A Summary of Conservation Activities of the Miles City, MT Sage-grouse Local Working Group

SAGE GROUSE
MONTANA LOCAL WORKING GROUPS

The role of the sage-grouse local working groups is to adapt the state plan to specific local areas to develop and implement strategies that will improve or maintain the sagebrush steppe and reduce or mitigate factors that may further reduce greater sage-grouse habitats or populations (Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-grouse in Montana 2005).

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

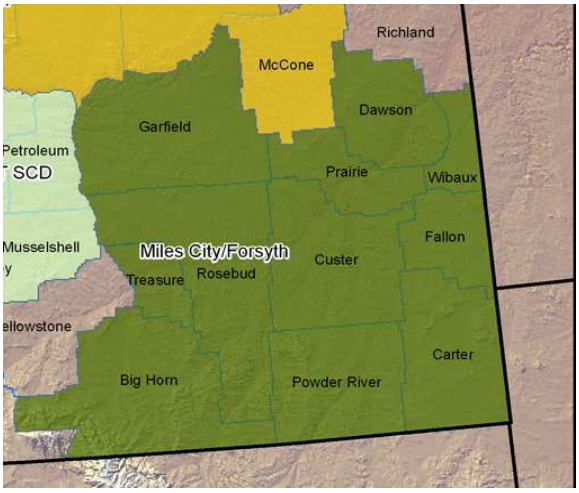
This "Summarizes the Conservation Actions" taken by the Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group (SG-LWG) divided into sections as follows:

- Description of the local working groups
- A list of conservation issues identified by the Miles City Sage-grouse SG-LWG as they relate to 12 overall state conservation issues identified in the *Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-grouse in Montana 2005.*
- A list of issues specific to the Miles City SG-LWG
- A short overview of activities taken to accomplish the conservation strategies identified in the state plan
- And Table 2 identifies twelve conservation issues identified in the state plan and which were addressed specifically by the Miles City SG-LWG.

The *Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Greater Sage-grouse in Montana 2005* was developed over the course of two years, it is the state plan for managing sage-grouse in Montana. The Plan states:

> *"The role of the sage-grouse local working groups is to adapt the plan to specific local areas to develop and implement strategies that will improve or maintain the sagebrush steppe and reduce or mitigate factors that may further reduce greater sage-grouse habitats or populations."*

Map 1. Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group Boundaries Shown in Green



The Miles City sage-grouse local working group is one of three formal working groups in the state, the other two are located in Dillon and Glasgow. One additional group, Petroleum County Conservation District in central Montana, has been proactively "functioning like" a sage-grouse local working. The local working group boundaries were determined at a statewide executive meeting held in Billings, Montana in January 2009 (see Map 1). The Miles City SG-LWG area encompasses eleven counties, some of the largest counties in the state. For this reason the Miles City SG-LWG has recently made a concerted effort to move meetings and workshops to different locations to reach new people who for logistical reasons, have not attended.

Table 1 lists twelve statewide sage-grouse conservation issues identified by the Montana SG-LWGs; Table 2 lists which of the of the twelve sage-grouse conservation issues identified in the state plan were addressed; Table 3 lists key issues identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this area; and Table 4 lists priority issues identified by the Miles City SG-LWG.

TABLE 1 TWELVE STATEWIDE SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY MONTANA SG-LWGs 2005	
Fire Management	Power Lines and Generation Facilities
Harvest Management	Predation
Livestock Grazing Management	Recreational Disturbance of Sage-grouse
Mining and Energy Development	Roads and Motorized Vehicles
Noxious Weed Management	Vegetation
Outreach, Education, and Implementation	Managing Other Wildlife

Note: This report does not take into account extensive conservation efforts underway in Montana by NRCS, BLM, USFWS and Fish Wildlife and Parks. Only activities conducted by the Miles City SG-LWG are reported.

