

Greater Sage-Grouse ^[1]



Protecting Sage Grouse While Growing Western Economies

The Greater Sage-Grouse (GrSG) is a large ground-dwelling bird that inhabits 186 million acres in eleven western states. Because of a settlement agreement with environmental groups, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was required to determine whether to list the species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by September 2015. FWS found that the GrSG was not threatened or endangered and announced a not warranted decision.

FWS arrived at the right decision, but took the wrong path to get there. The not warranted decision rests on robust population numbers and effective state and local efforts that are working to protect the species, not the flawed federal land use plans that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) released on the same day as the not-warranted announcement. Given the huge range of its habitat, these BLM and USFS land use plans will have enormous economic and social consequences in western rural communities, and will place vast energy resources off limits.

The Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies' (WAFWA) [2015 update](#) ^[2] shows a **63% increase in the population** over the last two years, with **a total breeding population of 424,645**. WAFWA compiled the data from more than a dozen databases from the 11 western GrSG states. The population numbers based on real data are superior to the flawed modeling used in several federal reports to support top-down federal restrictions, which [a coalition of western counties and productive land users](#) ^[3] have challenged.

WAFWA also found that the population in core areas where the highest density of GrSG lives is essentially unchanged over the fifty-year period beginning in 1965. WAFWA's data are encouraging for showing how states, counties, private landowners, industries, conservation groups and others are effectively protecting GrSG.

State and Local Plans

Rather than the top-down approach taken by BLM and USFS, federal land use plans should be guided by state and local conservation plans and supported by local science. State and local efforts provide a more sensible and adaptive approach to GrSG management while balancing future economic growth that is lacking from a federal one-size-fits-all approach.

States across the West have implemented [sage grouse conservation plans](#) ^[4] based on actual conditions on the ground in their states. These efforts include conservation plans, mitigation funds, research projects, direct conservation payments and on-the-ground conservation projects. Western Energy Alliance along with many other stakeholders across the West strongly support state and local efforts as well as legislation that prevents excessive federal management in states with effective conservation plans. Below are the state conservation plans and efforts.

- [Colorado Governor Hickenlooper's Executive Order](#) ^[5]
- [Idaho's Conservation Plan](#) ^[6]
- [Montana's Conservation Program](#) ^[7]
- [Nevada's Conservation Plan](#) ^[8]
- [Utah Governor Herbert's Executive Order](#) ^[9]
- [Wyoming Governor Mead's Executive Order](#) ^[10]

Federal Greater Sage-Grouse Plans

BLM and USFS finalized 15 land use plans in September 2015 that collectively update 98 individual land management and forest plans. These land use plans were finalized in two Records of Decision (ROD) that were released simultaneously with the decision not to list the species under the ESA.

- [Great Basin ROD](#) ^[11]
- [Rocky Mountain ROD](#) ^[12]

Western Energy Alliance has [filed a lawsuit](#) ^[13] challenging the land use plans where the oil and natural gas restrictions fail to conform to state plans. In September 2017, BLM announced its intent to revise the land use plans with the express intent of more closely aligning with the state plans. USFS issued a similar notice in November 2017. Western Energy Alliance submitted scoping comments in response to the notices of intent.

- [Scoping Comments on BLM's Notice of Intent to Amend the GrSG Plans](#) ^[14]
- [Scoping Comments on USFS's Notice of Intent to Amend the GrSG Plans](#) ^[15]

Many of the management prescriptions in these plans do not balance GrSG conservation with continued economic activity, are unnecessarily restrictive, lack proper scientific justification, do not conform to state plans, and ignore local conditions on the ground. Western Energy Alliance along with API, the Montana Petroleum Association, Petroleum Association of Wyoming and North Dakota Petroleum Council filed protests on 12 of the Land Use Plan Amendments (LUPA) and Resource Management Plans (RMP).

- [Billings-Pompey Pillars RMP](#) ^[16]
- [Bighorn Basin RMP](#) ^[17]
- [Buffalo RMP](#) ^[18]
- [HiLine RMP](#) ^[19]
- [Idaho/Southwest Montana LUPA](#) ^[20]
- [Lewistown RMP](#) ^[21]
- [Miles City RMP](#) ^[22]
- [Nevada/Northeastern California LUPA](#) ^[23]
- [North Dakota LUPA](#) ^[24]
- [Northwest Colorado LUPA](#) ^[25]
- [Utah GrSG LUPA](#) ^[26]
- [Wyoming 9-Plan LUPA](#) ^[27]

Governors across the West protested the land use plans and argued, in their consistency reviews, that the federal plans should defer to state conservation efforts. The consistency reviews also highlight how the federal land use plans fail to comply with state plans. BLM's responses and subsequent state appeals are also below.

- [State of Colorado LUPA Protest](#) ^[28]
- [State of Idaho LUPA Protest](#) ^[29]
- [State of Montana RMP Protest](#) ^[30]
- [State of Nevada LUPA Protest](#) ^[31]
- [State of Utah LUPA Protest](#) ^[32]
- [State of Wyoming LUPA Protest](#) ^[33]
- [Colorado Governor Hickenlooper's Consistency Review](#) ^[34]
- [Idaho Governor Otter's Consistency Review](#) ^[35]
- [Montana Governor Bullock's Consistency Review](#) ^[36]
- [Nevada Governor Sandoval's Consistency Review](#) ^[37]
- [North Dakota Governor Dalrymple's Consistency Review](#) ^[38]
- [Utah Governor Herbert's Consistency Review](#) ^[39]
- [Wyoming Governor Mead's Consistency Review](#) ^[40]
- [BLM Response to Colorado's Consistency Review](#) ^[41]
- [BLM Response to Idaho's Consistency Review](#) ^[42]
- [BLM Response to Montana's Consistency Review](#) ^[43]
- [BLM Response to North Dakota's Consistency Review](#) ^[44]
- [BLM Response to Nevada's Consistency Review](#) ^[45]
- [BLM Response to Wyoming's Consistency Review](#) ^[46]
- [ID Consistency Review Appeal](#) ^[47]
- [NV Consistency Review Appeal](#) ^[48]

