Chapter 1

Introduction

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Changes to Chapter 1 between Draft LUPA/EIS and Proposed LUPA/Final EIS

- General corrections (e.g., typographical errors), clarifications, and acreage recalculations were included.
- Additions and clarifications to the planning criteria (Section 1.6.1) and Memoranda of Understanding (Section 1.7.5).
- A discussion of USFWS was expanded to include the Priority Areas for Conservation and how they relate to GRSG management areas in the LUPA as well as a discussion of Sagebrush Focal Areas (Section 1.1.2).
- A discussion was added to describe a new USGS report published regarding lek buffers since the DEIS (Section 1.1.3).
- Text was added to describe the Montana Executive Order related to GRSG (Section 1.1.4).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 1-1

1.1 Background 1-1
1.1.1 Forest Service Involvement 1-6
1.1.2 USFWS Involvement 1-7
1.1.1 Other Federal Agency Involvement 1-10
1.1.2 State Government and Wildlife Agencies Involvement 1-10
1.1.3 Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region 1-10
1.2 Purpose and Need 1-13
1.3 Description of the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Area 1-14
1.3.1 Overview 1-14
1.3.2 Land Uses 1-19
1.4 Planning Process 1-21
1.4.1 BLM Planning Process 1-21
1.4.2 Forest Service Planning Process 1-25
1.5 Public Input and Identification of Issues 1-27
1.5.1 The Scoping Process 1-27
1.5.2 Issues Identified for Consideration in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region 1-29
1.5.3 Planning Issues 1-29
1.5.4 Public Comment on the Draft LUPA/EIS 1-37
1.6 Development of Planning Criteria 1-38
1.6.1 Preliminary Planning Criteria 1-38
1.7 Relationship to Other Policies, Plans and Programs 1-41
1.7.1 Federal Plans 1-41
1.7.2 State Plans 1-42
1.7.3 County Plans 1-42
1.7.4 Endangered Species Recovery Plans 1-44
1.7.5 Memoranda of Understanding 1-44
1.7.6 Activity Plans and Amendments 1-47
1.7.7 Habitat Management Plans 1-47
1.7.8 Secretarial Order 3336 1-47

FIGURES

Page

1-1 Greater Sage-Grouse Distribution 1-2
1-2 BLM USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries 1-4
1-3 USFWS Priority Areas for Conservation with Preliminary Priority and General Habitat 1-9
1-4 Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Planning Area 1-11
1-5 Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Population Areas 1-20
1-6 BLM Nine Step Planning Process 1-22

TABLES

Page

1-1 Crosswalk between Habitat Classifications in the Draft and Final EIS 1-6
1-2 BLM and Forest Service Land Use Plans Proposed for Amendment 1-12
1-3 Identified Threats to Greater Sage-Grouse 1-14
1-4 Acres of GRSG Habitat by Surface Management 1-15
1-5 Acres of GRSG Habitat by County 1-17
1-6 County Land Use and Sage-Grouse Management Plans 1-43

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

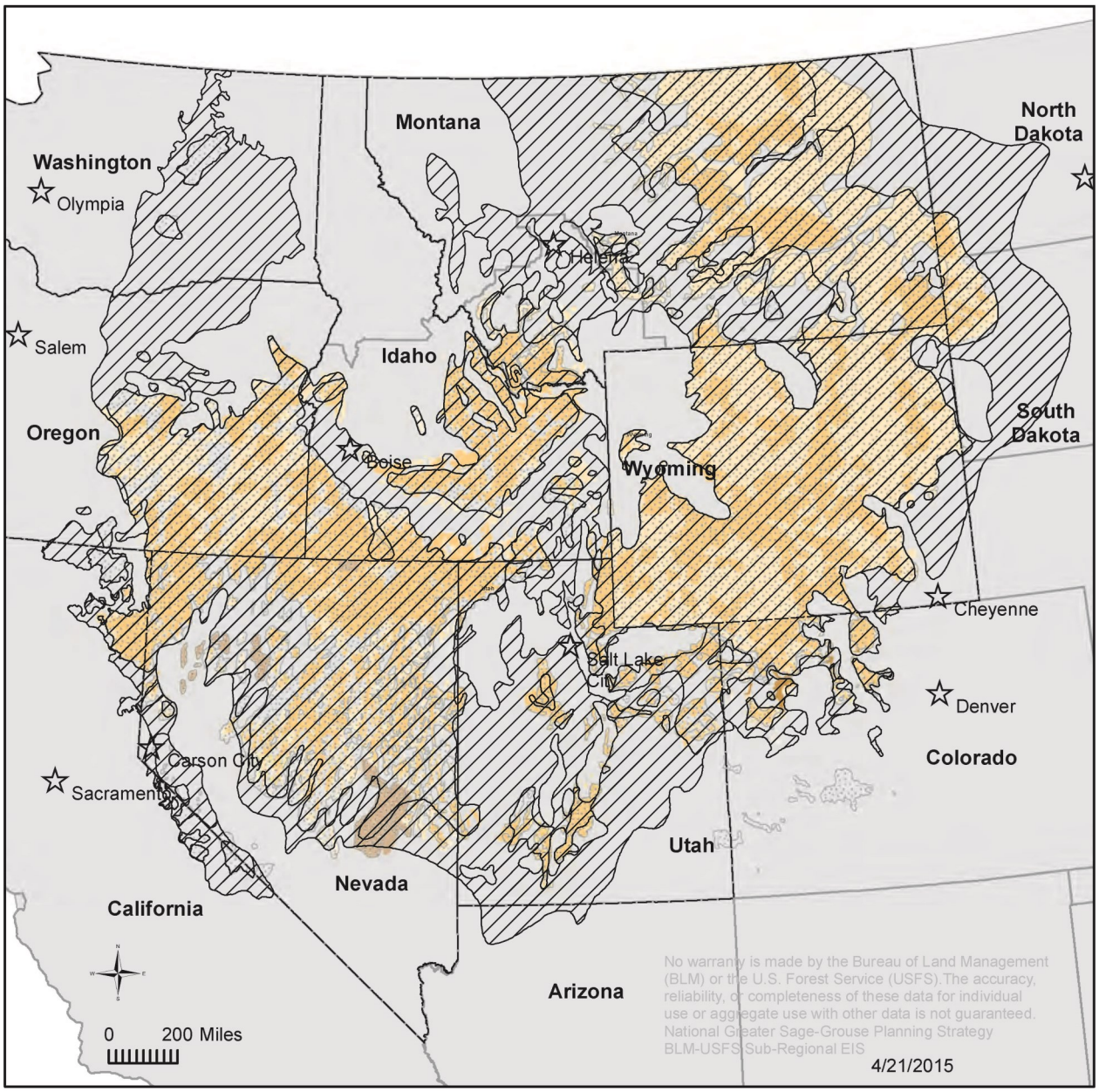
Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG; *Centrocerus urophasianus*) are large, ground-dwelling birds that reside primarily in sagebrush ecosystems. Sagebrush ecosystems were and, in some respects, still are ubiquitous across the intermountain regions of western North America. While historical Euro-American settlement of these lands has been slower and sparser than in other regions of the country, habitat conversion to suit human purposes has contributed to widespread loss and decline of sagebrush habitat availability or quality and associated wildlife populations. These human purposes include agriculture and urban development, energy and mineral resource development, and a long history of dispersed (but sometimes intensive) uses such as domestic grazing.

More recently, large wildfires, often fueled or exacerbated by invasive plant species such as cheatgrass, have led to large areas of sagebrush loss in the intermountain west and Great Basin. The estimated distribution of contiguous sagebrush habitats, prior to Euro-American contact (Schroeder et al. 2004), was nearly twice that which is available today. This influences the availability of habitat for GRSG across the species' range (**Figure 1-1**, Greater Sage-Grouse Distribution). Although early documentation is sparse and possibly unreliable, it is suspected that GRSG were similarly more abundant historically at a continental scale (Schroeder et al. 2004). GRSG population trends are variable across their distribution, and while some populations appear stable, population numbers show long-term declines collectively across several regions (Connelly et al. 2004). Proximate reasons for population declines differ across the range-wide distribution of GRSG, but ultimately, the underlying cause is loss of suitable sagebrush habitat (Connelly and Braun 1997; Leonard et al. 2000; Aldridge et al. 2008).

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (US) Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its Land Use Plans (LUPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) directs the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service to develop and periodically revise or amend its Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs), which guide management of National Forest System lands. For the purpose of this document, the term LUP applies to all BLM Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and older Management Framework Plans (MFPs) and Forest Service LRMPs.

This plan amendment effort is the result of the August 2011, BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (Strategy) (BLM 2011). The Strategy responds to the March 2010, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as Threatened or Endangered* (75 *Federal Register* [FR] 13910, March 23, 2010) (2010 Finding). In the 2010 Finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was "warranted, but precluded" for listing as a threatened or endangered species. The USFWS reviewed the status and threats to GRSG in relation to the five Listing Factors

Figure 1-1
Greater Sage-Grouse Distribution



Sub-Regional EIS Boundary
Sage-Grouse Historic Distribution
Sage-Grouse Current Distribution

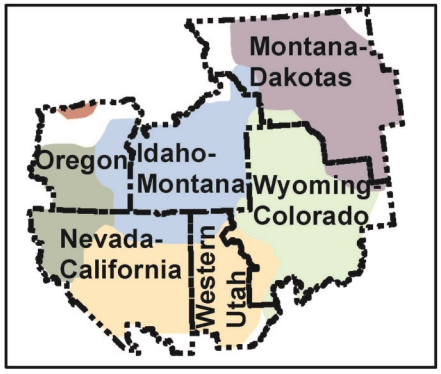
Consolidated Preliminary Priority and Preliminary General Habitat June 26, 2012

Priliminary Priority Habitat
Preliminary General Habitat
CO SG Population Linkage Areas
NV PPH/PGH Analysis Ongoing

Sub-Regional EIS Boundary

WAFWA Zone

MZ I
MZ II and VII
MZ III
MZ IV
MZ V
MZ VI



provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Of the five Listing Factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, "*the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the Greater Sage-Grouse,"* and Factor D, "*the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms"* posed "*a significant threat to the Greater Sage-Grouse now and in the foreseeable future"* (USFWS 2010) (emphasis added). The USFWS identified the conservation measures in LUPs as the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and Forest Service.

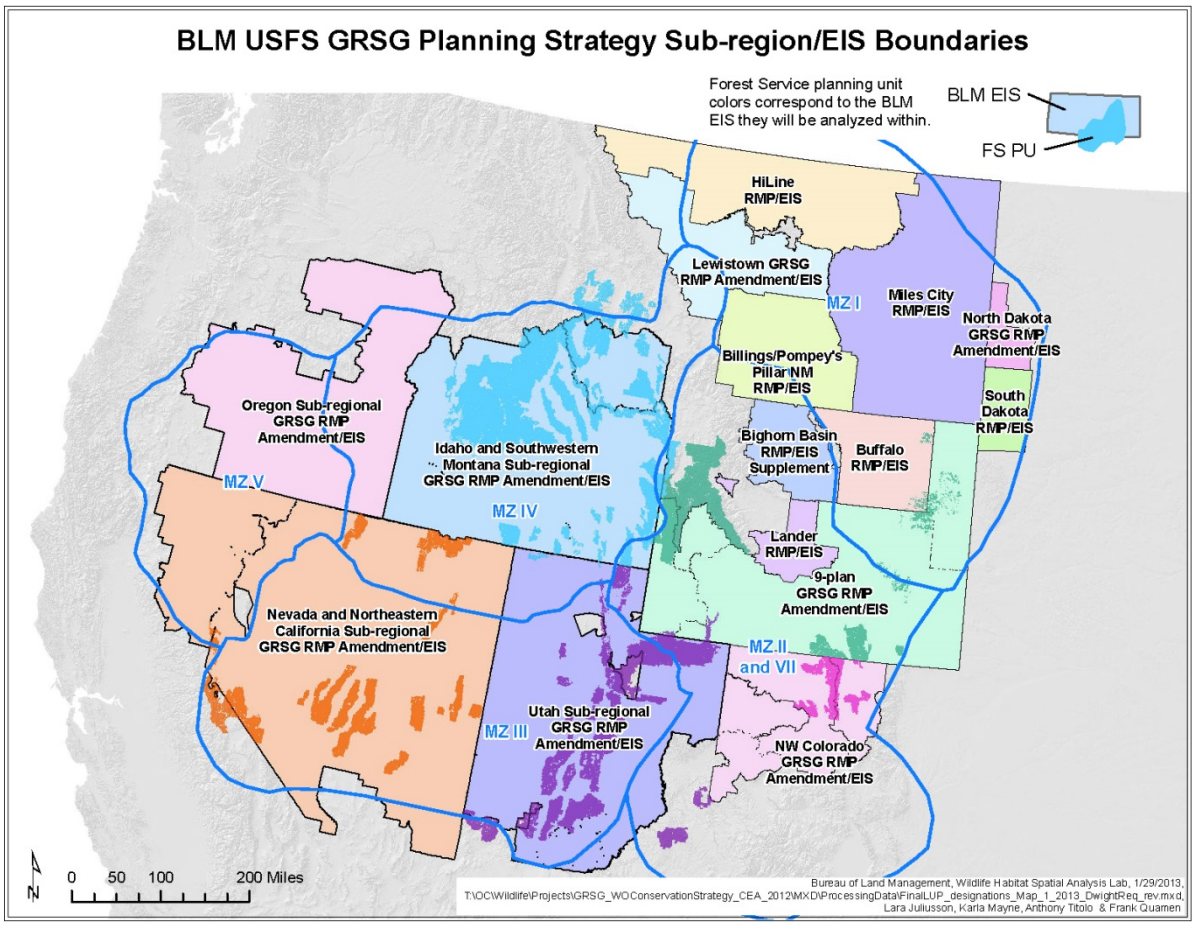
In response to the USFWS findings, the BLM and Forest Service intend to prepare plan amendments with associated Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) to incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with national BLM and Forest Service policy. The planning strategy will evaluate the adequacy of BLM and Forest Service LUPs and address, as necessary, amendments throughout the range of the GRSG (with the exception of the bi-state population in California and Nevada and the Washington State distinct population segment, which will be addressed through other planning efforts). The BLM is the lead agency and the FS is a cooperating agency in developing these EISs. These EISs have been coordinated under two administrative planning regions: the Rocky Mountain Region and the Great Basin Region. These regions are drawn roughly to correspond with the threats identified by the FWS in the 2010 listing decision, along with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Management Zones framework (National Sage-grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team, December 2006). Stiver et al. (2006) delineated seven GRSG Management Zones, based on the distribution of 41 GRSG populations and 7 floristic provinces to guide general conservation goals and rangewide management within the range of the species. More detailed site-specific data, such as for seasonal habitats, vegetation characteristics, and related factors are more appropriately addressed in finer scale planning efforts or activities.