TABLE 2. HOW EACH OF THE TWELVE SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE STATE PLAN WERE ADDRESSED DURING 2007-2010*	
Fire Management	W
Harvest Management	
Livestock Grazing Management	W,F,FA (FA = CX encroachment project)
Mining and Energy Development	W, F
Noxious Weed Management	
Outreach, Education, and Implementation	W,F
Power Lines and Generation Facilities	
Predation	
Recreational Disturbance of Sage-grouse	W,F
Roads and Motorized Vehicles	W,F
Vegetation	W,F
Managing Other Wildlife	

*Cells highlighted in blue indicate that the item was specifically addresses during the time period either by:

C = Correspondence – public comment letter
W = Workshop topic
F = Field tour
FA = Field activity i.e. planting, placing fence markers

TABLE 3 KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY USFWS
1. **Oil and Gas development**
2. **Infrastructure (including fences, roads, power lines, communication towers, and pipelines)**
3. **The following appeared as "tied" for 3rd place:** a. **Grazing** b. **Wildfire** c. **Invasive plant species**

TABLE 4 PRIORITY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE MILES CITY SG-LWG
• **Consider populations at risk:**
Are there populations known or suspected to be declining?
• **Identify future actions or situations that could create new risk factors for population viability. In the Miles City area this includes:**
Increased energy development and related infrastructure
West Nile Virus (known to kill birds that contact the disease, first surfaced in Montana in late summer of 2003; cool weather conditions in 2004 did not lend themselves to production of mosquito that carries the disease)
Other?
• **Actions that reduce or minimize sage brush habitat. This area includes:**
New conversion of sagebrush habitat to cropland
Eliminating sagebrush (including burning, plowing, mowing, or use of herbicides) as part of effort to promote grass growth, or other
Wildfire
• **Adequate seasonal habitat**
Drought and other factors can affect forb and insect production, both of which are important food sources for young sage-grouse
Water availability (whereas sage-grouse tend to associate with moist areas during the mid and late summer/early fall, they do not need open water)
• **Effects of predation and hunting on sage-grouse**

A SUMMARY OF THE CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

From 2007-2010 the Miles City SG-LWG held over 24 meetings, events or projects, encompassing regularly scheduled meetings, tours, grant applications, outreach or on-the-ground field projects. Table 5 below lists the events in chronological order along with the day, location and type of activity. A brief description of some of the events follows:

TOURS

The Miles City SG-LWG was fortunate to have an exceptional opportunity to capitalize on a statewide meeting of Montana Range Days. Montana Range Days meet in its host city for two consecutive years, and as such, met in Miles City in 2009 and 2010. The Miles City SG-LWG's seized on this opportunity, capitalizing on this statewide gathering, incorporating sage-grouse education into their agenda. The two year, three day event was held June 15-17, 2009 and June 14-16, 2010. Sage-grouse were incorporated into the Range Days' agenda, covering conservation topics that were then reinforced during field trips. The Miles City SG-LWG committee met regularly to plan and execute training and field trips. An estimated 350 people participated each year.

Range Days Miles City, Montana June 2010; photo courtesy of Kurt Reinhart, USDA Ecologist

Range Days Miles City, Montana June 2010; photo courtesy of Kurt Reinhart, USDA Ecologist

Dr Dave Naugle address Montana Range Days attendants on Sage-grouse and Energy Development

In addition to regularly scheduled committee meetings, a public meeting was held at Fort Keogh October 29, 2009 in Miles City. The session was opened by Doug Campbell, local rancher and co-chair of the SG-LWG. Other guest speakers covered timely topics and more meetings were held as described below.

MOVING MEETINGS

To engage landowners over a large eleven county area, the working group made a concerted effort to hold workshops in new locations to involve more people. Meetings were designed to inform landowners and the public about sage-grouse populations in southeastern Montana. Moving meeting locations enabled the SG-LWG to reach more people and increased attendance by local landowners. In February 2010 a public meeting was held in Alzada at the Alzada Community Hall. Information was presented on sage-grouse populations and biology. This forum was also used to inform landowners of a new FWP sage-grouse telemetry study taking place in Carter County in southeastern Montana.

On January 26, 2010 the working group participated in the *Ag Winter Series* in Broadus, Montana offered by the Montana Extension Service. Miles City SG-LWG co-chairman Doug Campbell was present to introduce the SG-LWG and a presentation on sage-grouse was given. Additonally, the Rosebud Conservation District and the Miles City SG-LWG sponsored an informational meeting in Forsyth on February 15, 2011. It attracted new people from an area having limited opportunity to attend past working group fuctions, providing them updated information on sage-grouse and sage-grouse landowner programs.

