



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Greater Sage-grouse

Facts, figures and discussion

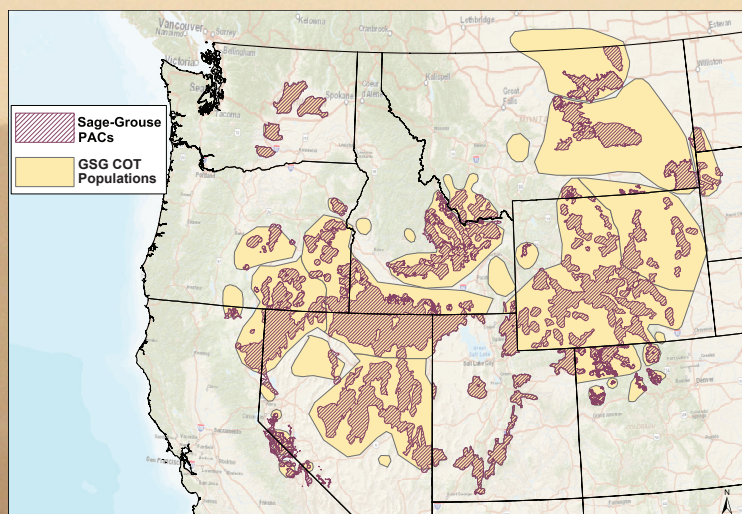
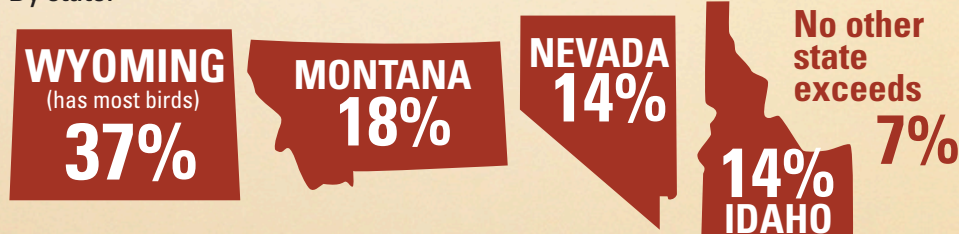
General Facts About Greater Sage-grouse (GrSG)

- Largest native grouse species in North America
- Long-lived, ground-nesting resident game bird managed by state agencies
- Currently occurs across 11 states and 2 Canadian provinces
- Range: 165 million acres, 257,000 square miles
(Loss of 56% from historic range)
- Uses communal mating grounds called leks
- Sagebrush dependent
- Annual home range can cover 230 square miles or more

Population & Distribution

- There is no single, consistently measured, range-wide survey methodology for GrSG.
- Current estimates range from 200,000 – 500,000 individuals.
- GrSG are monitored by state agencies primarily by counting males at leks.
- Some states use brood counts and collect hunter-harvested wings to estimate productivity.
- Estimated 30% decline in population since 1985.

By state:

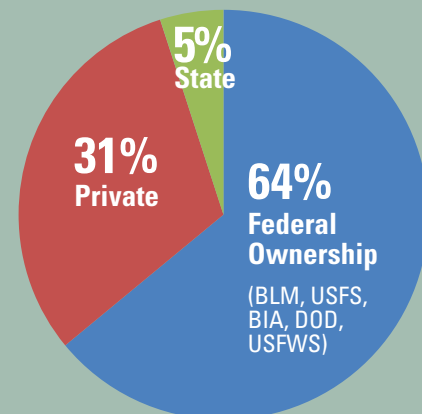


Greater sage-grouse Priority Areas of Conservation (PACs) and COT Populations

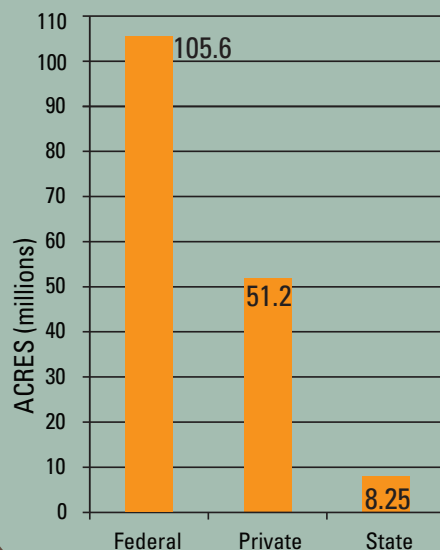


Land Ownership

Range-wide (%)