The Rocky Mountain Region comprises LUPs in the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and portions of Utah. This region comprises the WAFWA Management Zones I (Great Plains), II (Wyoming Basin), and a portion of VII (Colorado Plateau). The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, the major ones being habitat loss and fragmentation caused by development (e.g., oil and gas development, energy transmission, and wind energy development).

The Great Basin Region comprises LUPs in California, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Utah and Montana. This region comprises the WAFWA Management Zones III (Southern Great Basin), IV (Snake River Plain), and V (Northern Great Basin). The USFWS has identified a number of threats in this region, the major ones being wildfire, loss of native habitat to invasive species, and habitat fragmentation.

Both the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin regions are further divided into sub-regions, which is the level of this National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) analysis. These sub-regions are generally based on the identified threats to the GRSG and the WAFWA Management Zones (see **Figure 1-2**, BLM USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries, showing the sub-regional boundaries and WAFWA Management Zones).

Figure 1-2
BLM USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Sub-region/EIS Boundaries



On December 9, 2011, a Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register to initiate the amendment of LUPs across nine western states, including California, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, and Southwest Montana in the Great Basin Region and Northwest Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota, and North Dakota in the Rocky Mountain Region. This Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Plan Amendment and EIS is one of fifteen separate EISs that are currently being conducted to analyze and incorporate specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG, consistent with National BLM and Forest Service policy. A goal of all such LUPAs is to ensure consistency of goals objectives and management actions, to the extent practicable, across the region, as well as across the range of the GRSG.

On December 27, 2011, the BLM Washington Office released Instructional Memorandum (IM) No. 2012-044, *BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy*. This IM provides direction to all of the planning efforts across the GRSG range to consider all applicable conservation measures when revising or amending its LUPs in GRSG habitat,

including the measures developed by the NTT that were presented in the December 2011 document – *A Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures* (NTT Report), included as Attachment 1 of the IM. The IM also directs the inclusion and refinement of preliminary priority habitat (PPH) and preliminary general habitat (PGH) to be used in applying the conservation measures included in the NTT Report. The conservation measures developed by the NTT, should be considered in the land use planning process. The NTT report provides the latest science and best biological judgment, as of December 2011, to assist in making management decisions relating to the GRSG. The IM requires that the BLM consider all applicable conservation measures developed by the NTT when revising or amending its RMPs in GRSG habitat.

To augment this planning document at a biologically meaningful scale for GRSG, a Baseline Environmental Report (BER) for GRSG was produced by the US Geological Survey (USGS) for the BLM and Forest Service (Manier et al. 2013). The BER is a science support document that provides information to provide context for the individual planning units and issues within the larger WAFWA GRSG MZs. The BER examines each threat identified in the USFWS listing decision and summarizes the current scientific understanding of various impacts on GRSG populations and habitats. When available, the BER also identifies patterns, thresholds, indicators, metrics, and measured responses that quantify the impacts of each specific threat.

The Draft EIS included six alternatives that mapped GRSG habitat using different habitat classification schemes (**Table 1-1,** Crosswalk between Habitat Classifications in the Draft and Final EIS).

The Proposed Plan uses a three-tiered habitat classification system: Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA) Important Habitat Management Areas (IHMA) and General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA).

Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs) focus on conserving the two key meta-populations in the sub-region. These meta-populations consist of a large aggregation of interconnected breeding subpopulations of GRSG that have the highest likelihood of long-term persistence. PHMAs include adequate area to accommodate continuation of existing land uses and landowner activities.

Important Habitat Management Areas (IHMAs) contain additional habitat and populations that provide a management buffer for the PHMA and to connect patches of PHMA. IHMAs are typically adjacent to PHMAs but generally reflect somewhat lower GRSG population status and/or reduced habitat value due to disturbance, habitat fragmentation or other factors. There are no IHMAs designated within the Southwestern Montana Conservation Area.

General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs) encompass habitat that is outside of PHMAs or IHMAs. GHMAs contain approximately 10 percent of the occupied leks that are also of relatively low male attendance compared to leks in PHMA or IHMA. GHMAs are generally characterized by lower quality disturbed or patchy habitat of low lek connectivity.

Table 1-1
Crosswalk between Habitat Classifications in the Draft and Final EIS

Alternative	DEIS Habitat Classification	FEIS Habitat Classification
Alternative A	Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
	Preliminary General Habitat (PGH)	General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)
Alternative B	Preliminary Priority Management Area (PPMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
	Preliminary General Management Area (PGMA)	General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)
Alternative C	Preliminary Priority Management Area (PPMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
Alternative D	Preliminary Priority Management Area (PPMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
	Preliminary Medial Management Area (PMMA)	Important Habitat Management Area (IHMA)
	Preliminary General Management Area (PGMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
Alternative E	Idaho Core Habitat Zone (CHZ) Montana Preliminary Priority Management Area (PPMA) Utah Sage-grouse Management Area (SGMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
	Idaho Important Habitat Zone (IHZ)	Important Habitat Management Area (IHMA) – Idaho only
	Idaho General Habitat Zone (GHZ) Montana Preliminary General Management Area (PGMA)	General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)
Alternative F	Preliminary Priority Management Area (PPMA)	Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA)
	Preliminary General Management Area (PGMA)	General Habitat Management Area (GHMA)
	Preliminary Restoration Management Area (PRMA)	Occur within General or Important Habitat Management Area (GHMA; IHMA)

1.1.1 Forest Service Involvement

The Forest Service is a cooperating agency with the BLM as part of the BLM GRSG Planning Strategy. Across the range of the GRSG the Forest Service manages approximately 8 percent of the total GRSG habitat. Combined with the approximately 52 percent managed by the BLM, both agencies manage approximately 60 percent of GRSG habitat across its range (Knick 2011).

The Forest Service has partnered with the BLM to help complete the LUPAs and EISs to implement the Strategy. As part of the initial Notice of Intent published in the Federal

Register on December 9, 2011, numerous Forest Service LUPs were identified to be amended through this combined effort. After further evaluation a Notice of Correction was published in the Federal Register on February, 10, 2012, which added several additional Forest Service LUPs to the list of plans to be amended through this process.

The Forest Service "Interim Conservation Recommendations for Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat" (Forest Service Washington Office [WO] 2600 Memo, October 2, 2012) provides interim recommendations for GRSG and habitat management in Forest Service Regions 1, 2, and 4, on the 20 Forest Service units involved in the GRSG land use planning process. These recommendations are applicable until interim directives are adopted or until the amendment for the LUP unit is completed (77 *Federal Register* 12792; March 2, 2012). The recommendations identify considerations for project decision-making as well as existing direction and legal requirements that may be relevant to Forest Service management of GRSG habitat. The recommendations do not supersede more protective conservation measures in existing LUPs. The goal is to promote consistency in management of activities on National Forest System lands with guidance in the BLM IM No. 2012-043, Greater Sage-Grouse Interim Management Policies and Procedures (December 22, 2011).

The Forest Service has structured its planning effort in a manner similar to the BLM Strategy, with involvement at the national, regional and sub-regional levels, as described in detail in **Section 1.1.1**. Since December 2011, the BLM and Forest Service have been working jointly through scoping, issue and alternative development, effects analysis and document completion. At the culmination of this process, the Forest Service intends to issue a separate Record of Decision (ROD) to amend or revise (if needed) Forest Service LUPs.

1.1.2 USFWS Involvement

The USFWS is a cooperating agency with the BLM as part of this Strategy. The USFWS is ultimately responsible for the evaluation and findings regarding potential ESA listing of the GRSG. The 2010 Finding indicated that GRSG is warranted for listing but precluded by higher priority listing actions ("warranted but precluded"), this designation places the GRSG on the federal list of candidate species.

GRSG Conservation Objectives: Priority Areas for Conservation and How They Correlate with Priority and General Habitat Management Areas

In 2012, the Director of the USFWS asked the Conservation Objectives Team (COT), consisting of state and USFWS representatives, to produce recommendations regarding the degree to which the threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve GRSG so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The COT Report (USFWS 2013a) provides objectives based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release. The BLM and Forest Service management actions analyzed in the LUP/EISs are intended to ameliorate threats identified in the COT report and to reverse the trends in habitat condition. The COT Report can be viewed online at the following address:

http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/COT/COT-Report-with-Dear-Interested-Reader-Letter.pdf

The highest level objective in the COT Report is identified as meeting the objectives of WAFWA's 2006 GRSG Comprehensive Strategy of "reversing negative population trends and achieving a neutral or positive population trend."

The COT Report provides a WAFWA Management Zone and Population Risk Assessment. The report identifies localized threats from sagebrush elimination, fire, conifer encroachment, weed and annual grass invasion, mining, free-roaming wild horses and burros, urbanization, and widespread threats from energy development, infrastructure, grazing, and recreation (USFWS 2013a, p. 18).

Key areas across the landscape that are considered "necessary to maintain redundant, representative, and resilient populations" are identified within the COT Report. The USFWS in concert with the respective state wildlife management agencies identified these key areas as Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs).

Within the Idaho and southwestern Montana sub-region, the PACs consist of a total 11,232,800 acres. Under the Proposed Plan, the PACs are comprised of 7,111,200 acres of PHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, 3,489,400 acres of IHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, 272,400 acres of GHMA managed by the BLM and Forest Service, and 359,900 acres of non-habitat managed by the BLM and Forest Service.

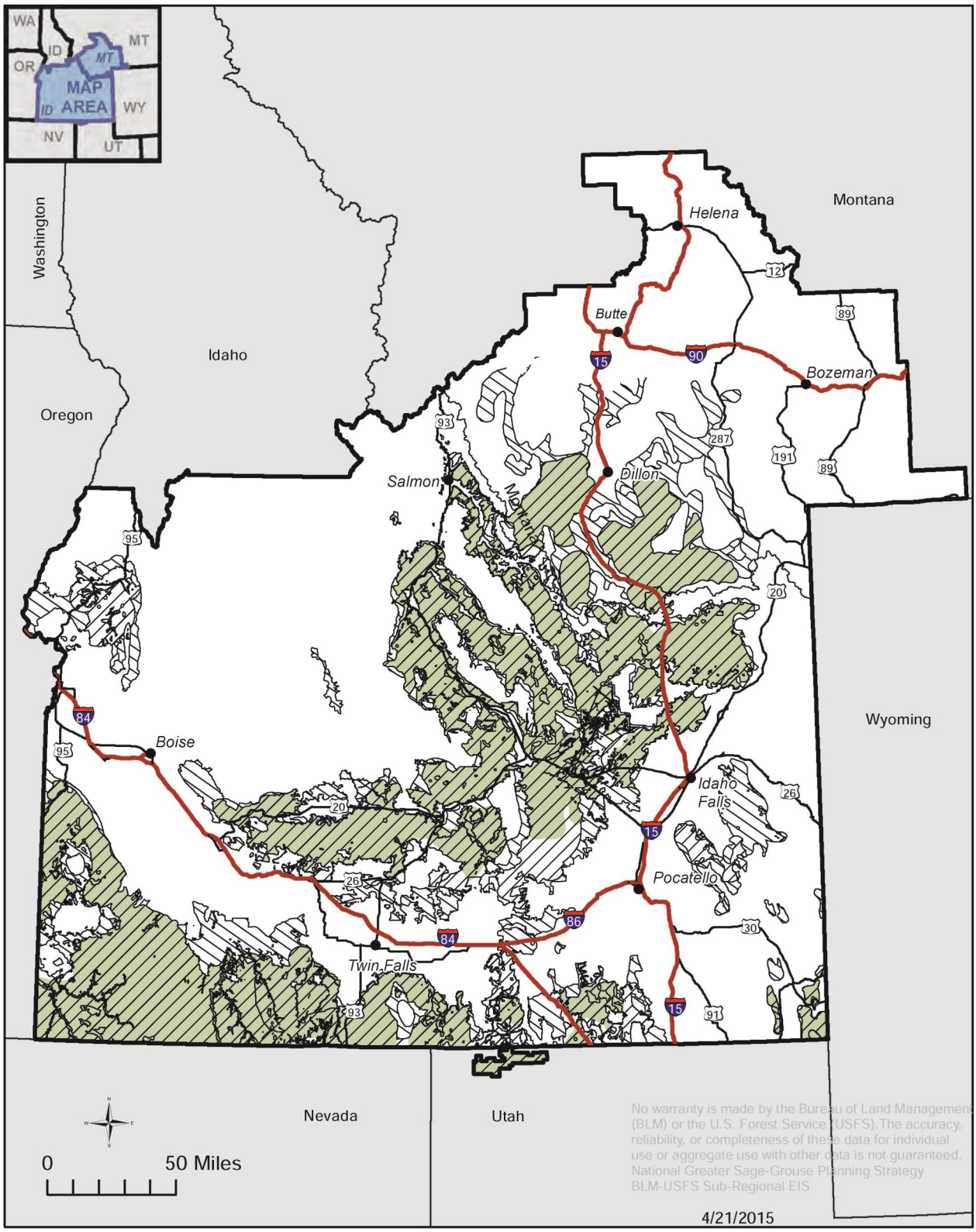
On October 27, 2014, the FWS provided the BLM/FS a memorandum titled "Greater Sage-Grouse: Additional Recommendations to Refine Land Use Allocations in Highly Important Landscapes". The memorandum and associated maps provided by the FWS identify areas that represent recognized "strongholds" for GRSG that have been noted and referenced by the conservation community as having the highest densities of GRSG and other criteria important for the persistence of the species. These areas have been incorporated into the Proposed Plan as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA) (**Figure 1-3,** USFWS Priority Areas for Conservation with Preliminary Priority and General Habitat), and will be managed as PHMA with the following additional management:

1) Recommended for withdrawal from the General Mining Act of 1872, subject to valid existing rights.