These outreach efforts all contribute to a larger partnership goal of local conservation as outlined in Montana's state sage-grouse conservation plan which sets long-term goals of maintaining or increasing sage-grouse populations and habitats. The ultimate goal of the local working group is to involve communities and stakeholders in voluntary efforts to maintain or increase populations to avoid a listing under the Endangered Species Act.

GRANTS

The Miles City SG-LWG secured several grants during the time period to retain expert speakers and to facilitate field tours on energy development and sage-grouse. Dr. David Naugle, Ph.D of the University of Montana presented the results of research on sage-grouse and energy development at one of the workshops. A variety of new studies have been published documenting various impacts of energy development to sage-grouse and were also presented. Presentations like these to the Miles City SG-LWG participants, landowners, agency staff and other stakeholders is critical to propagating a science-based understanding and response to the unique and substantial challenges and potential strategies for conserving sage-grouse under various energy development proposals.

Consistent with the Montana sage-grouse state plan *"Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana",* the Miles City SG-LWG has pursued other grants, applying for a Northern Great Plains Joint Venture (NGPJV) grant in 2011 which assisted the Conservation Districts and SG-LWG in retaining speakers for a landowner informational meeting held in Forsyth.

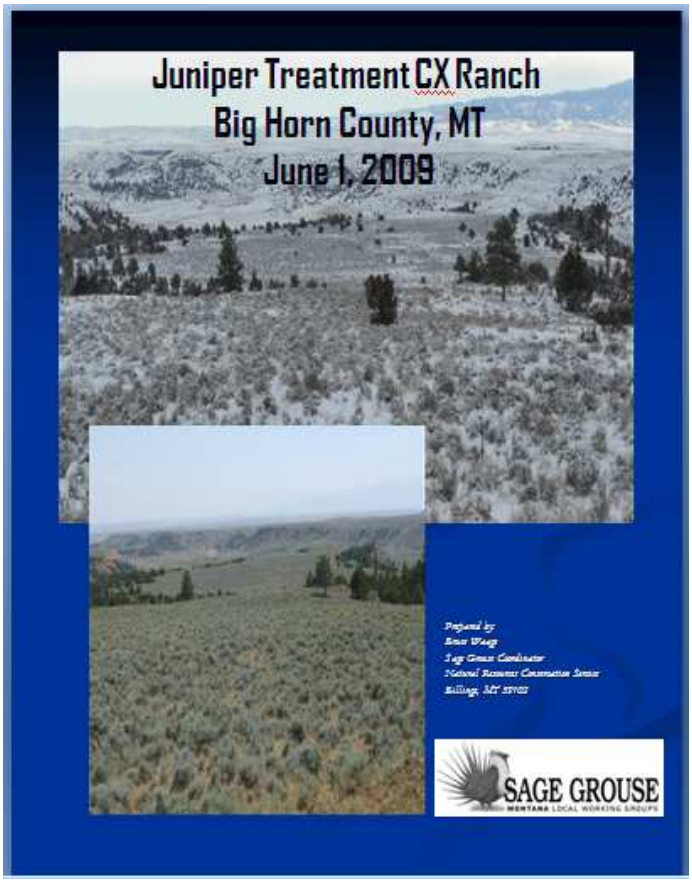
ON THE GROUND PROJECTS

The Miles City SG-LWG was instrumental in following through on a Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum)* removal project undertaken to improve sage-grouse habitat in partial fulfillment of a November 16, 2000 mitigation agreement between Spring Creek Coal Company (SCCC), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and the Big Horn Conservation District. The project received input and direction from the Miles City SG-LWG, BLM, MDFWP, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), SCCC, and the CX Ranch. Prior to developing the treatment plan, sage-grouse researchers Brett Walker and Kevin Doherty of the University of Montana (U of M) were consulted. Both had previously conducted research studies in the area.

The pilot project treated approximately 145 acres of private property in Big Horn County, Montana. The treatment involved the use of hand held chain saws to cut and scatter encroaching junipers. The expansion of Rocky Mountain juniper and Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa)* is a significant, however localized threat to the sagebrush steppe ecosystems in Montana. Conifer encroachment was identified as a problem for sage-grouse in Montana's sage-grouse management plan (*Management Plan and Conservation Strategy for Sage-Grouse in Montana 2005*). Sagebrush obligate species, like sage-grouse, are negatively affected by their expansion.

