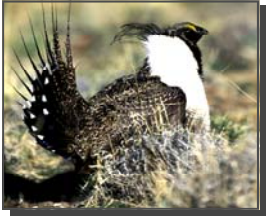




Sage-Grouse Conservation in Idaho



Sage-grouse considered for future listing as an endangered species

In March 2010, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined the greater sage-grouse warrants listing under the Endangered Species Act, but did not list it at this time due to higher listing priorities. However, the species is now considered a candidate for listing at a future date.

What does this mean for landowners?

If greater sage-grouse occurs on your property and is listed under the Endangered Species Act in the future, there may be certain activities you have to change or curtail because they adversely affect sage-grouse.

You can take **voluntary proactive steps** to conserve birds and habitat while sustaining your working farms and ranches. Contributing to sage-grouse conservation efforts may make listing under the ESA unnecessary. Voluntary conservation actions can effectively remove the need for listing a species if they address specific threats and are taken on by multiple properties within the range of a species.

Opportunities for Landowners

NRCS Technical & Financial Assistance Available *The Sage-grouse Initiative (SGI)*

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) **Sage-grouse Initiative** helps landowners implement conservation work with funding for certain practices that maintain sage-grouse populations and restore habitat. The SGI currently uses two USDA conservation programs - the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).



“Conferencing” Ensures Benefits of Sage-grouse Initiative

NRCS collaborated with the Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service this summer to provide confidence to landowners who enroll in NRCS programs to benefit sage-grouse. This action means that ranchers and farmers can continue operating even if the greater and Gunnison sage-grouse are listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act. To continue operating, eligible ranchers and farmers must follow the conservation practices outlined in the conference report written by NRCS and FWS as part of the Department of the Interior and USDA’s ongoing efforts to protect the sage-grouse.

A suite of 40 conservation practices were amended to ensure they were beneficial to the sage-grouse, including upland habitat management, prescribed grazing, and brush management to remove juniper. The conference report does not grant permits to landowners to incidentally “take”¹ sage-grouse, should the species be listed.

CCAAs Offer Landowners Some Additional Assurances

The USFWS administers voluntary conservation agreements called Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA). They are available to non-federal landowners who employ conservation practices that tackle known threats to a particular species on non-federal lands.

These agreements provide a landowner with assurances that if they undertake certain conservation actions for the species in the agreement they will not be required to take on additional actions beyond those in the CCAA if the species is listed in the future.

- Conservation actions in CCAAs can be implemented using funding available under the SGI if they correspond to the practices reviewed in the conference report.
- A permit that provides for a specific level of “incidental take”² becomes effective if the species is listed.
- In Idaho, a partnership of state and federal agencies helps develop CCAAs for private landowners who have greater sage-grouse on their property or have the potential to assist in species recovery.
- The West Central CCAA is completed, and the Blackfoot, Soda and Sand Creek CCAAs are under development.



Comparing Conferencing and CCAAs:

	Conference Report	CCAA
Addresses threats to sage-grouse	Only threats that can be addressed with NRCS Conservation Practices	Generally address all threats to the species
Participation is voluntary	Yes	Yes
Applies to federal lands	Yes	No
Funding available for implementation	Yes	No
Provides regulatory assurances in the event of a future listing	No	Yes
Incidental take permitted in the event of a future listing	No	Yes
Is a regulatory mechanism to be considered in a future listing decision	No	Yes

¹ “Take” - to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt any such conduct.

² “Incidental take” is take that occurs not purposefully, but incidental to otherwise lawful activities.

For more information, visit the Idaho NRCS Web site at http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/sage_grouse/index.html. Or, visit the NRCS office near you.

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