

Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations

Developed by the
Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group

As revised and approved by consensus
June 2009

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Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group's Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations, developed by the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group (Local Working Group), is to specify recommended actions for restoring sage-grouse populations in portions of eastern Idaho (as described further in the section titled "Area," below) in accordance with the 1997 Idaho Sage-grouse Management Plan. The 1997 Plan has subsequently been replaced by the 2006 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho and is now the accepted guiding document in Idaho.

B. Need

Sage grouse populations have exhibited long term declines throughout North America, declining by greater than 30 percent over the past 30-40 years. Data from lek routes conducted for the Upper Snake Local Working Group planning area show on average a 40-50 percent decline in sage-grouse populations based on comparisons with long-term averages. Since 1996, populations appear to be stable. (See Appendix A.)

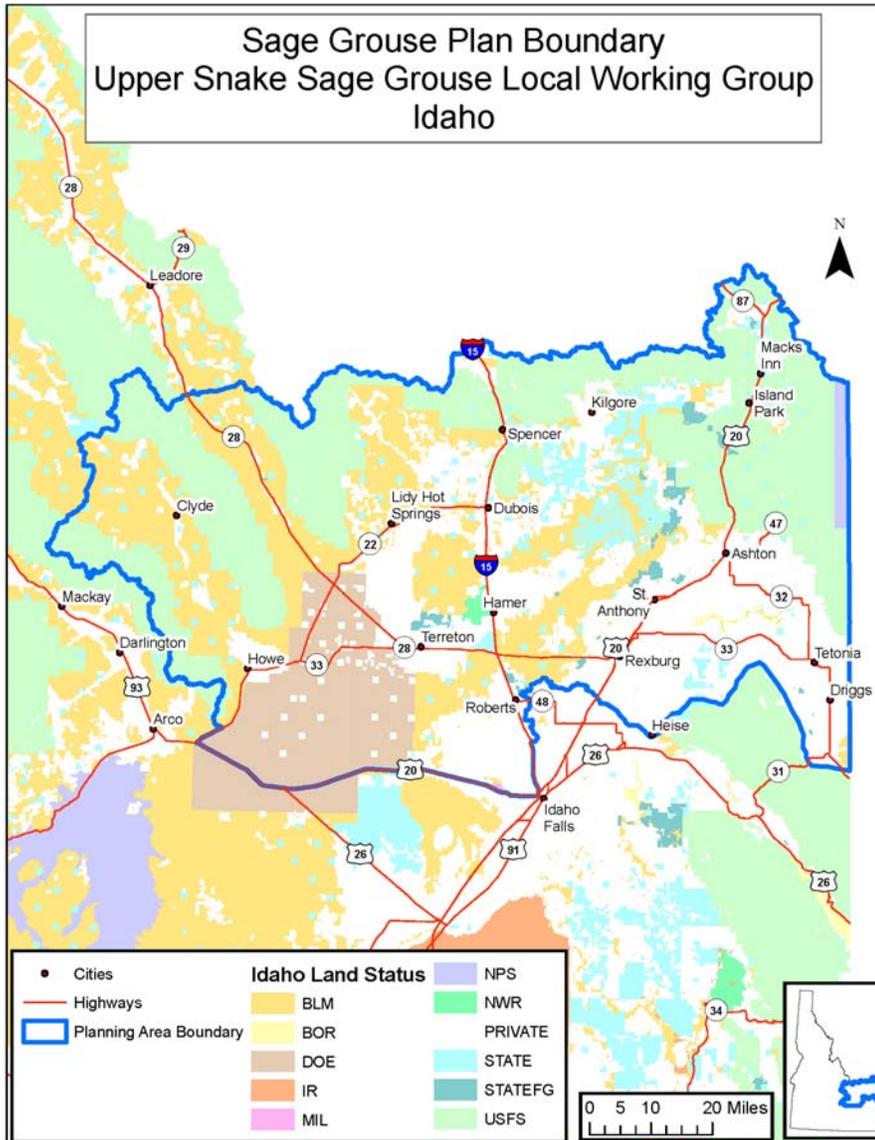
Petitions were filed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the sage-grouse as threatened or endangered throughout the entire range. Even though the species has not been listed under the Endangered Species Act (a "Finding of Not Warranted" was published in the *Federal Register* on January 7, 2005), specific actions were needed to reduce the possibility of listing. Specific planned actions addressed in this plan were designed to reverse this declining trend, and improve the quality and condition of sage-grouse habitat. This plan is intended to be the Conservation Plan for Sage-grouse in the Upper Snake area. The Local Working Group intends that this Plan could be used as a template for a Recovery Plan should the birds become a "listed" species as per the Endangered Species Act.

C. Area

The Local Working Group revised the boundaries of its planning area in June 2009. The revised planning area can be described as follows:

- All of Teton County, excluding the Big Hole Mountains
- All of Madison County excluding the Big Hole Mountains
- The portion of Jefferson County that lies north and west of the Snake River
- The portion of Bonneville County that lies west of Interstate 15 and north of Highway 20
- The portion of Bingham County that lies north of Highway 20
- The portion of Butte County that lies outside of Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)'s Big Game Management Unit 50 and north of Highway 20
- The portion of Custer County that lies in Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)'s Big Game Management Unit 51

- The portion of Lemhi County that lies within IDFG Big Game Management Units 51 and 58
- Clark County, in its entirety
- Fremont County, in its entirety.



The area is illustrated above.

Sage grouse habitat within the Snake River area is managed by many private landowners and public agencies. Federal agencies with land management responsibilities in the area are:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sheep Experiment Station (Sheep Station)

- U.S. Department of Energy, Idaho Operations Office (which owns and manages the Idaho National Engineering & Environmental Laboratory) (DOE)
- U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service - Camas National Wildlife Refuge (Camas Refuge)
- U.S. Department of Interior, Park Service (Park Service)

State agencies with land management responsibilities in the area include:

- Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDF&G)
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

D. Goal

The goal of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group's Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations is to increase sage-grouse populations and/or improve sage-grouse habitat in the area described above to achieve management objectives in the 2006 Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho, subject to new information as it becomes available. The Local Working Group will achieve this goal through implementation of recommended actions as developed through consensus processes within the Local Working Group. The recommended actions are described in this Plan.