Historically, junipers in Big Horn County were confined to steep slopes where they had a competitive advantage over grasses. These sites enabled junipers to survive wildfires because these un-productive sites have shallow skeletal soils, therefore reduced fine fuels, and do not regularly carry a fire. The trees then persist, providing a seed source for expansion into adjacent sagebrush flats. Post settlement juniper expansion into sagebrush flats and plateaus is then aided by human fire suppression. The natural

ecological function in the sagebrush steppe was altered by this suppression, starting with the first homesteaders who influenced fire frequencies, increased fire suppression, and changed historical grazers, grazing patterns and their distribution. In *The Biology Ecology and Management of Western Juniper* (Miller et al. 2005), Miller suggests that western juniper woodlands have increased ten-fold in Oregon in the past 130 years. The expansion of Rocky Mountain juniper and Ponderosa pine into pure sagebrush habitat becomes apparent when comparing historic photos with today's; flat landscapes with no juniper in 1961 changed to scattered junipers throughout.

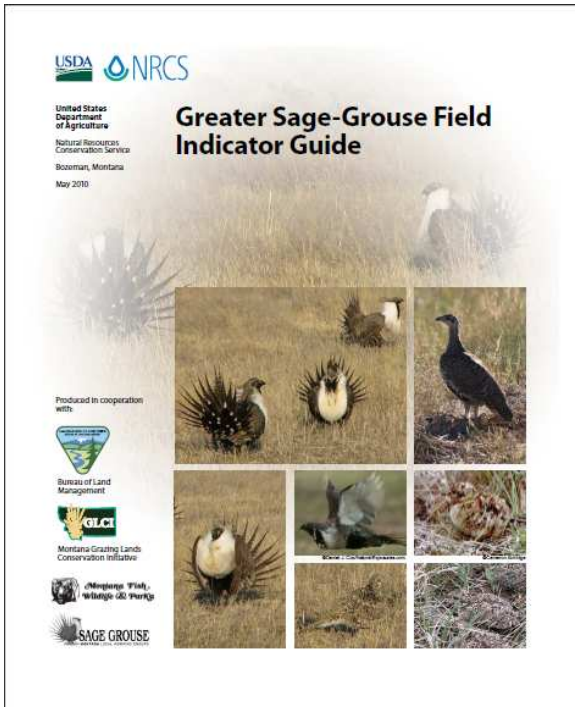


Juniper encroachment into topographically flat sagebrush habitats is detrimental to sage-grouse because it results in habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and it attracts predators that use the increased cover provided by trees. Juniper encroachment is not an extensive problem in Montana but where it does occur, it is locally significant. Connelly suggests that "conifer removal from sagebrush communities can be an effective management technique for improving sage-grouse habitat" (Connelly et al. 2000). The Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Oregon identified juniper encroachment as one of the greatest risks to the continued existence of sage-grouse on the refuge (http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/newsletters/Summerfall20072.pdf).

Post-treatment monitoring of the Big Horn County project indicates some re-occupation or new use by sage-grouse, where no use was noted before. A long running sage-grouse telemetry study conducted in the area by Dr. Brett Walker UM documented no use of the area by sage-grouse before treatment.

PUBLICATIONS

A new sage-grouse publication titled *Greater Sage-grouse Field Indicator Guide was* developed for landowner information with working group input and participation. It is a hands-on illustrative guide to sage-grouse field indicators. An important outreach brochure, it provides information about sage-grouse and is useful for people out on the land such as landowners, hunters, sports people and wildlife enthusiasts. The publication is available for downloaded at the Montana NRCS web-site below:
http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/biology/sagegrouse/sg_fieldguide/index.html
The publication has since been reprinted by NRCS's national headquarters and distributed to all eleven western states having sage-grouse.



CHALLENGES

The Miles City SG-LWG has been successful in providing outreach and education on local issues despite having no operational budget. As would be anticipated, they have encountered challenges not necessarily unique to them but nevertheless, indicative of individual interests having to come together for a common goal. The Miles City SG-LWG has successfully acquired small grants which they have used to schedule workshops, field trips, engage professional speakers, and advertise such on local radio stations,

newspapers, and bulletin boards. Interest in sage-grouse by landowners has fluctuated, primarily with the threat of endangered species listing.

