



Summary: Evaluation of Measures Taken by Oil and Natural Gas Companies to Protect Greater Sage-Grouse

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SWCA Environmental Consultants conducted an analysis of the conservation measures oil and natural gas companies implement to protect the Greater Sage-Grouse (GrSG). SWCA analyzed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for projects approved on public lands since 2008. NEPA documents govern how companies must operate, thereby providing certainty that the measures will be implemented and enforced. Full details are found in the report [*Evaluation of the NEPA Process as an Adequate Regulatory Mechanism to Eliminate or Minimize Threats to Greater Sage-Grouse Associated with Oil and Natural Gas Development Activities*](#).

Key Findings

- Of the 103 oil and natural gas NEPA documents reviewed, companies committed to **773 total conservation measures, an average of 6.5 per project**.
- Conservation measures were implemented across 18 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning areas and U.S. Forest Service national forests encompassing 68,404 square miles of public lands with GrSG habitat.
- The majority of documents contain adaptive management and monitoring; no surface occupancy buffers; seasonal, timing, and spatial restrictions; interim and final reclamation; traffic reduction and restrictions; and noise abatement. In addition, companies utilize measures that permanently reduce footprint in GrSG habitats including horizontal drilling, reuse of produced water, multiple-wells on drill pads, co-location of facility equipment, twinning pipelines, and funding for GrSG research projects.
- The conservation measures meet the FWS' *Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions* (PECE policy) standards for certainty of implementation and effectiveness.

Why These Commitments Matter

- Companies invest vast amounts of time, capital, and human resources implementing GrSG protections, and are continuously developing new measures to more effectively conserve GrSG.
- Commitments made in these NEPA documents are binding and therefore effective for protecting GrSG and their habitat while enabling development vital to local communities in terms of job creation, economic growth, and local, state and federal government revenue.
- The NEPA process is a transparent and robust regulatory mechanism that is effective for protecting, conserving, and enhancing the GrSG populations and habitat.
- As FWS determines whether to list under the Endangered Species Act, it should recognize the commitments companies have made in NEPA documents as strong regulatory mechanisms that protect GrSG, and rethink its assumption that oil and natural gas development is a major threat to the species.

Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Overlaps Significant Oil and Natural Gas Basins across the West