E. How this Plan was Developed

IDF&G published a Sage Grouse Management Plan in 1997 that called for the development of local working groups throughout the state to develop local management plans for increasing sage-grouse populations. The efforts of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group began when IDF&G announced a meeting to be held in December of 1998. A mailing list was established for keeping all interested individuals and organizations informed of the group's efforts (Appendix B, Mailing List).

The Local Working Group met approximately once a month from December 1998 through February 2004. No deadlines were set for the Local Working Group. Early on, the group agreed to work by consensus, understanding that consensus building would be challenging and time-consuming. It was felt that the group's products would be much enhanced by this approach, however.

Aided by the services of a neutral facilitator, the Group began with a process of collecting and reviewing available information on sage-grouse and the various factors that affect sage-grouse populations and habitat. Once the Local Working Group participants agreed they had enough information to proceed, a Working Charter was developed to identify a process and schedule for developing a plan to increase regional sage-grouse populations. The participants reached consensus on a purpose statement and agreed to use the Working Charter to guide their progress (Appendix C, Working Charter).

Starting in November 1999, the Local Working Group participants formed six working committees to develop “potential actions” for consideration by the entire Local Working Group. That process took several months and resulted in a list of 25 potential actions.

To support conducting an objective evaluation of the 25 potential actions, the Local Working Group participants formed three evaluation committees. One committee evaluated the economic impacts of each potential action, a second committee assessed the impact each potential action would have on sage-grouse populations and/or their habitats, and the third committee considered how difficult it would be to implement each potential action. Following independent evaluations by the three committees, the entire Local Working Group considered the results. At that point, it was decided that none of the potential actions should be removed from consideration.

The Local Working Group considered the most recent published guidelines for sage-grouse populations and habitats (Connelly et al. 2000b, Guidelines to manage sage-grouse populations and their habitats, Wildlife Society Bulletin, 28:967-985, provided in full in Appendix D). An attempt was made to adapt these regional guidelines to specific conditions in the Upper Snake region of Idaho. However, the Local Working Group was not able to reach consensus on how to adapt the guidelines. Rather, it was agreed that the guidelines serve as a starting point for discussion as the guidelines present the best distribution-wide recommendations for sage-grouse.

Next, the Local Working Group turned its attention to development of a plan for restoring sage-grouse populations. It was agreed that a special committee would take responsibility for thoroughly reviewing work products to date and developing a revised draft plan for consideration by the full Local Working Group. The special committee met a total of five full days to complete this process. Then, the entire Local Working Group reviewed the plan completely. Many changes were agreed to during that review.

The final review began in April of 2003. For the final review process, all Local Working Group participants were notified of the schedule for the review and the ground rules that would apply. The final review spanned six meetings. At the September 2003, the Local Working Group completed its final review of the Plan.

F. How This Plan Was Adopted

Upon completion of the final draft of this Plan, the Local Working Group hosted a public meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to announce completion of the Plan, explain the process used to develop it, and respond to questions about the Plan. The meeting was announced in the local media and all Local Working Group members will be urged to invite interested parties.

Members of the public were invited to comment on the Plan, in writing, during a public comment period 45 days in length. Comments were accepted via mail, E-mail, and facsimile.

The Local Working Group then released its Plan for public review and comment. A total of nine public comments were received; they are summarized in the table in Appendix E.

Following completion of the Final Plan, the Local Working Group sought permission from all individuals who helped develop the document to use their names/affiliations on the List of Contributors. Finally, the Local Working Group attempted to enter into Memoranda of Understanding with all agencies and organizations with a role in implementing the Plan.

Since then, the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho was completed. That document was signed by the agencies and eliminated the need for Memoranda of Understanding for this Local Working Group's Final Plan.

In compliance with the Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho, that Plan provides guidance in addressing issues on which this Plan is silent. Our plan provides guidance on any issues that we have addressed.

G. Constraints:

Constraints that will affect implementation of all Recommended Actions listed in this Plan include:

- Funding
- Manpower
- Availability of appropriate technology
- Federal and state laws and differing agency mandates and emphases
- The vast mosaic of land ownership patterns and agency authorities affecting management of sage-grouse habitat in the area.

II. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Habitat Recommended Actions

1. *Habitat Inventories*

a) Description:

Information regarding the location of historical, potential, and current habitat areas for Sage-grouse in the Upper Snake area is incomplete.

b) Objective:

The objective of the "Habitat Inventories" proposed action is to obtain more complete information regarding the location of historical and current habitat areas for Sage-grouse in the Upper Snake area on public and private lands.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Upper Snake District of the Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and IDF&G, create a useable habitat map and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database of the Upper Snake area that identifies all five types of habitat/seasonal Sage-grouse use areas using data (provided by all relevant agencies) including:

- Leks
- Nesting and early brood rearing habitat
- Summer brood rearing habitat
- Winter habitat
- Migration corridors/linkage areas

(These may be grouped into different categories that more closely match existing management plans such as breeding habitat that includes leks and nesting and early brood rearing habitats, summer-late brood rearing habitats, winter habitats, and migration corridors.)

- 2) The Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies¹ and the Natural Resources Conservation Service delineate habitats into the following categories:
 - Presently lost areas (areas that currently do not provide usable habitat due to land use changes but which may potentially be recovered).
 - Permanently lost areas (no chance for recovery).
 - Vital areas (areas that remain intact and vital for current populations).
 - Underutilized areas (suitable; but currently not used; lightly occupied areas; or areas that received historical use).
 - Fragmented areas (isolated areas of habitat that may or may not be occupied).
 - Low priority areas that are being used incidentally, but have low site potential.
- 3) The Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service develop standardized habitat inventory methods. Once the agencies agree to use the standardized inventory methods, documentation will be appended to this plan.
- 4) The Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service update the database and map annually.

d) Benchmarks:

- Recommended Actions #1 and #3 should be completed in 2005.
- Recommended Action #2 should be completed in 2005.