Table 5
Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group Activities 2007-2010

Date	Activity	Location
December 19, 2006	Regularly scheduled / Updates / NRCS web-site development	Miles City FWP conference Room
January 21, 2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP conference Room
February 5, 2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
February 12, 2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
April 4,2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
April 23,2008	Sage-grouse listing status, updates on LWG activities, GLCI grant, Cedar Creek Anticline, NRCS web-site development, FWP update	Miles City FWP Conference Room
May 12, 2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
June 2, 2009	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
June 15-17 2009	Presentation on energy and sage-grouse, field tours of sage-grouse habitat and vegetation requirements.	Fair Grounds, Fort Keogh
October 22, 2008	Results of state wide workshops GLCI grant/ Jordan, Grass range, Twin Bridges / 11 state Utah survey results of LWGs	Miles City FWP Conference Room
October 29, 2009	Public sage-grouse workshop	Fort Keogh Miles City
December 8, 2009	Executive committee meeting – status and updates, discussion on moving meeting to improve attendance	Miles City FWP Conference Room

Table 5 Cont:
Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group Activities 2007-2010

Date	Activity	Location
January 2, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
January 26, 2010	Jointed with Extension office AG Winter Series meeting to present sage-grouse topic. SG-LWG was represented at the meeting by Miles City SG-LWG co-chair	Broadus , Montana
February 2, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
February 18, 2010	Public meeting Alzada – discussions on sage-grouse ecology, predators and new sage-grouse study in Carter County	Alzada Hall, Alzada Montana
March 2,2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
March 29, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
April 26, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
June 1, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room
June 14-16, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities /status and updates	Fair grounds and Fort Keogh
November 30, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities / status and updates	Miles City FWP Conference Room
December 12, 2010	Executive committee met to plan Range days activities	BLM/MCFO meeting room
January 10, 2011	Executive committee met to plan Forsyth meeting activities	Miles City FWP Conference Room

MILES CITY SAGE-GROUSE LOCAL WORKING GROUP

ACTION PLAN 2011-2014

Note to readers: The following is prepared primarily for use by the local working group, but it is also anticipated that others outside of the local working group may have interest in this document. So, it is written to provide some basic information to persons who may not be familiar with the local geography, surroundings, and issues.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The Miles City area Sage-grouse Local working group (SG-LWG) is one of 4 working groups currently operating in Montana originally identified in the "Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-Grouse in Montana-2005."

The Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group began meeting in December of 2003. Meetings were open to all and participants included agricultural interests, sportsmen, power companies, and representatives of state, federal, and tribal agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The SG-LWG first met in December 2003, and has continued to meet 3-4 times per year since. The primary focus of the meetings has been to review the goals and conservation actions recommended by the Montana state management plan for greater sage-grouse conservation, review programs providing financial assistance to landowners for sage-grouse-related improvements and conservation measures, review pending activities that may impact habitats and populations, host expert presentations on the results of scientific research, review state and federal conservation planning, and to begin on-the-ground projects.

The Montana SG-LWG boundaries were determined at an Executive Committee meeting of the Montana State Sage-grouse Working Group Committee on October 3, 2007.

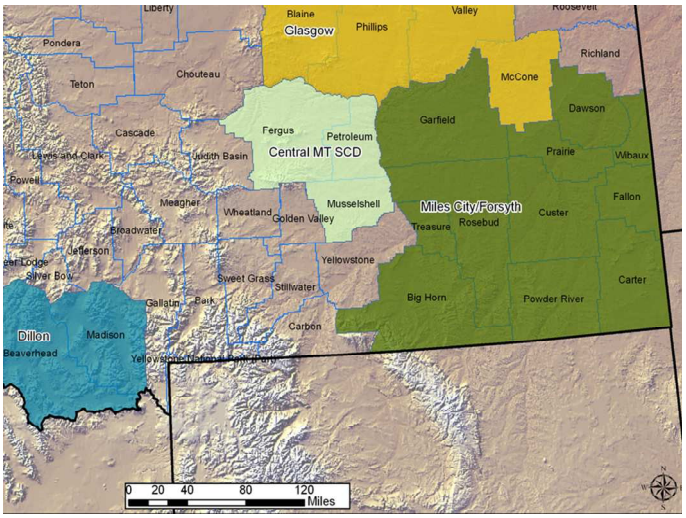


Figure 1

Blue – Dillon, Gold – Glasgow, Green – Miles City Light green – Central

Central - Conservation Districts not an official SG-LWG however is proactive functioning as one.

