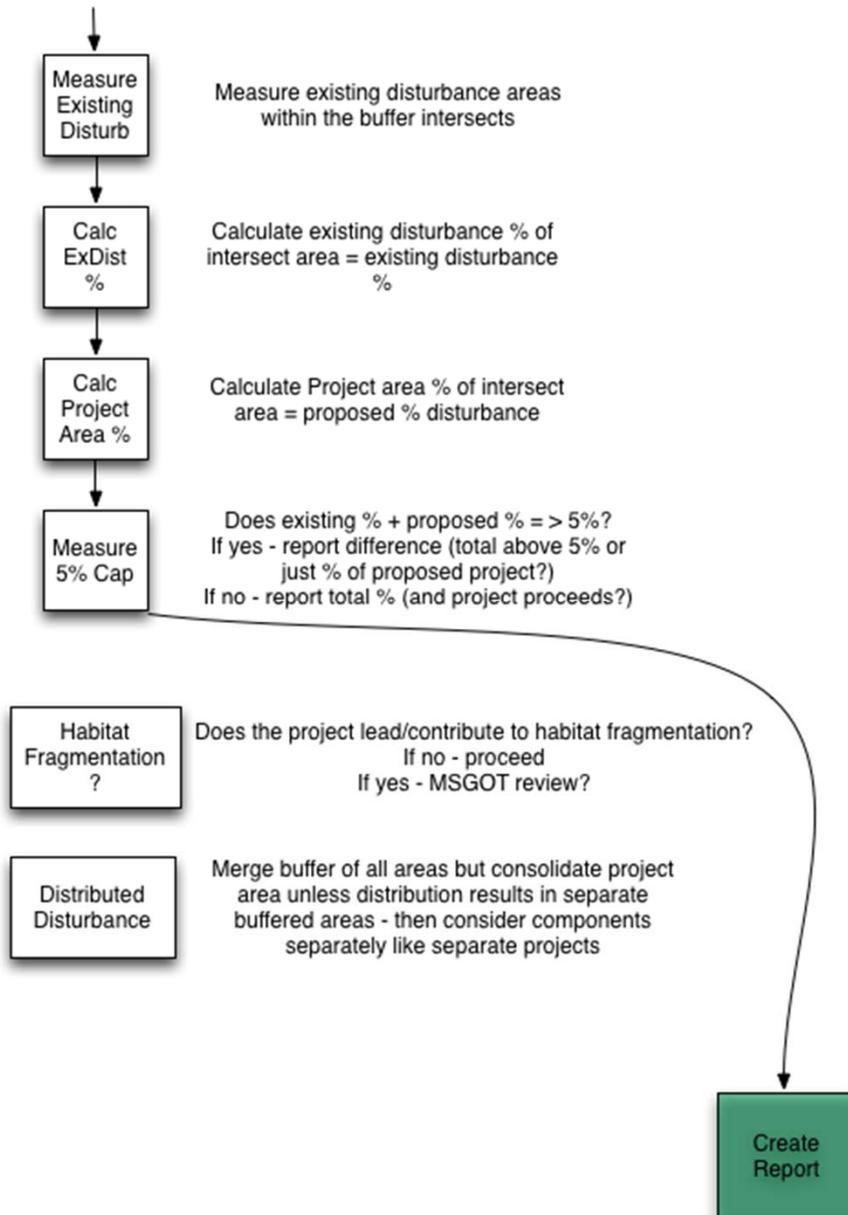
- Website Development
 - Page design
 - DNS entry
 - Question to be answered – form development
 - Map Application for project location upload
 - Data upload options (& security scans)
 - Email confirmation # returned
 - Public Comment tool setup and pilot
- DDCT Model Development
 - Workflow Process (see adjacent workflow diagram)
 - Procure Server & Database
 - Develop database and data layers, table schemas
 - **Develop Existing Disturbance Data**
 - Unique instance/value considerations (non-suitable habitat, definitions, seasonal restrictions, other considerations?)
 - Data tracking
- Report Analysis
 - Format & data report identification and development
 - Map template for spatial communication of project locale
 - Auto-generation from database data
 - Tracking of authorizing agency communication
- Pilot Application & Process
 - Pilot test tool and workflow
 - Demonstrate workflow and/or tool at Dec. 15 MSGOT meeting
 - Go live Dec. 30 – fallback date Dec. 31 if move to prod encounters issues

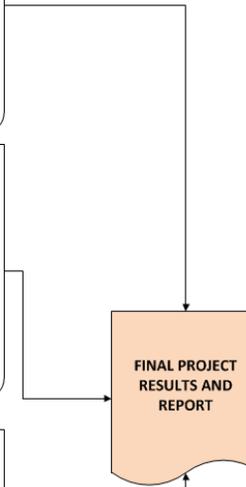
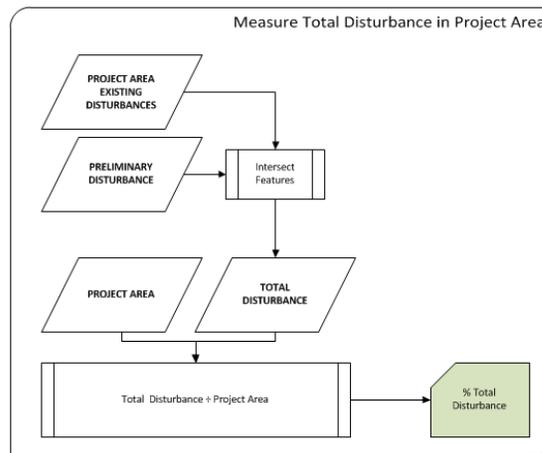
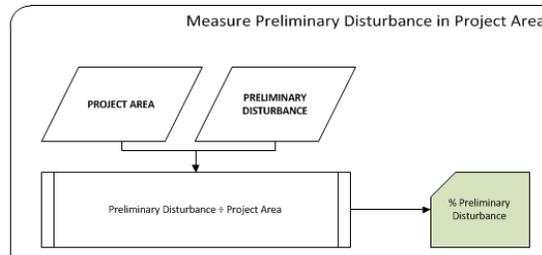
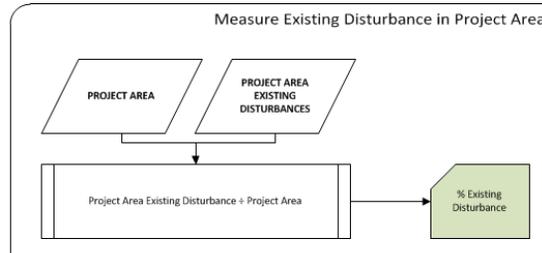
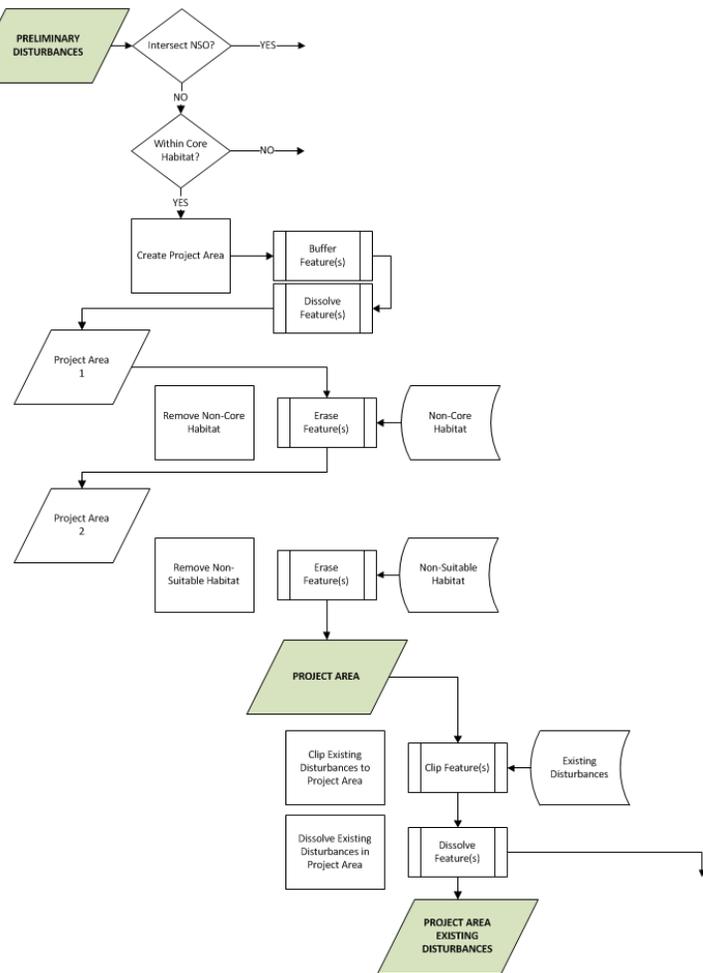
Montana DDCT



Sage Grouse DDCT Spatial Analysis Process







Sage Grouse DDCT Project Plan Phase II (High-level Outline)

- Website Enhancements
- DDCT Model/Process Refinement
 - Workflow process testing and tuning
 - Stopgap for Developing Existing Disturbance Data
 - Automation & unique instance/value considerations (non-suitable habitat, definitions, seasonal restrictions, other considerations?)
 - Data tracking – coordination with authorizing agencies for continual currency of model data
- Exiting Disturbance Data Development -
 - RFP for contracted GIS services
- Next Generation DDCT
 - Scope definition, coordination with other entities, procurement
- HQT Coordination

News Release

NRCS Montana Extends Funding Application Deadline for Agricultural Land Easement Program

Contact:

[Lisa McCauley](#)

406-587-6970

Bozeman, Mont., Dec. 9, 2015—The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Montana has extended the funding application deadline for the Agricultural Land Easement component of the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (ACEP) from Jan. 15, 2016, to March 25, 2016.

Landowners and entities interested in using conservation easements to address natural resource concerns can submit applications at any time. Though signup is continuous, funding selections are made at specific times during the fiscal year. To be considered for funding in Fiscal Year 2016, applications for the Agricultural Land Easement component of ACEP must be submitted by March 25, 2016. **The application deadline for the Wetland Reserve Easement component of ACEP will remain Jan. 15, 2016.** Ranking information will be available at a later date.

NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program also protects grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland and shrubland.

Eligible partners include Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs.

To learn about ACEP, visit the [Montana NRCS website](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov) at www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov.

News Release

NRCS Makes \$50 Million Available to Help Ranchers Restore Sage-grouse Habitat

Contact:

[Kyle Tackett](#)

406-683-3803

BOZEMAN, Mont., Dec. 11, 2015 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service is making available about \$50 million this year in financial assistance to partner with agricultural producers who want to restore and protect habitat for seven focus species, including the [Greater sage-grouse](#). Conservation efforts for sage grouse are part of Working Lands for Wildlife, an innovative partnership that supports struggling landscapes and strengthens agricultural operations.

“The decisions of agricultural producers can have significant impacts on wildlife,” said Lisa Coverdale, NRCS state conservationist for Montana. “By managing land with sage grouse and other wildlife in mind, producers can benefit entire populations while also strengthening their agricultural operations.”

This year, NRCS will invest about \$40 million nationwide on habitat restoration and protection for the sage grouse, the umbrella species of the sagebrush landscape. Previous conservation efforts to restore and protect sagebrush led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to determine in September that protections under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) were not warranted.

Since 2010, NRCS and conservation partners have worked with ranchers to make conservation improvements to 4.4 million acres of sagebrush habitat, benefiting sage grouse and 350 other kinds of wildlife, including mule deer, elk, pronghorn and golden eagles. “The decision not to list the sage grouse is the result of unprecedented collaboration in public and private rangeland restoration,” said Kyle Tackett, NRCS sage grouse coordinator for Montana.

With the support of conservation partners and ranchers, NRCS launched the [Sage Grouse Initiative](#) in 2010. Those efforts became the model for Working Lands for Wildlife, which began two years later.

Technical and financial assistance is available through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) and [Conservation Stewardship Program](#).

NRCS financial assistance covers part of the cost to implement conservation practices. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact their [local USDA service center](#)

A Brief Overview: Sage-Grouse Habitat Use and Sagebrush Habitats

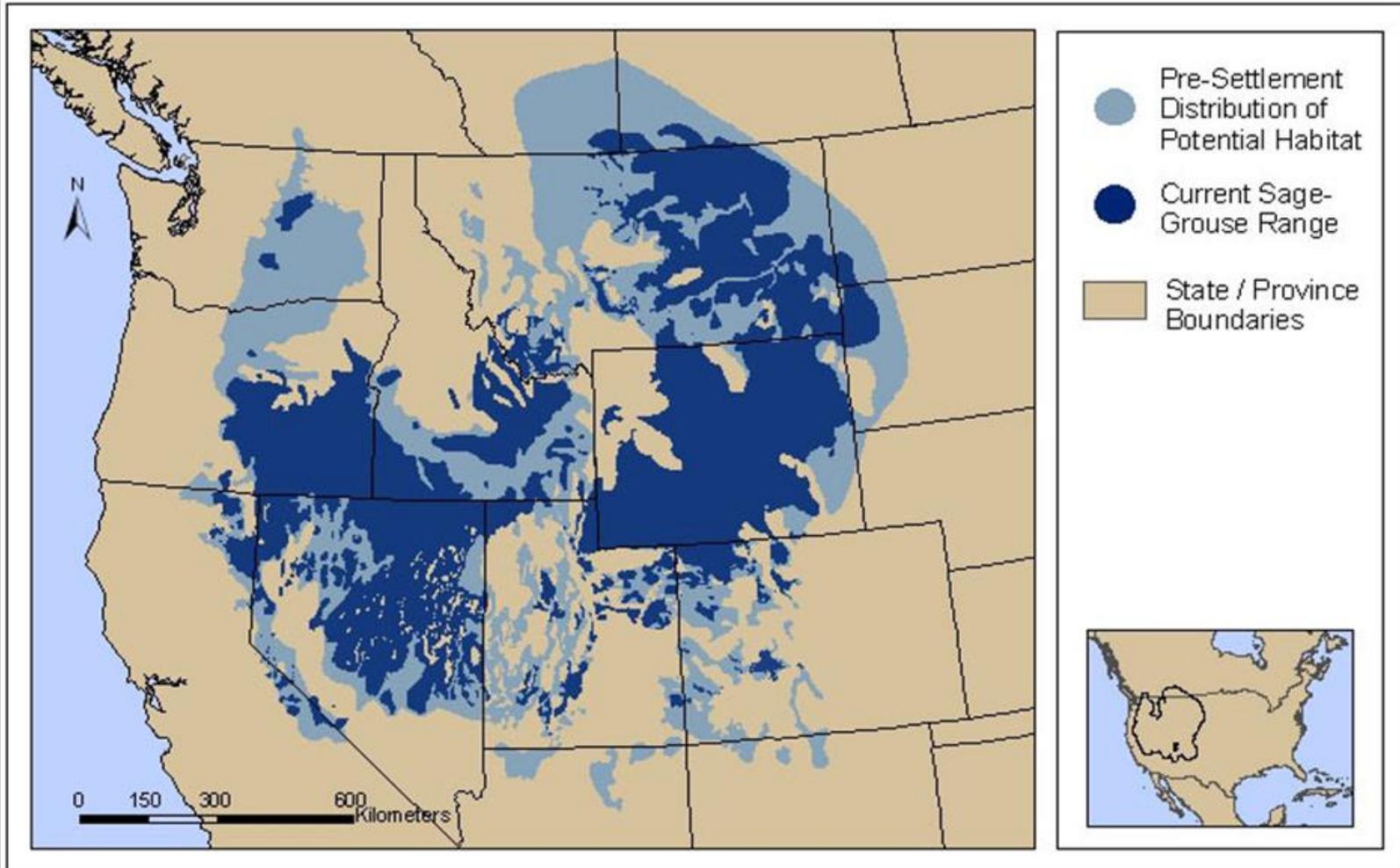
MONTANA SAGE-GROUSE
OVERSIGHT TEAM
DECEMBER 15, 2015

Rick Northrup
Wildlife Habitat Bureau



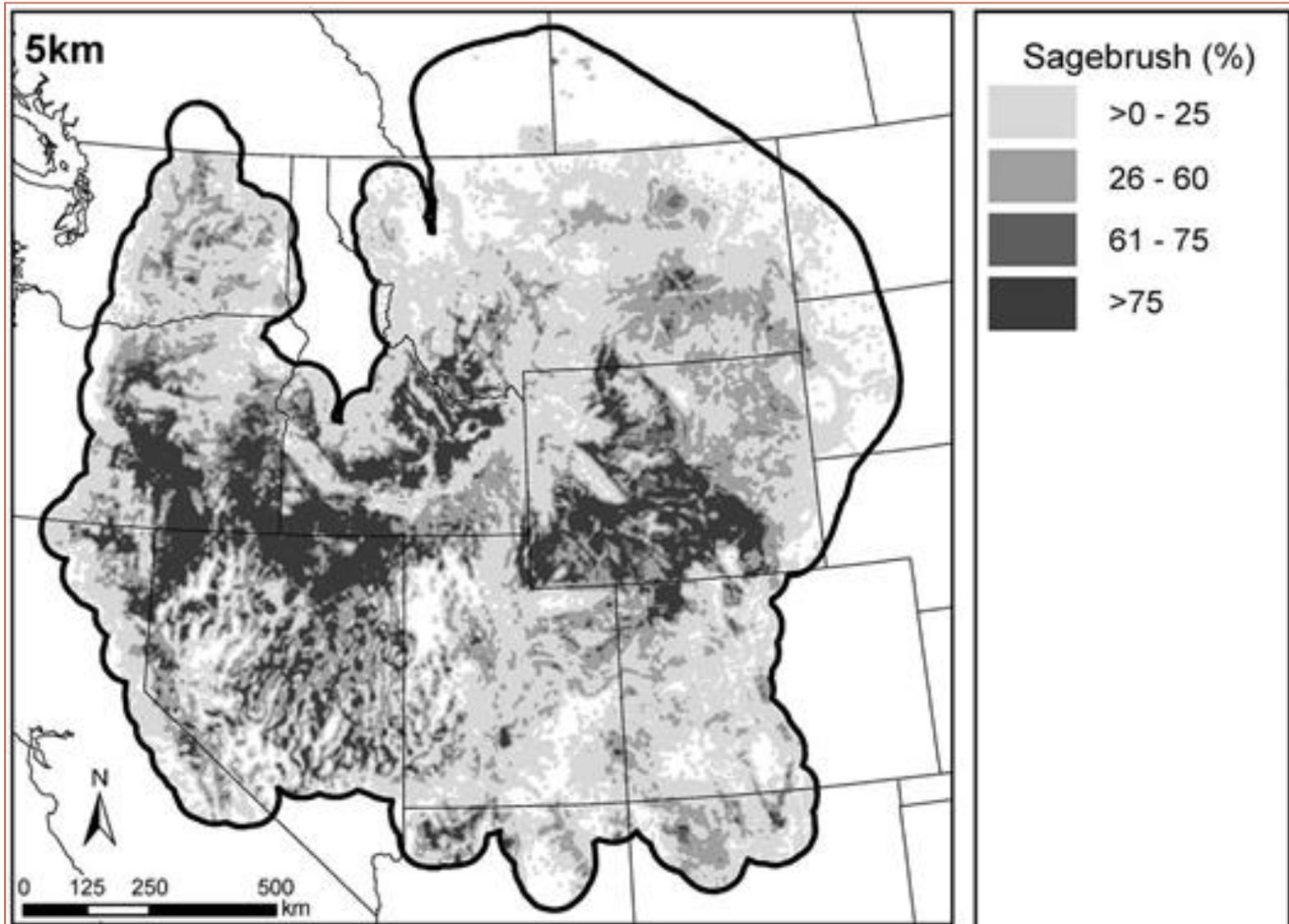
*Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks*