¹ The term "land management agencies" in this document is intended to include all federal and state agencies with land management responsibilities within the Snake River area as listed in Section C. "Area" in the Introduction to this document.

- Recommended Action #4 should be completed annually.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

The Local Working Group will monitor progress on the Recommended Actions by reviewing the development and quality of the database and map annually. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management would present a status report on all recommended actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

2. *Evaluate Sage-grouse Habitat Conditions*

a) *Description:*

Information regarding the sage-grouse habitat conditions within the Upper Snake area is incomplete.

b) *Objective:*

The Objective of the “Evaluate Sage-grouse Habitat Conditions” proposed action is to develop more complete information regarding habitat conditions in Sage-grouse habitat areas within the Upper Snake area.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The federal and state land management agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service develop standardized methods for evaluating vegetative characteristics. The inventory method should be based on important sage-grouse habitat parameters and include those vegetative conditions that are determined by site potential and are necessary to sustain overall resource productivity. These parameters should include but not be limited to: predominant sagebrush species, average sagebrush height, sagebrush canopy, sagebrush age, predominant grass species, average grass height, grass canopy, forb canopy, patch size, and vegetative mosaic on the landscape. Once the agencies agree to standardized evaluation methods, documentation of the methodology will be appended to this plan.
- 2) The Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies create an accurate inventory and useable map of vegetative characteristics in sage-grouse habitat, including presently lost areas, vital areas, underutilized areas, and fragmented habitat areas within the Upper Snake area. (Standardized inventory methods developed in Recommended Action 1.3 above will be used.) Those areas that are permanently lost and low-priority areas (see Habitat Action #1 “Habitat Inventories” above) and do not have the potential to provide suitable habitat may be excluded from this inventory.

d) *Benchmarks:*

- Recommended Action #1 should be completed by 2004.
- The first inventory and map (for Recommended Action #2), based on currently available data, should be completed by 2004.

- The revised inventory and map for occupied sage-grouse habitat, incorporating new data, should be completed by 2007.
- The final inventory and map for the entire Upper Snake area should be completed by 2008.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The Local Working Group will monitor progress on the Recommended Actions by reviewing the development and quality of the inventory and map annually. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management will present a status report on all recommended actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

3. Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities

a) Description:

Sage grouse require large expanses of sagebrush habitats with healthy, diverse understories of grasses and forbs. In some areas, past management of rangelands has altered the density, structure, and composition of sagebrush communities—sometimes creating a variety of conditions that do not meet sage-grouse seasonal needs. Composition of grasses and forbs, condition, and canopy cover of sagebrush, and other habitat-related conditions vary across Idaho. Variation may result from environmental factors such as climate, soil type, site potential and/or land management practices, e.g., fire management, grazing, weeds, recreation, etc. Because areas are diverse, maintaining, restoring or enhancing sage-grouse habitats requires different strategies.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities” proposed action is to manage the density, structure, and composition of shrubs, forbs, and grasses at a standard that will maintain the long term health and sustainability of the plant community, enhance the long term health of sage-grouse habitats, and meet the needs of other species and human uses.²

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local working group recommends that:

- 1) The land managing agencies and cooperators use the following process to analyze habitat management actions necessary to achieve the objective.

- (a) Inventory proposed management area for the following parameters. The local Working group recognizes that not all of these parameters may be applicable depending on the proposed management action.

Site potential, current vegetative structure and condition, current sage-grouse use, potential sage-grouse use, types of sage-grouse habitat, ecological condition of the surrounding sagebrush habitat, current condition of the sage-grouse habitat,

² Throughout this section, the term “human uses” is intended to include livestock grazing.

current and past land use, past fire history, current fuel loads, and noxious weed and undesirable plant inventory.

- (b) Identify habitat characteristics that the project is designed to change and the desired results of the project.
 - (c) Evaluate the current land management and infrastructure of project area to determine if they are adequate to ensure likely success of the project.
 - (d) Assess the short and long-term impact of the management action on the sagebrush community, sage-grouse habitats, and other wildlife needs.
 - (e) Assess the positive and negative impacts that the management action will have on other human uses.
 - (f) In conducting the analysis of the proposed management action, consider the cumulative affects of the proposed action by analyzing the effects against (1) current conditions occurring outside the immediate project area and (2) those reasonably known or foreseeable activities occurring within the area that may effect the sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitat.
 - (g) The scale of analysis should be commensurate with the affected sage-grouse population's seasonal distribution.
- 2) The local land managing agencies and cooperators determine the treatment to be used in the management action to achieve the objective by using the following:
- (a) Review current literature and experiment with new techniques and procedures to achieve the objective.
 - (b) Analyze the impacts of past management actions or natural disturbances in the area. This would include local landowner actions, federal and state resource management actions or management by university or federal experiment entities. Consider ecological responses to past treatments in the immediate area of the proposed management action to help choose an appropriate treatment.
 - (c) Choose a treatment that will best accomplish the management action Objective and will be cost effective, feasible, and complementary to the long-term benefit of the current and future land uses.
 - (d) For project proposals in currently occupied sage-grouse habitat, design the implementation of the treatment to accommodate as much as possible the short term needs of the sage-grouse (mosaic prescribed burns, patch herbicide treatments, adjacent habitat requirements and etc) while meeting the objectives of the project.
 - (e) Work with all cooperators to coordinate current land uses to enhance the efficacy of the treatment (e.g., be sure grazing is adjusted to accommodate treatment).