Geographic Area

Participants in meetings have included persons from Big Horn, Rosebud, Carter, Custer, Powder River, and Prairie Counties in Montana and from locations in Wyoming as well. A general boundary was offered at a statewide committee meeting in Billings October 3, 2007.

Landownership and public land management in this portion of Montana include:

- Private landownership
- Land and minerals managed by the Bureau of Land Management
- Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
- Crow Indian Reservation
- Lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service
- Lands managed by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- C. M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

General Description of Habitat

Southeastern Montana is within the Wyoming Big Sagebrush-Silver Sagebrush ecotype, which extends over most of eastern Montana. In this part of Montana, sagebrush steppe occurs at elevations ranging from 2000-

3500 feet on nearly level landscape or gentle slopes. The sagebrush steppe landscape is dissected by locally steep river breaks. Stands of ponderosa pine are intermixed with prairie across the landscape. Major drainages include the Yellowstone, Tongue, and Powder Rivers.

Land uses in the area include livestock grazing, energy development, farming (grains and hay on dry land and beets, corn, beans, and other crops in irrigated valleys). Conversion to residential use is not prevalent—this is an area of Montana that has been experiencing population declines over the past few decades. There is little residential development in the area outside of established towns and recreational area locations (such as on the Tongue River Reservoir).

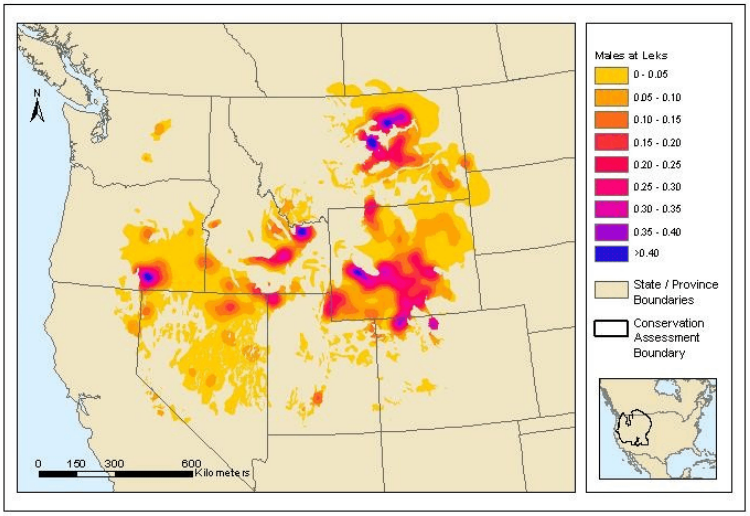
General Description of Sage-Grouse Population

Based on available data and anecdotal information, sage-grouse populations in these counties experienced declines in the latter half of the 20th century, but more recently appear to have stabilized based on lek counts.

Despite harsh winters that can occur in this part of Montana, sage-grouse survive winters well, especially compared to other upland game birds. Sage-grouse use sagebrush for food and shelter during the winter months. (Refer to the "Management Plan" for more information on seasonal habitat needs. Also refer to Brendan Moynihan's Ph.D. dissertation on importance of winter habitat in northern Montana.)

Research on habitat and sage-grouse populations is being conducted by FWP, BLM, and the U.S. Forest Service in the Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group Area. This includes work on mapping habitat and research on potential effects of coalbed methane gas development.