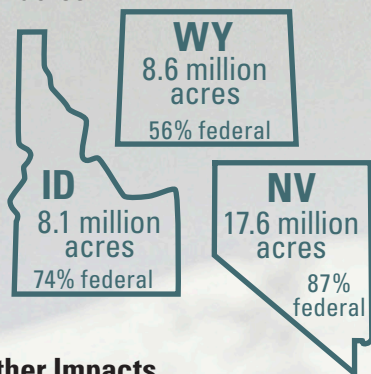
Range-wide (acres)



Priority Areas for Conservation:

Key habitats essential for long-term viability of GrSG; should be focus of conservation resource investment.

- 75.5 million Total PAC acres, 63% of current range
- 64% federally owned, 48 million acres



Other Impacts

PREDATION

Sage-grouse are prey animals. Predation is only a threat when habitat is lacking or fragmented. In these situations nest predation can have significant local impacts.

HUNTING

Not a threat to persistence of species; state management is goal.

GRAZING

Overgrazing can degrade quality of sagebrush habitat. Grazing that is managed to maintain or promote sagebrush with a healthy understory of grasses and forbs benefit sage-grouse.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Direct, long-term impact undetermined; may amplify cheatgrass impact and affect sagebrush persistence and distribution.

Primary Threats

- Loss and fragmentation of sagebrush
- Agricultural conversion
- Infrastructure: - *transmission towers, energy development, fences, roads, pipelines*
- Urbanization, ranchette development
- Invasive plants:
 - *cheatgrass; Piñon-Juniper encroachment*
- Fire cycle (amplified by cheatgrass)
- Lack of regulatory mechanisms to protect sagebrush



Pronghorn in Wyoming / Theo Stein

General Facts About Sagebrush

- Most widespread vegetation in Western North America
- Dominant land cover on more than 190,000 square miles within sage-grouse range
- Includes 18 woody plant species of various shapes and sizes
- Co-occurs with native grasses and forbs, which are also critical components of sage-grouse habitat
- Essential habitat for 350 species, including sage-grouse
- At risk due to altered fire regimes, invasions of nonnative plants, encroachment of trees, anthropogenic land uses and climate change
- More than 70 percent of sagebrush habitats used by sage-grouse are on public lands managed by federal or state agencies

FWS Goals

- Our goal is to work with states and other partners to ensure the long-term conservation of greater sage-grouse by ***maintaining viable, well-distributed grouse populations that are connected by healthy sagebrush across their range.***
- We would like to see management actions in place that will ***arrest or reverse recent population declines*** and establish conditions where populations can be expected to increase.
- Our decision on whether or not to list the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act ***will take into consideration all ongoing conservation plans, efforts and management programs*** that can assist in restoring the health of the species and its habitat. Our decision is due in September 2015.
- ***We do not yet know what our decision in 2015 will be.*** States and federal agencies across the range continue to work on conservation plans. These efforts must be completed and integrated across the species' range. It's important for everyone to contribute. Everyone's actions can count.
- There is broad agreement that sagebrush ecosystems have been significantly degraded over the past several decades. This has impacted not only sage-grouse but the community of wildlife that depends on healthy sagebrush rangelands.
- ***Our collective conservation actions must improve and maintain productive sagebrush ecosystems*** for people and wildlife for generations to come.

For more info visit:
www.fws.gov/greatersagegrouse

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