- (f) Identify landowner incentives to encourage participation and cooperation.
- 3) Implement management action
- 4) Management agencies and cooperators monitor the results of the treatment.
 - (a) Determine if the treatment achieved the short-term results and if additional treatments are necessary to achieve the long-term Objective (seeding and etc).
 - (b) Monitor the short- and long-term results of the treatment on the sagebrush habitat to determine if the desired vegetative responses are occurring and the response timeframe.
 - (c) Monitor the short- and long-term effects of the treatment on sage-grouse and other wildlife populations and the response timeframe.
 - (d) Monitor the short- and long-term results of the treatment on other human uses.
 - (e) Monitor the effects of other human uses on the treated habitat.
 - (f) Use monitoring results of project to improve project planning and design for future projects.

d) *Benchmarks:*

- Recommended management actions #1 and #2 should occur within a year after the management action is proposed.
- Management action #3 should occur within two years of the proposed action.
- Management action #4 should begin after completion of the treatment and continue as necessary to measure efficacy.

e) *Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:*

The federal or state agencies cooperating on management actions will give an annual report to the Local Working Group on the long- and short-term results of the management actions they are responsible for.

4. *Wildfire Policy*

a) *Description:*

Large areas of sage-grouse habitat have been lost and fragmented by catastrophic wildfires in the Upper Snake area, especially on the Big Desert. Wildfires that burn at high temperatures and completely kill desirable sagebrush species over large areas are especially destructive.³ Most sagebrush species are slow to reestablish naturally across large burned areas and are expensive to re-seed artificially.

³ Most sagebrush species do not re-sprout following fire; remnant plants of "islands" of sagebrush are needed to provide a seed source for timely reestablishment after a burn.

b) Objectives:

The objectives of the “Wildfire Policy” proposed action are to reduce the size, intensity, and frequency of wildfires and to develop a fire suppression policy that would place a high priority on protecting sage-grouse habitat.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The land management agencies and relevant fire protection districts place priority on suppression of wildfires in sage-grouse habitat as quickly as possible to reduce and prevent loss of habitat.
- 2) The land management agencies provide maps of important sage-grouse habitat in the Upper Snake area to fire protection districts.
- 3) The land management agencies and relevant fire protection districts analyze important sage-grouse habitat to determine:
 - (a) Potential for wildfire occurrence based on history, human use patterns, and fuel loading;
 - (b) Potential for wildfire ignition, difficulty of suppression, suppression tactics, and potential acreage of burns; and
 - (c) Opportunities for minimizing the acreage that is vulnerable to wildfire by implementing preventive treatments.
- 4) The land management agencies and relevant fire protection districts seek funding to implement preventive treatments that would reduce loss of sage-grouse habitat from wildfire.
- 5) All wildfires be evaluated as soon as possible to determine if re-seeding is necessary to achieve habitat management objectives. If needed, re-seed with sagebrush, native bunchgrasses, and forbs whenever possible.
- 6) All land management agencies maintain sagebrush communities on a landscape scale, allowing sage-grouse access to sagebrush stands with canopy cover of 10–30% and heights of at least 25–35 cm regardless of snow cover. Areas where winter habitat is already limited should be high priority for wildfire suppression and sagebrush control should be carefully managed to meet sage-grouse needs.
- 7) All land management agencies protect patches of sagebrush within burned areas from degradation and manipulation. These areas may provide the only winter habitat for sage-grouse and their loss could result in the extirpation of the grouse population. They also are important seed sources for sagebrush re-establishment in the burned areas. Post-fire activities should not remove or burn any remaining patches of sagebrush within the fire perimeter.

d) *Benchmarks:*

- Recommended Action #1 should be completed by April 2004.
- Recommended Action #2 should be implemented as soon as the maps become available.
- Recommended Action #3 should be completed when #2 is implemented.
- Recommended Actions #4 - 7 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:*

The land management agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. The report will address the number of wildfires and acreage burned, miles of fire breaks created and/or maintained areas and acreage needing re-seeding, areas needing preventive treatment, and agency funding levels for fire control.

5. *Prescribed Fire Policy*

a) *Description:*

Prescribed fire is a tool used to manage vegetation composition.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Prescribed Fire Policy” proposed action is to ensure that all planning for prescribed fire is based on a thorough analysis of the effect of prescribed fire on sage-grouse, sage-grouse habitat, and rangeland health as outlined in Habitat Action 3 “Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities.” The analysis should also consider effects on other wildlife and human uses. .

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The land management agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service develop agreement on a set of guidelines for prescribed burn proposals in sage-grouse habitat. The guidelines should address analysis, implementation, and monitoring for prescribed burning.
- 2) Prescribed fire not be used in sage-grouse habitats prone to invasion by cheatgrass and other invasive weed species unless adequate measures are included in restoration plans to replace the cheatgrass understory with perennial species using approved re-seeding strategies. These strategies could include, but are not limited to, use of pre-emergent herbicides (e.g., Oust®, Plateau®) to retard cheatgrass germination until perennial herbaceous species become established.
- 3) In winter habitat, burns larger than 120 acres (50 hectares) should be discouraged unless other compelling reasons warrant larger areas. In those cases, the reasons should be thoroughly justified in the analysis. Burns should not exceed 20% of

winter habitat within any 20-30 year interval (depending on the estimated recovery time for the sagebrush habitat, especially mountain big sagebrush).

- 4) IDF&G, in cooperation with the other land management agencies, initiate a study of sage-grouse response to prescribed fire in Mountain Big sagebrush habitat areas on a landscape basis.

d) Benchmarks:

- Recommended Actions #1 should be completed by 2004.
- Recommended Actions #2 and #3 should be implemented immediately.
- Recommended Action #4 should be implemented as funding is available.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The land management agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. The report will address all prescribed burn locations (in sage-grouse habitat) long- and short-term response in burn locations by plant species, plant diversity, and canopy cover.