2) Managed as NSO, without waiver, exception, or modification, for fluid mineral leasing.

3) Prioritized for management and conservation actions in these areas, including, but not limited to review of livestock grazing permits/leases (see livestock grazing section for additional actions).

Figure 1-3
USFWS Priority Areas for Conservation with Preliminary Priority and General Habitat



GRSG COT PAC
Priority Habitat
General Habitat
Analysis Boundary
Interstate Highway
US Highway
Major Cities

1.1.1 Other Federal Agency Involvement

On November 21, 2014 the USGS published "Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse—A Review" (USGS 2014). The USGS review provided a compilation and summary of published scientific studies that evaluate the influence of anthropogenic activities and infrastructure on GRSG populations. The BLM has reviewed this information and examined how lek buffer-distances were addressed through land use allocations and other management actions in the Draft Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region GRSG LUPA/EIS. Based on this review, in undertaking BLM management actions, and consistent with valid and existing rights and applicable law in authorizing third party actions, the BLM will apply the lek buffer-distances in the USGS Report "Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage Grouse-A Review (Open File Report 2014-1239)" in GHMA, IHMA, and PHMA as detailed in **Appendix DD**.

1.1.2 State Government and Wildlife Agencies Involvement

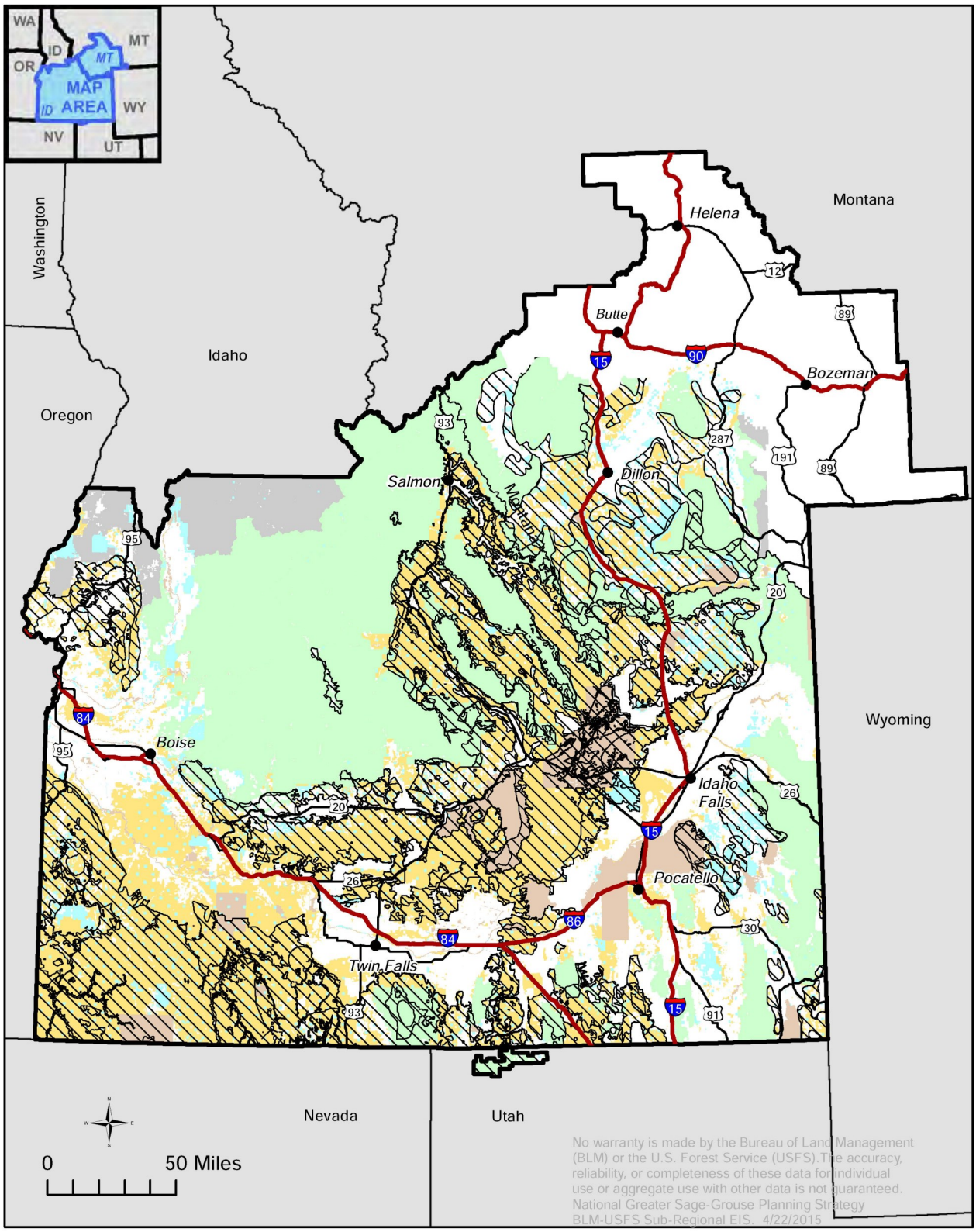
The various state wildlife agencies are involved in the BLM GRSG planning strategy as cooperating agencies and are involved with the RMTs and the Sub-Regional interdisciplinary teams. While working to help develop the EIS, the states of Idaho and Utah have also worked through their own authorities and processes to develop state plans to be included as alternatives in the BLM GRSG Planning Strategy as a potential approach to management for consideration by the BLM and Forest Service.

The Governor of the State of Montana issued Executive Order 10-2014 which created the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team and the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The executive order outlines a number of conservation strategies for state agencies to follow for land uses and activities in GRSG habitat in addition to establishing the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team and habitat conservation program. The State conservation efforts are complimentary to the conservation measures proposed in the BLM land use plans and when combined would provide conservation efforts across land ownership boundaries.

1.1.3 Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region

The BLM Idaho and Montana state offices and Forest Service Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Boise, Caribou, Salmon-Challis, Sawtooth, and Targhee national forests and Curlew National Grassland are preparing the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional EIS. This is to consider amending up to 29 LUPs to incorporate conservation measures into the management of GRSG habitat for all included BLM-administered and National Forest System lands (**Figure 1-4**, Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Planning Area). This planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM and Forest Service will provide direction during this planning effort, and the planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction. For this EIS, the planning area is the entire sub-region (**Figure 1-4**). Lands addressed in the LUPA will be BLM-administered and National Forest System lands (including surface-estate and split-estate lands) in GRSG habitats. Any

Figure 1-4
Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Planning Area



Management Agency

- Bureau of Land Management
- United States Forest Service
- Private
- State
- Other
- USFS Not Analyzed
- *Idaho and SW Montana Sub-regional boundary*

Preliminary Priority Habitat

- Priority
- General

direction provided in the LUPA will apply only to federal lands or mineral estate administered by either the BLM or the Forest Service. The LUPA will be limited to providing land use direction specific to the conservation of GRSG and their habitat. The proposed LUPA is intended to identify and incorporate appropriate regulatory mechanisms to maintain, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat. It also is intended to eliminate, reduce, or minimize threats to GRSG priority and general habitats on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region. The proposed LUPA addresses both ESA Listing Factors A and D (see Section 1.1 above) and is intended to provide consistency in the management of GRSG habitats across Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region BLM and Forest System lands. The LUPs identified in **Table 1-2**, BLM and Forest Service Land Use Plans Proposed for Amendment, are proposed to be amended during this effort to incorporate appropriate conservation measures. The Butte RMP is not identified in **Table 1-2** and is not going to be amended due to the limited extent and quality of GRSG habitat present within the Butte Field Office; however, the area covered by the Butte RMP will be considered as part of the effects analysis described in **Chapter 4**.

Table 1-2
BLM and Forest Service Land Use Plans Proposed for Amendment

Managing Office	Year Effective	Land Use Plan
Bureau of Land Management		
Bruneau Field Office, ID	1983	Bruneau MFP
Bruneau Field Office, ID	Revision to start in 2015	Bruneau RMP Revision
Burley Field Office, ID	1985	Cassia RMP
Burley Field Office, ID	1982	Twin Falls MFP
Challis Field Office, ID	1999	Challis RMP
Dillon Field Office, MT	2006	Dillon RMP
Four Rivers Field Office, ID	1988	Cascade RMP
Four Rivers Field Office, ID	1983	Kuna RMP
Four Rivers Field Office, ID	In Development	Four Rivers RMP Revision
Four Rivers Field Office, ID	2008	Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) RMP
Jarbidge Field Office, ID	1987	Jarbidge RMP
Jarbidge Field Office, ID	In Development	Jarbidge RMP Revision
Owyhee Field Office, ID	1999	Owyhee RMP
Pocatello Field Office, ID	2012	Pocatello RMP
Salmon Field Office, ID	1987	Lemhi RMP
Shoshone Field Office, ID	2006	Craters of the Moon National Monument RMP
Shoshone Field Office, ID	1975	Magic MFP
Shoshone Field Office, ID	1981	Sun Valley MFP
Shoshone Field Office, ID	1980	Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP
Shoshone and Burley Field Offices, ID	1985	Monument RMP
Shoshone and Burley Field Offices, ID	Revision to start in 2015	Shoshone-Burley RMP Revision
Upper Snake Field Office, ID	1981	Little Lost-Birch Creek MFP

Table 1-2
BLM and Forest Service Land Use Plans Proposed for Amendment

Managing Office	Year Effective	Land Use Plan
Upper Snake Field Office, ID	1985	Medicine Lodge RMP
Upper Snake Field Office, ID	1981	Big Desert MFP
Upper Snake Field Office, ID	1983	Big Lost MFP
Upper Snake Field Office, ID	In Development	Upper Snake RMP
Forest Service		
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, MT	2009	Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Plan
Boise National Forest, ID	2003	Boise National Forest Revised Forest Plan
Caribou-Targhee National Forest, ID	2002	Curlew National Grassland Management Plan
Caribou-Targhee National Forest, ID	2003	Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest, ID	1997	1997 Revised Forest Plan, Targhee National Forest
Salmon-Challis National Forest, ID	1987	Challis National Forest Plan
Salmon-Challis National Forest, ID	1988	Salmon National Forest Plan
Sawtooth National Forest, ID, UT	2003	Sawtooth National Forest Revised Forest Plan

1.2 Purpose and Need

The BLM and the Forest Service are preparing a LUPA with associated EIS for LUPs containing GRSG habitat. This effort responds to the USFWS's 2010 Finding which identified inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant threat. The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM and Forest Service as conservation measures embedded in LUPs. Changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of populations that are anticipated across the species' range. These plan amendments will focus on areas affected by threats to the GRSG habitat identified by the USFWS in the 2010 Finding. Within the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region the primary threats to GRSG include habitat loss and fragmentation due to increased occurrence of wildfire, expansion of invasive species, human development and infrastructure. **Table 1-3,** Identified Threats to Greater Sage-GrouseIdentified Threats to Greater Sage-Grouse , lists the threats, in order of priority, that have been identified across the GRSG range and specifically within Idaho and Montana. At the local scale, the relative risk of these threats may differ. For example, even though the USFWS at the national level, the State of Idaho at the state level, and the Challis Local Working Group (LWG) at the local level have identified predation as a lower threat, the Custer County Board of Commissioners has identified excessive predation as the greatest threat to GRSG within Custer County (see **Appendix R**).

Table 1-3
Identified Threats to Greater Sage-Grouse

USFWS 2010 Finding	2006 Idaho GRSG Conservation Plan	2005 Montana GRSG Management Plan
Invasive Species	Wildfire	Fire
Infrastructure	Infrastructure	Harvest management
Fire	Annual Grassland	Livestock grazing management
Agriculture	Livestock Impacts	Noxious weed management
Grazing	Human Disturbance	Mining and energy development
Oil and Gas	West Nile Virus	Outreach, education, and implementation;
Urbanization	Prescribed Fire	Power lines and generation facilities
Mining	Seeded Perennial Grassland	Predation
Conifer Invasion	Climate Change	Recreational disturbance of GRSG
Predation	Conifer Encroachment	Roads and motorized vehicles
Disease	Isolated Populations	Vegetation
Water Development	Predation	Other wildlife
Hunting	Urban/Exurban Development	
Climate Change	Sagebrush Control	
	Insecticides	
	Agricultural Expansion	
	Sport Hunting	
	Mines/Landfills/Gravel Pits	
	Falconry	

Source: USFWS 2010a; Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee 2006; Montana Sage-Grouse Work Group 2005

The purpose of the LUPA is to identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures into LUPs to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat. The BLM and Forest Service will consider such measures in the context of their multiple-use mandates under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), respectively. Because the BLM and Forest Service administer a large portion of the GRSG habitat within the affected states, changes in BLM and Forest Service management of GRSG habitats are anticipated to have a considerable beneficial impact on present and future GRSG populations.