Distribution of Sage-grouse

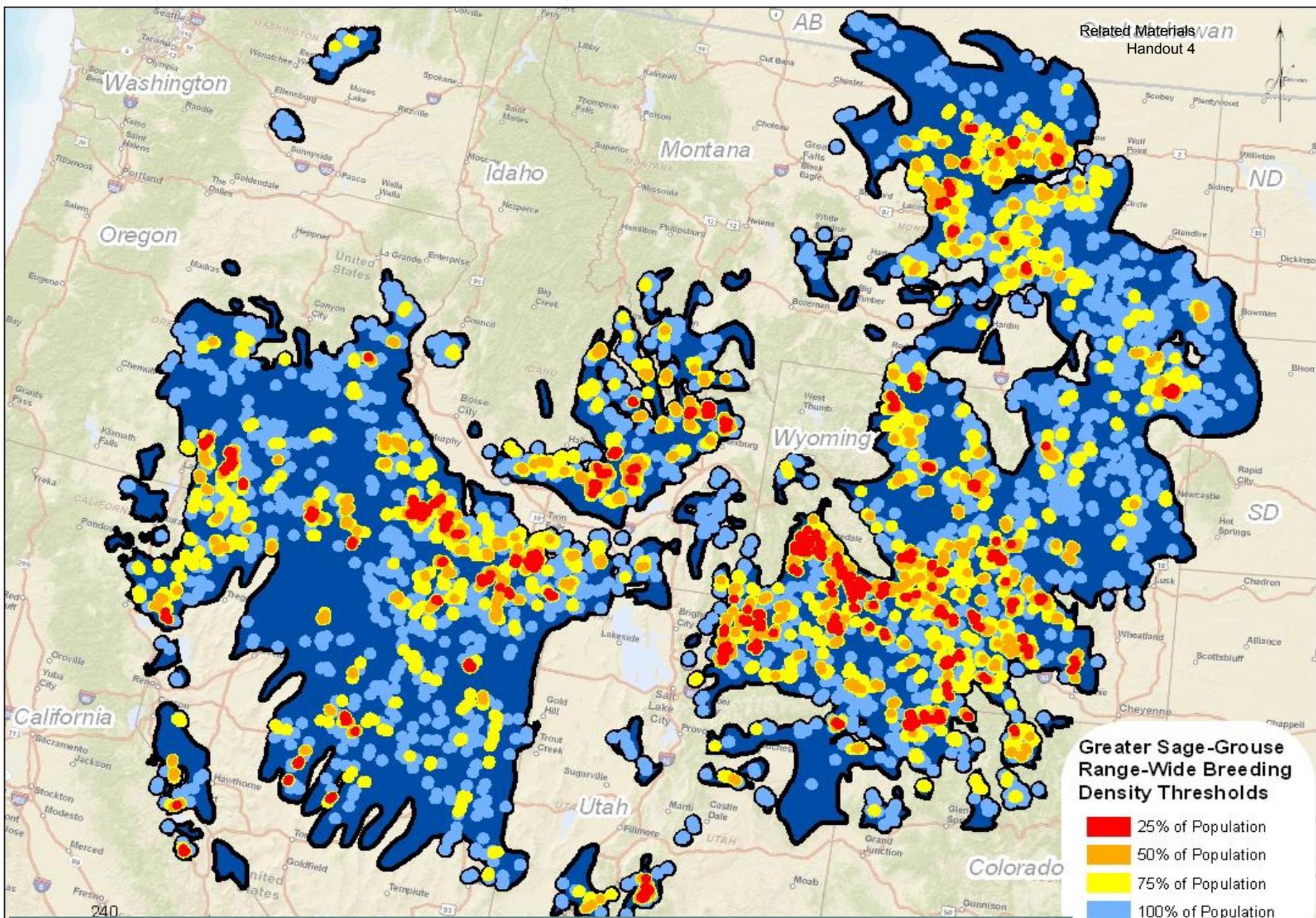


(USGS image, based on Schroeder et al. 2004)

Where's the sagebrush?



Percent of landscape dominated by sagebrush (Knick and Hanser 2011).

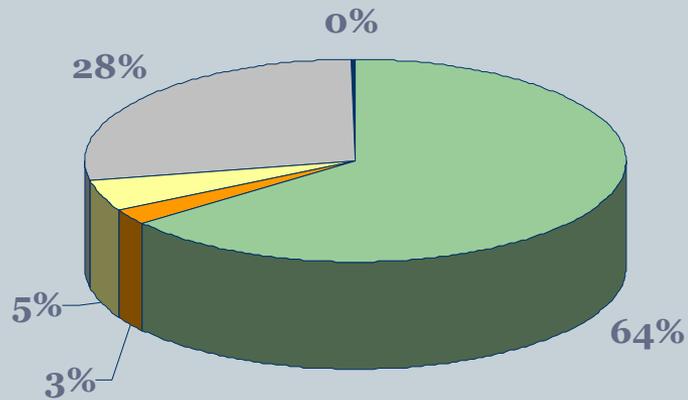


**Greater Sage-Grouse
Range-Wide Breeding
Density Thresholds**

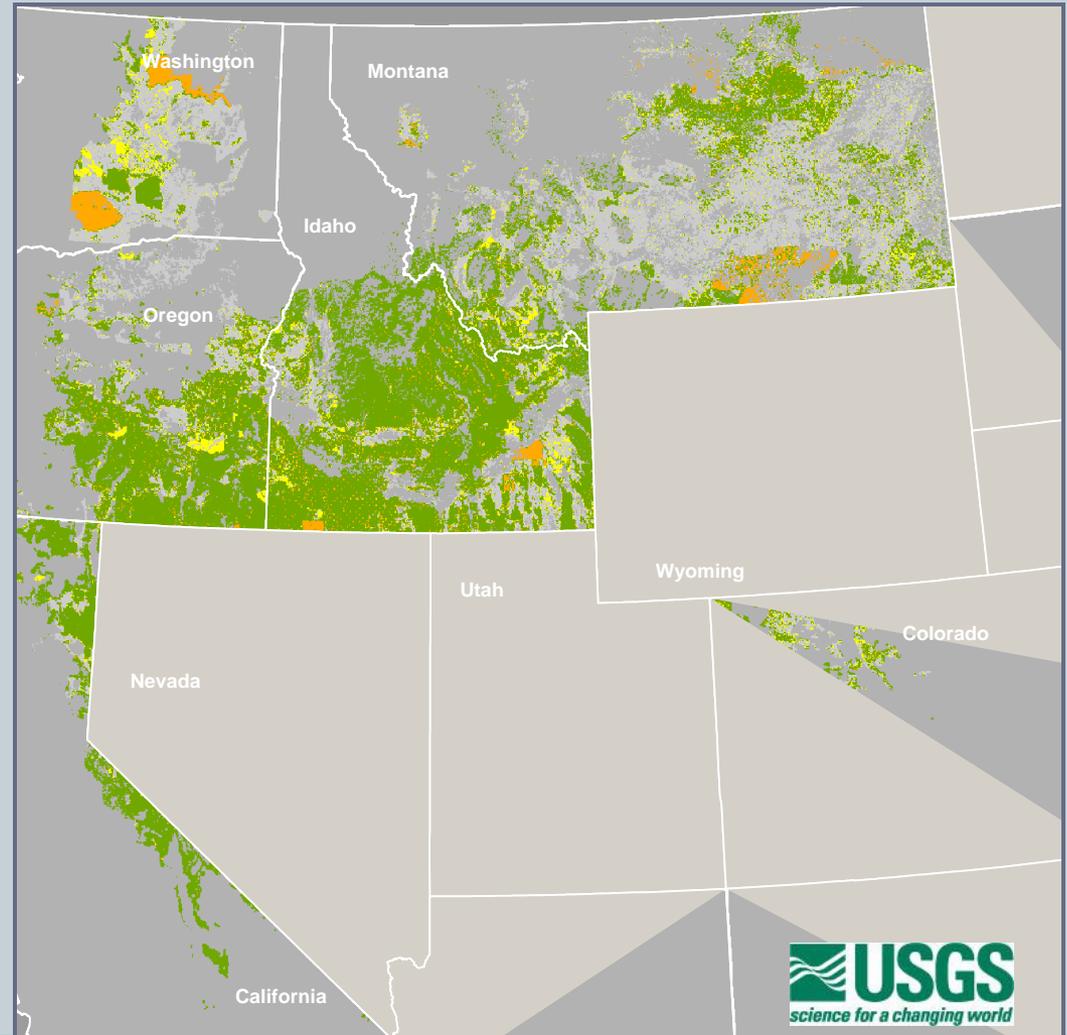
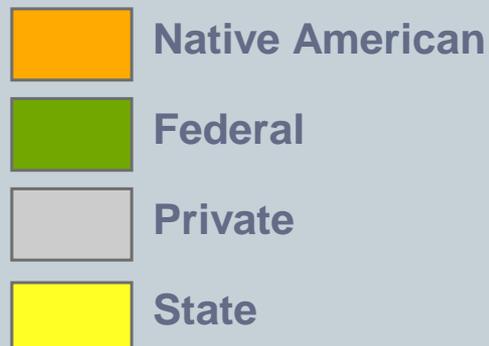
- 25% of Population
- 50% of Population
- 75% of Population
- 100% of Population
- Occupied Distribution

Relative density of greater sage-grouse (Doherty et al. 2010)

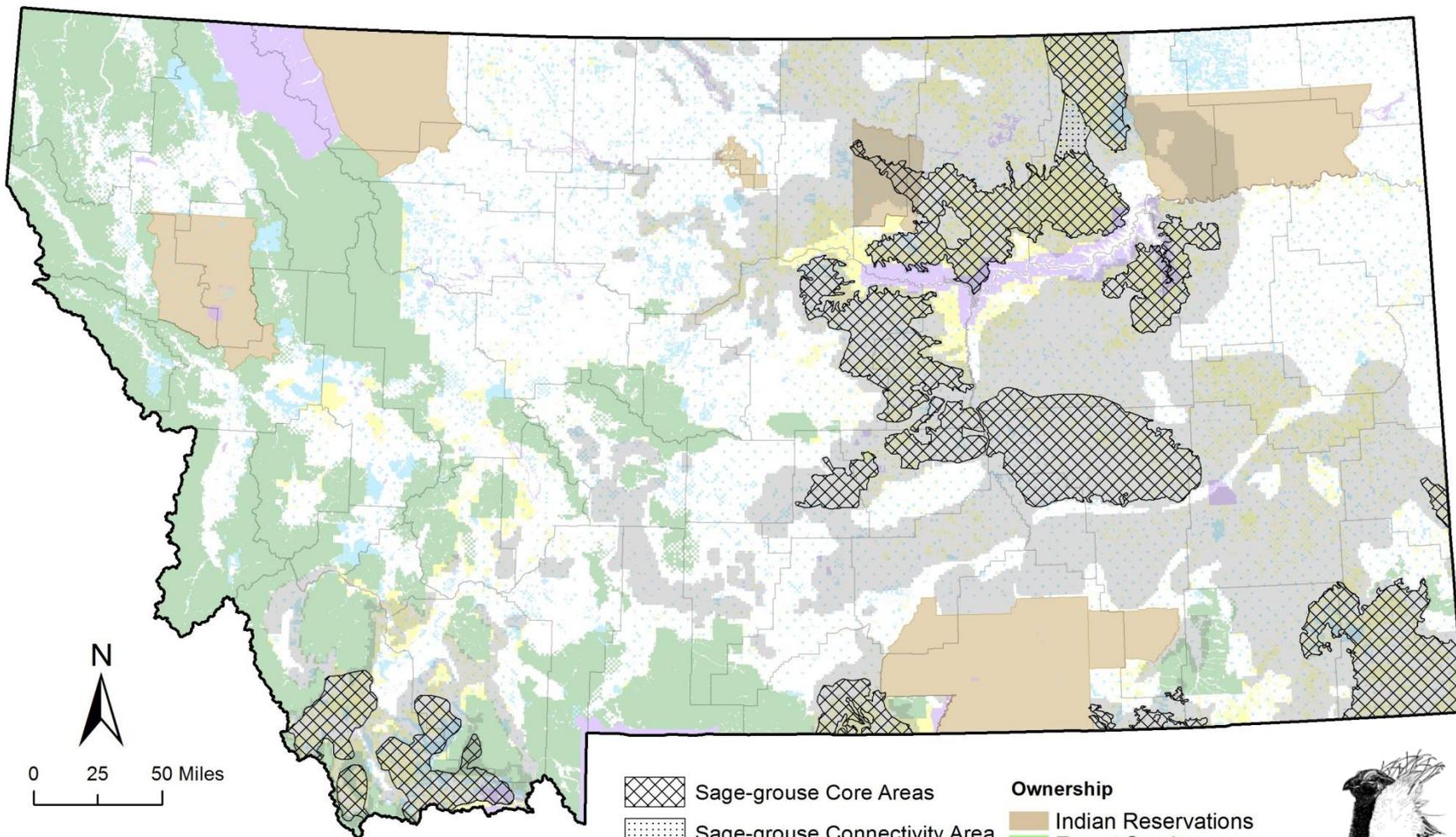
Who manages the sagebrush?



Land Steward



Sage-grouse Core Areas and General Habitat in Montana

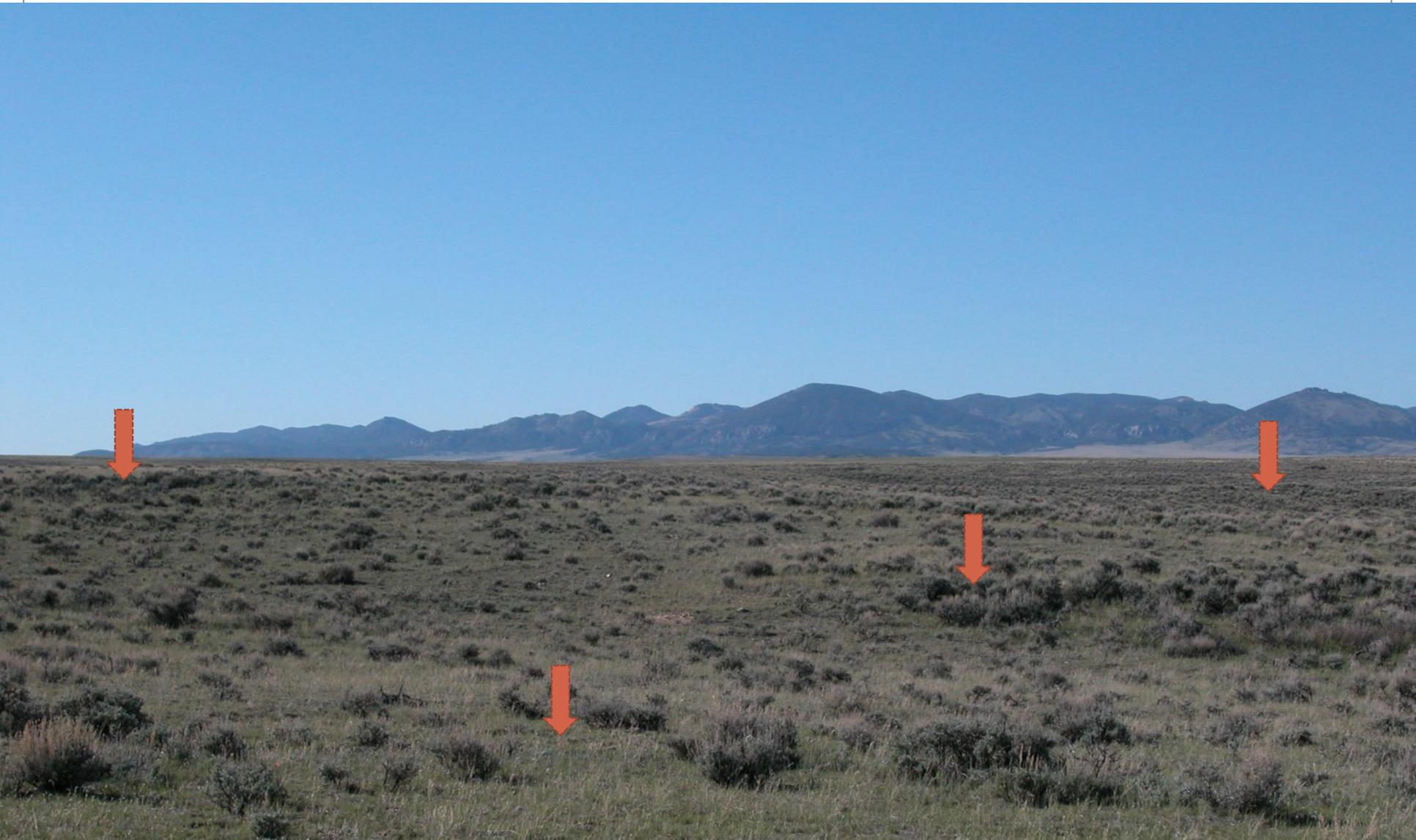


-  Sage-grouse Core Areas
-  Sage-grouse Connectivity Area
-  Sage-grouse General Habitat