6. Recovery/Restoration

a) Description:

As a result of fire, invasion of undesirable plants and noxious weeds, over-grazing, non-native species seedings, or other events, there are areas of sage-grouse habitat within the Upper Snake area that could benefit from deliberate restoration efforts. Brush beating, fire, and herbicides are treatment methods that are available for creating a mosaic of openings (early seral plant communities) to improve late brood rearing habitats. Land managers, rangeland ecologists, and biologists consider numerous factors when determining which treatment method is most appropriate, affordable, and potentially effective in any specific circumstance.

Opening up shrub canopy to encourage forb and grass growth may not improve severely degraded habitats. Where restoration of native plant communities involves treatment of sagebrush overstory, adequate sagebrush blocks should be retained to maintain minimum habitat conditions for sage-grouse populations.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Recovery/Restoration” proposed action is to restore degraded areas (areas with undesirable vegetation and areas in poor ecological condition) with a desired mix of grasses, forbs, and shrubs so they again can become usable for sage-grouse.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) All land management agencies identify areas in fair or poor ecological condition and prioritize areas for implementation of restoration activities.

- 2) All land management agencies restore degraded rangelands to a condition that again provides suitable breeding habitat for sage-grouse by including sagebrush, native forbs (especially legumes), and native grasses in re-seeding efforts (Apa 1998). If native forbs and grasses are unavailable, use species that are functional equivalents and provide habitat characteristics similar to those of native species.
- 3) All land management agencies consider the protocol developed in Habitat Action #3 “Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities” of this document when implementing recovery/restoration projects.
- 4) All land management agencies follow the latest science for cheatgrass control and sagebrush reestablishment in cheatgrass/noxious weed-prone sites.
- 5) All land management agencies utilize prescriptive grazing to achieve desired restoration objectives, (for example, crested wheatgrass seedings) if appropriate.
- 6) Undesirable plant species be aggressively controlled or eliminated through the application of chemical, mechanical, or biological control methods where appropriate.
- 7) All land management agencies require vegetation monitoring to be included in fire rehabilitation plans and immediately establish monitoring plots following all fires.
- 8) All land management agencies promote rangeland practices that improve soil moisture effectiveness, reduce erosion, decrease invasion of exotic plants, and increase abundance and diversity of forbs.
- 9) In areas of significant winter habitat loss ($\geq 40\%$ of original winter habitat), all land managers⁴ manage all remaining sagebrush habitats conservatively to meet sage-grouse needs.
- 10) All land managers re-seed former winter range with the appropriate subspecies of sagebrush and herbaceous species unless the species are re-colonizing the area in a density that would allow recovery within an acceptable timeframe based on site potential and past experience.
- 11) All land managers re-seed winter range areas burned by wildfire or prescribed fire as soon as possible after the fire if an evaluation of the area determines that reestablishment of sagebrush or native herbaceous species is not likely to occur naturally.
- 12) All land management agencies review status of habitat areas, including crested wheatgrass seedings, every five years to identify opportunities for restoration and prioritize those opportunities for implementation of restoration activities.

⁴ The term “land managers” in this and subsequent recommended actions is meant to include both public land management agencies and private land managers. The Local Working Group understands that it can only make recommendations to private landowners, and that individual landowners may not choose to implement the recommendations.

d) Benchmarks:

- Recommended Actions #1 - #11 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.
- Recommended Action #12 should be implemented every five years.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

All land management agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

7. Wetlands/Riparian Area Management in Sage-grouse Habitat

a) Description:

Wetland and riparian areas⁵ are vital to the survival of sage-grouse throughout the Upper Snake area. Wetlands and riparian areas provide a rich abundance and diversity of forbs and insects important to sage-grouse, particularly broods. Reduction, loss, or degradation of these areas (through trampling, compaction, alteration, vegetative encroachment, or diversion of water) negatively affect sage-grouse

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Wetland/Riparian Area Management in Sage-grouse Habitat” proposed action is to ensure that: 1) wetlands and riparian areas are managed to maintain or improve sage-grouse habitat, 2) wetlands and riparian areas are inventoried, and 3) the condition of each wetland and riparian area is assessed relative to its potential to provide sage-grouse habitat.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) Springs and associated riparian areas be managed to protect sage-grouse habitat from excessive grazing.⁶ Where appropriate, new spring developments with riparian sites should be fenced to exclude livestock grazing. Existing spring developments with riparian sites should be inventoried and fenced where needed to provide high quality sage-grouse foraging habitat.
- 2) Spring sources be protected and spring development projects be designed to maintain similar volume of free water and area of wet meadows at the spring. Capturing water from springs using pipelines and troughs may affect adversely wet meadows used by

⁵ Wetlands are defined as areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands include marshes, shallow swamps, lakeshores, bogs, muskegs, wet meadows, and estuaries. Riparian areas are found in transition between permanently saturated wetlands and upland areas. These areas exhibit vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent surface or subsurface water influence. Riparian areas include lands along, adjacent to, or contiguous with perennially and intermittently flowing rivers and streams, glacial potholes, and the shores of lakes and reservoirs with stable water levels.

⁶ Excessive grazing is defined as grazing that results in a downward vegetative trend or maintenance of unacceptable vegetative conditions.

grouse for foraging. Current methods exist for spring development and design that can actually increase wet meadow.