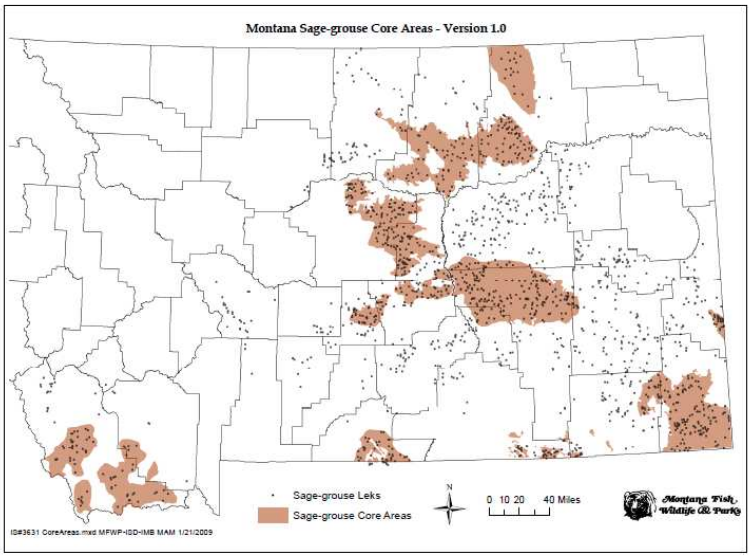
Figure 2. Strongholds for breeding populations of sage-grouse in western North America



Darker shades represent the greatest densities of males/km^2.

SOURCE: Connelly, J. W., S. T. Knick, M. A. Schroeder, and S. J. Stiver. 2004. Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitats. Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Unpublished Report. Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Figure 3: Montana Sage-grouse Core Areas – Version 1.0



SOURCE: In 2009 the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks (MDFWP) released the greater sage-grouse core area map of Montana.

Key Issues for Sage Grouse in the West

After thoroughly analyzing the best scientific and commercial information available, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded in March 2010 that the greater sage-grouse warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act. However, the Service has determined that listing the species for protection is precluded by the need to take action on other species facing more immediate and severe extinction threats. As a result, the sage-grouse has been added to the list of species that are candidates for Endangered Species Act protection. The Service will review the status of the sage-grouse annually to determine whether it warrants more immediate attention.

The Service analyzed five factors in making their evaluation for listing. Two of the factors were judged to be warranted these were; the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of habitat or range and the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms. Some potential factors that may affect the habitat or range of the greater sage-grouse and result in habitat loss or fragmentation are wildfire, energy development, urbanization, agricultural conversion, infrastructure development and conifer encroachment are the primary threats to the species.

Greater sage-grouse populations have been declining since the 1960s. Population projections and our analysis of threats suggest the declining population trend will continue across the species' range. Effective conservation measures can help to abate these anticipated negative effects.

Invasive plants are also a serious range wide threat to greater sage-grouse habitat because they can out-compete sagebrush and are increasing wildfire frequencies, further contributing to direct loss of habitat. Once

established, invasive plants reduce and eliminate vegetation essential for greater sage-grouse to use as food and cover. Sagebrush restoration techniques are limited and have generally been ineffective. However, maintain healthy sagebrush grasslands with a full complement of native perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs can effectively reduce the invasion of these habitats by exotic plants.

Federal agencies manage the majority of greater sage-grouse habitat in the United States. Overall, the ability of these agencies to adequately address the issues of wildfire and invasive plants across the landscape is limited. Energy development and its associated infrastructure are expected to continue. Protective measures, including strategic locating of energy developments away from core sage-grouse habitats, are needed to reduce threats into the future.

Substantial new information on West Nile virus (WNv) and impacts on the greater sage-grouse has emerged since 2005. The virus is now distributed throughout the species' range, and affected sage-grouse populations experience high mortality rates with resultant, often significant reductions in local populations. Infections in northeastern Wyoming, southeastern Montana, and the Dakotas seem to be the most persistent. Outbreaks vary between years, with hotter late summers that support high mosquito abundance promoting the highest observed mortality rates. Limited information suggests that sage-grouse may be able to survive an infection; however, because of the apparent low level of immunity and continuing changes within the virus, widespread resistance appears unlikely.

Issues Identified by Miles City Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The Miles City SG-LWG identified the following as priority issues for their area.

Key issues are focused on the objectives of the state plan—sage grouse populations and sage grouse habitat. It is assumed that primary emphasis will be given to those populations that are known or suspected to be at risk, or where future actions could create new risk factors. Areas with stable populations will be less of a focus (except where future actions could be a problem).

- Consider populations at risk:
    - Are there populations known or suspected to be declining?