- Ownership**
-  Indian Reservations
 -  Forest Service
 -  Other Federal Lands
 -  Bureau of Land Management
 -  State and Local



Sage-Grouse Habitats



Spring Breeding

Breeding on leks, also known as strutting grounds

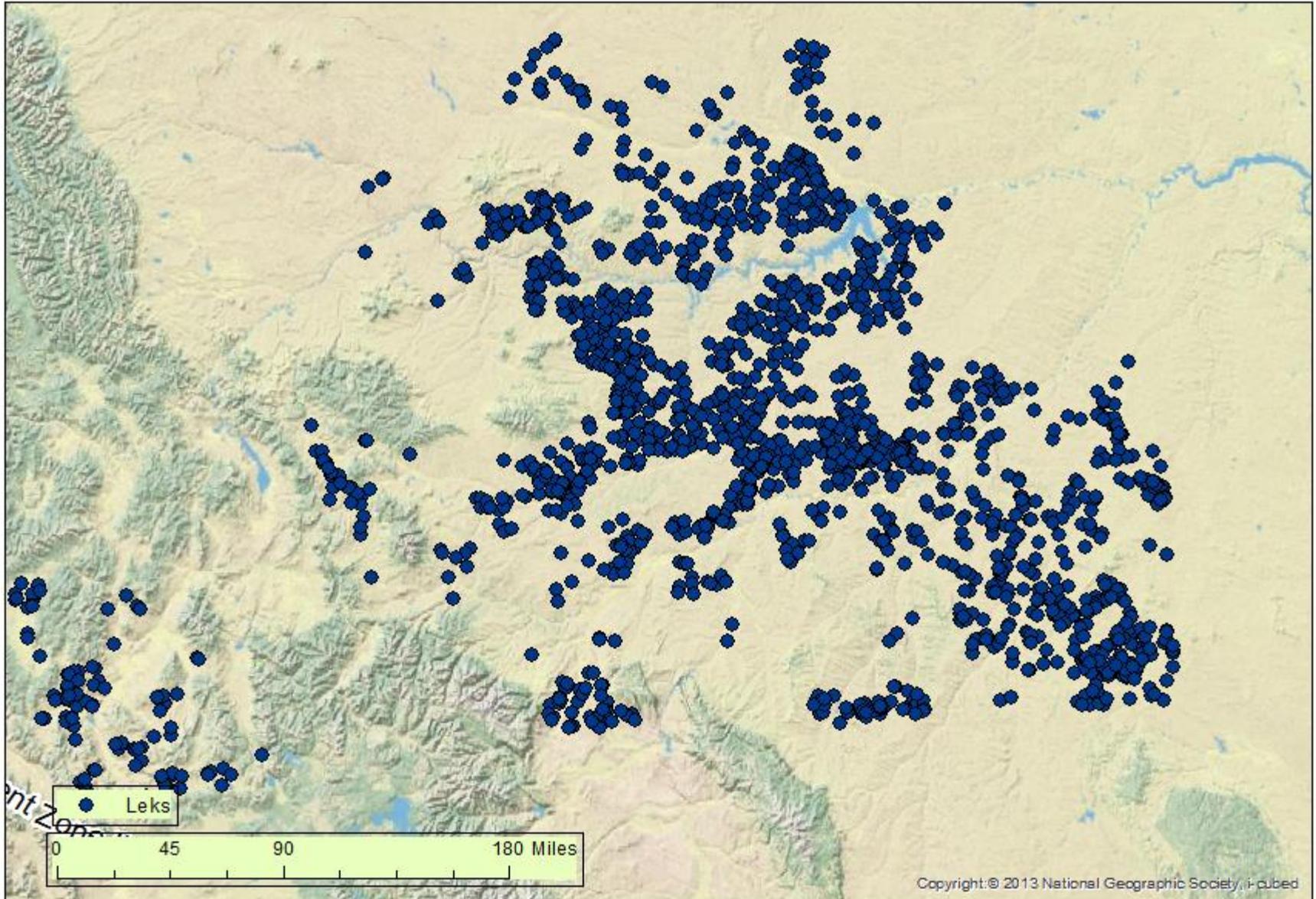


Sage-grouse Nesting

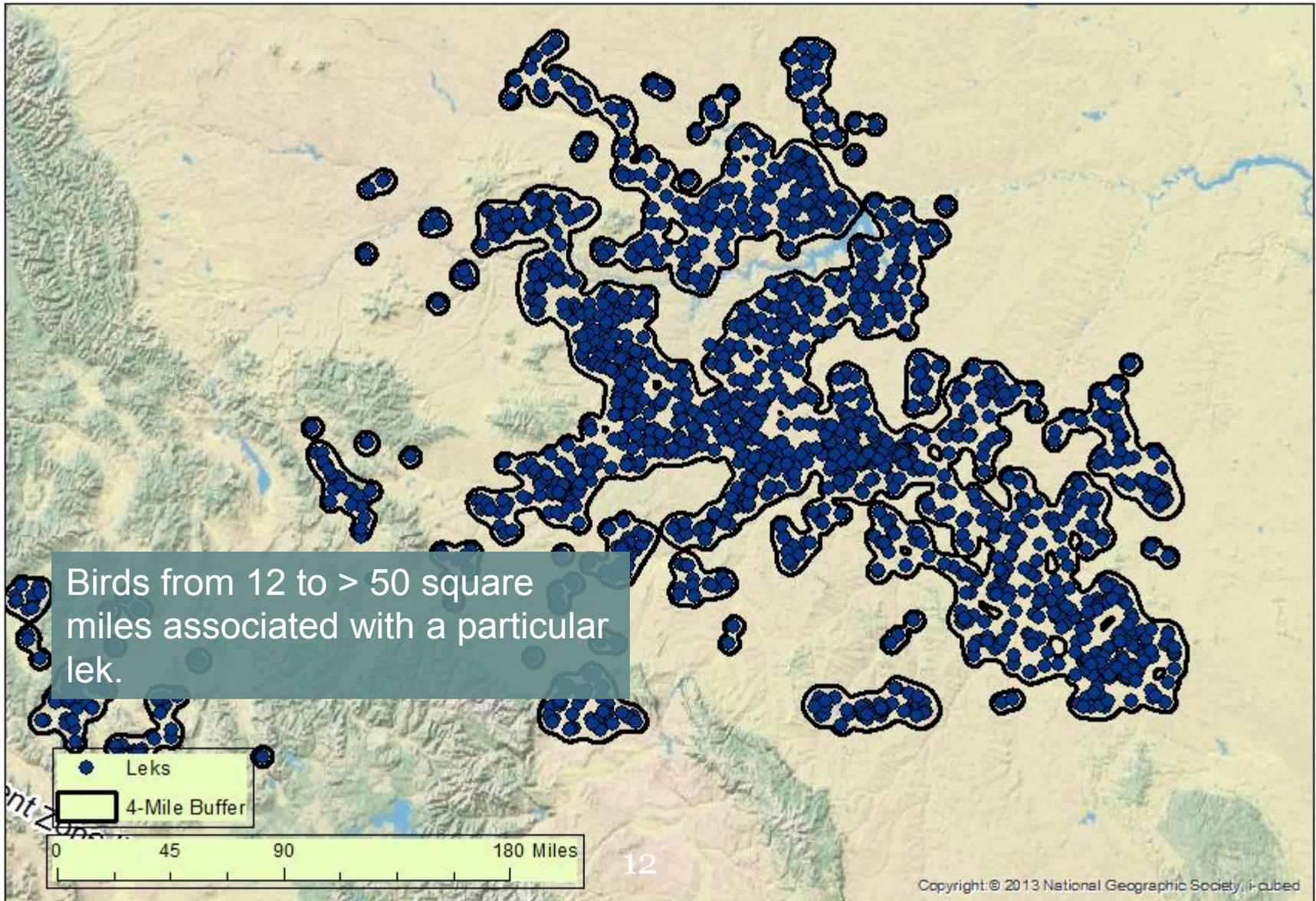
Generally high nest success



Sage-grouse nests – 4 miles or more from lek



Sage-grouse nests – 4 miles or more from lek



Sage-grouse brood rearing – Early (uplands) Later summer (swales)



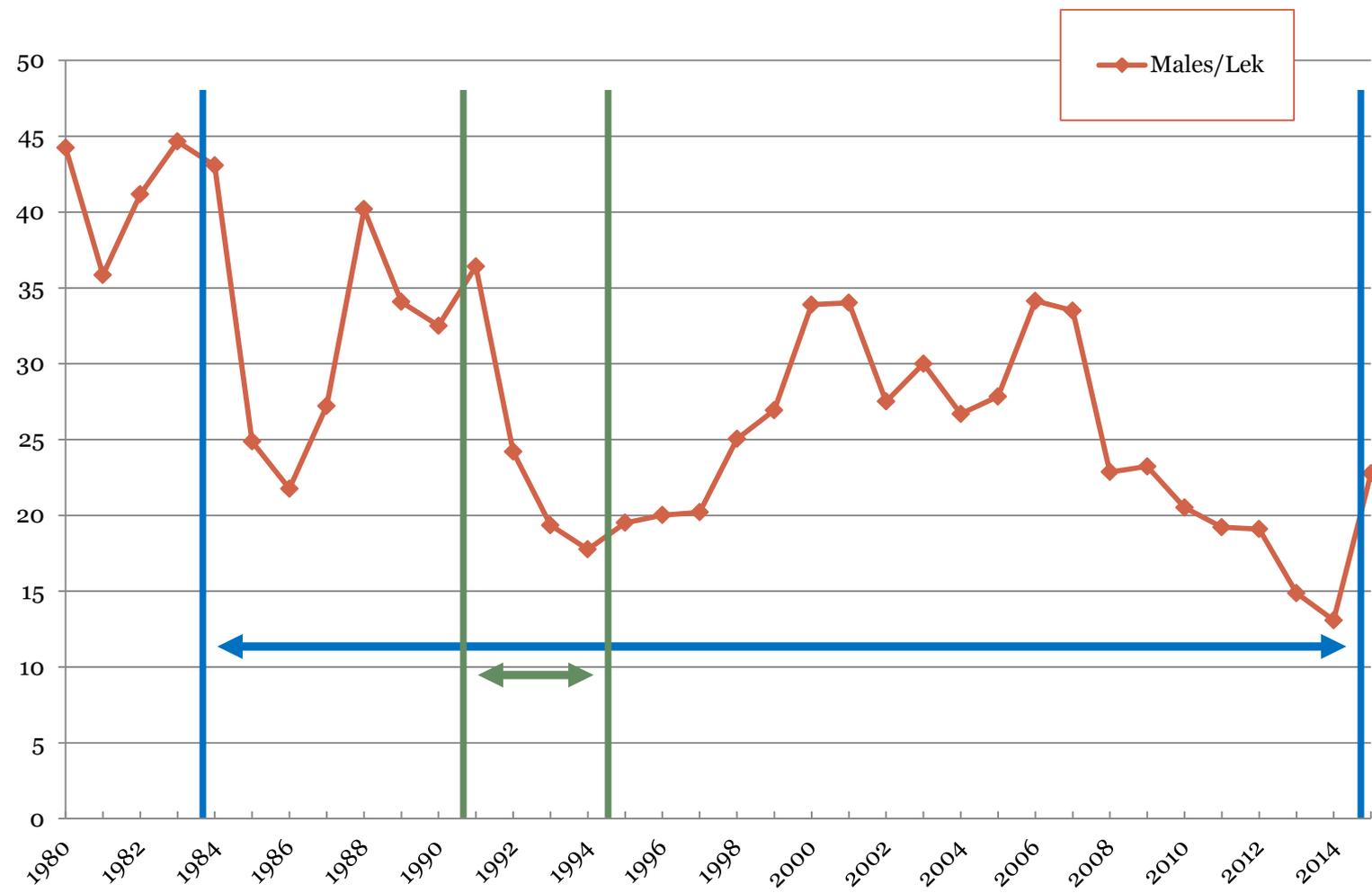
Fall and Winter

- Food shifts from forbs and insects to sagebrush
- Winter habitat may vary from year to year and even between weather events
- Winter habitat can be limiting – tied to exposed sagebrush





Sage-grouse Lek Counts (AHM Leks) 1980 - 2015



Short term variation and long term trends

Sage-grouse Conservation Issues – A Brief Overview

Montana Sage-grouse Oversight Team
December 15, 2015



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

Catherine Wightman

Range-wide Conservation Issues

Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation

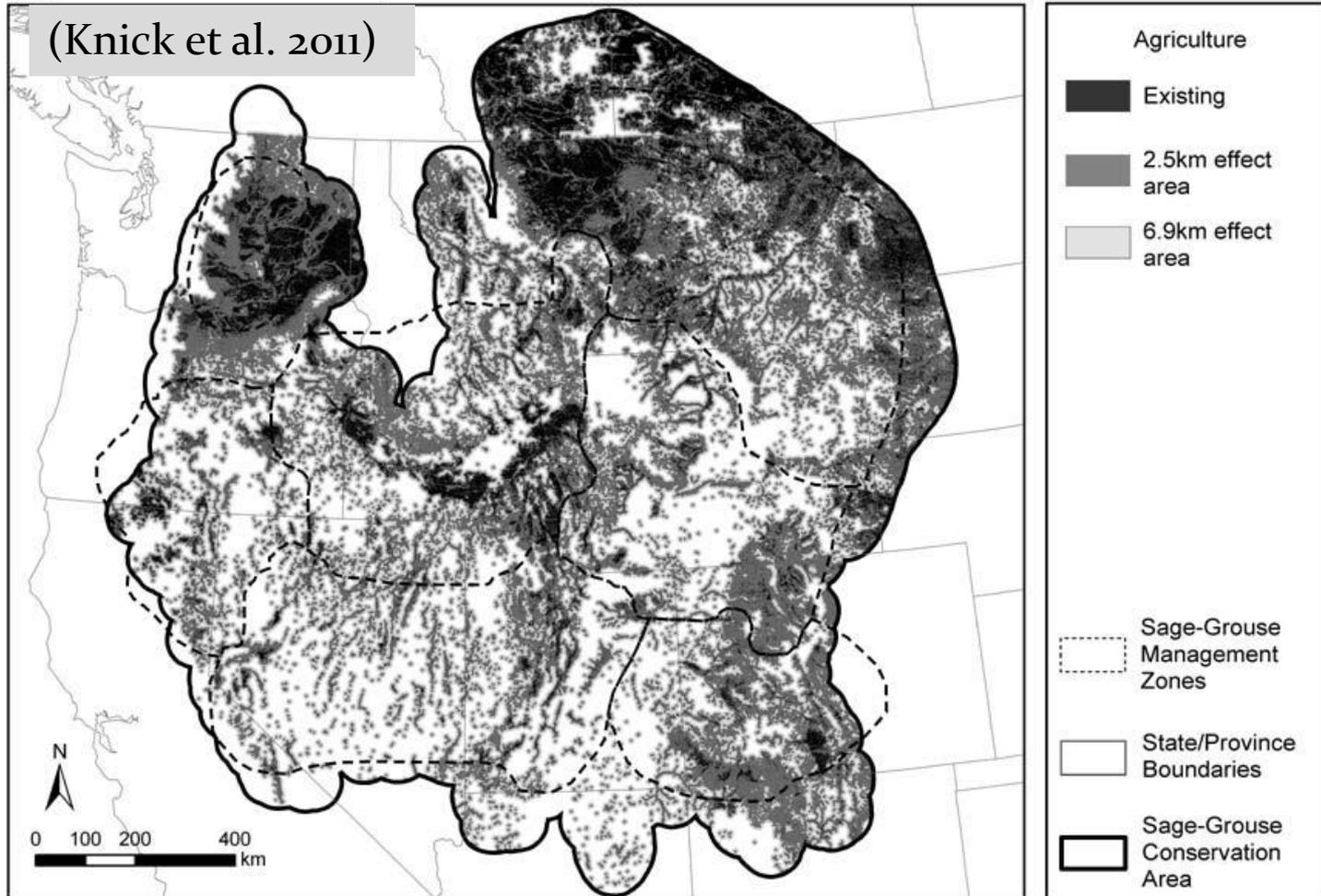


Montana: Widespread Issues

Agricultural conversion
Energy development
Infrastructure

Agricultural Conversion

(Knick et al. 2011)