- 3) Exclosures be constructed, where appropriate, to provide a buffer around spring sources to protect the spring and riparian habitat from trampling, overgrazing by ungulates, and mechanical destruction by off-road vehicles. Exclosures should begin a minimum of 10 feet beyond the wetland/riparian area.
- 4) Troughs be installed in upland areas if possible. Design troughs to discourage loafing to the extent practical.
- 5) The effects of trough placement on the associated sage-grouse habitat be considered, particularly if placement results in livestock use of new areas or decreased use on areas already grazed.
- 6) All roads and trails be managed to minimize their potential negative impacts on springs and riparian areas. New roads and trails should be located appropriately. If feasible, existing roads that are adversely effecting springs and riparian areas in sage-grouse habitat should be relocated.
- 7) Vegetation be managed to maintain or enhance spring flows and in-stream flows be enhanced through vegetative manipulation, where appropriate.
- 8) Dewatering of streams be avoided.
- 9) Non-governmental organizations be encouraged to purchase or lease water rights from willing sellers where sage-grouse habitat is lost or degraded by dewatering.
- 10) Livestock be managed through development of riparian pasture systems, water gaps, troughs, etc. where appropriate to protect and enhance habitat.
- 11) Removal of sagebrush be avoided within 100 meters of sage-grouse foraging areas along riparian zones, meadows, lakebeds, and farmland, unless such removal is necessary to achieve habitat management objectives (e.g., meadow restoration, treatment of conifer encroachment) and long term ecosystem health. When prescribed fire is used in steep terrain to achieve other management objectives outside the 100-meter buffer zone, practical fire control measures should be applied to reduce the possibility of the spread of fire into the 100-meter buffer strip. Fire personnel should not be put at risk in any situation.
- 12) Water developments for sage-grouse only be constructed in or adjacent to known summer use areas and provide escape ramps suitable for all avian species and other small animals. Water developments and "guzzlers" may improve sage-grouse summer habitats (Autenrieth et al. 1982, Hanf et al. 1994). However, sage-grouse used these developments infrequently in southeastern Idaho because most were constructed in sage-grouse winter and breeding habitat, rather than summer range (Connelly and Doughty 1989).
- 13) Off-road vehicle use be restricted to existing roads and trails in sage-grouse habitat in and adjacent to wetlands, riparian areas, and spring areas.

d) *Benchmarks:*

Recommended Actions #1 - #13 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

Relevant agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

8. *Grazing Management*

a) *Description:*

Ungulate grazing can have a positive, neutral, or negative impact on sage-grouse habitat.

b) *Objectives:*

The objectives of the “Grazing Management” proposed action are:

- Manage ungulate grazing to maintain or enhance sage-grouse habitat and sagebrush ecosystem sustainability and
- Conduct research efforts to enhance knowledge of grazing impacts on sage-grouse populations, sage-grouse habitat, and sagebrush ecosystems.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) All land management agencies evaluate the location, timing, intensity, and overall impact of grazing by domestic livestock and wildlife upon sage-grouse habitat use areas identified during agency planning efforts.
- 2) Where current ungulate use is a factor in not meeting sage-grouse habitat requirements, initiate changes that will result in improving habitat conditions.
- 3) During development and review of grazing plans (including grazing systems and objectives) proposed range projects (e.g. fences, pipelines, etc.) be designed to consider seasonal sage-grouse habitat needs and the needs of sustainable sagebrush ecosystems.
- 4) Incentives be developed to encourage private landowners to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Idaho Department of Agriculture, and the Extension Service to manage grazing in a manner that provides good sage-grouse habitat on private land.
- 5) All land management agencies monitor grazing use levels and ecological trends on a regular cycle to ensure that sage-grouse habitat requirements and sagebrush ecological sustainability are achieved.
- 6) All federal and state land management agencies implement suitable habitat restoration practices for sagebrush ecosystems that have deteriorated to such an extent that livestock management alone will not restore an upward habitat trend.

- 7) All land management agencies, in conjunction with IDF&G, inform livestock operators of lek locations and encourage operators to avoid leks during breeding season (mid-March through mid-to-late-May) when trailing, bedding, salting, or watering livestock.
- 8) All land management agencies route new fences in a manner that minimizes negative impacts to sage-grouse. Where excessive fence mortality has been documented, consider rerouting or modifying existing fences.
- 9) All federal and state land managers increase the visibility of fences and other structures occurring within one kilometer of seasonal ranges by flagging or similar means if these structures have been documented as hazardous to flying grouse (e.g., birds have been observed hitting or grouse remains have been found next to these structures.
- 10) Land managers manage current crested wheatgrass seedings to achieve sage-grouse conservation objectives.

d) *Benchmarks:*

- Recommended Action #1 should be implemented based on agency planning procedures and budgets. New land use plans should address sagebrush ecosystem analysis of grazing management objectives.)
- Recommended Actions #2 - #10 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

All land management agencies will present a status report (including a review the procedures used by the agencies) on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

9. *Undesirable Plant and Noxious Weed Control*

a) *Description:*

The current situation is best described as a general increase in undesirable plants and noxious weeds (as defined by the Idaho Department of Agriculture). Undesirable plants and noxious weeds are invading sagebrush-steppe plant communities. These plant species displace desirable species, change fire frequencies, reduce the value of the habitat for sage-grouse and reduce forage for livestock and wildlife. Control of these species is difficult and expensive and technology for controlling some species is limited.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Undesirable Plant and Noxious Weed Control” proposed action is to implement management practices that reduce, eliminate, or discourage the further establishment or spread of undesirable plants and noxious weeds in sage-grouse habitat.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) All land management agencies should participate with the Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA) to ensure that the needs of sage-grouse are addressed in CWMA activities.
- 2) County weed supervisors encourage enforcement of existing regulations on all land ownerships (i.e., fire, supplemental feeding, inadvertent transportation of seeds, impacts of control measures on other species, construction, and deconstruction projects).
- 3) The Local Working Group inform the public of the potential for some activities to introduce and encourage invasion of undesirable plants and noxious weeds on rangeland and sage-grouse habitat and encourage them to comply with land management regulations.
- 4) All federal and state land managers evaluate planned management activities for their potential to increase or spread undesirable plants and noxious weeds.
- 5) County weed supervisors consider feasibility of constructing and operating vehicle wash stations.

d) Benchmarks:

Recommended Actions #1 - #5 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The relevant Cooperative Weed Management Areas will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting and/or Local Working Group members will attend Cooperative Weed Management Area meetings.

