



Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Sage-grouse Lek Survey Protocols for Idaho Conservation Practice Job Sheet/Specification

JS-26

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Idaho

April 2010



Purpose

Sage-grouse lek surveys are applied as part of a resource management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

- Assist in monitoring effectiveness of habitat improvements for sage-grouse.
- Assist a landowner in determining the use of their property and surrounding lands by sage-grouse and help determine population trends for the local area.

What is a Sage-grouse Lek survey?

Lek surveys are an important tool to help determine population trends and habitat use within a given area. Lek surveys also provide an opportunity for a landowner to become more familiar with the habits of sage-grouse and help foster a connection between the landowner and these unique birds.

What is a Sage-grouse Lek?

A lek is a traditional communal mating ground where displaying males gather to attract hens. Leks are usually in open areas adjacent to sagebrush.

- Leks are usually separated by greater than ½ mile
- A lek may have more than one activity center (small groups of birds in very close proximity)
- Leks can move

Practice Specifications

This practice applies to lands that have an identified active or historical sage-grouse lek within its

boundaries. Producers eligible for this practice have an identified active or historical sage-grouse lek within their agricultural operation's boundaries. Basic training and record keeping using the Idaho Department of Fish and Game sage grouse lek protocol and mapping is required. These minimum standards include the following data elements for each identified lek:

- Date of the survey
- Lek name and assigned lek identification label
- Weather conditions at the time of survey
- Number of male sage-grouse counted
- Number of female sage-grouse counted
- X-Y (latitude and longitude) location

This data will be included in the state sage-grouse lek database.

Protocols for lek surveys should be consistent with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Lek Survey Protocol and training provided to landowners by Idaho Department of Fish and Game staff.

Lek Survey Protocol

All leks in a given area should be counted on the same morning.

Lek surveys should be run 1/2 hours before sunrise to 1 1/2 hours after sunrise.

Each lek must be visited at least 4 times each spring, and the same observer should conduct all 4 counts.

Counts should be spaced roughly 10 days apart.

Start dates should be March 25th and run through April 30th in low elevation zones. Higher elevation zones should begin April 1st and run through May 10th.

Lek surveys should only be conducted when weather conditions are favorable (clear to partly cloudy skies and winds of less than 10 miles per hour. (surveys should never be conducted during rain or snow storms).

Sage-grouse are sensitive to disturbance. Birds may move a short distance and continue displaying following a disturbance. If a known active lek is not occupied, the observer should turn off their vehicle, step outside, and listen for displaying birds.

When traveling between leks, the observer should not drive faster than 25 mph to allow for the opportunity to find new leks.

Count Protocol

Locate a good vantage point that provides visibility of the entire lek. The observer should not approach the lek so close that the birds are disturbed.

Training

All surveys should be performed by an individual with adequate experience and/or training to accurately conduct a sage-grouse lek survey. **Training seminars for landowners interested in this practice will be provided by Idaho Department of Fish and Game staff or their partners.**

The attached worksheet will be used to document weather conditions and observed bird numbers. The producer should use a new sheet for each of the four survey dates.

Copies of completed lek survey forms will be provided to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game by May 15th each year for entry into the state sage-grouse lek database.

1. Record the time that the count begins
2. Count the birds from right to left.
3. Wait 1-2 minutes, and then count left to right
4. Repeat the steps once more.
5. Record highest number of males and females, separately.
6. Move on to next lek if you have one.

If no birds are present record a zero on the observation form (do not leave spaces on form blank)

Complete all information on the data form.

Needed Equipment

- Map of all known sage-grouse leks
- Spotting scope and/or binoculars
- Data forms
- Writing utensil

CLIENT'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

The Client acknowledges that:

- a. Surveys must be performed four times on each lek, each spring by an individual with sufficient experience and training to accurately identify and count sage-grouse by species and sex.
- b. The client must keep survey datasheets, and provide copies of datasheets and maps of known leks to IDFG by May 15th each year. IDFG survey protocols will be followed, and survey data will be provided to the IDFG sage-grouse lek database.
- c. The client must keep annual records of all surveys conducted.
- d. The client has received a copy of this practice specification and understands the contents and requirements.

Accepted by: /s/ _____ Date: _____

Certification of Practice Completion

I hereby certify that this practice has been installed in accordance with NRCS standards and specifications.

Planner: _____ Date: _____

Client: _____ Date: _____

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Sage-grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Survey

<input type="checkbox"/> Sage Grouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharp-tailed Grouse	County: _____
Lek Route Name (or enter 'none'): _____		Date of Survey: _____
Observer: _____		Official Sunrise: _____
Weather (temp, wind, precip, cloud cover): _____		Start Time: _____ End Time: _____
Summary: Active Leks		Comments: _____
Total Males Counted		

Time	Statewide Lek ID	Lek Name	# Males (or total birds for sharp-tails)	# Females	Lek Location*				Comments
					UTM Datum_____		PREFERRED		
					UTM Zone_____		WGS 84 Decimal Degrees		
					Easting	Northing	Latitude	Longitude	
				*Record location if lek has moved, if previously recorded location is inaccurate, or if lek is new. The preferred location format is WGS 84 decimal degrees.					