Direct habitat loss

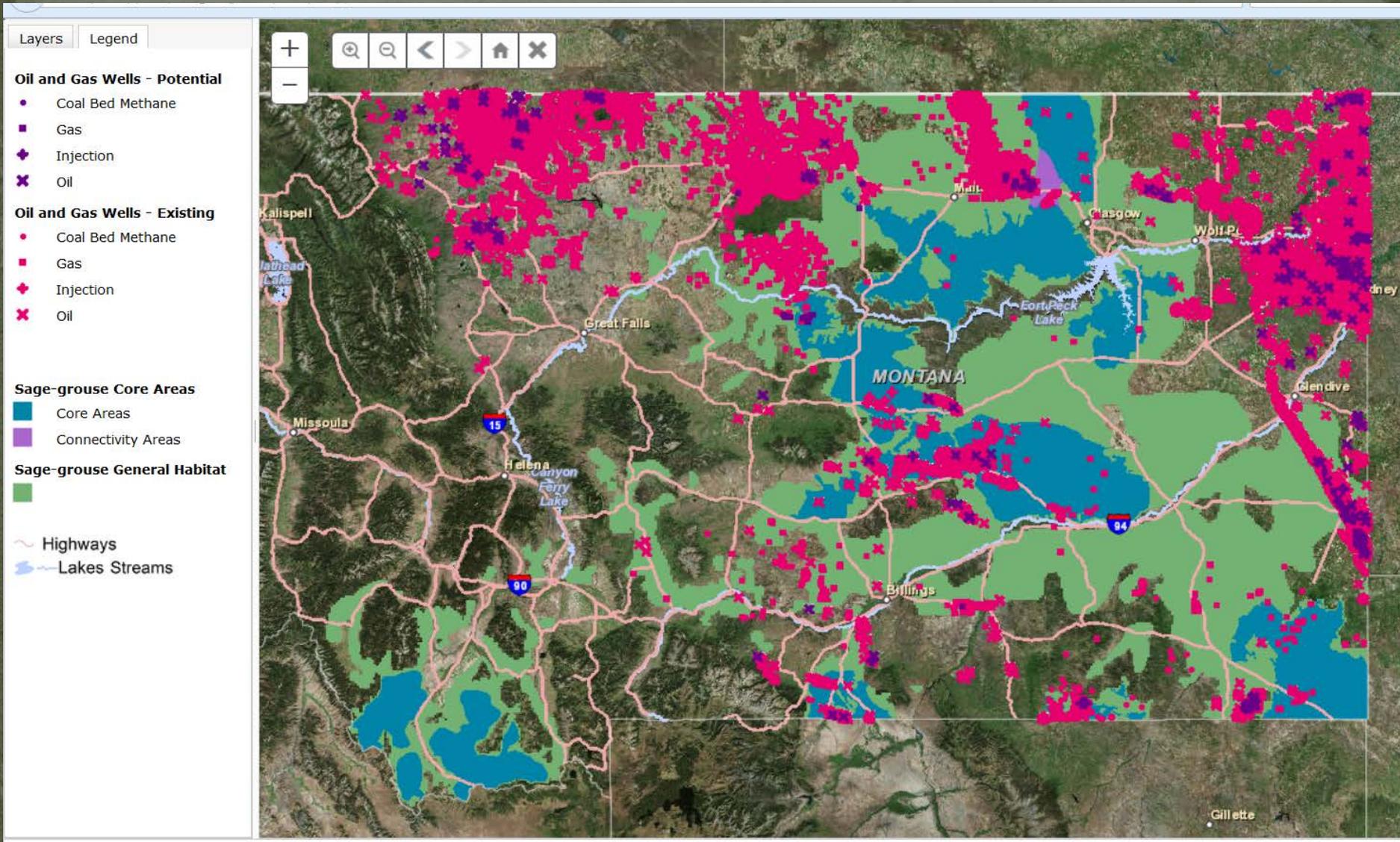
21-25% tillage in landscape can lead to lek abandonment

Increased edge habitat leads to increased predation

Indirect effects such as pesticides and water diversion

Energy Development







- Direct habitat loss and fragmentation
- Disturbance from human presence, noise, equipment and explosives
- Increased perches for avian predators

Energy Development



- Increased facility densities
 - Decreases in male lek attendance (>1/640 acres)
 - Avoidance by nesting females
 - Lower nest initiation and success rates
 - Lower brood survival
- Nearness to lek
 - Decreases in male lek attendance (1.9 – 7.8, average 3.8 miles)
 - Yearling females avoided within 0.6 miles
 - 40% of females nest >3.1 miles from lek
- Lag effect - up to 10 years to detect responses because of site fidelity

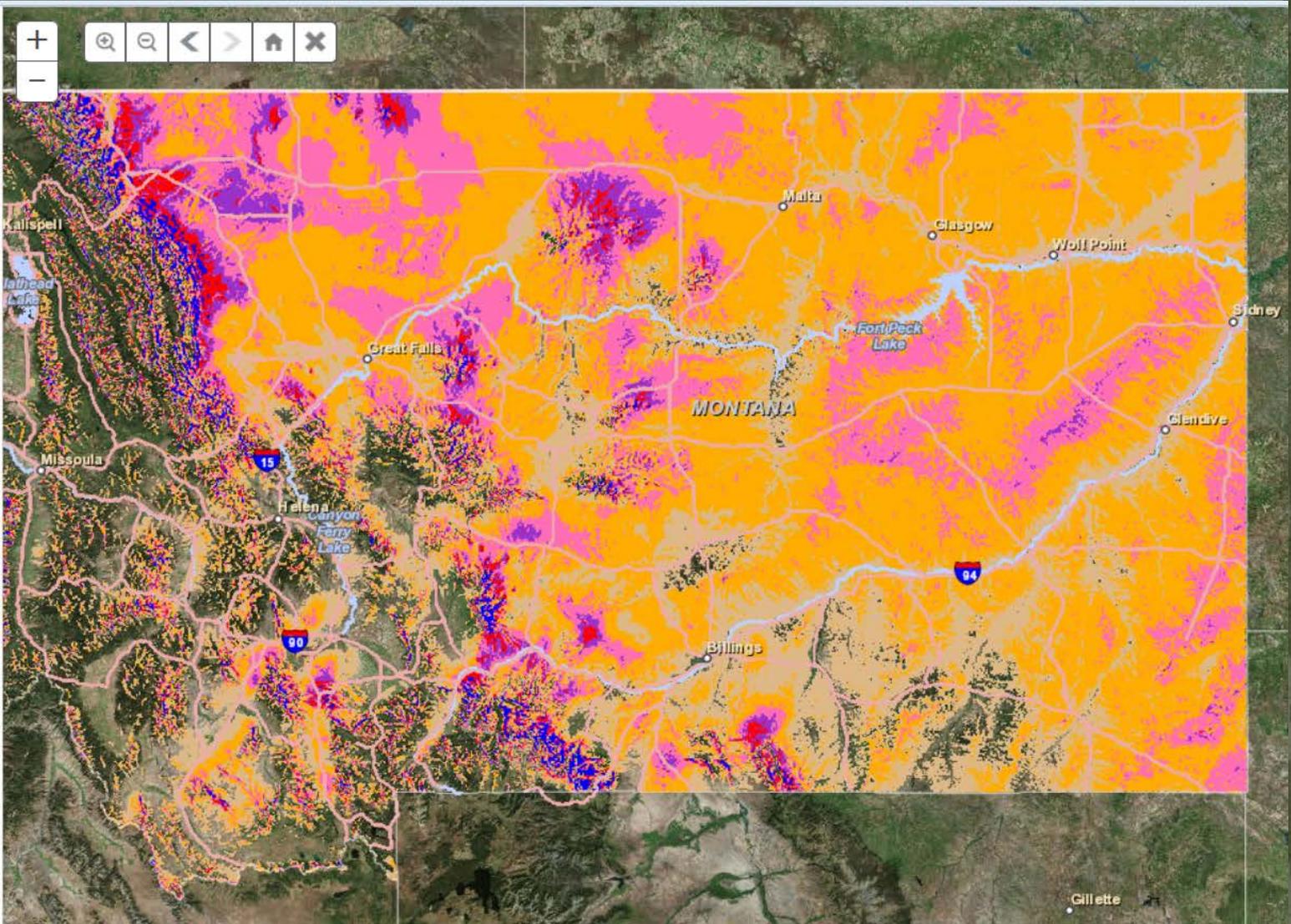


Layers Legend

Wind Power Potential

- Poor
- Marginal
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- Outstanding
- Superb

Highways
Lakes Streams



Infrastructure: powerlines, cell towers



(BLM/California)

Infrastructure: roads



Infrastructure: Pipelines



Infrastructure: Pipeline Compressors



(BLM/Wyoming)

Infrastructure: fences



Infrastructure

- Unclear as to the impacts on sage-grouse populations
- Some direct habitat loss
- Direct mortality from collisions
- Avoidance of noise, human activity, and visual obstructions
- Increased perches, nesting and hunting range for avian predators
- Spread of invasive species and wildfire ignition

Cumulative Impacts



Montana: Local Issues

Improper livestock grazing
Wildfire and invasive species
Conifer encroachment
Urban development
Predation
Disease

Ranching is a Conservation Strategy

Sage Grouse Initiative

Science to Solutions

Reducing Cultivation of Grazing Lands Conserves Sage Grouse



Sustainable grazing conserves sage grouse and western ways of life. Photo: Linda Poole.

Livestock grazing occurs on the vast majority of sage-grouse habitats



Livestock grazing management can influence long-term habitat quality

SAGEBRUSH IS A PRODUCT OF THE RANGE,
RANGE CONDITION IS NOT A PRODUCT OF SAGEBRUSH



Two big sagebrush sites with similar brush canopy cover. The profoundly different ground cover is not related to sagebrush density. (Photo by FWP)



Livestock grazing management affects short term habitat productivity



Ranching has been a key driver for conserving native habitat landscapes



Wildfire and Invasive Species

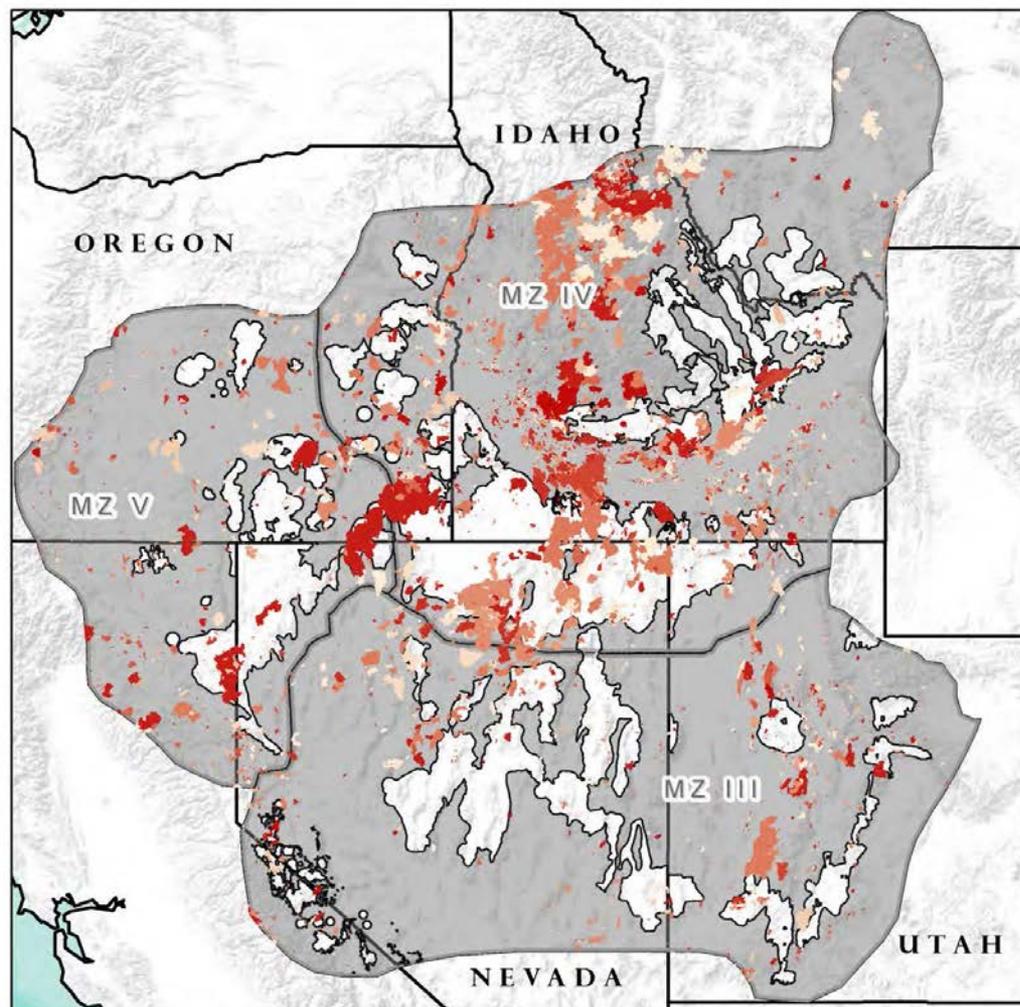


5-17-2013

Wildfire frequency is linked to invasion by annual brome grass species – the vicious cycle.



USDA image



- Sage-grouse Management Zone (MZ)
- Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs)
- Area outside of PACs

Fire Perimeter Burn Year

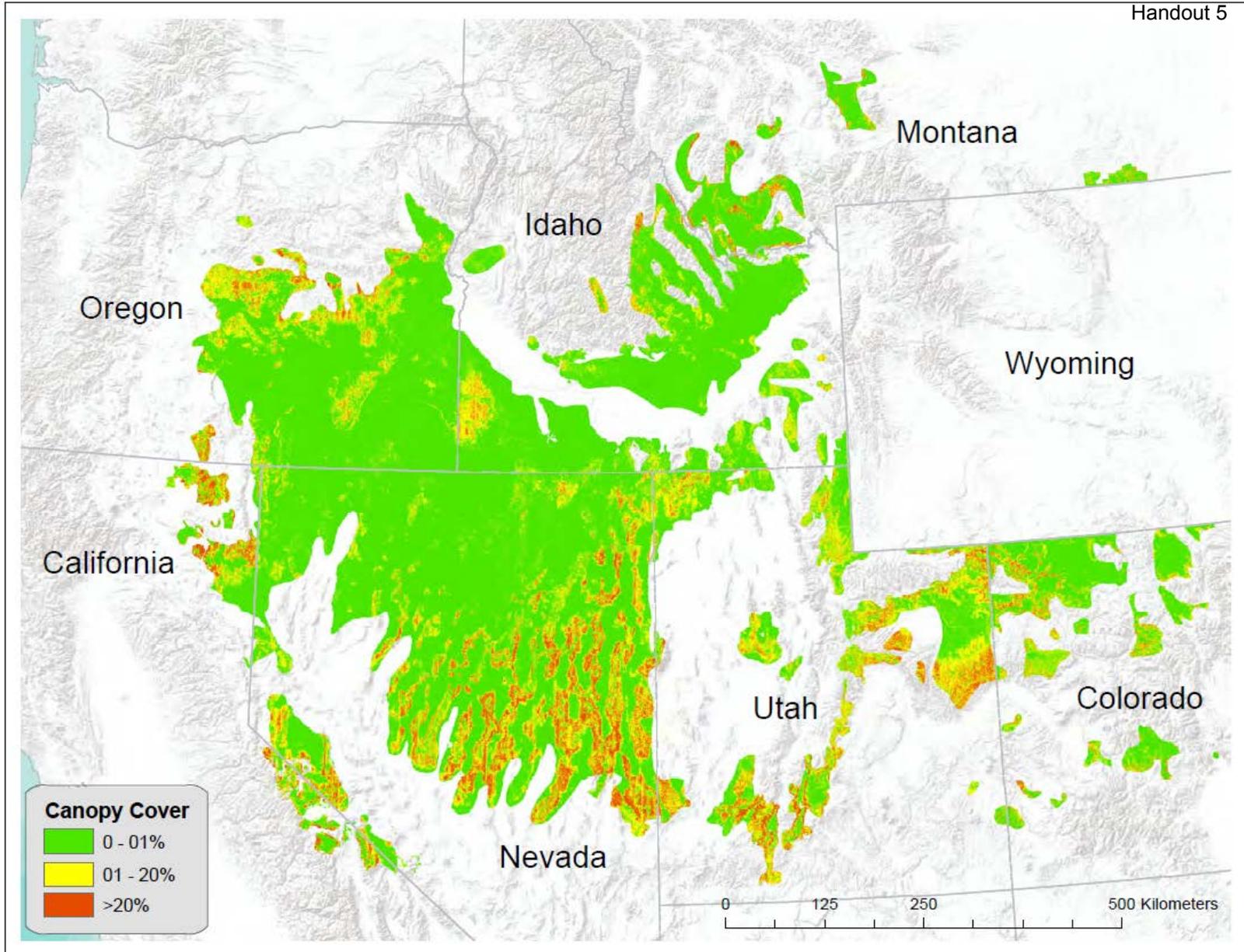
2000	2005	2010
2001	2006	2011
2002	2007	2012
2003	2008	2013
2004	2009	

0 100 200 400 Kilometers

Chambers et al. 2014

Conifer Encroachment





Exurban Development



(NAIP 2011)

Related Materials
Handout 5



© Gemma Photography

Photos courtesy of Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Table 1. Average range of vital rates for sage-grouse, range-wide and in Montana.

Vital Rate	Range-wide rates ¹	Montana rates	Years of MT study	Location	Reference
Nest success	15 – 86%	64%	1969 - 1972	Petroleum Co.	Wallestad and Pyrah 1974
		28 - 43%	2004 - 2005	Musselshell and Golden Valley Co.	Sika 2006
		35 – 61%	2001 - 2003	S. Phillips Co.	Moynahan et al. 2007
		53 – 61%	2007 - 2008	Milk River Basin	Tack 2009
		59%	2011 - 2012	Musselshell and Golden Valley Co.	Berkeley, unpubl. data ²
Chick survival	12 – 50%	33 – 38%	2007 - 2008	Milk River Basin	Tack 2009
		12%	2011 - 2012	Musselshell and Golden Valley Co.	Berkeley, unpubl. data ²
Hen survival	37 – 78%	25 – 96% ³	2001 – 2003	S. Phillips Co, Montana	Moynahan et al. 2006
		94% (nesting season) 84 – 93% (late summer)	2004 - 2005	Musselshell and Golden Valley Co.	Sika 2006
		55 – 91% (spring/summer) 84 – 92% (over winter)	2007 - 2008	Milk River Basin	Tack 2009
		59%	2011 - 2012	Musselshell and Golden Valley Co.	Berkeley, unpubl. data

¹Range-wide estimates from Connelly et al. 2011.

²Spring and early summer weather during 2011 and 2012 were subject to historic extremes of high precipitation in 2011 and severe drought in 2012, which likely affected nest and chick survival rates.

³25% annual survival in 2003 was attributed to a WNV outbreak and severe winter conditions; annual survival in 2001-2002 averaged 96%.