B. Population Actions

1. Sage-grouse Population Inventories and Monitoring

a) Description:

- b) Population data is collected through chick mortality studies, lek counts, brood counts, and harvest data, etc. Idaho Department of Fish and Game is currently compiling all existing population data for historic and current Sage-grouse populations in the Upper Snake area. Objectives:*

The objectives of the “Sage-grouse Population Inventories and Monitoring” proposed action are to: 1) complete compiling all available data on Sage-grouse populations in the Upper Snake area into a useable database, 2) ensure high quality population data is available to support decision-making, and 3) use the database to identify and prioritize data collection.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) IDF&G complete the compilation of historical population data, including all data collected within or outside the agency.
- 2) IDF&G analyze the existing data for adequacy and quality.
- 3) IDF&G standardize data collection techniques and ensure they are applied consistently. Consider all past, present, and future data collection techniques used within or outside the agency.
- 4) IDF&G ensure that only quality data are used in analysis.
- 5) IDF&G report data in a consistent format and a manner that can be understood by the general public on an annual basis.
- 6) IDF&G ensure that data is stored and managed consistently on a statewide basis.
- 7) IDF&G collect sufficient data to be able to ascertain which populations are migratory and which are non-migratory, and map movement patterns when possible and appropriate.
- 8) IDF&G encourage investigation into the need for and methodology to collect population data in areas where there is no sage-grouse hunting.
- 9) IDF&G increase collection of wings from harvested sage-grouse.
- 10) IDF&G monitor production or recruitment by brood counts or wing surveys (Autenrieth et al. 1982). Brood counts are labor intensive and usually result in inadequate sample size. Where adequate samples of wings can be obtained, we recommend using wing surveys to obtain estimates of sage-grouse nesting success and juvenile-to-adult hen (including yearlings) ratios.
- 11) IDF&G analyze status and trend annually for each identifiable sage-grouse population or harvest unit.
- 12) IDF&G document the genetic variation of relatively small, isolated populations to better understand threats to these populations and implement appropriate management actions (Young 1994, Oyler-McCance et al. 1999).

d) *Benchmarks:*

Recommended Actions #1 - #12 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

IDF&G will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. The Local Working Group would determine whether all information has been compiled into a useable database. The Local Working Group will monitor the efficacy of the survey methods.

2. Sage-grouse Hunting

a) Description:

There is no agreement on the role that regulated sport-hunting plays on sage-grouse populations. Idaho Department of Fish and Game continues to study the effects of alternate harvest strategies on populations. A majority of sage-grouse biologists conclude that an annual harvest of less than 10% of the population has no effect on populations.

b) Objectives:

The objective of the “Sage-grouse Hunting” proposed action is to ensure that hunting activities will have no negative impact on sage-grouse populations.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) IDF&G encourage research to 1) better identify the percentage of sage-grouse harvested by hunters under different hunting season structures, 2) determine at what level hunting becomes limiting on sage-grouse populations, and 3) investigate methods other than wing analysis for obtaining production data, especially for those areas where no sage-grouse hunting occurs.
- 2) IDF&G collect sage-grouse wings from hunters using incidental contacts, check stations and wing barrels to assess annual sage-grouse production, sage-grouse hunter distribution and activities, and obtain other biological data.
- 3) IDF&G continue the post-season survey of sage-grouse hunters to assess total harvest, hunter distribution, and activities.
- 4) IDF&G should base hunting seasons for sage-grouse on careful assessments of population size and trends. Sage grouse tend to have relatively long lives with low annual turnover (Zablan 1993, Connelly et al. 1994) and a low reproductive rate (Gregg 1991, Connelly et al. 1993). Consequently, hunting may be additive to other causes of mortality for sage-grouse (Johnson and Braun 1999, Connelly et al. 2000a) and the cumulative effects of hunting on certain populations may be detrimental. However, most populations appear able to sustain hunting if managed carefully (Connelly et al. 2000a).
- 5) If populations occur over relatively large geographic areas and are stable to increasing (based on five-year running averages that are at or above the population Objectives in the Idaho Sage Grouse Management Plan, seasons and bag limits can be relatively liberal (2-bird daily bag limit, 4-bird possession limit, and a 4-week season) for hunting seasons allowing firearms.
- 6) If populations are declining (for 3 or more consecutive years) or trends are unknown, seasons and bag limits should be generally conservative (2-bird daily bag limit, 4-bird possession limit, and 2-day season) for hunting seasons allowing firearms or suspended for all types of hunting because of this species’ low reproductive rates.
- 7) Where populations are hunted, harvest rates should be 10% or less of the estimated fall population to minimize negative effects on the subsequent year’s breeding

population (Connelly et al. 2000b). If populations continue to decline under conservative hunting seasons, and harvest rates exceed 10% of the estimated fall population, the suspension of all hunting should be considered.

- 8) Populations should not be hunted where ≤ 300 birds comprise the breeding population (i.e., ≤ 100 males are counted on leks [C. E. Braun, Colorado Division of Wildlife, unpublished report]).
- 9) IDF&G continue to operate check stations in the Upper Snake area during opening weekend of the sage-grouse season because it is the only long-term data set monitoring trends in hunter participation and sage-grouse harvest. It also provides an opportunity to collect sage-grouse wings and talk to hunters about their hunting experience and observations.
- 10) IDF&G evaluate the possibility and effectiveness of initiating a mail-in wing collection procedure.

d) Benchmarks:

Recommended Actions #1 - #10 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:

IDF&G will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

3. Predation

a) Description:

Sage grouse and sage-grouse nests are preyed upon by a variety of species, including, but not limited to, raven, coyote, red fox, magpie, skunk, golden eagle, ground squirrels, and hawks. It is generally believed that the effects of predation are related to the quality of habitat and the localized abundance of predators. Predation has less impact on populations in extensive areas of good quality habitat than it is in habitat areas that are smaller, fragmented, or lower quality. Biologists believe sage-grouse populations are able to thrive despite some level of predation.

b) Objectives:

The objectives of the "Predation" proposed action are to: 1) reduce predation (where practical) to a level that results in an upward recruitment trend where predation is shown to be a limiting factor responsible for reducing recruitment for a specific population and 2) target species and areas that will provide the greatest benefit to sage-grouse if predator control measures are implemented.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) IDF&G, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, identify populations of concern where trend lines (based on ten-year running averages, if available) indicate that recruitment falls below 2.2 juveniles per hen

sage-grouse based on wing data. Any population that is producing below 2.2 juveniles per hen or is experiencing rapid declines in recruitment should receive high priority for recruitment studies.