1.3 Description of the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Area

1.3.1 Overview

The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region includes BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in Idaho and southwestern Montana, excluding the Idaho panhandle (**Figure 1-3** and **Table 1-4**, Acres of GRSG Habitat by Surface Management. The specific field offices and national forests included in the planning area are: Bruneau Field Office, Burley Field Office, Challis Field Office, Four Rivers Field Office, Jarbidge Field Office,

Table 1-4
Acres of GRSG Habitat by Surface Management

Surface Land Management	Acres PPH	Acres PGH	Acres Outside Habitat	Total Acres
BLM Total	**7,272,100**	**1,971,800**	**3,205,100**	**12,449,000**
BLM – Idaho	6,811,400	1,749,900	2,982,900	11,544,200
Bruneau Field Office	1,001,000	184,700	262,900	1,448,600
Burley Field Office	422,000	206,200	206,700	834,900
Challis Field Office	635,600	84,400	72,900	792,900
Four Rivers Field Office	162,200	190,800	901,400	1,254,400
Jarbidge Field Office	765,100	251,900	305,100	1,322,200
Owyhee Field Office	794,600	242,700	222,500	1,259,900
Pocatello Field Office	233,700	87,500	278,800	599,900
Salmon Field Office	311,100	51,600	131,200	493,900
Shoshone Field Office	1,092,500	262,000	368,700	1,723,200
Upper Snake Field Office	1,393,800	187,900	232,600	1,814,300
BLM – Montana	460,600	222,000	222,200	904,800
Dillon Field Office	460,600	222,000	222,200	904,800
Forest Service Total	**962,400**	**898,100**	**11,391,900**	**13,252,400**
Forest Service - Idaho	728,200	664,100	9,718,800	11,111,100
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	110	30	980	1,120
Sawtooth National Forest	210,100	212,400	1,612,300	2,034,800
Boise National Forest	21,200	56,900	2,182,800	2,260,900
Caribou-Targhee National Forest	148,300	186,400	2,251,300	2,586,000
Salmon-Challis National Forest	348,700	208,300	3,672,400	4,229,400
Forest Service - Montana	162,300	234,000	1,673,100	2,069,400
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest	162,300	234,000	1,673,100	2,069,400
Forest Service - Utah	71,900	0	0	71,900
Sawtooth National Forest	71,900	0	0	71,900
US Fish and Wildlife Service	39,700	11,700	30,000	81,400
National Park Service	27,200	222,700	261,800	511,700
Department of Energy	378,000	182,500	1,670	562,200
Department of Defense	11,100	37,700	78,500	127,400
Bureau of Reclamation	3,250	3,260	109,800	116,300
Indian Tribe	143,900	10,700	189,000	343,600
Idaho State	642,400	377,500	804,500	1,824,400
Montana State	221,700	167,500	432,000	821,100
Utah State	630	0	0	630
Private	2,127,600	1,857,200	9,652,900	13,637,700
Other	87,800	32,200	294,400	414,400
Total Acres:	**11,921,200**	**5,756,600**	**26,164,500**	**43,842,300**

Source: BLM 2013

Owyhee Field Office, Pocatello Field Office, Salmon Field Office, Shoshone Field Office, Upper Snake Field Office, Boise National Forest, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Curlew National Grassland, Salmon-Challis National Forest, and Sawtooth National Forest in Idaho; and Butte Field Office, Dillon Field Office, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in southwest Montana. The Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region also includes the portion of the Sawtooth National Forest located within Box Elder County in Utah (managed under the Sawtooth Forest Plan), and the maps of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA will display these lands as part of the planning area. The acres of GRSG habitat by county is displayed in **Table 1-5**, Acres of GRSG Habitat by County' .

There are approximately 77,800 acres of BLM-administered lands in Elko County, Nevada, located north of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and south of the Idaho-Nevada state line adjacent to the Bruneau and Jarbidge Field Offices in Idaho. For purposes of the GRSG LUPAs in Idaho and in Nevada, planning for these lands will occur through the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA, and the regulatory measures and direction that are put in place for the GRSG through the Nevada and Northeastern California ROD will be implemented and administered by the Jarbidge and Bruneau Field Offices in Idaho. Therefore, the decision and planning areas for the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse LUPA end at the Idaho/Nevada state line and will not include lands in Nevada; however, maps will continue to include these Nevada lands as part of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region based on the recognized administrative boundary.

PPH and PGH have been delineated as defined by BLM IM No. 2012-043 for both Idaho and Montana. Although slightly different processes were used to delineate PPH and PGH in Idaho and Montana the habitat designations are analogous and will be discussed interchangeably for the purposes analysis. In Idaho, PPH and PGH were identified based on a model incorporating sage-grouse breeding bird density and lek connectivity models, informed with additional ancillary broad scale habitat data, seasonal habitat maps, connectivity information, expert opinion, population persistence model, local priority areas and agriculture and conifer filters (Makela and Major 2012).

In Montana, PPH was delineated based on Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Park's (MFWP) modeling of GRSG Core Areas using a model based on male lek attendance and refined with seasonal habitat, telemetry, connectivity information and field review; occupied habitats not identified as Core Areas were delineated as PGH (MFWP 2009).

Through this land use planning process, the BLM and Forest Service refined PPH and PGH data to: (1) identify priority habitat and analyze actions within priority habitat to conserve GRSG habitat functionality, and/or where appropriate, improve habitat functionality, and (2) identify general habitat and analyze actions within general habitat that provide for major life history function (e.g., breeding, migration, or winter survival) in order to maintain genetic diversity needed for sustainable GRSG populations.

Table 1-5
Acres of GRSG Habitat by County[1, 2]

County	Acres PPH			Acres PGH			GRSG Habitat (PPH & PGH)			County Acres	Percent Federal PPH in County	Percent Federal Habitat in County
	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service			
Idaho												
Ada	0	0	0	500	0	500	500	0	500	678,800	0	0
Adams	7,800	0	7,800	14,400	0	14,400	22,200	0	22,200	604,200	1	4
Bear Lake	43,500	1,600	45,200	4,700	600	5,300	48,200	2,200	50,500	672,700	7	8
Bingham	87,800	0	87,800	96,500	0	96,500	184,300	0	184,300	1,356,800	6	14
Blaine	454,000	2,200	456,200	65,300	17,600	82,900	519,300	19,800	539,100	1,699,100	27	32
Bonneville	6,200	0	6,200	19,400	42,000	61,400	25,600	42,000	67,600	1,220,500	1	6
Butte	489,400	65,400	554,700	20,200	73,800	94,000	509,600	139,200	648,700	1,432,800	39	45
Camas	97,200	400	97,600	15,300	19,000	34,300	112,500	19,400	131,900	689,100	14	19
Caribou	7,400	0	7,400	9,100	2,000	11,100	16,500	2,000	18,500	1,150,900	1	2
Cassia	251,500	130,900	382,400	133,400	121,900	255,300	384,900	252,800	637,700	1,651,000	23	39
Clark	310,700	80,500	391,100	25,800	89,700	115,600	336,500	170,200	506,700	1,128,500	35	45
Custer	652,500	234,700	887,200	78,100	102,200	180,300	730,600	336,900	1,067,500	3,160,400	28	34
Elmore	108,400	26,000	134,400	57,700	57,000	114,700	166,100	83,000	249,100	1,986,100	7	13
Fremont	97,800	8,900	106,600	6,900	14,100	21,000	104,700	23,000	127,600	1,212,300	9	11
Gem	0	0	0	19,500	0	19,500	19,500	0	19,500	361,400	0	5
Gooding	195,000	0	195,000	18,100	0	18,100	213,100	0	213,100	469,900	41	45
Jefferson	169,100	0	169,100	12,200	0	12,200	181,300	0	181,300	707,700	24	26
Jerome	0	0	0	54,900	0	54,900	54,900	0	54,900	385,600	0	14
Lemhi	377,800	66,800	444,600	63,200	76,800	139,900	441,000	143,600	584,500	2,923,100	15	20
Lincoln	306,100	0	306,100	129,700	0	129,700	435,800	0	435,800	771,800	40	56
Madison	11,400	0	11,400	800	0	800	12,200	0	12,200	303,000	4	4
Minidoka	124,500	0	124,500	10,800	0	10,800	135,300	0	135,300	488,000	26	28

[1]Acres included are within the planning area. Acres for counties that extend beyond the planning area only reflect those acres within the county and within the planning area. Counties which do not contain any federal PPH or PGH are not included in the table.
[2]Acreage totals may not match other tables exactly, as a result of rounding errors and GIS overlay offsets.

Table 1-5
Acres of GRSG Habitat by County[1, 2]

County	Acres PPH			Acres PGH			GRSG Habitat (PPH & PGH)			County Acres	Percent Federal PPH in County	Percent Federal Habitat in County
	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service	BLM	Forest Service	BLM & Forest Service			
Oneida	172,300	43,600	215,900	65,700	17,900	83,600	238,000	61,500	299,500	769,000	28	39
Owyhee	2,344,500	0	2,344,500	651,000	0	651,000	2,995,500	0	2,995,500	4,925,800	48	61
Payette	3,400	0	3,400	9,100	0	9,100	12,500	0	12,500	262,400	1	5
Power	82,100	4,100	86,200	35,800	2,400	38,300	117,900	6,500	124,500	923,000	9	13
Twin Falls	345,000	63,900	408,900	39,700	27,500	67,200	384,700	91,400	476,100	1,234,300	33	39
Washington	66,100	0	66,100	92,000	0	92,000	158,100	0	158,100	942,400	7	17
Montana												
Beaverhead	436,900	122,900	559,800	123,400	138,800	262,200	560,300	261,700	822,000	3,564,900	15	23
Deer Lodge	0	0	0	700	0	700	700	0	700	474,400	0	0
Fremont	0	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clark	0	0	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madison	23,700	39,900	63,500	101,200	95,604	196,900	124,900	135,504	260,400	2,306,000	3	11
Silver Bow	0	0	0	17,600	0	17,600	17,600	0	17,600	459,900	0	4
Utah												
Box Elder[3]	0	71,900	71,900	0	0	0	0	71,900	71,900	92,100	78	78

[3]Only acres for the Sawtooth National Forest that are located in Box Elder County are included; therefore, the only county acres contained in the Idaho and southwestern Montana Sub-region are those administered by the Sawtooth National Forest.

While PPH and PGH delineations reflect a relatively broad characterization of habitat priorities at the landscape scale, there may be variations or discrepancies locally due to the nature of the modeling involved. For purposes of this planning effort, the April 2012 map (used in the DEIS) (Makela and Major 2012) provides a common basis for comparing baseline conditions and impacts analysis for each alternative on GRSG habitat in the sub-region. For the remainder of this document, PPH and PGH refer to the areas identified in the April 2012 map of GRSG habitat (**Figure 1-4**). For the proposed plan this map was refined through coordination between the BLM, Forest Service, and the State of Idaho into a three-tiered habitat classification system. This does not represent a significantly new depiction or analysis of the extent of the habitat identified in the DEIS.

The vast majority of the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region lies within WAFWA Management Zone (MZ) IV (Stiver et al. 2006). A small portion of southeastern Idaho is within MZ II and is associated with the Wyoming Basin population. Within the sub-region, GRSG occupy all or portions of ten population areas described in Connelly et al (2004; **Figure 1-5**, Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Population Areas). Two populations (Great Basin Core, Wyoming Basin) occupy habitat in adjacent states. Habitat mapping has been coordinated across state boundaries.

The distribution of GRSG is closely aligned with the distribution of sagebrush-dominated landscapes (Schroeder et al. 2004). In the sub-region, large expanses of sagebrush still occur in portions of southwestern and south-central Idaho, in association with the Great Basin Core population shared with Nevada, Oregon, and Utah, as well as in portions of the Snake-Salmon-Beaverhead population north of the Snake River.

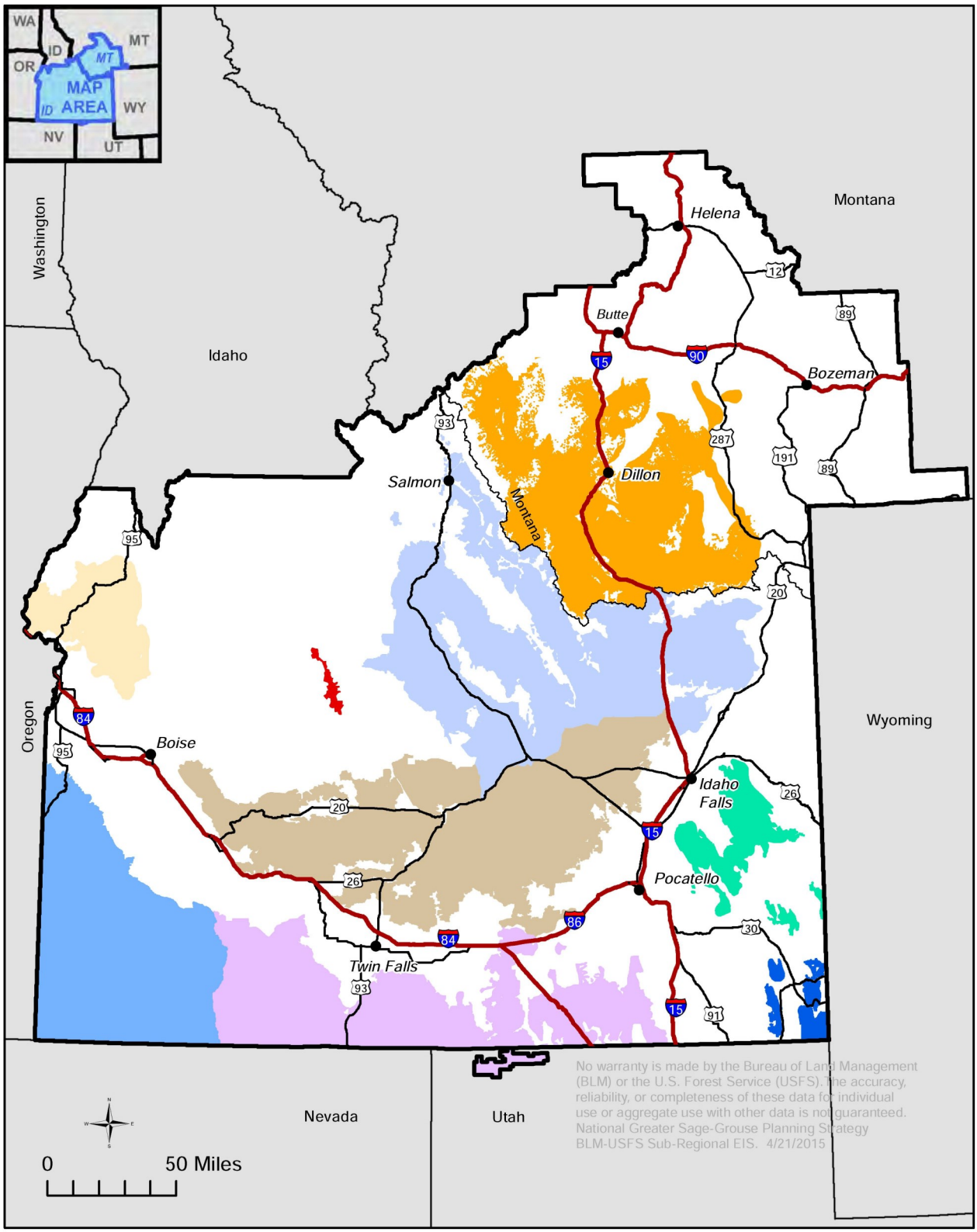
At broad scales, PPH and PGH encompass areas of intact sagebrush, suitable for GRSG habitat needs. PPH and PGH may also contain inclusions of conifer encroachment and perennial grass dominated areas, generally occupied by GRSG or potentially suitable for future restoration. At finer scales, PPH and PGH encompass areas of intact suitable sagebrush habitat that is generally occupied by GRSG, as well as areas of conifer expansion and perennial grassland potentially suitable for future restoration.