Predation

- Habitat fragmentation:
 - Nests are easier for predators to find – more edge, nest concentration.
 - Predator communities become more diverse.
- Anthropogenic subsidies:
 - Abandoned structures harbor mammalian predators
 - Anthropogenic structures provide perches for avian predators
 - Landfills subsidize scavenger diet



Predator community dynamics:

- Dominate predator of intact sagebrush communities is the coyote
- Coyote dominated landscapes tend to support higher sage-grouse nest success – control short-legged predator populations
- Raven predation is primarily by territorial pairs; vacant habitats usually reoccupied by another pair quickly



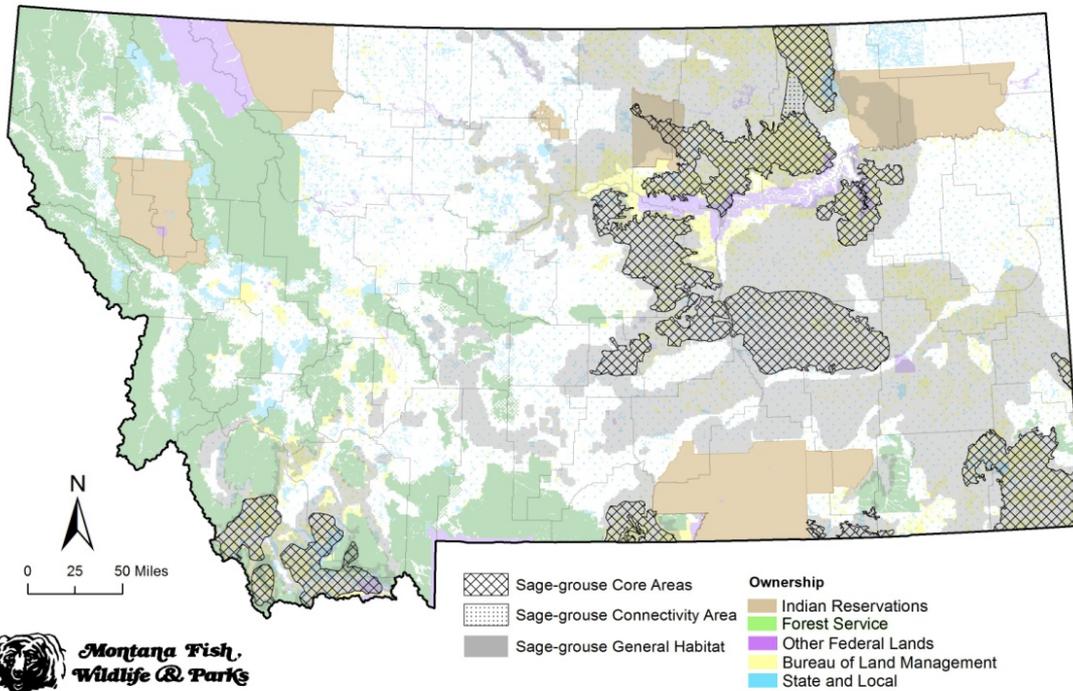
West Nile Virus

- Outbreaks in 2002 and 2007 may have lead to lower lek counts in 2003 and 2008
- Outbreaks associated with environmental conditions
- Mosquitoes lay eggs in fresh, standing water
- More prevalent in lower elevation sites

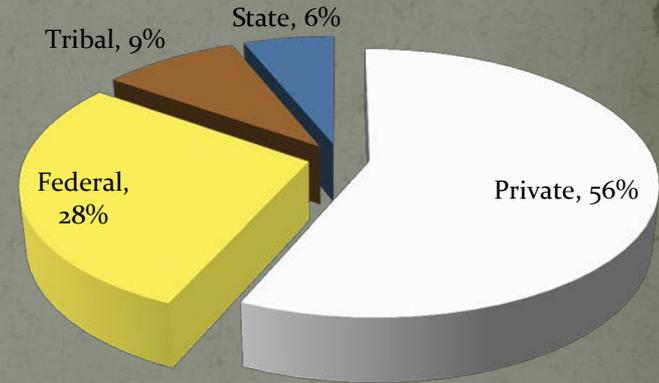


Management Challenge

Sage-grouse Core Areas and General Habitat in Montana



\\Wildlife\GameSpp\Birds\SageGrouse\Projects\EO_CoreHabitat\CoreHab\WOwner.mxd MAM 9/4/2015





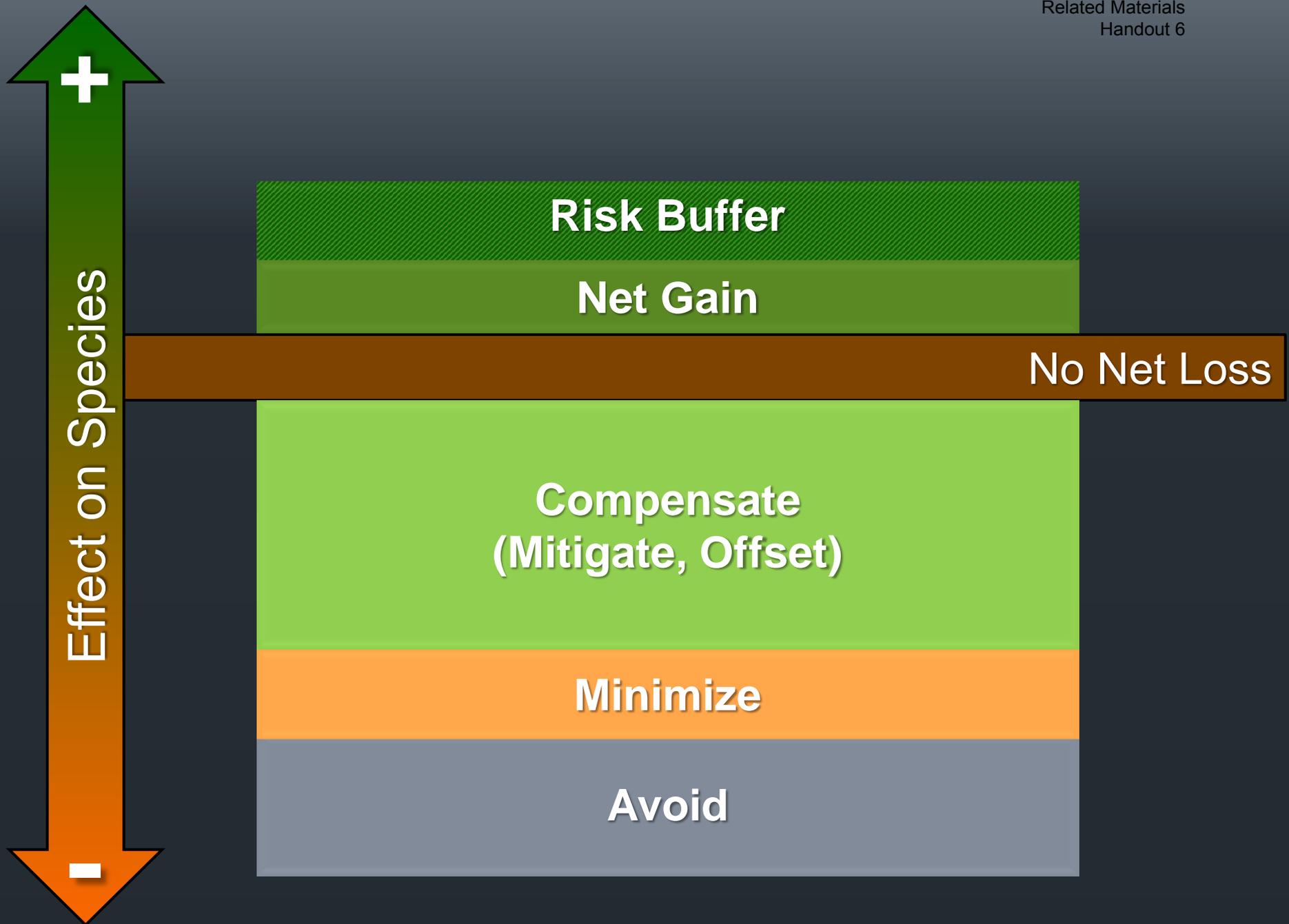
USFWS MITIGATION PERSPECTIVES

Greater Sage-Grouse

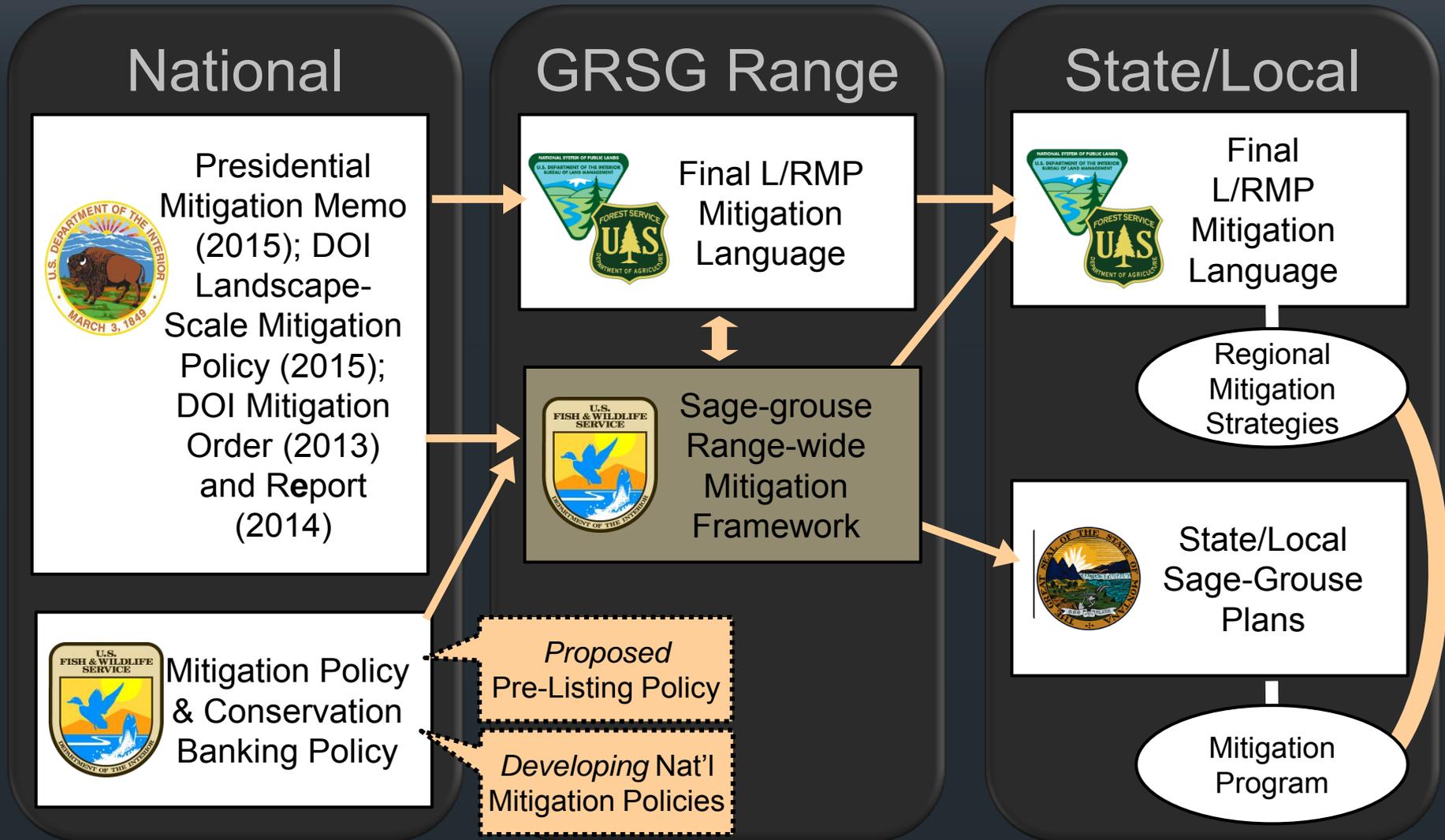


Mitigation Definition

- CEQ (40 CFR 1508.20): avoiding impacts, minimizing impacts, rectifying impacts, reducing or eliminating impacts over time, and compensating for remaining **unavoidable** impacts
- Impacts include direct, indirect, temporary, permanent, cumulative, etc.
- as a practical matter, the mitigation elements are categorized into three general types that form a **sequence or hierarchy**: avoidance, minimization, and **compensatory mitigation** for remaining unavoidable (residual) impacts
- Compensatory (offset) mitigation focus of this presentation



Mitigation Policies & Greater Sage-Grouse



Montana Sage-Grouse Mitigation Drivers: EO 12-2015

- *“MSGOT shall oversee and approve development of a program that provides for appropriate mitigation, including **compensatory mitigations** (financial, off-set, or off-site).*
- *All new land uses or activities that are subject to state agency review, approval, or authorization shall follow the **sequencing** provisions required herein (avoid, minimize, reclaim, compensate as appropriate).*
- *Mitigation shall be required even if the adverse impacts to sage grouse are **indirect or temporary**.*
- *A variety of mitigation tools may be used, including conservation banks, habitat exchanges, and approved conservation plans.*
- *All mitigation must be consistent with the FWS Greater Sage-Grouse Rangeland Mitigation Framework.”*



Montana Sage-Grouse Mitigation Drivers: 8/28/15 State of MT EO Regulatory Authority Letter

- “*Offset mitigation is required for all activities subject to agency review, approval, or authorization for which any direct, indirect, temporary, or permanent impacts to sage grouse would remain following application of avoidance, minimization, and reclamation/restoration measures.*”
- “*It is the intent to condition the application of sequencing requirements such that, at a minimum, neutral or positive sage-grouse population trends and habitats would be maintained, with the goal of achieving net conservation benefit for the species.*”



Montana Sage-Grouse Mitigation Drivers: 2015 Montana GRSG Stewardship Act

- Competitive grant funding mechanisms for voluntary, incentive-based GRSG conservation measures in GRSG habitats
- Prioritizes proposed projects that use **HQT** and maximize credits generated/\$
- Majority of funds must be awarded to projects that generate credits available for compensatory mitigation
- Allows developers to provide compensatory mitigation using HQT and: Habitat Exchange, conservation bank, stand-alone actions (HQT/HE subject to FWS “approval”)
- All mitigation must be consistent with FWS GRSG range-wide mitigation framework, state law, and any rules adopted

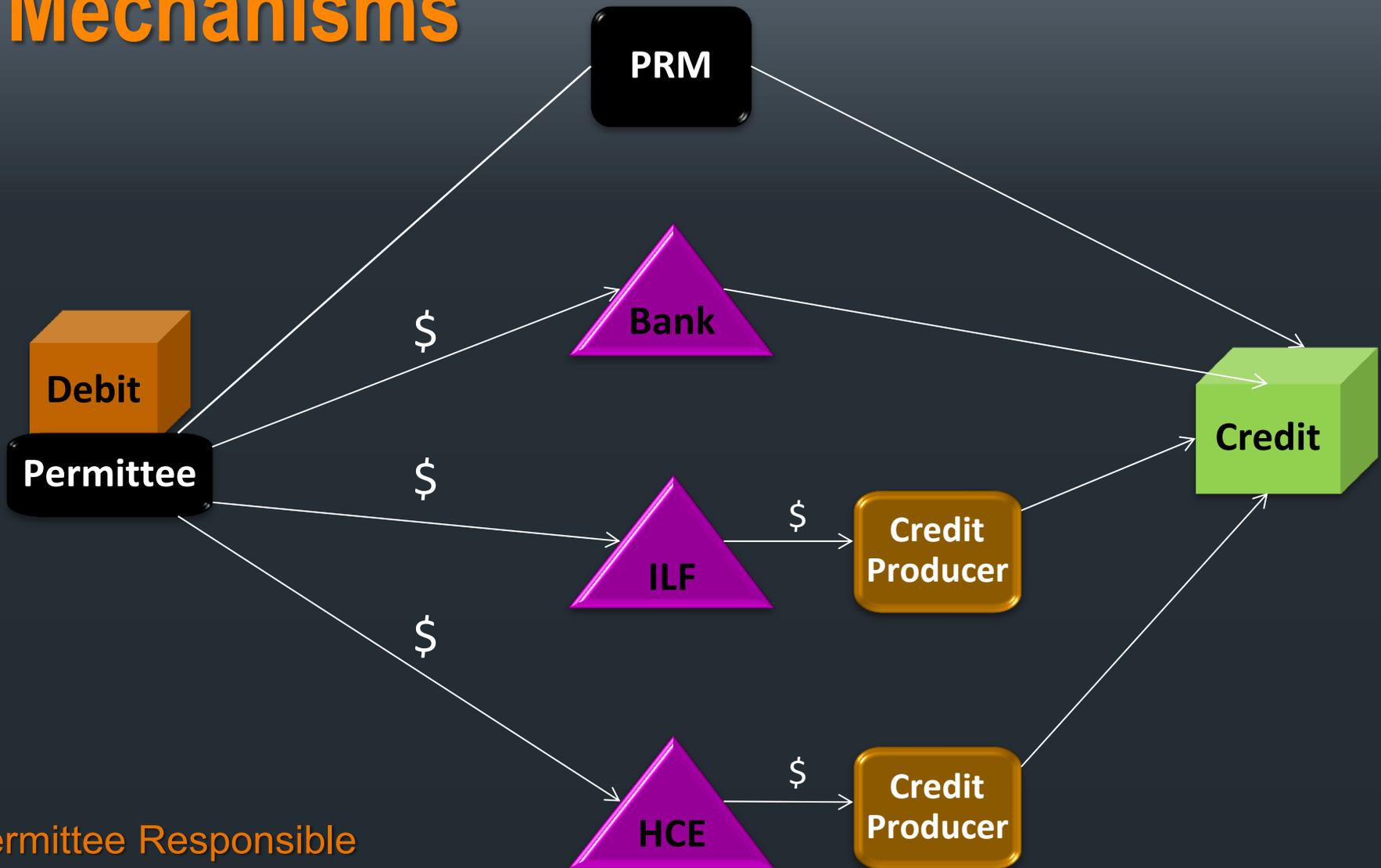


Montana Sage-Grouse Mitigation Drivers: 2015 BLM RMPs

- GRSG Regional Mitigation Strategy in all RMPs
- Applies to all GRSG habitats
- Follow mitigation **sequencing**
- Where residual impacts remain, compensatory mitigation projects will be used to provide a **net conservation gain** to the species
- Develop a WAFWA Management Zone GRSG Conservation Team (w/in 90 days of ROD – 12/22/15)
- Develop a WAFWA Management Zone Regional Mitigation Strategy (w/in 1 yr of ROD – Sep 2016)



Mechanisms



Permittee Responsible
Conservation Bank
In Lieu Fee
Habitat Credit Exchange

Key Messages:

