## Sagebrush and Salt Flats (5,625,886 acres or 5.97% of Montana)

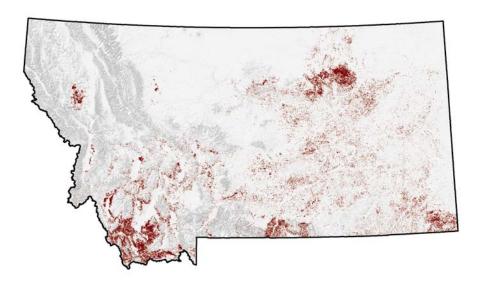


Figure 40. Distribution of Sagebrush and Salt Flats Community Types

The sagebrush community includes all sagebrush and associated grass and shrubs, although specific attention should be focused on the "shrub steppe," a transitional zone between arid shrubland and semiarid grassland and saltsage that occurs primarily in eastern and southeastern Montana alkali flats. The community can be visualized as a mosaic of sagebrush communities that occur in discontinuous pockets throughout Montana although mostly in the eastern two thirds.

These communities occur primarily in valleys across the state. Occasionally they occur on low- to mid-elevation mountain slopes. Shrublands are dominated by sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.), with 20 to 80 percent cover.

### **Essential Associated Plant Community**

Basin Big Sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata tridentata)
Black Sagebrush Steppe (Artemisia nova)
Mountain Big Sage (Artemisia tridentata vaseyana)
Wyoming Big Sage (Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis)
Saltsage (Atriplex nuttallii)

#### Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

There are a total of 78 terrestrial vertebrate species that are found within the sagebrush and salt flats community type, with 23 of these species being essentially associated (essentially associated species are shown in bold). All associations can be found in Table 43.

**Birds: Greater Sage-Grouse,** Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, and **Burrowing Owl** 

Mammals: Spotted Bat, Pallid Bat, Pygmy Rabbit, Great Basin Pocket Mouse, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, and White-tailed Prairie Dog

# **Conservation Concerns & Strategies**

Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies
Range management practices and	Protect large blocks of healthy
conversion to agriculture, which alter	sagebrush through conservation
the distribution and condition of	easements
Montana's sagebrush habitat	
	Work with private landowners through
	landowner incentives and conservation
	easements to protect critical habitats
	Cooperate with government and private
	conservation programs/activities that
	encourage and support private land
	stewardship
	Promote grazing plans that encourage
	a mosaic of sagebrush, native grasses, and forbs
Invasion of weeds and woody and non-	Support cooperative efforts to reduce
native species	invasive and exotic plant species
Thative species	invasive and exotic plant species
	Work with off-road vehicle users to help
	reduce spread of invasive weeds
	Create a stable native seed source for
	sage restoration after fires
Loss of sagebrush as a result of human	Support strategic conservation
population growth/development	easements by conservation
	organizations and public agencies
	Support state/federal tax incentives
	that discourage sagebrush habitat loss
	Promote further development of county
	ordinances that help guide future
	residential and commercial
	development in sagebrush habitat
	Identify and prioritize key wildlife
	linkage areas, and work with other state and federal agencies,
	conservation groups, and landowners
	to restore wildlife connectivity
	to restore whethe confidentials

Oil, gas, and geothermal exploration and development	Monitor leasing and development decisions and regulations applying to geophysical exploration
	Work with corporations, land owners and other agencies to reduce impacts of exploration
	Conduct research on fossil fuel development and its impacts on sagebrush
Impacts from recreational use	Work with the public and other agencies to establish sustainable recreation management practices, including designations of lands open, limited, or closed to off-road vehicle use

#### References

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