- Identify future actions or situations that could create new risk factors for population viability. In this area this includes:
    - Increased energy development and related infrastructure
    - West Nile Virus (known to kill birds that contract the disease, first surfaced in Montana in late summer 2003; cool weather conditions in 2004 did not lend themselves to production of mosquito that carries the disease)
    - Conversion, other?

- Actions that reduce or minimize sage brush habitat. In this area this includes:
    - New conversion of sage brush land to cropland
    - Eliminating sage brush (including burning, plowing, or use of herbicides) as part of efforts to promote grass growth, or other
    - Wildfire

- Adequate seasonal habitat

  - Drought and other factors can affect forb and insect production, both of which are important food sources for young sage grouse
  - Water availability (especially during drought)
- Effects of predation and hunting on sage grouse populations

Actions Taken To-Date

- October 3, 2007 participated in an executive committee meeting of the State Sage-grouse Committee
- The Miles City SG-LWG has held 20 meeting since 2007
- The Miles City SG-LWG was successful in incorporating sage-grouse into the statewide Range Days agenda which was held June 15th – 17th 2009 in Miles
- The Montana Range Days attracted people from across the state which provided a great opportunity for the local committee to reach a large audience.
- Sage-grouse were again incorporated into Montana Range Days activities in 2010 with the participation and guidance of the Miles City SG-LWG. The Montana Range Days attracted people from across the state which provided a great opportunity for the local committee to reach a large audience.
- The *Juniper Treatment Project CX Ranch Big Horn County June 1, 2009*. Treated 143 acres of juniper encroachment.
- The Miles City SG-LWG held a sage-grouse outreach conference October 29,2009 at Fort Keogh in Miles City
- Cooperated in the development and publications *Greater Sage-grouse Field Indicator Guide* an informational brochure for the general public informing them about sage-grouse.
- The Miles City SG-LWG participated in Montana Extension Service program in Broadus January 26th, 2010
- The Miles City SG-LWG sponsored an informational meeting on sage-grouse in Alzada February 18th, 2010
- Numerous public articles appeared in the local paper covering sage-grouse events and meetings were announced in local papers and radio.

ACTION PLAN

The Miles City SG-LWG, in additions to holding regular meeting, has undertaken several actions to assist sage-grouse conservation

1. Meetings

   The Sage-grouse Local Working Group will meet at least once during the year and will also conduct an annual field tour. Purpose of the meeting(s) will be to:

   1) provide updates on various projects, studies, statewide and multi-state regional sage-grouse conservation efforts
   2) provide information and training on financial assistance programs for sage-grouse conservation efforts
   3) identify any new developments (actions or other) resulting in new impacts for sage-grouse in the local area
   4) identify opportunities for the SG-LWG to provide information to the public regarding the SG-LWG's goals, efforts, and accomplishments, and build support for those actions
   5) identify new projects or actions of the SG-LWG
   6) elect co-chairs
   7) monitor effectiveness of ongoing projects

Co-chairs may call other meetings as relevant, including for purposes of project planning, implementation, and monitoring.

2. Executive Committee

An executive committee will be established to provide support to the co-chairs between meetings and will include representation from the state and federal agencies (NRCS, BLM, and FWP). The Executive Committee will meet as necessary between meetings of the local working group.

3. Logistical Support

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will coordinate with co-chairs to provide the following logistical support:

1) Preparation and distribution of meeting announcements and written meeting summaries
2) Management of the Local Working Group mailing list data base
3) Preparation of news releases
4) Meeting logistics (e.g., meeting location, refreshments, etc.)
5) Preparation of draft progress report (as draft to be reviewed by local working group and then submitted to MDFWP.

4. Action Items

Between January 1, 2011 and January 1, 2014, The Local Working Group will:

1) Identify and Implement at least one project
2) Provide at least one public information session (e.g., presentation at a conservation district meeting, *grazing district*, public meeting, other)
3) Update the action plan for 2011-2014 (including identifying other projects for subsequent years and role of local working group)
4) Provide written information to agencies on local working group consensus items of relevance to agency actions (e.g., supporting specific agency projects)
5) Assist and facilitate NRCS Sage-grouse initiative outreach, communications, and education
6) Provide outreach outside of Miles City to increase recruitment and exposure to new members
7) Identify funding opportunities to help support our activities