For All Identified Habitat

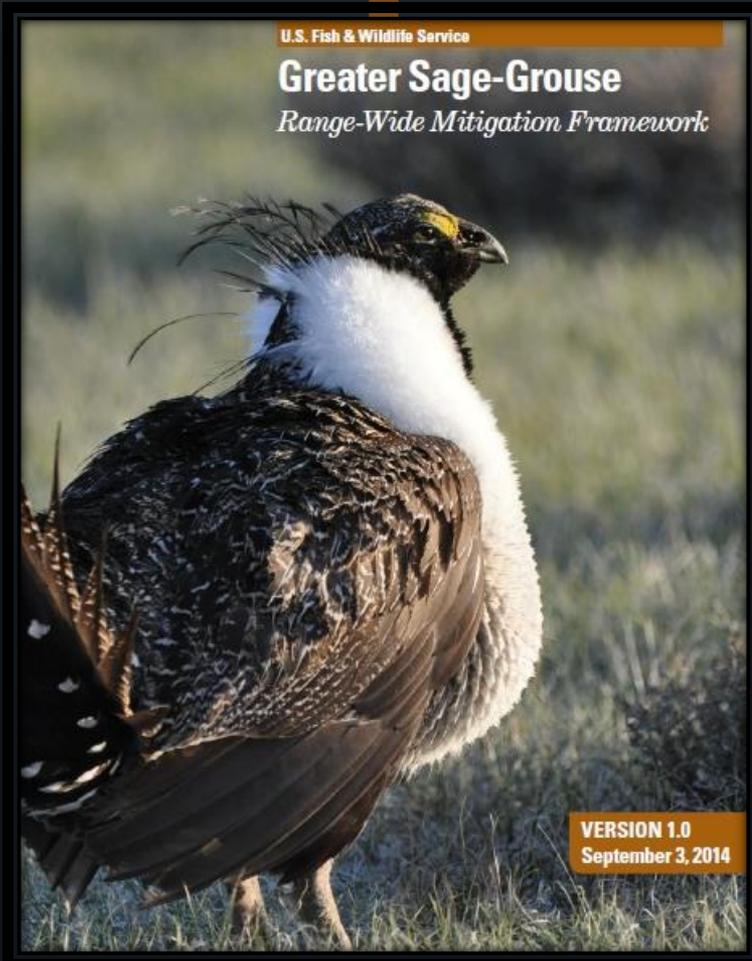
Avoid

Compensate

Net Conservation Gain

Flexibility

Consistency





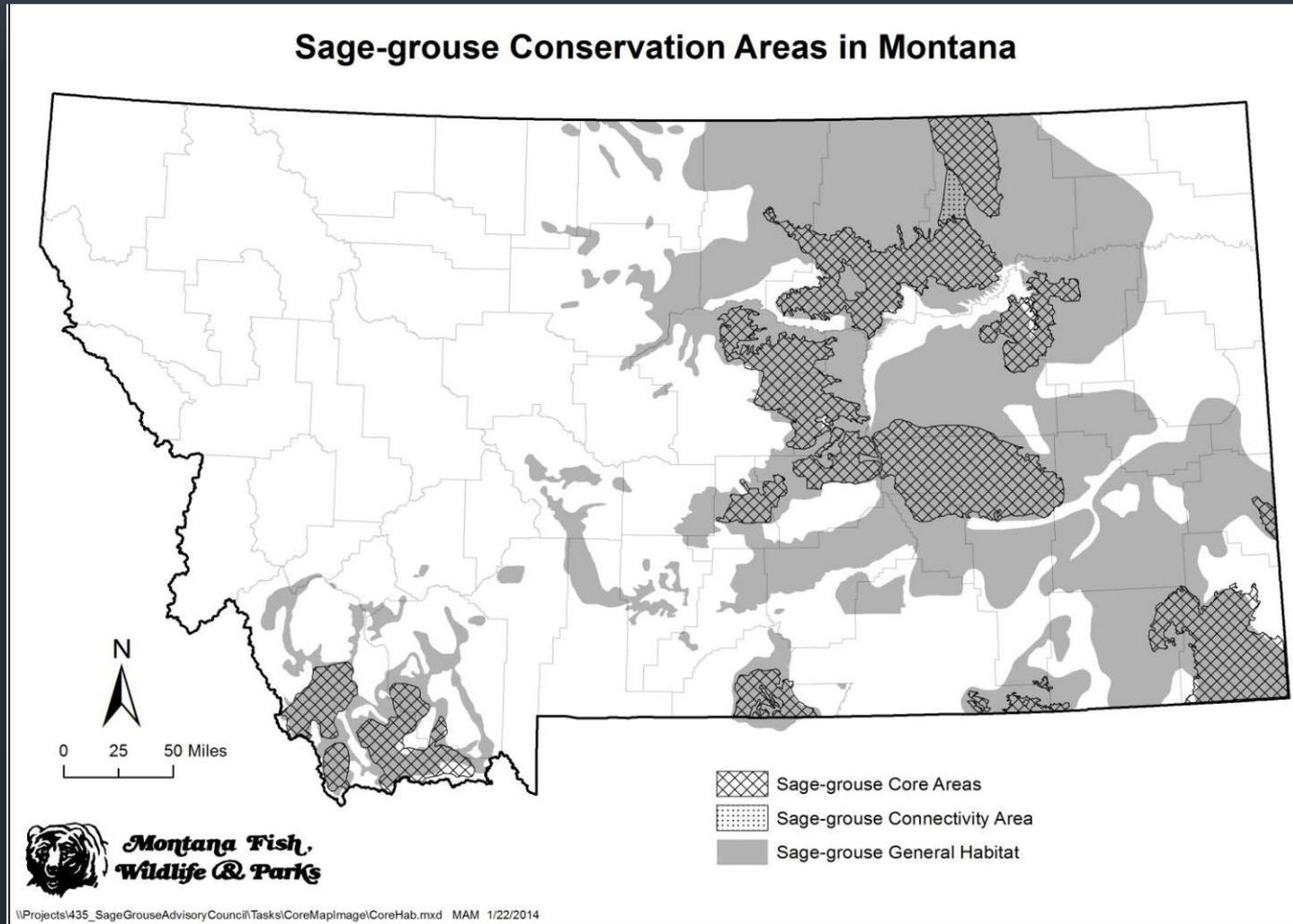
Mitigation Standards

← Landscape Context

- Additionality
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Apply hierarchy in the context of conservation objectives derived by a landscape-scale approach

Montana PACs/Core Areas





Mitigation Standards

- Landscape Context
- **Additionality**
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Offsets must provide benefits beyond those that would be achieved if the mitigation actions had not taken place.

Additionality Example: Fed-Funded Conservation Programs (SGI, PFW, CCAA, etc.)

- Projects under these programs (including “match”) not considered “additional”
- Benefits provided above and beyond the terms of the agreement, or solely from “match” over/above required minimum (if allowed by specific program)
- Projects conducted in conjunction with / supplemental to these projects to maximize ecological benefit
- Participating landowners could participate in a compensatory mitigation program once the financial term of the contract expires



Mitigation Standards

- Landscape Context
- Additionality
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Actions should be measurable and deliver the expected conservation benefits.



Mitigation Standards

- Landscape Context
- Additionality
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Include legal and financial assurances to ensure offsets will be in place for the intended duration.



Mitigation Standards

- Landscape Context
- Additionality
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Offsets should achieve targeted conditions in a timeframe commensurate and proportional with the impacts to be offset.

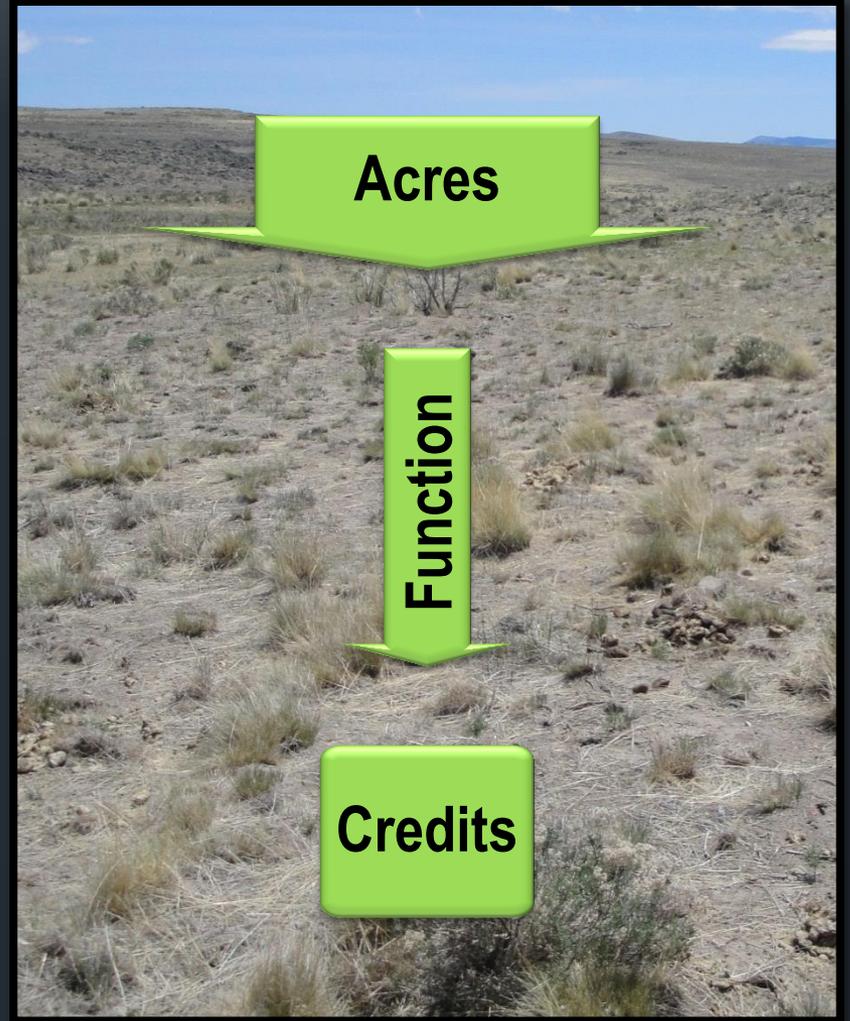
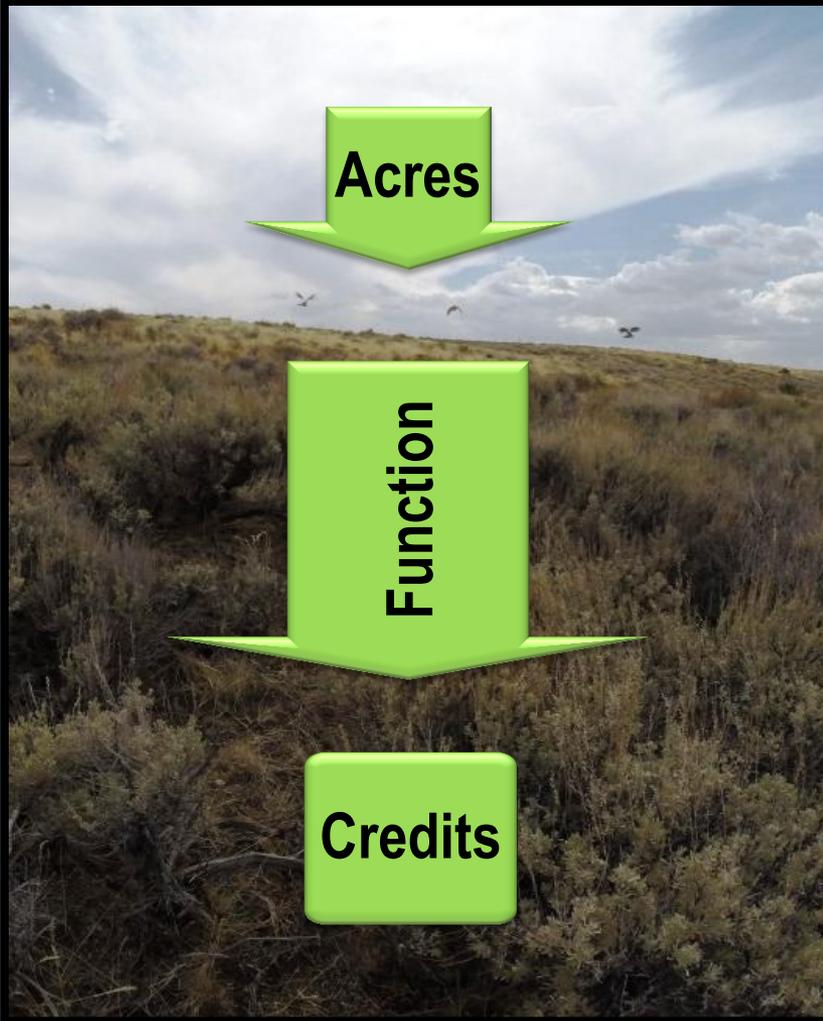


Mitigation Standards

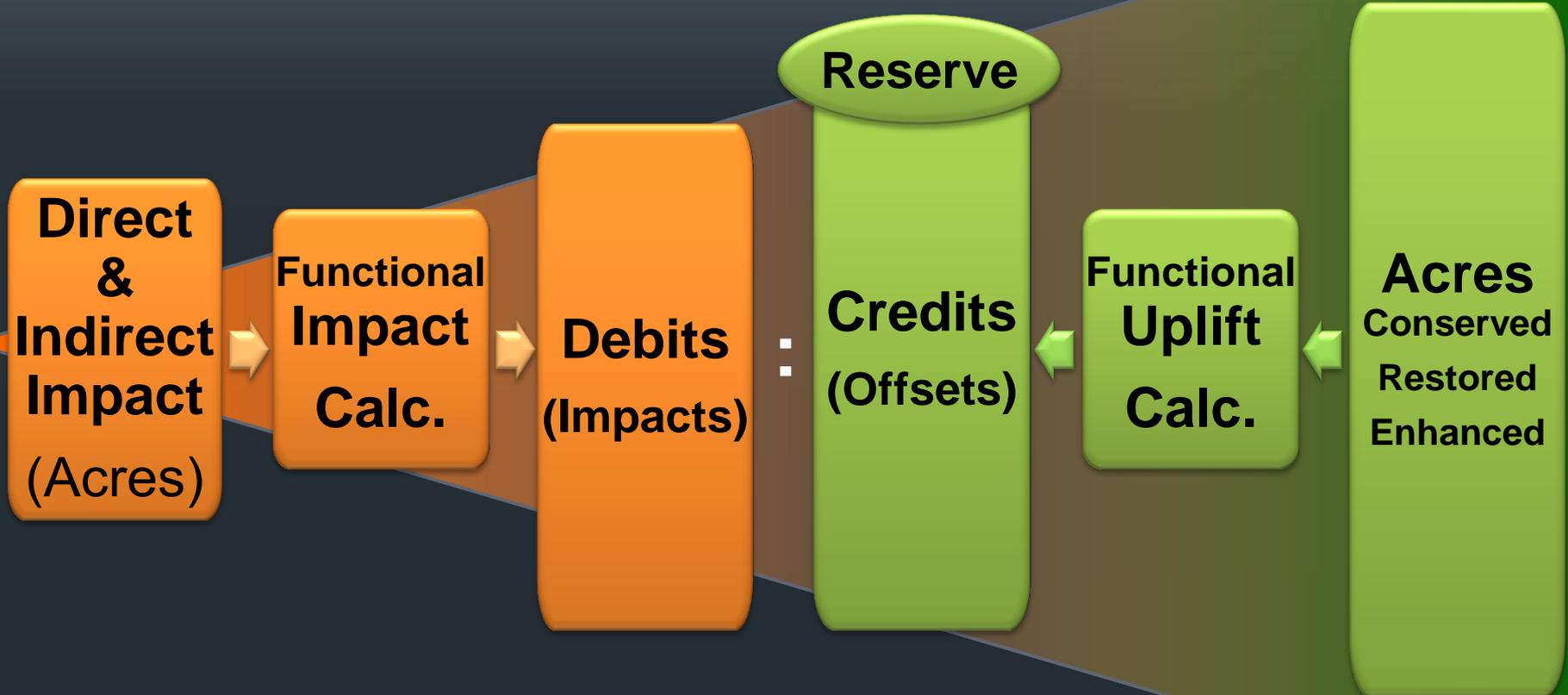
- Landscape Context
- Additionality
- Effectiveness
- Durability
- Duration
- Metrics

Determining impacts and mitigation should be based on biological conditions and reliable and repeatable quantitative science-based methods.

Modern Metrics



Modern Metrics



Functional Factors and Multipliers:
Baseline; Habitat Quality;
Habitat Importance, Type, Scarcity, Proximity

Metrics

Siting

Duration

Additionality

Effectiveness

Durability

Mitigation Program

Participant Agreement

Mgmt.
Plan



Financial
Plan



Land
Protections



Monitoring, Verification, AM



Other Mitigation Program Elements

Program
Governance

**Service
Areas**

Site Selection
&
Management

Additionality

Effectiveness
& Durability

Metrics &
Accounting

Managing
Risk

- Guided by GRSG needs
- Identify early in process
- Work across land ownerships
- Use guidance: BLM, State Plans
- Justify jurisdictional boundaries



FWS Credit Considerations

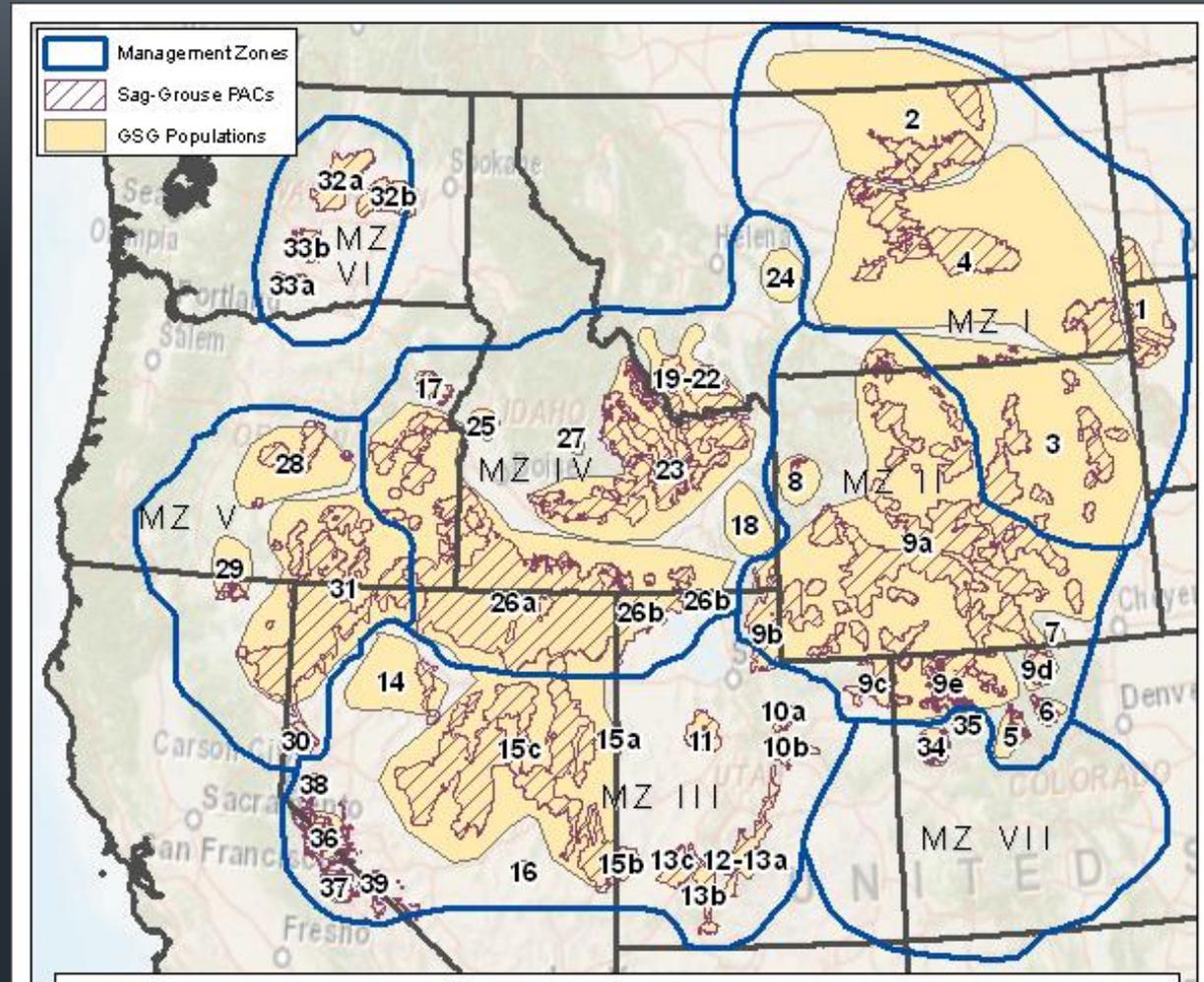
- Predicated on sequencing; meet standards
- Adequate monitoring, verification, AM requirements
- Target projects in areas providing greatest benefits and reducing greatest threats (such as **habitat loss and fragmentation**)
 - Research & Education important, but should not be considered for credit (do not replace lost functions/habitat)
- Projects should have high likelihood of success; supported by sound science
- Aggregate where possible; sufficient size/scope, right location
- Net Conservation Gain



Questions?