If current trends in wildfire, populations and habitat activities continue, then populations of sage-grouse in MZ IV are estimated to decline by 55 percent between 2007 and 2037, and by 66 percent in MZ II (USFWS 2010, citing unpublished version of Garton et al. 2011). Modeling suggests that if current conditions and trends continue, at least 13 percent of the GRSG populations may decline below effective population sizes of 50 within the next 30 years and at least 75 percent of the populations may decline below effective population sizes of 500 within the next 100 years (Garton et al. 2011).

1.3.2 Land Uses

Land uses occurring within GRSG habitat on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region are livestock grazing and associated infrastructure; rights-of-way (ROWs) for a variety of linear and site-type facilities;

Figure 1-5
Idaho and Southwestern Montana
Greater Sage-Grouse Population Areas



Population Area *

- Bear Lake
- East-Central Idaho
- Mountain Valleys
- North Side Snake
- SW Montana
- Sawtooth
- South Side Snake
- Southwest Idaho
- Weiser
- *Idaho and SW Montana Sub-regional boundary*

* Modified Connelly et al. 2004

travel and recreation; off-highway vehicle (OHV) use; energy (nonrenewable, renewable, and geothermal), mineral development (including hardrock and phosphate mining); and geothermal leasing, exploration, and development.

These uses generally occur throughout the planning area to varying degrees. For example phosphate leasing is typically confined to southeast Idaho and oil and gas leasing typically occurs in the eastern portion of the sub-region. Livestock grazing occurs throughout the sub-region as do recreation, OHV use and various ROW authorizations for linear and site-type facilities.

1.4 Planning Process

1.4.1 BLM Planning Process

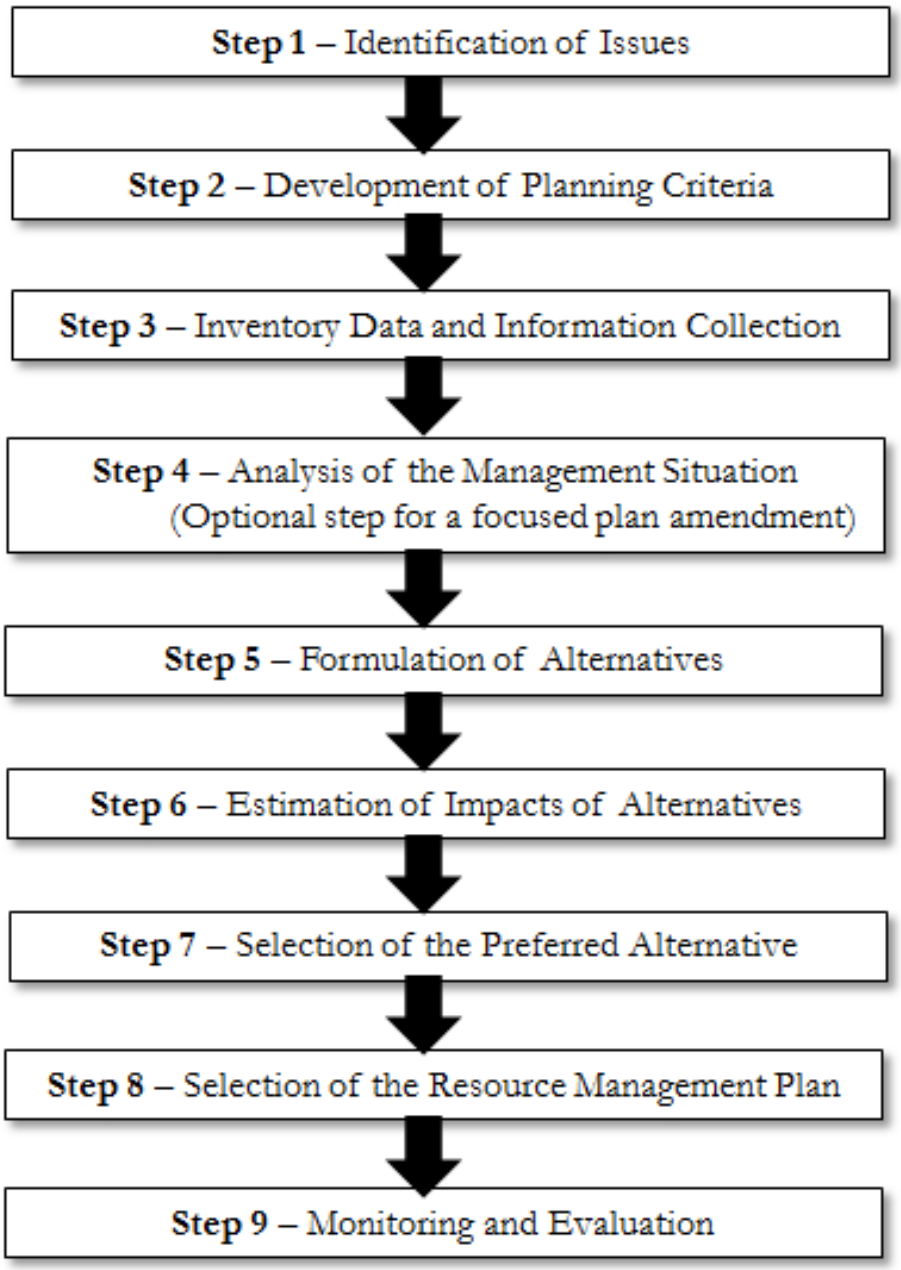
FLPMA requires the BLM to use RMPs as tools by which "present and future use is projected" (43 United States Code [USC] 170l(a)(2)). FLPMA's implementing regulations for planning (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1600), state that LUPs are a preliminary step in the overall process of managing public lands "designed to guide and control future management actions and the development of subsequent, more detailed and limited scope plans for resources and uses" (43 CFR 1601.0-2). Public participation and input are important components of land use planning.

Under BLM regulations, an RMP revision or amendment of an existing plan is a major federal action requiring disclosure and documentation of environmental effects as described in the NEPA. Thus, this EIS accompanies the amendment of the existing RMPs (**Table 1-2**). This EIS analyzes the impacts of six alternatives for the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region LUPA, including the No Action Alternative. The science used to analyze these impacts is current through August 2013.

The BLM uses a nine-step planning process (**Figure 1-6**, BLM Nine Step Planning Process) to develop or revise RMPs (43 CFR Part 1600 and planning program guidance in the BLM Handbook H-1601-1, Land Use Planning Handbook (BLM 2005a)). The planning process is designed to help the BLM identify the uses of BLM-administered lands desired by the public and to consider these uses to the extent they are consistent with the laws established by Congress and the policies of the executive branch of the federal government.

Once an RMP is approved, it may be changed through amendment. An amendment can be initiated in response to monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, a change in circumstances or a proposed action that may result in a change in the scope of resource uses or a change in the terms, conditions, and direction provided in the approved plan. If the BLM decides to prepare an EIS, the amending process shall follow the same procedure required for preparation and approval of the plan, but the focus shall be limited to that portion of the plan being amended (43 CFR 1610.5-5).

Figure 1-6
BLM Nine Step Planning Process



Source: 43 CFR 1610.4

As depicted in **Figure 1-6**, the planning process is issue-driven (Step 1). The planning process is undertaken to resolve management issues and problems as well as to take advantage of management opportunities. The BLM uses the public scoping process to identify planning issues to direct (drive) the revision or amendment of an existing plan. The scoping process is also used to introduce the public to preliminary planning criteria, which set the parameters or "sideboards" for conducting the planning process (Step 2).

The BLM uses existing data from files and other sources and collects new data to address planning issues and to fill data gaps identified during public scoping (Step 3). Using these data, information concerning the resource management programs, and the planning criteria, the BLM completes an Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) (Step 4) to describe current management and develop or inform the affected environment portion of the LUP. Typically, the AMS is conducted at the outset of planning for an entire LUP or LUP revision and is incorporated by reference into development of a single focus plan amendment. AMSs are required for plan revisions but not necessarily for plan amendments, and an AMS has not been completed specific to this sub-regional planning effort. In this case, direction for the plan amendment is provided through national policy (BLM IM 2012-044).

Results of the first four steps of the planning process clarify the purpose and need and identify key planning issues that need to be addressed by the amendment. Key planning issues reflect the focus of the LUP amendment and are described in more detail in **Section 1.5.2**, Issues Identified for Consideration in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region.

Alternatives constitute a range of management actions that set forth different priorities and measures to emphasize certain uses or resource values over other uses or resource values (usually representing a continuum from extraction and development to preservation/conservation) pursuant to the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate, so as to achieve certain goals or objectives consistent with the purpose and need. During alternative formulation (Step 5), the BLM collaborates with cooperating agencies to identity goals and objectives (desired outcomes) for resources and resource uses within the planning area. The alternatives represent a reasonable range of planning strategies for managing resources and resource uses. Chapter 2 of the DEIS, Alternatives, describes and summarizes the Preferred Alternative and the other draft alternatives considered in detail.

The draft LUPA/EIS also includes an analysis of the impacts of the Preferred Alternative and the other draft alternatives in Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences (Step 6). With input from cooperating agencies and BLM specialists, and consideration of planning issues, planning criteria, and the impacts of alternatives, the BLM identifies and recommends a preferred alternative from among the alternatives presented in the EIS (Step 7). This is documented in the draft LUPA/EIS, which is then distributed for a 90-day public review and comment period.

Following receipt and consideration of public comments on the draft LUPA/EIS and in preparation of the Proposed LUPA/Final EIS, the BLM considers all comments it receives during the public comment period (Step 8). This Proposed LUPA has been crafted, in whole

or in part, from components of the draft alternatives. It amends plans on final approval of the Record of Decision.

Monitoring, the repeated measurement of activities and conditions over time, and evaluation, in which the plan and monitoring data are reviewed to see if management goals and objectives are being met and if management direction is sound, are components of plan implementation (Step 9). Monitoring data gathered over time are examined and used to draw conclusions on whether management actions are meeting stated objectives, and if not, why. Conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management or what changes need to be made in management practices to meet objectives.

The two types of monitoring of the planning process include implementation and effectiveness monitoring. Land use plan monitoring is the process of (1) tracking the implementation of land use planning direction and (2) collecting and assessing data/information necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of land use planning direction. The two types of monitoring are described below.

Implementation Monitoring: Implementation monitoring is the most basic type of monitoring and simply determines whether planned activities have been implemented in the manner prescribed by the plan. Some agencies call this compliance monitoring. This monitoring documents the BLM's progress toward full implementation of the direction provided in the LUP. There are no specific thresholds or indicators required for this type of monitoring.

Effectiveness Monitoring: Effectiveness monitoring is aimed at determining if the implementation of activities has achieved the desired goals and objectives. Effectiveness monitoring asks the question: Was the specified activity successful in achieving the objective? This requires knowledge of the objectives established in the LUP as well as indicators that can be measured. Indicators are established by technical specialists in order to address specific questions, and thus to focus on collection of only necessary data. Success is measured against the benchmark of achieving desired future conditions established by the plan.

Regulations at 43 CFR 1610.4-9 require that the proposed LUPA establish intervals and standards, as appropriate, for monitoring and evaluation of the plan, based on the sensitivity of the resource decisions involved. Progress in meeting the plan objectives and adherence to the management framework established by the plan is reviewed periodically. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA state that agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases (40 CFR 1505.2(c)). To meet these requirements, the BLM will review the plan on a regular schedule in order to provide consistent tracking of accomplishments and provide information that can be used to develop annual budget requests to continue implementation.

LUP evaluations will be used by BLM to determine if the direction provided in the LUP, supported by the accompanying NEPA analysis, is still valid. Evaluation of the LUP will

generally be conducted every five years per BLM policy, unless unexpected actions, new information, or significant changes in other plans, legislation, or litigation triggers an evaluation. LUP evaluations determine if direction provided is being implemented, whether mitigation measures are satisfactory, whether there are significant changes in the related plans of other entities, whether there are new data of significance to the plan, and if direction should be changed through amendment or revision. Evaluations will follow the protocols established by the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 in effect at the time the evaluation is initiated. Specific monitoring and evaluation needs are identified by resource/uses throughout Chapter 2.

