

Greater Sage-Grouse

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Ranch Management

ISSUE 1: March 2012



What is a CCAA?

A Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) is a voluntary agreement between a private landowner and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The CCAA utilizes conservation measures to benefit both the designated wildlife species and the landowner. Currently, the Harney County Sage Grouse CCAA Steering Committee is collaboratively developing a county-wide, programmatic CCAA to recognize the value of ranchlands for the long-term wildlife habitat they provide.

CCAA Benefits to the Ranching Operations

A rancher's primary concern is to remain a profitable business. Despite the challenges, there are many reasons ranchers stay in the business including making their own management decisions, viewing wildlife and open spaces as well as retaining a traditional way of life. Signing the agreement under the programmatic CCAA for sage-grouse is a voluntary management decision made by individual ranchers.

There are several benefits of enrolling a private ranching operation in a CCAA, one of which is implementing conservation measures to help sage-grouse populations remain viable, while preventing the Service's need to list the species on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. The Service's top "factor" or reason for listing the sage-grouse is loss of habitat. Ranchers enrolling their operation in a CCAA assure the Service their land will remain un-subdivided or un-fragmented. The most direct benefit provided to ranchers enrolling in a CCAA are "assurances" provided by the Service. These assurances protect participating ranchers from additional regulatory responsibilities, in the event the sage-grouse is listed as Threatened or Endangered.

The Harney County Sage Grouse CCAA Steering Committee members are made up of local landowners, representatives from the Burns Paiute Tribe, Harney County Court, Harney County Soil & Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, ODFW, OSU Extension, USDA Agriculture Research Service and the USFWS.

Timeline: The Harney County Sage Grouse CCAA Steering Committee is in the preliminary development stages of the CCAA document. Once this document is developed, reviewed and approved, the process of enrolling interested landowners will begin.





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Warranted but Precluded

The Service initiated a status review for the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in February 2008. The purpose of the review was to determine if the sage-grouse warranted listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The Service determined the sage-grouse was warranted, but precluded from listing in its finding, published on March 26, 2010. The Service also assigned the listing priority number as "8," indicating the threats to the bird are low to moderate. The Service indicates the top threats to sage-grouse as follows: habitat loss and fragmentation, reduction of quality habitat, establishment of non-native vegetation, and wildland fire. Threats associated with ranch management ranked lower in the Service's Finding. Examples of potential associated threats include the following: inappropriate grazing management for sage-grouse habitat, sage-grouse drowning in stock tanks, mortalities resulting in fence collisions, etc. The Greater Sage-Grouse CCA for ranch management will provide a list of conservation measures to address each applicable and present threat on enrolled lands.

Development of CCA

Work with Partners
to Develop CCA

Seek Public Comment
on CCA

Address Public Com-
ments and finalize
CCA



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