Sage-Grouse Management Zones and Populations

- 7 Management Zones
- 47 Populations
- MT has 3 MZs (I, II, and IV)
- MT has 7 populations
 - Dakotas
 - Yellowstone Watershed
 - Powder River Basin
 - Wyoming Basin
 - Northern Montana
 - Belt Mountains
 - SW Montana



SAGE GROUSE STEWARDSHIP FUND GRANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What's happening?

The Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) is seeking public comment on a proposed rule for implementing the Sage Grouse Stewardship Fund Grant Program.

What is the Stewardship Fund Grant Program?

The 2015 Montana Legislature created the grant program when it passed the Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act. The Act is a key pillar of Montana's Conservation Strategy which led to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to decide that listing the greater sage grouse under the federal Endangered Species Act was not warranted.

The purpose of the Stewardship Fund is to maintain, enhance, restore, expand or benefit sage grouse habitat and populations. Habitat conservation is an important part of Montana's Conservation Strategy, especially on private lands where most of Montana's sage grouse live.

The Stewardship Fund is a source of competitive funding to facilitate free-market mechanisms for voluntary, incentive based conservation on private lands (and public lands as needed) in habitats designated as necessary to conserve sage grouse and maintain state management of the bird.

What does the proposed rule say?

The proposed rule establishes the process MSGOT will use to receive Applications and make decisions. The Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act itself established many detailed statutory requirements and how the funds should be spent. See Montana Code Annotated §§ 76-22-102, 105, 109, and 110.

Because the Legislature provided clear direction in statute, the proposed rule is very general and addresses procedures. For example, the rule requires:

- MSGOT will approve a grant Application form and publish Application deadlines on the Sage Grouse Habitat Program web page hosted by DNRC.
- Applications are to be submitted electronically at www.fundingmt.org.
- MSGOT will evaluate Applications at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- MSGOT shall take public comment on the Applications.
- Successful applicants must enter into an agreement with MSGOT and DNRC before funds are made available.
- Grant recipients must file progress and final reports.



What do the statutes say about the Stewardship Fund?

The Montana Legislature provided specific statutory direction for the Stewardship Grant Fund. Consult the statutes for all the details, but here are a few important ones:

- Projects are only eligible if they are located, at least in part, on land in sage grouse core areas, general habitat, or connectivity areas.
- Applicants must be an agency or an organization.
- Organizations or agencies are only eligible if they hold and maintain conservation easements or leases or are directly involved in sage grouse habitat mitigation and enhancement activities approved by MSGOT.
- Eligible projects may include: reduction of conifer encroachment, maintenance, restoration, or improvement of sage brush health or quality, incentives to reduce the conversion of grazing land to cropland, restoration of cropland to grazing, fence marking, reduction of unnatural perching platforms for raptors, reduction of unnatural safe havens for predators, and purchase or acquisition of leases, term conservation easements or permanent conservation easements. MSGOT can consider other project ideas, but they must be consistent with the purpose of the Stewardship Act.
- Some projects are statutorily ineligible. Examples include: fee simple acquisition of private land, water right purchase, leases or easements that require recreational access, supplementation or replacement of operating budgets except for budget items that directly relate to purposes of the grant.

What else do I need to know about the Stewardship Fund Grants Program?

Projects will be evaluated by the extent to which the proposed project will maintain, enhance, restore, expand or benefit sage grouse habitat and populations. Other criteria include the extent to which the proposed project generates credits that are available for compensatory mitigation.

Greater priority will be given to habitat projects which maximize the number of credits generated per dollars of grant funds awarded and which are actually available for compensatory mitigation. Greater priority will be given to projects which represent partnerships between public and private entities. Greater priority will also be given to projects showing matching funds and the extent to which the matching funds are consistent with the Stewardship Act.

How can I comment?

The public comment period opened on December 10, 2015 and will run through 5:00 p.m. on January 22, 2016. The Oversight Team will host three public hearings on the proposed rule. The public can submit their comments either orally or in writing at the hearings. The hearings are scheduled for:

- Malta: January 6, 2016 at 3:00 p.m., First State Bank, 1 South 1st Street East.
- Roundup: January 7, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. at the Ambulance Barn, 704 1st Street, East.
- Dillon: January 11, 2016 at 6:30, BLM Office, 1005 Selway Drive.



The public can also submit written comment electronically through the online comment form at <https://appsi.dnrc.mt.gov/pubcomment/>

Written comments can be mailed to: Carolyn Sime, Sage Grouse Resource Program Manager, MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, PO Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601.

What happens next?

Public comments will be reviewed. The proposed rule, the draft Procedures and the draft Application will be revised based on public comment. MSGOT is expected to take action on these three documents on February 19, 2016. MSGOT expects to conduct its meeting via conference call, but could decide to hold a meeting in person. Public notice will be provided.

If MSGOT approves, the final rule will become effective upon publication in the Montana Administrative Register. If the rulemaking stays on schedule, the rule is expected to take effect in early March, 2016. Modifications to the rule require MSGOT to re-initiate formal rulemaking under the Montana Administrative Procedures Act.

If MSGOT approves the Procedures document and the Application, these documents also become final. MSGOT could modify them in the future at a regular meeting, so long as it notifies the public it is considering changes and the public is given an opportunity to comment.

When will the Stewardship Fund Grants Application process actually start and how will the process work?

MSGOT is expected to finalize the proposed rule in February, 2016. The rule's effective date is likely to be in March. MSGOT is expected to publically announce it will accept applications around that same time. MSGOT is also expected to establish a deadline by which all applications must be received.

Applications will be reviewed by the Sage Grouse Habitat Program and subject matter experts. They will also be made available for public review on the Program's website. MSGOT would review the applications, the Program's recommendations, and public comment during a regularly scheduled meeting and make their decisions.

Once MSGOT selects the projects to be funded, the amount of the funding, and any conditions associated with the funding, recipients will enter an agreement with the MSGOT, the Program, and DNRC.

Funds are expected to be made available on a reimbursable basis. Special arrangements could be made for projects which require a lump sum payment.

Does MSGOT have any limitations on how it distributes the funds?

Yes. First, MSGOT cannot disburse a majority of the money in the Stewardship Fund before it adopts a Habitat Quantification Tool approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



The Habitat Quantification Tool will be used to determine how many credits are generated by land conservation projects that benefit sage grouse and how many debits are incurred by habitat disturbances that cannot first be avoided or minimized secondarily under Executive Order 12-2015.

Second, MSGOT cannot disburse the majority of the funds to projects which do not generate credits that are available for compensatory mitigation.

Projects which are funded, in any part, with money from the Stewardship Fund prior to the adoption of the Habitat Quantification Tool will be reviewed retroactively to determine how many credits were generated. Those credits must then be made available on the habitat exchange.

How much money is in the Stewardship Fund?

The 2015 Montana Legislature placed \$10 million in a special revenue account called the Stewardship Fund. The money can only be spent on grants and projects consistent with the Stewardship Act's purposes and requirements. It is hoped that the Stewardship Fund becomes self-sustaining through time and unspent funds roll over from year to year.



MONTANA SAGE GROUSE OVERSIGHT TEAM

PROCEDURE 01-2016

PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE GRANT APPLICATIONS UNDER THE MONTANA GREATER SAGE-GROUSE STEWARDSHIP FUND GRANT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act, codified at Sections 76-22-101, et seq., MCA, establishes a grant program (“Grant Program”) for maintaining, enhancing, restoring, expanding, and benefiting sage grouse habitat and populations;

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Grant Program is to provide competitive grant funding and establish ongoing free-market mechanisms for voluntary, incentive-based conservation measures benefiting sage grouse habitat and populations on private lands, and public lands as needed.

WHEREAS, Section 76-22-105, MCA directs the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (“MSGOT”) to evaluate and take public comment on applications submitted to the Grant Program;

WHEREAS, MSGOT desires consistency in its process and procedures for the evaluation of applications to the Grant Program.

THEREFORE, THE MONTANA SAGE GROUSE OVERSIGHT TEAM DETERMINES THAT THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES WILL APPLY WHEN PROCESSING GRANT APPLICATIONS UNDER THE ACT:

1. From time to time MSGOT will announce a deadline for filing Applications to the Grant Program. MSGOT may accept Applications at any time, but MSGOT need not take any action on Applications until after the next application deadline.
2. The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (“Program”) will review all Applications for completeness.
3. The Program may return any incomplete Application to the Applicant.
4. Completed grant applications will be made available for public review through publication on the Program website.
5. The Program will prepare a report (“Grant Recommendation Report”). The Grant Recommendation Report, at a minimum, shall recommend:
 - (A) grant funding priorities;
 - (B) a ranking of all complete Applications in consideration of the evaluation criteria;

(C) the proposed grant amount, if any, for each complete Application;
(D) any proposed conditions which the Program believes are necessary on the use of any grant funds for each Application, whether recommended for funding or not; and
(E) any other information the Program believes is relevant to MSGOT's evaluation of the Applications, including reports or input from independent reviewers knowledgeable in the subject matter.

6. MSGOT will evaluate all complete Applications at a public meeting ("Grant Evaluation Meeting"). MSGOT will solicit written public comments regarding each Application prior to the Grant Evaluation Meeting and accept verbal comments at the meeting. The Grant Evaluation Meeting may be one of MSGOT's regularly scheduled meetings.
7. At the Grant Evaluation Meeting MSGOT will consider any public comment, and consider the Grant Recommendation Report in its evaluation of all completed Applications pursuant to the evaluation criteria.
8. The Program will provide written notice to each Applicant concerning any action taken by MSGOT on the application.
9. The Program, by and through the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation ("Department") will prepare the agreement between the Department, MSGOT, and a successful Applicant pursuant to **XX.XX.102, ARM**. MSGOT will review, and may approve, such agreement at its next scheduled meeting.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2016.

Tim Baker, Chair

MONTANA GREATER SAGE-GROUSE STEWARDSHIP FUND GRANT PROGRAM

ELIGIBILITY AND EVALUATION CRITERIA GUIDANCE

The Purpose of this document is to provide a single list of the statutory and regulatory criteria governing the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Fund Grant Program.

This document sometimes paraphrases the governing statutory and regulatory language. However, the specific language of the statutes and rules govern, regardless of the language used in this document. This document does not interpret or modify any statutes or rules governing the Grant Program.

PURPOSE OF THE GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act (“Act”) is to provide competitive grant funding and establish ongoing free-market mechanisms for voluntary, incentive-based conservation measures that emphasize maintaining, enhancing, restoring, expanding, and benefiting sage grouse habitat and populations on private lands, and public lands as needed, that lie within core areas, general habitat, or connectivity areas. Montana Code Annotated (MCA) § 76-22-102(2). The majority of the account funds must be awarded to projects that generate credits that are available for compensatory mitigation. MCA § 76-22-109(4).

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Only “organizations” or “agencies” are eligible to receive grant funding. MCA § 76-22-110(3). “Organization” means a private entity registered with the Montana Secretary of State authorized to conduct business in the State of Montana. **XX.XX.101(4), ARM.** “Agency” for the purposes of the Act means a department, agency, or instrumentality of the state of Montana, a political subdivision of the state, or a Tribe and is not a private individual, private entity, or private organization recognized by the laws of the State of Montana. **XX.XX.101(1), ARM.**

Organizations or agencies are only eligible if they hold and maintain conservation easements or leases or that are directly involved in sage grouse habitat mitigation and enhancement activities approved by the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (“MSGOT”). MCA § 76-22-110(3).

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

A project is only eligible if it is located, at least in part, on land identified as Core Areas, General Habitat, or Connectivity Areas. MCA § 76-22-102(2)(Establishing grant funding for sage grouse conservation measures on lands that “lie within core areas, general habitat, or connectivity areas.”). Maps delineating these areas are available on the MSGOT website.

A project is eligible if it will maintain, enhance, restore, expand, or benefit sage grouse habitat and populations for the heritage of Montana and its people through voluntary, incentive-based efforts. MCA § 76-22-110(1). Eligible projects may include:

- Reduction of conifer encroachment. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(a).
- Maintenance, restoration, or improvement of sagebrush health or quality. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(c).
- Incentives to reduce the conversion of grazing land to cropland. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(e).
- Restoration of cropland to grazing land. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(f).
- Modification of fire management to conserve sage grouse habitat or populations. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(g).
- Demarcation of fences to reduce sage grouse collisions. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(h).
- Reduction of unnatural perching platforms for raptors. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(i).
- Reduction of unnatural safe havens for predators. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(j).
- Reduction of the spread of invasive weeds that harm sagebrush health or sage grouse habitat. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(b). “Invasive Weed” means a grass, forb, shrub or tree (weed) listed on the Montana Invasive and Noxious Weed list or other weed designated by MSGOT as invasive and that the weed has a known quantifiable negative impact on the quality or quantity of general, core or connective sage grouse habitat or negatively impacts sage grouse populations other than through habitat impacts. **XX.XX.101(3), ARM.**
- Purchase or acquisition of leases, term conservation easements, or permanent conservation easements that conserve or maintain sage grouse habitat, protect grazing lands, or conserve sage grouse populations. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(d). Such projects are subject to the further eligibility requirements of MCA § 76-22-112, as discussed below.
- Sage grouse habitat enhancement that provides project developers the ability to use improved habitat for compensatory mitigation under MCA § 76-22-111. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(k).
- Establishment of a habitat exchange to develop and market credits consistent with the purposes of the Act, so long as the habitat exchange is authorized by United States Fish and Wildlife Service, uses the habitat quantification tool to

quantify and calculate the value of credits and debits, and the grant funds are only used:

- to create and market credits consistent with the habitat quantification tool,
- for operational purposes including monitoring the effectiveness of projects,
- for costs associated with establishing the habitat exchange, or
- for reimbursing the state for the proportionate share of proceeds generated from the sale of credits created under the grant program.

MCA § 76-22-110(1)(l).

- Other project proposals that MSGOT determines are consistent with the purposes of the Act. MCA § 76-22-110(1)(m).

A project is ineligible if it seeks grant funding:

- For fee simple acquisition of private land. MCA § 76-22-109(5)(a).
- To purchase water rights. MCA § 76-22-109(5)(b).
- To purchase a lease or conservation easement that requires recreational access or prohibits hunting, fishing, or trapping as part of its terms. MCA § 76-22-109(5)(c).
- To allow the release of any species listed under MCA § 87-5-107 or the federal Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.* MCA § 76-22-109(5)(d).
- To fund a habitat exchange that does not meet the requirements of MCA § 76-22-110(1)(l).
- For a project involving land owned by multiple landowners, including state and federal land, in which the majority of the involved acres are not privately held or the proposed project does not benefit sage grouse across all of the land included in the project. MCA § 76-22-110(2).
- To supplement or replace the operating budget of an agency or organization, except for budget items that directly relate to the purposes of the grant. MCA § 76-22-110(4).
- For a lease or conservation easement in which:
 - The state will not be named a third-party beneficiary to the lease or easement with the contingent right to enforce the terms of the lease or easement if the grantee fails to do so.
 - The agreement will not provide that the lease or easement may not be transferred for value, sold, or extinguished without consent of the department.
 - Attempts to preclude the State from taking legal action to enforce the terms of the lease or easement or to recover from the proceeds of the

transfer for value, sale, or extinguishment the state's pro rata share of the proceeds based on the funds the state provided pursuant to this Act for the creation of the lease or easement.

MCA § 76-22-112.

- To fund a project that does not meet the criteria of MCA § 76-22-110.
- Through a late, incomplete, or improperly submitted application. XX.XX.102(1)-(3), ARM.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Projects will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- The extent to which the proposed project will maintain, enhance, restore, expand, or benefit sage grouse habitat and populations. MCA § 76-22-104(1).
- Compliance with eligibility requirements. (See above).
- The extent to which the proposed project generates credits that are available under compensatory mitigation. MCA § 76-22-109.
- The socioeconomic impacts on the local community including the views of interested and affected persons and entities, including local, state, tribal, and federal governmental agencies, and boards, commissions, and other political subdivisions of the state. MCA §§ 76-22-104(1)(a); 105(c).