1.4.2 Forest Service Planning Process

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the NFMA (16 USC 1600 et seq.), requires the Forest Service to develop, maintain, and, as appropriate, revise LRMPs for units of the National Forest System using a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences. Consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 USC 528-531), the overall goal of managing the National Forest System is to sustain the multiple uses of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term productivity of the land. LRMPs provide broad guidance and information for project and activity decision-making. In particular, LRMPs coordinate outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness. Public participation and input are important components of land use planning.

The process of amending a LRMP is outlined in 36 CFR 219. The current version of this regulation states that plan amendments that were initiated before May 9, 2015 may be developed in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation. Therefore, the LRMP amendments in this document were developed according to direction in the 1982 version of the CFR 25 219. A LRMP includes plan components, proposed and possible actions, the monitoring program, and maps.

The objectives of LRMPs are: Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Multiple Use Goals and Objectives, including Desired Conditions.

1. Establishment of Forest-wide or Grassland-wide Management Requirements, including standards and guidelines.

2. Establishment of Management Area direction, including prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines.

3. Identification of lands suitable or unsuitable for various uses.

4. Recommendations for any Wilderness, Wild-Scenic, or other designated areas.

5. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluation.

NFMA requires LRMPs to be maintained, amended, and revised. Adaptive management requires ongoing adjustment of goals, objectives, management area prescriptions, standards, and guidelines constraining land uses. An amendment can be started in response to monitoring and evaluation findings, new data, new or revised policy, a change in circumstances or a proposed action that may result in a change in the scope of resource uses, or a change in the standards and guidelines of the approved plan. Plan development is part of the collaborative and adaptive cycle: (1) monitor, (2) evaluate monitoring results and any new information, and (3) change activity and resource management, change the plan, change the monitoring, or do an assessment.

The Forest Service responsible official may amend a plan in response to the need for change. For this amendment, the process involves eight steps (36 CFR, Part 220):

i. Consideration of need for change

ii. Public notice for initiating plan amendment. Development of the proposed plan amendment

iii. Documentation of affected environment and environmental consequences in an EIS. Public notice for proposed plan amendment, draft EIS, and 90-day comment period

iv. Response to comments

v. Issuance of final EIS and draft decision document, beginning of the 60-day public objection period before approval of the decision document

vi. Upon resolution of any objection[4] (36 CFR, Part 219 subpart B), approval of the plan by the responsible official

Under Forest Service regulations, an LRMP revision or amendment of an existing plan is a federal action requiring appropriate NEPA documentation. This EIS analyzes the possible amendment of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest LRMP and the amendment of the individual LRMPs for the Boise, Caribou, Challis, Salmon, Sawtooth, and Targhee national forests and Curlew National Grassland. This EIS analyzes the impacts of various alternatives for the plan amendment, including the no action alternative.

In addition, both agencies have certain existing programs, activities, or projects that implement their respective LUPs (for example oil and gas and geothermal leasing analyses).

[4]Because the Forest Service is a cooperating agency and thus a participant in the multifederal agency effort, the responsible officials for the Forest Service have waived the objection procedures of 35 CFR, Part 219, Subpart B, and adopted the administrative review procedure of the BLM, as provided for by 36 CFR, Part 219.59(a). This is in agreement with the responsible officials of the BLM. A joint agency response will be provided to those who file for administrative review of this effort.

These program-specific documents may also be updated to reflect new information or changed circumstances that result from this analysis.[5]

1.5 Public Input and Identification of Issues

1.5.1 The Scoping Process

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues to consider in the planning process. Scoping identifies the public and agency concerns, defines the relevant issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the EIS, and eliminates those that are not within the scope or have been covered by prior environmental review. A planning issue is defined as a major controversy or dispute regarding existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production and related management practices on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that can be addressed through a range of alternatives. The environmental impacts of these alternative management scenarios are analyzed and addressed in this final EIS.

A public scoping period was initiated on December 9, 2011, with the publication of a Notice of Intent to begin a planning effort in the Federal Register. Scoping is designed to be consistent with the public involvement requirements of FLPMA, NFMA, and NEPA. The cooperative process included soliciting input from interested state and local governments, tribal governments, other federal agencies and organizations, and individuals to identify the scope of issues to be addressed in the plan amendment, and to assist in the formulation of reasonable alternatives. The scoping process is an excellent method for opening dialogue between the BLM, Forest Service, and the general public about management of GRSG and their habitats on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands and for identifying the concerns of those who have an interest in this subject and in GRSG habitats. As part of the scoping process, the BLM also requested that the public submit nominations for potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) for GRSG and their habitats.

Public outreach during the public scoping period included: press releases announcing the original and extended scoping period for the EIS process; a newsletter mailed in December 2011 to over 14,000 agency officials, organizations, and members of the public in the Great Basin Region; 26 open houses throughout the Great Basin Region; and a National GRSG conservation Web site (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html) and a regional Web site for the Great Basin Region (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/western.html), which provides access to materials distributed at scoping meetings, as well as information on the public involvement process. The formal public comment period as required by NEPA began on December 9, 2011, with the publication of

[5]Regulations at 36 CFR, Part 228.102, require the Forest Service to decide which NFS lands are administratively available for oil and gas leasing. The Forest Service decision also includes necessary lease stipulations to protect surface resources. The Forest Service does not have regulations that address geothermal leasing, but the agency follows a process similar to oil and gas in that it conducts an analysis of leasing National Forest System lands and makes a decision that is consistent with but independent of the LRMP.

a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. It was extended through a Notice of Correction published February 10, 2012, and ended on March 23, 2012.

Scoping included scheduled open-house meetings in the following 26 locations (see Chapter 5 for details):

- Tonopah, Ely, Elko, Winnemucca, and Reno, Nevada
- Boise, Idaho Falls, Salmon, Twin Falls, and Pocatello, Idaho
- Lakeview, Ontario, Baker City, Burns, and Prineville, Oregon
- Price, Vernal, Salt Lake City, Randolph, Snowville, Richfield, Kanab, and Cedar City, Utah
- Alturas and Susanville, California
- Dillon, Montana

In addition, news releases were used to notify the public regarding the scoping period and the planning process and to invite the public to provide written comments from many sources including via email, fax, and regular mail (see Chapter 5 for details). Comments obtained from the public during the scoping period were used to define the relevant issues that would be addressed by a range of reasonable alternatives.

A total of 585 unique written submissions for the Great Basin Region were received during the public scoping period. Submissions resulted in a total of 7,472 unique comments. In addition, a total of 30,397 form letters were received.

For the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region planning process, scoping comments received from the public were placed in one of three categories:

i. Issues identified for consideration in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region LUPA
ii. Issues to be addressed through policy or administrative action (and therefore not addressed in the LUPA)
iii. Issues eliminated from detailed analysis because they are beyond the scope of the LUPA (and therefore not addressed in the LUPA)

Some important issues to be addressed in the LUPA were identified by the public and the agencies during the scoping process for the statewide planning effort. The Final Scoping Summary can be located at:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/documents_and_resources.html

The Scoping Summary was prepared in support of the planning effort and summarizes the scoping process. The Scoping Report identified issues in 13 broad categories. Section 1.5.3

describes the refined issues for the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region. Other resource and use issues are identified in the BLM Planning Handbook and Manual (H1610-1). All of these issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward for analysis.

1.5.2 Issues Identified for Consideration in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Region

During the scoping process, the BLM and Forest Service received feedback from members of the public, including various public, governmental and nongovernmental groups. This feedback, along with internal assessment and concerns described in the 2010 Finding, has been compiled to describe issues and analysis concerns that are discussed in this document. During comment analysis, individual comments were evaluated to determine whether they constituted issues relevant to this planning process. These issues were then evaluated to determine where in the planning process they most appropriately applied – project design; alternative development, or environmental effects.

Issues that applied to all parts of the planning process were further evaluated to determine planning issues. A planning issue is defined as a major controversy or dispute regarding existing and potential land and resource allocations, levels of resource use, production and related management practices on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands that can be addressed through a range of alternatives. Planning issues can drive the development of an alternative, may involve resources that are adversely affected by the proposed action, or involve unresolved conflicts regarding alternative uses of available resources. Planning issues provide focus for the analysis and are used to compare and contrast the environmental effects of the alternatives.

In addition to planning issues, analysis issues are identified and utilized in the effects analysis to compare alternatives. These issues are further described below.

1.5.3 Planning Issues

Issues identified as planning issues for this Draft LUPA/EIS are described below. These issues have been grouped according to their related threat to GRSG, as described in the 2010 Finding, and a brief description of the threat is provided. These issues were used to drive differences between the alternatives analyzed in detail and will be discussed in the analysis and throughout the remaining chapters of this document.

Wildfire

Wildfire (primarily lightning- and human-caused) in sagebrush ecosystems is one of the primary factors linked to the loss of sagebrush-steppe habitat and corresponding population declines of GRSG. Loss of sagebrush habitat to wildfire has been increasing in the western portion of the GRSG range due to an increase in fire frequency, which has been facilitated in drier, lower elevations by the replacement of native perennial bunchgrass communities by invasive annuals such as cheatgrass. The USFWS conservation objective for wildfire – retain and restore healthy native sagebrush plant communities within the range of GRSG (USFWS 2013) – is applicable to this planning issue.

Issues:

- **What measures should be undertaken to manage fuels and wildland fires, while protecting GRSG habitat?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement program activities to reduce the threat (habitat loss and fragmentation) to GRSG habitat from wildland and prescribed fire?**

Vegetation – Invasive Species, Conifer Encroachment

The increase in mean fire frequency has been facilitated by the incursion of nonnative annual grasses into sagebrush ecosystems (Billings 1994; Miller and Eddleman 2001). Exotic annual grasses and other invasive plants also alter habitat suitability for GRSG by reducing or eliminating native forbs and grasses essential for food and cover (75 *Federal Register* 13910, and references therein). Annual grasses and noxious perennials continue to expand their range, facilitated by ground disturbances, including wildfire (Miller and Eddleman 2001), improper grazing (Young et al. 1972, 1976), agriculture (Benvenuti 2007), motorized recreation, and infrastructure associated with energy development (Bergquist et al. 2007). The USFWS conservation objective for nonnative, invasive plant species – maintain and restore healthy, native sagebrush plant communities (USFWS 2013) – is tied to this threat.

The intentional removal or treatment of sagebrush (i.e., using prescribed fire, or any mechanical and chemical tools to remove or alter the successional status of the sagebrush ecosystem) can contribute to habitat loss and fragmentation. Removal and manipulation of sagebrush may also increase the opportunities for the incursion of invasive annual grasses, particularly if the soil crust is disturbed (Beck et al. 2012). The USFWS conservation objective for sagebrush removal – avoid sagebrush removal or manipulation in GRSG breeding or wintering habitats (USFWS 2013) – is tied to this threat.

GRSG are negatively impacted by the expansion of pinyon and/or juniper in their habitats, even if the under-story sagebrush habitats remain (Freese et al. 2009). GRSG avoid these areas of expansion (Casazza et al. 2010), and as the pinyon and/or juniper increases in abundance and size, the underlying habitat quality for GRSG diminishes. The USFWS conservation objective for pinyon-juniper expansion – remove pinyon-juniper from areas of sagebrush that are most likely to support GRSG (post-removal) at a rate that is at least equal to the rate of pinyon-juniper incursion (USFWS 2013) – is applicable to this planning issue.

Issues:

- **How will the BLM and Forest Service address the potential expansion of nonnative annual grasses (i.e., cheatgrass) and associated loss of sagebrush habitats as a result of climate change?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service conserve, enhance, or restore GRSG habitat such as sagebrush communities and minimize or prevent the introduction or spread of noxious weeds and invasive species?**

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement program activities to reduce the threat (habitat loss and fragmentation) to GRSG habitat from conifer encroachment and spread of noxious and invasive species?**

Infrastructure

The increasing demands on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands for the location of wind towers, cellular towers, utility lines, roads, and other infrastructure cause continued development within the GRSG range, resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation, which in turn result in GRSG population declines. Infrastructure development can cause fragmentation that leaves the remaining habitat in noncontiguous patches, alteration that renders patches unusable to a species, or other changes (such as installation of power lines or cellular towers) that cause habitat avoidance (USFWS 2010). The cumulative impacts of infrastructure is a concern because sage-grouse population persistence may not be influenced by a single anthropogenic (human-built or human-caused) line or point feature (such as a power line or tower), but by multiple anthropogenic features acting in synergy (Leu and Hanser 2011). Development of infrastructure for any purpose (e.g. roads, pipelines, power lines, and cellular towers) results in habitat loss and fragmentation, and may cause GRSG habitat avoidance. Infrastructure can also provide sources for the introduction of invasive plant species and may also facilitate predation by providing perching or nesting opportunities for ravens and raptors. Surface mining and associated facilities within GRSG habitats result in the direct loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation. The USFWS conservation objectives listed below for the following threats are applicable to this planning issue:

- Energy development – design energy development to ensure it will not impinge upon stable or increasing GRSG population trends
- Infrastructure – avoid development of infrastructure within PACs
- Mining – maintain stable to increasing GRSG populations and no net loss of GRSG habitats in areas affected by mining (USFWS 2013)

Issues:

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service manage program activities (land use authorizations, mining, mineral leasing, energy development – including renewable energy) to reduce the threat (habitat loss, fragmentation and reduced productivity) to GRSG habitat from additional infrastructure development and management of ongoing infrastructure development (ROWs, oil and gas development, Coal/Strip Mining, Hard Rock Mining, Wind Energy Development, Solar Energy Development) while recognizing valid existing authorizations?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service manage existing and proposed infrastructure development to reduce resulting mortality (direct and via predation) of GRSG?**