Feature content:

No

Quick Facts:

- BLM and USFS have implemented new Greater Sage-Grouse management prescriptions in [98 public land use plans covering 65 million acres](#) ^[49].
- The Western Governors' Association's [inventory of initiatives](#) ^[49] across the West highlights the comprehensive conservation work underway to protect sage grouse, including investments of \$425 million to conserve more than 4 million acres.
- The oil and natural gas industry implements, on average, [6.5 conservation measures per project](#) ^[50] to protect GrSG.

Related Content:

[Alliance Letter to Sage Grouse Review Team](#) [51]

[Fish and Wildlife Service Homepage for GrSG](#) [52]

[Western Governors' Association Special Report](#) [4]

[House Committee on Natural Resources Hearing on State Management of GrSG](#) [53]

[Wall Street Journal Editorial on GrSG Plans](#) [54]

[Greater Sage-Grouse Data Quality Act Challenge](#) [3]

[Economic Impact of GrSG Restrictions on Oil & Natural Gas Development](#) [55]

[Economic Analysis of BLM GrSG Restrictions](#) [56]

Source URL: <https://www.westernenergyalliance.org/knowledge-center/wildlife/greater-sage-grouse>

Links:

- [1] <https://www.westernenergyalliance.org/knowledge-center/wildlife/greater-sage-grouse>
- [2] http://www.wafwa.org/news/e_1606/News/2015/8/WAFWAReportDocumentsGreaterSage-GrousePopulationRebound.htm
- [3] <http://www.westernenergyalliance.org/knowledge-center/wildlife/greater-sage-grouse/DQA-Challenge>
- [4] http://www.westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Inventory_Final_lo_res.pdf
- [5] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Colorado%20GrSG%20EO%20-%20Signed%205.15.15.pdf>
- [6] <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/wildlife/sageGrouse/conservPlan.pdf>
- [7] <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/sageGrouse/habitatConservation/>
- [8] http://www.ndow.org/Nevada_Wildlife/Sage_Grouse/Conservation_Plans/
- [9] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Utah%20Governor%20Herbert%E2%80%99s%20Executive%20Order%20on%20GrSG.pdf>
- [10] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Wyoming%20GrSG%20EO%20-%207.30.15.pdf>
- [11] http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Communications_Directorate/public_affairs/sage-grouse_planning/documents.Par.44118.File.dat/GB%20ROD.pdf
- [12] http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Communications_Directorate/public_affairs/sage-grouse_planning/documents.Par.57493.File.dat/RM%20ROD.pdf
- [13] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Alliance%20GrSG%20Complaint%20ND.pdf>
- [14] <https://www.westernenergyalliance.org/files/western-energy-alliance-sage-grouse-scoping-commentspdf>
- [15] <https://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Western%20Energy%20Alliance%20Sage%20Grouse%20Scoping%20Comments%20to%20USFS%201.5.18.pdf>
- [16] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/MPA-API-Alliance%20Billings-Pompey%20Pillars%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [17] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Bighorn%20Protest.pdf>
- [18] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Bufalo%20Protest.pdf>
- [19] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/MPA-API-Alliance%20Hiline%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [20] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/MPA-API-Alliance%20Idaho-SWMT%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [21] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/MPA-API-Alliance%20Lewistown%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [22] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/MPA-API-Alliance%20Miles%20City%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [23] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/API-Alliance%20Nevada%20California%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [24] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/NDPC-API-Alliance%20North%20Dakota%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [25] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/API-Alliance%20NW%20Colorado%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [26] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/API-Alliance%20Utah%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [27] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Wyoming%209-Plan%20Protest.pdf>
- [28] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Colorado%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [29] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Idaho%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [30] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Montana%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [31] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Nevada%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [32] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Utah%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [33] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/State%20of%20Wyoming%20Protest%20062915.pdf>
- [34] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Colorado.pdf>
- [35] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Idaho.pdf>
- [36] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Montana.pdf>
- [37] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Nevada.pdf>
- [38] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/North%20Dakota.pdf>
- [39] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Utah.pdf>
- [40] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Wyoming.pdf>
- [41] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20CO%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [42] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20ID%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [43] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20MT%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [44] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20ND%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [45] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20NV%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [46] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/BLM%20Response%20to%20WY%20Consistency%20Review.pdf>
- [47] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/ID%20Consistency%20Review%20Appeal.pdf>
- [48] <http://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/NV%20Consistency%20Review%20Appeal.pdf>
- [49] http://westgov.org/images/dmdocuments/2014_WGA_Sage_Grouse_Inventory_Final_lo_res.pdf
- [50] http://www.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/images/WesternEnergyAlliance_GRS_G_NEPA_Final_071414.pdf
- [51] <https://cdn.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Western%20Energy%20Alliance%20Letter%20to%20Interior%20re%20GrSG%20Economic%20Impact.pdf>
- [52] <http://www.fws.gov/greatersagegrouse/>
- [53] <http://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=398499>
- [54] <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-sage-grouse-switcheroo-1443386802>
- [55] <http://www.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Final%20Economic%20Analysis-Sage%20Grouse%20Restrictions.pdf>
- [56] <http://www.westernenergyalliance.org/sites/default/files/Sage%20Grouse%20Economic%20Report%20-%20Final%20from%20Minuteman%20Press.pdf>