Projects will also be evaluated by the following criteria. Where such criteria are met, projects will be given greater priority:

- Maximizing the number of credits generated per dollars of grant funds awarded, and which are actually available for compensatory mitigation. MCA § 76-22-104(1)(d); MCA 76-22-109(4).
- Partnerships between public and private entities. MCA § 76-22-104(1)(a).
- Whether the project will be provided matching funds and the extent to which such matching funds can be used consistent with the Act. MCA §§ 76-22-104(1)(b); 110(5).
- Use of the Habitat Quantification Tool to quantify the project when that tool is operational. MCA § 76-22-104(1)(c).

MSGOT is prohibited from funding projects under the following additional circumstances:

- MSGOT cannot disburse a majority of the funds in the Account before the Habitat Quantification Tool has been adopted. MCA § 76-22-109(4).
- MSGOT cannot disburse the majority of the funds in the Account to projects which do not generate credits that are available for compensatory mitigation. MCA § 76-22-109(4).

GRANT AGREEMENTS, PROJECT MONITORING, AND REPORTING

Successful Applicants for projects approved by MSGOT must enter into an agreement with the DNRC and MSGOT prior to disbursement of funds from the Sage Grouse Stewardship Account. XX.XX.102(6), ARM. Monitoring and review of projects will be pursuant to the terms of the agreement. MCA §§ 76-22-104(5); XX.XX.102(8), ARM. Grant recipients will be subject to project reporting requirements pursuant to the terms of the agreement. XX.XX.102(7), ARM.

GRANT APPLICATION FORMS AND PROCEDURES

It is anticipated that MSGOT will approve a grant application form and grant review procedures at its February 2016 meeting. Upon approval those documents will be posted on the MSGOT website. Parties interested in the Grant Program should consult those documents.

**MONTANA GREATER SAGE-GROUSE STEWARDSHIP FUND ACCOUNT
("MGSFSFA")
GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION AND INSTRUCTIONS**

December 15, 2015

PURPOSE OF THE GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act ("Act") is to provide competitive grant funding and establish ongoing free-market mechanisms for voluntary, incentive-based conservation measures that emphasize maintaining, enhancing, restoring, expanding, and benefiting sage grouse habitat and populations on private lands, and public lands as needed, that lie within core areas, general habitat, or connectivity areas. MCA § 76-22-102(2).

The Act also requires that the majority of the grant funds be awarded to projects that generate credits that are available for compensatory mitigation. Therefore, MSGOT will prioritize grant awards to projects which maximize the number of credits generated per dollars of funds awarded, and which provide assurances that credits generated by the project are available for compensatory mitigation. The habitat quantification tool will be used to determine the number of credits generated for any projects funded under the Grant Program.

Applications to the Grant Program do **not** constitute a consultation with MSGOT or the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program concerning a new activity or land use governed by the stipulations of *Executive Order 12-2015*, dated September 8, 2015. It is not the purpose of this Grant Program to exclude or waive necessary review of any new land uses or activities subject to *Executive Order 12-2015*. Any proposed land use or activity described in the grant application which triggers review under *Executive Order 12-2015* must also be reviewed by the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program pursuant to that process.

Applicants are required to read the key documents before applying for Grant funding:

- The *Evaluation and Eligibility Criteria Guidance Document* for Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Account Grant Program. This document combines the statutory requirements of the grant program located at MCA § 76-22-101 *et seq*, and the administrative rules promulgated to implement the grant program located at **XX.XX.101-102, ARM.**
- *Executive Order 12-2015*, dated September 8, 2015, which outlines the duties of the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team and the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

Applicants are encouraged to read the following documents before applying for Grant funding:

- *The Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council Final Recommendations*, dated January 29, 2014 available at **XXXX.**

- The *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Notice of 12 Month Petition Finding*, announcing its decision not to list the greater sage grouse rangewide under the federal Endangered Species Act (i.e. the “not warranted for listing” decision); see 80 FR 59858-59942, October 2, 2015, **available at XXX**. Attention should be placed on portions relevant to Montana.

GRANT APPLICATION GENERAL INFORMATION (please read before completing or submitting an application):

All projects should be submitted on the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Account Grant Program Application Form.

Applications can be submitted at any time but Applications will only be processed once the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team announces a grant application deadline. It is anticipated that there will be two deadlines, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Grant funding is provided for the purpose of implementing projects that satisfy the eligibility and evaluation requirements of the Act, and which further address the primary threats to sage-grouse as identified in *Executive Order 12-2015* and by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its *12 Month Petition Finding* of “not warranted for listing” published as 80 FR 59858-59942, October 2, 2015. Applicants are required to read the *Evaluation and Eligibility Criteria Guidance Document* and *Executive Order 12-2015*, and tailor projects accordingly. Applicants may also find it helpful to review *The Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council Final Recommendations*, dated January 29, 2014 and the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 12 Month Petition Finding* concluding listing of the greater sage grouse is not warranted throughout its range.

Organizations and agencies are eligible for grant funding, whereas private individuals are not. In addition, organizations and agencies must hold and maintain conservation easements or leases or be directly involved in sage grouse habitat mitigation and enhancement activities.

Grant Recipients are required to enter into a grant agreement with MSGOT and the Program. An applicant is not a grant recipient until the grant agreement has been executed by all necessary parties. Grant agreements will include necessary terms and conditions to insure that grant funds are disbursed and utilized consistent with the purpose and language of the Act.

Grants funds are distributed as reimbursements in most cases. This means the grantee must submit for reimbursement of expenses incurred while carrying out the project. “Up front” funding is typically not allowed, unless specifically identified in any grant agreement.

Grant funding cannot be used for replacement or supplementation of a grantees operating budget, unless the budget items directly relate to the conservation of Sage

Grouse. For example, grant funding cannot be used to obtain office space, increase a wage or salary, or for acquisition of capital goods, assets, or durable goods (trucks, GPS units, computers, software, etc.).

Semi-annual progress reports, a final report, and a fiscal close-out report are required for each grant project to allow tracking of expenditures and to document results. In addition, ongoing monitoring plans will be required.

Documents referenced in this form are available at: <http://XXXX>

Completed applications should be submitted through the [XXXX](#) at <http://XXXX>. Please be aware that this program requires all information to be submitted digitally through that web portal. Applicants should obtain access to that website as early as possible and reserve adequate time to input all application information into that system.

Questions may be directed to Carolyn Sime, Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, 1625 Eleventh Ave, Helena, MT 59620; (406) 444-0554; csime2@mt.gov.

DRAFT

**MONTANA GREATER SAGE-GROUSE STEWARDSHIP FUND ACCOUNT
("MGSGSFA")
GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION**

Project Title: This should be brief (less than 10 words) but descriptive.

Grant Request Amount (in \$):

Applicant(s) Information:

Name:

Title:

Agency/Organization:

Street/P.O. Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone #: FAX #:

E-mail:

Point of Contact: (name only one individual):

Name:

Title:

Agency/Organization:

Street/P.O. Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone #: FAX #:

E-mail:

Proposal Prepared by: Leave blank if same as Point of Contact.

Name:

Title:

Agency/Organization:

Street/P.O. Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone #: FAX #:

E-mail:

Request: One-time Payment or Reimbursable

**Is this a multi-year project for which future grants will be sought from MGSGSFA?
If so, explain.**

All Project Partners/Cooperators. Provide contact information for all persons, organizations, and agencies:

(A) involved in the proposed project

(B) who own lands in the project location, or

(C) who own lands for which the grant applicant is claiming project benefits.

For each identified person, organization, or agency, describe their role in the proposed project.

Identify any MOUs, agreements, or contracts associated with the project.

Project Narrative: Describe the problems or threats specifically identified at the project location, what actions the project will undertake, and how such actions will address the threats and satisfy the stated goals and objectives of the project. (3 pages of narrative or less)

Management Relevance/Conservation Benefit: Describe the benefits to be achieved if the project is implemented. (200 word narrative or less)

Problem / Threat Analysis: Describe the sage grouse problems/threats being addressed by the project and why the project is necessary. (Approximately 100 words)

Project Location:

UTM Coordinates (Easting, Northing, Zone, Datum):

PLSS Description (County Township Range Section/s):

Project Location map(s): Please submit maps as attachments to this document. Do not submit maps without titles or descriptive references.

County name/s: List all counties where project will occur.

Size of Project Area:

Total acres within project boundary, or directly affected by project:

Total acres indirectly affected by project (explain):

Surface Land Ownership:

(check all that apply) Federal _____ State _____ Private _____

If project will affect a mosaic of land ownerships (e.g., mix of federal, state and/or private lands), provide a breakdown for each specific owner type by acres and percent of total project area.

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Directly Affected				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Indirectly Affected				
Acres				
Percent of Total				

Project Description: (check all that apply):

___ Reduction of Conifer Encroachment

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				

___ Reduction of Invasive Weeds

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				

___ Maintenance/Restoration/ Improvement of Sagebrush Health or Quality

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				

Percent of Total				
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____ Purchase/Acquisition of Lease or Conservation Easement

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				

____ Incentives to Reduce Conversion of Grazing Land to Cropland

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				

____ Restoration of Cropland to Grazing Lands

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Acres				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Acres				

Percent of Total				
------------------	--	--	--	--

_____ Demarcation of Fences

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Miles				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Miles				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Miles				
Percent of Total				

_____ Reduction of Unnatural Perching Platforms for Raptors

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				

_____ Reduction of Unnatural Safe Havens for Predators

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				

General Habitat				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				

_____ Other: Briefly Explain.

	Federal	State	Private	Total
Core Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				
General Habitat				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				
Connectivity Area				
Number of Structures				
Percent of Total				

_____ Modification of Fire Management to Conserve Sage Grouse Habitat or Populations (Briefly explain)

_____ Sage grouse habitat enhancement that provides project developers the ability to use improved habitat for compensatory mitigation under MCA § 76-22-111. (Attach Explanation of how project meets statutory requirements.)

_____ Sage grouse habitat enhancement that provides project developers the ability to use improved habitat for compensatory mitigation under MCA § 76-22-111. (Attach Explanation of how project meets statutory requirements.)

Vegetation Management: If the project involves any vegetation management, manipulation, or treatment (i.e. conifer reduction, grazing land management, sagebrush management or restoration wildfire management) complete the following. (Check All That Apply)

Mechanical Treatment _____ Chemical Treatment _____ Prescribed Fire _____
 Restoration _____ Reseeding/Planting _____ Deferred Grazing _____
 Invasive/Noxious Plant Removal _____ Other(s) (explain) _____

Identify the post-treatment management strategies to be implemented (e.g. livestock grazing plans, weed control, infrastructure maintenance, etc.). (500 word narrative or less. Attach additional information if necessary.)

Local Impacts: Describe any impacts to the local communities, including socioeconomic impacts. (200 word narrative or less. Attach additional information if necessary.)

Other benefits: List and describe any other benefits that will be achieved from the project. (E.g. educational, economic, research, public access, other environmental or conservation services, etc.)

Expected duration of effects from proposed project: Check the appropriate box. _____ 1-10 years; _____ 10-20 years; _____ 20-30years; _____ 30-50 years; _____ in perpetuity.

If the expected duration is in perpetuity, please explain how the applicant will legally and physically insure perpetual protection of the proposed project and its effects.

Total Montana Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Fund Account (“MGSGSFA”) Grant Funding Request:

Cash \$ _____

Percentage of Total Project Cost _____%

Narrative Details For Matching Funds: list all sources of matching funds or in-kind contributions, the amount, whether such funds are in-hand or committed, and any limitations on the use of such funds.

Source or Match	Amount	In-kind Cash?	or	In-hand Committed?	or	Any Limitations?

For in-kind contributions, explain basis and method for valuation:

For cash match that is committed but not yet in-hand, explain the circumstances of the commitment, the date committed, and if cash, when the cash will become available:

Project Costs / Budget (Non-Lease / Conservation Easement Projects)

Item	Matching Cash Contribution	Matching In-Kind Contribution	Requested MGSFSFA Contribution	Total Contributions
Project Planning and Design				
Contractor Costs				
Permitting				
Other				
Project Implementation				
Contractor Costs				
Supplies/Materials				
Equipment				
Salaries/Labor				
Other				
Project Monitoring				
Operation and Maintenance				
Total Cost Estimate				

Project Costs / Budget (Lease / Conservation Easement Projects)

Item		Matching Cash Contribution	Matching In-Kind Contribution	Requested MGSFA Contribution	Total Contributions
a. Project Planning and Design					
Engineering	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Baseline Inventory	Applicant				
	Contractor				
Mineral Report	Applicant				
	Contractor				
Appraisal					
Title Commitment					
Other Expenses					
Total					
b. Project Implementation					
Manpower	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Equipment	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Materials (rock, chemicals, etc.)	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Total Easement Value					
Other					
Total					
c. Project Operation/Maintenance					
Manpower	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Equipment	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				
Materials (rock, chemicals, etc.)	Applicant				
	Contractor				
	Landowner				

Other				
Total				
d. GRAND TOTAL				

Project Readiness / Implementation Schedule: List time line including month and year when project is expected to be initiated and completed.

Month/Year overall project begins:

Month/Year overall project ends:

Month/Year of MGSGSFA Grant funding begins:

Month/Year MGSGSFA Grant funding ends:

Likelihood of Implementation: Have all necessary permits/approvals been obtained? Projects judged unlikely to be implemented will be given lower priority.

PERMIT OR AUTHORIZATION	REQUIRED		SUBMITTED		APPROVED	
	Yes	No	Yes, Date	No, date expected	Yes, Date	No, date expected
Cultural Resource Inventory						
COE Section 404 Permit						
Cooperative Agreement(s)						
*NEPA Analysis						
Pesticide Application Permit						
Private Landowner Agreement(s)						
Sensitive Species Clearance						
Surface/Ground Water Permits						
T/E Species Clearance						
Others (explain)						

***If NEPA is Required:** What is the type of NEPA analysis required: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); Environmental Assessment (EA); Categorical Exclusion (CE); Biological Assessment/biological Evaluation (BA/BE); etc.? What federal agency will conduct the analysis and who is the primary agency contact? What is the estimated submittal and approval dates?

Project Timeline and Estimated Completion Date. (Explain) (200 words or less)

Project Monitoring Plan: All projects require monitoring to determine effectiveness relative to the statutory purposes of the Act to conserve sage grouse habitat and populations. Identify what monitoring program and protocols are in place or will be put in place to assess and quantify the results achieved by the project. Identify those responsible for monitoring. Include both short term and long term monitoring. A Project Close-out Report will be required for each project upon completion, to allow tracking of expenditures and attainment of results. Photos, summaries, etc. may be required. (Approximately 2 page of Narrative or less. Attach additional documentation if needed.)

Attachments and Supporting Documentation. (Check All That Apply. Not required for initial project review; however, all information submitted will be considered in the pre-application process.):

- Project Design / Maps
- Letters of Support
- Management Plan
- Monitoring Plan
- MGSGSFA Lease / Conservation Easement Acknowledgement*
- Budget
- MOUs and other Agreements
- Other (list): _____

Additional Information for Consideration. (Not required for initial project review; however, all information submitted will be considered. No more than 1 page.)

Acknowledgement

Initial each verification or acknowledgment and sign.

_____ All Applicants verify that they have read the Evaluation and Eligibility Criteria Guidance Document before filling out this application.

_____ All Applicants verify that they have read Executive Order 12-2015, dated September 8, 2015, which outlines the duties of the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team and the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

_____ All Applicants acknowledge that grant recipients are required to enter into a grant agreement with MSGOT and the Program, and that an applicant is not a grant recipient until a grant agreement has been executed by all necessary parties. Such grant agreements will include necessary terms and conditions to insure that grant funds are disbursed and utilized consistent with the purpose and language of the Act.

_____ All Applicants acknowledge that MSGOT will prioritize grant awards to projects which maximize the number of credits generated per dollars of funds awarded, and which provide assurances that credits generated by the project are available for compensatory mitigation. Such assurances may be included in the grant agreement.

_____ All Applicants acknowledge that applications to the Grant Program do not constitute a consultation with MSGOT or the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program concerning a new activity or land use governed by the stipulations of *Executive Order 12-2015*, dated September 8, 2015, and any proposed land use or activity described in the grant application which triggers review under *Executive Order 12-2015* must still be reviewed by the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program pursuant to its procedures or process.

_____ (If this Application seeks grant funding for a conservation easement of lease) All Applicants verify that all parties to the lease or conservation deed have executed and attached the *MGSGSFA Lease / Conservation Easement Acknowledgement*.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Title:

Date:

MSGGSFA Lease / Conservation Easement Acknowledgement

All parties to the proposed lease or conservation easement must sign the following acknowledgement. This includes every owner to the real property, every lessee and lessor, and every land trust or holder of the conservation easement. (Attach pages as necessary)

The signatories hereby verify that they are authorized to sign this acknowledgement in their declared capacity.

The signatories further acknowledge that any lease or conservation easement selected to receive grant funds pursuant to Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act will receive no grant funding unless and until every party involved in the applicable lease or conservation easement agrees through the grant agreement to establish the State of Montana as a third-party beneficiary to the lease or easement with a contingent right to enforce the terms of the lease or easement if the grantee fails to do so.

The signatories further acknowledge that all parties to the lease or conservation easement will be required to enter into an agreement with the state providing that the lease or easement may not be transferred for value, sold, or extinguished without consent of the State of Montana or its agents.

The signatories further acknowledge that all parties to the lease or conservation easement will be required to enter into an agreement recognizing the State of Montana or its agent's right to take legal action to enforce the terms of the lease or easement or to recover from the proceeds of the transfer for value, sale, or extinguishment the state's pro rata share of the proceeds based on the funds the state provided pursuant to this part for the creation of the lease or easement.

The signatories further acknowledge that MSGOT will retroactively calculate and make available credits for leases and conservation easements purchased with grant funds prior to MSGOT's adoption of the Habitat Quantification Tool.

The signatories further acknowledge that they will provide necessary documentation or agreements associated with the creation, maintenance, or stewardship of the lease or conservation easement and otherwise allow the State of Montana or its agents to protect its interests as third-party beneficiaries to the lease or conservation easement.

Signature: _____
Printed Name: _____

Title: _____
Role in Transaction
(owner, land trust, etc.): _____

Date: _____