Human Disturbance

Various activities occurring within GRSG habitat can disturb GRSG, altering their behavior and potentially disrupting aspects of their life history requirements, leading to lowered productivity and reduced populations. These activities can include ROW, energy (nonrenewable and renewable) and mineral development, as well as commercial operation activities and recreational activities. Aspects of these activities can cause direct and indirect disturbance to GRSG (construction activities, operational activities, maintenance activities, noise, vehicles, etc.). The USFWS conservation objectives listed below for the following threats are applicable to this planning issue:

- Energy development – design energy development to ensure it will not impinge upon stable or increasing GRSG population trends
- Infrastructure – avoid development of infrastructure within PACs
- Mining – maintain stable to increasing GRSG populations and no net loss of GRSG habitats in areas affected by mining
- Recreation – manage direct and indirect human disturbance (including noise) to avoid interruption of normal GRSG behavior (USFWS 2013)

Issues:

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement program activities to reduce the threat (loss of productivity) to GRSG habitat from human presence?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement program activities to reduce the threat (habitat loss and fragmentation) to GRSG habitat from recreation and travel management activities?**
- **How would motorized, nonmotorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide access to federal lands and a variety of recreation opportunities while protecting GRSG and their habitat?**

Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing is the most widespread land use across the sagebrush biome (Connelly et al. 2004) and almost all sagebrush areas are managed for livestock grazing (Knick et al. 2003). Improper livestock management, in relation to local ecological conditions, may have negative impacts on GRSG seasonal habitats (USFWS 2010a, and references therein). Structures which support range management activities can have negative impacts on GRSG by increasing fragmentation (e.g., fences and roads) or diminishing habitat quality (e.g., concentrating ungulates in winter habitats). Fences can be deleterious to GRSG populations and habitats, with threats including habitat fragmentation and direct mortality through strikes (Stevens et al. 2012). Fences can also improve habitat conditions for GRSG (e.g., by protecting brood-rearing habitats in riparian areas from overgrazing). The USFWS

conservation objectives listed below for the following threats are applicable to this planning issue:

- Grazing – conduct grazing management for all ungulates in a manner consistent with local ecological conditions that maintains or restores healthy sagebrush shrub and native perennial grass and forb communities and conserves the essential habitat components for GRSG (e.g., shrub cover, nesting cover)
- Range management structures – avoid or reduce the impact of range management structures on GRSG habitat
- Fences – minimize the impact of fences on GRSG populations (USFWS 2013)

Issues:

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement grazing management activities (grazing, water developments, fences, and structures) to reduce the threat (habitat loss, fragmentation, productivity, disease vector production) to GRSG and their habitat?**
- **What measures would the BLM and Forest Service put in place to protect and improve GRSG habitat while maintaining grazing privileges?**
- **What measures would be put in place to manage habitat for other wildlife species and reduce conflicts with GRSG?**
- **What measures would the BLM and Forest Service put in place to reduce the impacts of wild horses and burros on GRSG habitat?**

Management and Monitoring

Effective conservation strategies are predicated on identifying key areas across the landscape that are necessary to maintain redundant, representative, and resilient populations. Delineation of key GRSG habitats recognizes the extensive reach of habitat threats and the existing loss and degradation of habitats, and acknowledges that preservation of every remaining area of GRSG habitat is improbable (Kiesecker et al. 2011; USFWS 2013). With input from the state wildlife agencies, the BLM and Forest Service have identified PPH and PGH. These areas, along with the PACs identified by USFWS, form a foundation to assess application of habitat designations and related management actions as part of this effort.

Issues:

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service use the best available science to designate priority and general habitat categories for GRSG habitat within the planning area?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service accurately monitor the impact of land uses on GRSG and its habitat?**

Urbanization and Agricultural Conversion

Ex-urban development (dispersed homes on small acreages) results in direct habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and the introduction of invasive plants species. Urban and ex-urban activities also increase the presence of predator subsidies (e.g., trash, landfills and bird feeders) allowing for increased predators associated with humans that may have disproportionate impacts on GRSG (e.g., red fox, skunks, and raccoons). Agricultural conversion is typically defined as the conversion of sagebrush habitats to tilled agricultural crops or re-seeded exotic grass pastures, resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation. The USFWS conservation objectives listed below for the following threats are applicable to this planning issue:

- Ex-urban development – limit urban and ex-urban development in GRSG habitats and maintain intact native sagebrush plant communities
- Agricultural conversion – avoid further loss of sagebrush habitat for agricultural activities (both plant and animal production) and prioritize restoration (USFWS 2013)

Issues:

- **What opportunities exist to adjust public land ownership that would increase management efficiency for GRSG and their habitat?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service manage lands and realty decisions to reduce habitat fragmentation and conversion of GRSG habitat?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service evaluate, authorize, and implement land tenure adjustments to reduce the conversion of (habitat loss and fragmentation) GRSG habitat to agricultural or urbanization uses?**

Social and Economic Concerns

Management of the BLM-administered and National Forest System lands within the sub-region affect the economies of the associated counties and states. Conversely, the local demographics, social structure, and values within the counties and states influence the demand for uses and opportunities provided by the BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. In many counties, management uses (mining, grazing, energy development) of the BLM-administered and National Forest System lands are a vital component of the economic and social stability in these counties. Noncommodity values around aesthetics and recreation opportunities can also play an important role in local economics and sense of place.

Issue:

- **How could the BLM and Forest Service promote or maintain activities that provide social and economic benefit to local communities while providing protection for GRSG habitat?**

Special Management Designations

The BLM and Forest Service have the ability to designate and manage unique and important areas for their associated values. The BLM calls these ACECs and the Forest Service calls these Zoological Areas. Several ACECs already exist within the sub-region. These areas prescribe management to protect the unique values identified during their designation. Existing special management areas such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), and Wild and Scenic Rivers, may in some areas protect GRSG by restricting resource uses in these areas.

Issue:

- **What areas would be designated by the BLM or Forest Service to benefit the maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of GRSG and GRSG habitat?**

Analysis Issues

The following issues were identified through the internal and external scoping process; however, they were not used to drive the development of the alternatives. They will be displayed as components of the analysis in **Chapter 4** and may show differences between the effects of the alternatives.

Issues:

- **How would the BLM and Forest Service protect water and soil resources in order to benefit GRSG habitat?**
- **How would the BLM and Forest Service incorporate the analysis of the impacts of a changing climate on GRSG habitat?**

Issues not Addressed

The following discussion describes various comments or issues raised during the scoping period which are outside the scope of this LUPA process. This discussion is taken from the May 2012 National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Scoping Summary Report (BLM 2012).

Comments related to national policy decisions and issues outside the scope of the LUPA will not be addressed as part of this planning effort, including decisions on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands within the purview of other planning efforts or decisions made by other federal, state, or local agencies.

National Policy Decisions
Commenters expressed concern with decisions at the national level, including, but not limited to, the LUP revision process and implementation of NEPA, decisions on wilderness and WSAs, and hunting regulations on federal lands.

Outside the Scope of the Planning Effort
Commenters expressed concern with development and management of GRSG on decisions outside of the BLM and Forest Service jurisdiction. Specific themes included the following:

- How will the BLM and Forest Service work with wildlife management agencies to ensure appropriate management of hunting for GRSG on both public and private lands?

  Many commenters questioned why hunting of GRSG is allowed if the bird is in need of protection. Others stated that hunting should be used as a method to control GRSG predators.

  Hunting is regulated by state wildlife agencies; these comments therefore relate to state-regulated actions and are outside the scope of the current planning effort. Additionally, hunting opportunities for GRSG have been reduced in response to general population declines of known origin (e.g., disease and habitat loss) and unknown origin. While hunting has not been demonstrated as the primary cause of decline in GRSG populations, the cautionary recommendations outlined in the Sage-Grouse management guidelines (Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee 2006) and Connelly et al. (2000) remain appropriate.

- How did the USFWS determine the warranted but precluded decision?

  Commenters questioned population levels and the need to incorporate range-wide conservation measures. Others questioned the effectiveness of ESA listing as a method of species conservation.

  These comments relate to decisions under the purview of the USFWS and will not be addressed in the current planning effort.

- How can the BLM and Forest Service manage livestock grazing?

  Commenters asked that grazing be limited or completely stopped due to detrimental ecosystem effects. Other stated that grazing programs should be reformed as the requirements are too limiting and impact ranchers' livelihoods. In addition, some commenters state that grazing provides habitat enhancements for sensitive species.

  Decisions about national livestock grazing policies would not be made in this planning effort.

- How should renewable energy be managed and developed in relation to economic instability and wildlife mortality?

Commenters stated concerns about renewable energy development, including economic instability due to government subsidies and risk of wildlife mortality, specifically for bats and birds.

General decisions about renewable energy management on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands are outside the scope of this planning effort.

In addition, comments were received related to issues that are outside the scope of this effort, including the following:

- Compensation of private land owners for conservation efforts and off-site mitigation
- BLM and Forest Service funding
- NEPA procedures and costs

In addition to these issues described in the Scoping Summary Report, feedback specific to the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-region and predator control was provided to BLM through public meeting comments and cooperating agency feedback. While predation is included in several of the planning issues as a concern related to development, actual predator control activities are outside the authority of the BLM and Forest Service and, therefore, will not be considered further in the planning process.

1.5.4 Public Comment on the Draft LUPA/EIS

The BLM and Forest Service released the Draft LUPA/EIS to the public on November 1, 2013. Following the release of the Draft LUPA/EIS, there was a 90-day public comment period, which began on November 1, 2013, and ended on January 29, 2014. During this time, the BLM and Forest Service hosted seven open houses where the public had the opportunity to learn about the Draft LUPA/EIS, to ask questions of the BLM, the Forest Service, and the USFWS staff, and to fill out comment cards. Open houses were held in the following locations:

- Murphy, ID- January 6, 2014
- Idaho Falls, ID, January 7, 2014
- Salmon, ID, January 8, 2014
- Dillon, MT, January 9, 2014
- Pocatello, ID, January 13, 2014
- Twin Falls, ID, January 14, 2014
- Boise, ID, January 15, 2014

The BLM and Forest Service received written comments by mail, e-mail, and submitted at the public meetings. Using a systematic approach of labeling, reviewing, and categorizing each comment, the BLM and Forest Service identified and formally responded to all

substantive public comments. Substantive comments were categorized based on the content of the comment. Each retained the link to the commenter.

Subsequently, the BLM and Forest Service drafted statements summarizing the issues contained in each comment category. They then developed responses to each issue statement. As part of the response statement, the BLM and Forest Service indicated whether the comments resulted in a change to the LUPA/EIS. The Comment Analysis Report in **Appendix T** contains the issue statements and summary response for each comment category.

1.6 Development of Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are based on appropriate laws, regulations, BLM and Forest Service Manual and Handbook sections, and policy directives, as well as on public participation and coordination with cooperating agencies, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and Native American tribes. Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and factors used as a framework to resolve issues and develop alternatives. Planning criteria are prepared to ensure decision-making is tailored to the issues and to ensure that the BLM and Forest Service avoid unnecessary data collection and analysis.

1.6.1 Preliminary Planning Criteria

- The BLM and Forest Service will use the WAFWA *Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse and Sagebrush Habitats* (Connelly et al. 2004) and any other appropriate resources (e.g., Knick et al. 2011) to identify GRSG habitat requirements and best management practices.
- The approved LUPA will be consistent with the BLM's National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy.
- The approved LUPA will comply with FLPMA, NEPA, and CEQ regulations at 40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508; Department of the Interior regulations at 43 CFR and 46 and 43 CFR, Part 1600; the BLM H-1601-1 Land Use Planning Handbook, Appendix C: Program-Specific and Resource-Specific Decision Guidance Requirements, as amended, for affected resource programs; the 2008 BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1); and all other applicable BLM policies and guidance.
- The approved LUPA will comply with NFMA, NEPA, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR, Parts 1500-1508l; Regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture at 36 CFR, Part 219; Forest Service Manual 1920; and Forest Service Handbooks 1909.12 and 1909.15.
- The approved LUPA will comply with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burro Act of 1971 (as amended) which directs that "*All management activities shall be at the minimal feasible level and shall be carried out in consultation with the wildlife agency of the State wherein such lands are located in order to protect the natural ecological balance of all wildlife species which inhabit such lands, particularly endangered wildlife species.*"

- The LUPA will be limited to providing land use direction or to amending certain program-specific decisions, for the conservation of GRSG habitats on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands in the planning area.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consider allocations and prescriptive standards to conserve GRSG habitat, as well as objectives and management actions to restore, enhance, and improve GRSG habitat.
- The LUPA will recognize valid existing rights and authorizations, such as mining claims, mineral leases, and approved mineral operating plans.
- Lands addressed in the LUPA will be BLM-administered and National Forest System lands (including split-estate lands) in GRSG habitats. Any direction provided in the LUPAs will apply only to BLM-administered and National Forest System lands.
- Where more restrictive land use allocations or decisions are made in existing RMPs, those more restrictive land use allocations or decisions will remain in effect and will not be amended by this LUPA.
- The BLM and Forest Service will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach with the public and adjacent jurisdiction, where appropriate, to determine the desired future condition of BLM-administered and National Forest System lands for the conservation of GRSG and their habitats and to consider the impacts of proposed actions on all the resources in the region.
- As described by law and policy, the BLM and Forest Service will strive to ensure that conservation measures are as consistent as possible with other planning jurisdictions within the planning area boundaries.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consider a range of reasonable alternatives, including appropriate management prescriptions that focus on the relative values of resources while contributing to the conservation of the GRSG and its habitat.
- The BLM and Forest Service will address socioeconomic impacts, including environmental justice, of the alternatives. Socio-economic analysis will use an accepted input-output quantitative model such as IMPLAN, RIMSII, or JEDI for renewable energy analysis.
- The BLM and Forest Service will use best available scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventory, monitoring, and coordination consistent with the Information Quality Act, to inform appropriate local and regional management strategies that will enhance or restore GRSG habitats.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with WSAs on BLM-administered lands will be guided by BLM Manual 6330 Management of Wilderness Study Areas. Land use allocations made for WSAs must be consistent with Manual 6330 and with other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSA management.

- Management of GRSG will be guided by BLM Manual 6840 Special Status Species Management.
- Management of other special designation areas (e.g., Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Historic Trails, Wilderness Areas, National Monuments, National Conservation Areas) will be guided by the appropriate BLM and Forest Service manual or handbook.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with National Forest System wilderness areas will be guided by Forest Service Manual 2300 – Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management.
- For BLM-administered lands, all activities and uses within GRSG habitats will follow existing land health standards. Standards and guidelines (S&G) for livestock grazing and other programs that have developed S&Gs will be applicable to all alternatives for BLM-administered lands.
- Management of National Forest System lands for livestock grazing will follow guidance in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2200, Range Management, and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2209.13, Grazing Permit Administration.
- For National Forest System lands, all activities and uses within GRSG habitats will follow guidelines in Forest Manual 2500 – Watershed and Air Management.
- The BLM and Forest Service will consult with Native American tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage within GRSG habitats.
- The BLM and Forest Service will coordinate and communicate with state, local, and tribal governments to ensure that the BLM and Forest Service consider provisions of pertinent plans, seek to resolve inconsistencies between state, local, and tribal plans, and provide ample opportunities for state, local, and tribal governments to comment on the development of amendments.
- The BLM and Forest Service will develop vegetation management objectives, including objectives for managing noxious weeds and invasive species (including identification of desired future condition for specific areas), within GRSG habitat.
- The LUPA will be based on the principles of adaptive management.
- Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenarios (**Appendix B**) and planning for Fluid Minerals will follow the BLM Handbook H-1624-1 and current fluid minerals manual guidance for fluid mineral (e.g., oil and gas, coal-bed methane, and oil shale) and geothermal resources. For mineral resources on National Forest System lands, the Forest Service will apply guidance provided in Forest Manual 2800 – Minerals and Geology, as applicable.
- The LUPA will be developed using an interdisciplinary approach to prepare reasonable foreseeable development scenarios, identify alternatives, and analyze

resource impacts, including cumulative impacts on natural and cultural resources and the social and economic environment.

- The most current approved BLM and Forest Service corporate spatial data will be supported by current metadata and will be used to ascertain GRSG habitat extent and quality. Data will be consistent with the principles of the Information Quality Act of 2000.
- State wildlife agencies' GRSG data and expertise will be used to the fullest extent practicable in making management determinations on federal lands.

1.7 Relationship to Other Policies, Plans and Programs

This planning process will recognize the many ongoing programs, plans, and policies that are being implemented in the planning area by other land managers and government agencies. The BLM and Forest Service will seek to be consistent with or complementary to other management actions whenever possible.

1.7.1 Federal Plans

Federal plans that will be considered during the GRSG planning effort include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (BLM 1991a)
- Final Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Associated Record of Decision. USDI, Bureau of Land Management, 2007 (FES 07-21)
- Final Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Report. USDI, Bureau of Land Management, 2007 (FES 07-21)
- Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/Record of Decision for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States, January 2009, and the ROD on Forest Service Designation of Section 368 Energy Corridors on National Forest System Lands in 10 Western States (Forest Service 2009)
- BLM and Forest Service Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Geothermal Leasing In the Western United States (2008) and associated Records of Decision and Management Plan Amendments
- Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Wind Energy Development on BLM-administered Lands in the Western United States. FES 05-11. June 2005
- Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States. October 2012

- Supplement to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States. October 2011
- Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. USFWS, February 2013
- Forest Service oil and gas leasing availability analyses prepared to comply with 36 CFR, Part 228.102

1.7.2 State Plans

State plans that will be considered during the GRSG planning effort include the following:

- Greater Sage-Grouse Comprehensive Conservation Strategy. National Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Framework Team, Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 2006
- Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy, 2009
- Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-Grouse in Montana – Final, Montana Sage Grouse Work Group, 2005
- Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-Grouse in Idaho, as amended, Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee, 2009
- Idaho Energy Plan, Idaho Governor's Office of Energy Resources, 2012
- Idaho Invasive Species Strategic Plan 2012-2016
- Idaho Greater Sage-Grouse Local Working Group (LWG) Plans
    - Big Desert
    - Challis
    - Curlew Valley
    - Dillon
    - East Idaho Uplands
    - Jarbidge
    - North Magic Valley
    - Owyhee County
    - Shoshone Basin
    - Upper Snake
    - West Central

1.7.3 County Plans

County plans that will be considered during the GRSG planning effort are listed in **Table 1-6,** County Land Use and Sage-Grouse Management Plans. Blank rows indicate that the given county does not have a Land Use or Sage-Grouse Management Plan.

Table 1-6
County Land Use and Sage-Grouse Management Plans

County	Type	Adoption Date
Idaho		
Ada	Comprehensive	November 26, 2007
Adams	Comprehensive	May 2006
Bear Lake		
Bingham	Comprehensive	March 2005
Blaine	Comprehensive	November 7, 1994
Bonneville	Comprehensive	January 5, 1995
Butte		
Camas		
Caribou	Comprehensive	May 22, 2006
Cassia	Comprehensive	September 1, 2006
Clark	Comprehensive	November 11, 2010
Custer	Comprehensive Sage-Grouse	December 11, 2006 March 29, 2013
Elmore	Comprehensive	August 9, 2004
Fremont	Comprehensive	December 17, 2008
Gem	Comprehensive	January 19, 2010
Gooding	Comprehensive	May 3, 2010
Jefferson	Comprehensive	January 15, 2005
Jerome	Comprehensive	April 27, 2006
Lemhi	Comprehensive	October 9, 2012
Lincoln	Comprehensive	May 7, 2008
Madison	Comprehensive	March 25, 2008 in Draft
Minidoka	Comprehensive	Pending Approval
Oneida	Comprehensive	2011
Owyhee	Comprehensive Sage-Grouse Energy	August 9, 2010 April 8, 2013 December 4, 2007
Payette	Comprehensive	May 8, 2006
Power	Comprehensive	June 8, 2009
Twin Falls	Comprehensive	July 5, 1995
Washington	Comprehensive	October 19, 2010
Montana		
Beaverhead	Resource Use Plan	July 6, 2010
Deer Lodge	Growth Policy	December 12, 2005
Gallatin	Growth Policy	April 15, 2003
Madison?	Growth Policy	September 2006
Silver Bow	Growth Policy	2008
Utah		
Box Elder		

1.7.4 Endangered Species Recovery Plans

Endangered species recovery plans are prepared by the USFWS to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species. The following geographically relevant endangered species recovery plans have been identified:

- Draft Recovery Plan for Three of the Five Distinct Population Segments of Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)
- Draft Recovery Plan for the Jarbidge River Distinct Population Segment of Bull Trout
- Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan
- Recovery Plan for the Bruneau Hot Springsnail (*Pyrgulopsis bruneauensis*)
- Recovery Plan for the Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel
- Revised Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan
- Snake River Aquatic Species Recovery Plan

1.7.5 Memoranda of Understanding

There are several memoranda of understanding (MOU) in effect that pertain to management of resources on BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. These include:

- Between the BLM, Forest Service, USFWS, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Environmental Protection Agency regarding implementation of the Interior Columbia Basin Strategy. The purpose of this MOU is to cooperatively implement the "The Interior Columbia Basin Strategy" to guide the amendment and revision of forest (Forest Service) and resource management (BLM) plans and project implementation on public lands administered by the Forest Service and BLM throughout the Interior Columbia Basin.
- Between the BLM and the Forest Service Concerning Oil and Gas Leasing Operations (2006). The purpose of this MOU is to establish joint BLM and Forest Service policies and procedures for managing oil and gas leasing and operational activities pursuant to oil and gas leases on National Forest System lands, consistent with applicable law and policy. The MOU was signed in 2006 for the purpose of efficient, effective compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements. The MOU establishes the roles of the Forest Service and the BLM in processing Applications for Permits to Drill and review of subsequent operations.
- Between the BLM and the Forest Service concerning Implementation of Section 225 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 Regarding Geothermal Leasing and Permitting (2006).

- Interagency Agreements between the BLM and Forest Service concerning Mineral Leasing (1984) and Leasable Mineral Operations (1987). These agreements currently pertain to management of leasable minerals other than oil and gas and geothermal.
- Between the Department of the Interior, the USDA and the US Environmental Protection Agency Regarding Air Quality Analyses and Mitigation for Federal Oil and Gas Decisions Through the NEPA Process (2011). Through the MOU, the signatories commit to a clearly defined, efficient approach to compliance with the NEPA regarding air quality and air quality related values (AQRVs), such as visibility, in connection with oil and gas development on Federal lands.
- Between the WAFWA, the Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency, the BLM, USFWS, and USGS (2008). The purpose of the MOU is to provide for cooperation among the participating State and federal land, wildlife management and science agencies in the conservation and management of GRSG sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) habitats and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife throughout the Western United States and Canada.
- Between the Idaho BLM and Nevada BLM regarding management responsibility and authority regarding lands in Nevada but accessed through Idaho.
- Between Twin Falls District BLM and Elko District BLM (2013) clearly identifying the administrative boundaries between the districts as the Nevada/Idaho state line within the China Butte, Player Butte, Player Canyon, and Horse Creek allotments, and defines the Twin Falls District and Elko District management responsibilities in the Nevada portions of the identified allotments.
- Between the State of Idaho (Governor's Office, Idaho Department of Fish and Game [IDFG], Office of Species Conservation [OSC], Idaho Department of Agriculture [IDA]) and the BLM and USDA (Forest Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service [APHIS], NRCS) for the purpose of supporting and implementing the intent and actions contained in the 2006 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-Grouse in Idaho.
- Montana Idaho Airshed Group MOU, which includes federal, state, and private partners and encompasses prescribed burning activities on federal lands (e.g., pile burns and seedbed preparation).
- Between the Forest Service Sawtooth National Forest Minidoka Ranger District and the BLM Twin Falls District Burley Field Office concerning consolidated management of the Forest Service Goose Creek Allotment and the BLM West Goose Creek Allotment.
- Between the BLM and APHIS (2012) for the purpose of establishing guidelines to assist field personnel in carrying out their wildlife damage management responsibilities.

- Between the BLM and the Department of Energy (2011) regarding grazing, ROWs, fire suppression and other aspects of shared management of lands within the Idaho National Laboratory.
- While it is not an MOU, the BLM Dillon Field Office is a signatory on the Montana Cooperative Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement; a multiparty agreement involving various federal and county agencies regarding fire suppression efforts.

In addition, the BLM has entered into numerous MOUs with various federal, state, and county agencies for the purpose of establishing cooperating agencies for the BLM and Forest Service National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The following agencies and entities have established cooperating agency status for the purpose of working on the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-regional GRSG planning effort:

- **Federal**
  - USFWS
  - Forest Service
    - Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
    - Boise National Forest
    - Caribou-Targhee National Forest
    - Salmon-Challis National Forest
    - Sawtooth National Forest
  - NRCS
  - National Park Service – Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve
  - Department of Energy – Idaho National Laboratory
- **State**
  - Idaho Department of Fish and Game
  - Idaho Office of Species Conservation
  - Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
- **County**
  - Idaho Association of Counties
  - Bingham County, Idaho
  - Blaine County, Idaho
  - Box Elder County, Utah (through the Utah BLM State Office)

- Cassia County, Idaho
- Clark County, Idaho
- Custer County, Idaho
- Fremont County, Idaho
- Jefferson County, Idaho
- Lemhi County, Idaho
- Owyhee County, Idaho
- Power County, Idaho
- Twin Falls County, Idaho
- Beaverhead County, Montana
- Madison County, Montana

1.7.6 Activity Plans and Amendments

Each BLM field office and Forest Service district has many specific planning documents including: allotment management plans, livestock management plans, activity plans, coordinated resource management plans, cooperative resource management plans, habitat management plans, fire management plans, and normal fire rehabilitation plans.

1.7.7 Habitat Management Plans

A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) provides guidance for the management of a defined habitat for a target wildlife species, protecting and improving habitat for that species and for other species utilizing the habitat. These plans are usually written in coordination with State Wildlife Agencies. Idaho Department of Fish and Game has a variety of fish and wildlife management plans which are either species specific (e.g., mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout) or statewide in scope (e.g., Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy and Fisheries Management Plan). The plans most relevant to the GRSG in the Idaho and Southwestern Montana sub-region are the Idaho 2006 Conservation Plan for GRSG and the Montana 2005 Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for GRSG.

1.7.8 Secretarial Order 3336

Wildfire has been identified as one of the primary factors linked to loss of sagebrush-steppe habitat and corresponding population declines of greater sage-grouse (Connelly and Braun, 1997; Miller and Eddleman, 2001). While fire is a naturally occurring disturbance in the sagebrush steppe, the incursion of non-native annual grasses has facilitated an increase in mean fire frequency which can preclude the opportunity for sagebrush to become re-established. As such, the RMP includes requirements (referred to as Greater Sage-grouse Wildfire and Invasive Species Habitat Assessment in appendices in Draft documents) - that landscape scale Fire and Invasives Assessments be completed and updated regularly to more accurately define specific areas to be treated to address threats to sagebrush steppe habitat

from wildfire. Within the Great Basin, the first five priority areas of conservation (PACs) were singled out for the initial round of assessments because fire was identified as a primary threat to greater sage-grouse habitat and the first phase of these assessments were completed in March of 2015. Additionally, the Secretary of Interior issued Secretarial Order 3336 on January 5, 2015 which establishes the protection, conservation and restoration of "the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem and, in particular, greater sage-grouse habitat, while maintaining safe and efficient operations as a critical fire management priority for the Department". The Secretarial Order will result in a final report of activities to be implemented prior to the 2016 Western fire season. This will include prioritization and allocation of fire resources and the integration of emerging science, enhancing existing tools to implement the Resource Management Plan and improve our ability to protect sagebrush-steppe from damaging wildfires.