- 2) IDF&G coordinate research on sage-grouse chick mortality (hatching to 10 weeks old) to determine the level of mortality, mortality factors involved, predators species responsible, and habitat conditions and environmental conditions associated with mortality.
- 3) IDFG, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, conduct predator control measures that are species-specific, directed at reducing predation by native and non-native species that are known to be causing a problem for sage-grouse as soon as possible.
- 4) IDF&G, in cooperation with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, conduct predator control measures that are species-specific, directed at preventing establishment of non-native sage-grouse predator populations in sage-grouse habitats.
- 5) All land management agencies consider alternatives to powerlines and other tall structures that have been documented in site specific sage-grouse predation. If these powerlines or structures cause problems, they should be modified to prevent their use as raptor perch sites. New powerlines or structures should be buried or otherwise sited to prevent use as raptor perch sites.

d) *Benchmarks*

- Recommended Action #1 should be completed by fall of 2004.
- Recommended Actions #2 - #5 should be implemented as soon as possible after #1 has been completed.

e) *Proposed Methods for to Monitoring Progress:*

IDF&G will present a status report on assigned Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services will provide an annual report to the Local Working Group on predator control measures implemented to benefit sage-grouse populations.

C. Partnerships Recommended Actions

1. *Enhance access to interagency and interdisciplinary technical assistance*

a) *Description:*

A lack of interagency coordination and multi-disciplinary participation hinders the effectiveness of technical assistance services currently provided for sage-grouse conservation and restoration projects

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the "Enhance access to interagency and interdisciplinary technical assistance" proposed action is to identify entities that can provide technical assistance using coordinated, multi-disciplinary approaches.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Natural Resources Conservation Agency serve as the primary contact for technical assistance for sage-grouse conservation/restoration programs and projects on private land.
- 2) All land management agencies provide technical assistance for sage-grouse conservation/restoration programs and projects as requested
- 3) Project proponents seek technical assistance from other sources such as universities, private consultants, conservation organizations, agricultural organizations, etc. when necessary to accomplish the objectives and actions identified in this plan.

d) *Benchmarks*

Recommended Actions #1 - #3 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

Responsible parties will be invited to present “lessons learned” for sage-grouse conservation/restoration programs/projects to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

2. *Baseline Information*

a) *Description:*

There is currently a need to compile baseline information about sage-grouse populations and their habitat so it can be used to measure the success of conservation strategies implemented.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Baseline Information” proposed action is to compile relevant baseline information for use in assessing current populations and measuring the effectiveness of all efforts to increase sage-grouse populations and/or conserve and/or restore sage-grouse habitat and sustainable sagebrush ecosystems.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group compile existing relevant information about sage-grouse populations and their habitat on which to base evaluations of the effectiveness of any conservation effort. (See Habitat Action 3, “Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities” for further information about how this should be approached.)
- 2) The Local Working Group seek other sources of baseline information.

d) *Benchmarks*

Recommended Action #1 and #2 should begin as soon as possible and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

The Local Working Group will discuss the status of the Recommended Actions at each annual meeting.

3. *Partnerships for Sage-grouse Conservation Projects*

a) *Description:*

Partnering among relevant agencies and organizations would allow for enhanced project effectiveness.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Partnerships for Sage-grouse Conservation Projects” is to enhance the development of partnerships for design and implementation of sage-grouse conservation efforts.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group identify partners for regional projects to conserve and/or restore sage-grouse habitats and a sustainable sagebrush ecosystem.
- 2) The Local Working Group monitor all partnership projects to conserve and/or restore sage-grouse habitats and a sustainable sagebrush ecosystem.
- 3) Partners for all projects jointly establish reasonable and feasible goals and benchmarks.
- 4) Partners monitor project implementation using baseline information (as described in Partnership Action 2 “Baseline Information for the Measurement of Effectiveness) and periodically reevaluate the value of projects.
- 5) Partners jointly decide to end projects when project objectives have been achieved.

d) *Benchmarks:*

Recommended Actions #1 - #5 should be implemented as soon as possible and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

The Local Working Group will discuss the status of the Recommended Actions at each annual meeting.

4. Identify Funding Sources

a) Description:

There is a general lack of awareness of available and/or potential funding for doing what landowners and grouse habitat conservation/restoration partners agree is beneficial for sage-grouse as well as long-term stewardship of the land. Potential funding sources may include but are not limited to the following:

- Federal: Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Wetland Reserve Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.
- State: Office of Species Conservation, Habitat Improvement Program, Resource Conservation and Rangeland Development Program, Natural Resources Conservation Tax Credit.
- Private: Grants and other funding. Not-for-profit organizations like the North American Grouse Partnership can provide match monies to help obtain grants for grouse conservation/restoration partnership projects.

b) Objectives:

The objectives of the “Identify Funding Sources” proposed action are to: 1) make information available about potential funding sources and the requirements of each to all interested parties and 2) establish incentives for land managers who enhance habitat areas and can demonstrate increases in sage-grouse populations due to their efforts.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group identify funding sources to help willing landowners and participant partners establish model sage-grouse conservation efforts.
- 2) The Local Working Group make use of the Internet, periodic mailings, and other methods to inform regional landowners, vested interest groups, and other potential partners about how to fund sage-grouse conservation/restoration projects.
- 3) The Local Working Group highlight funding sources used to implement successful projects in appropriate publications like Grouse Partnership News, Birdscapes, Idaho Wildlife, local newspapers, and other publication and media sources.
- 4) The Local Working Group establish a mechanism for awarding a “Project of the Year” and a “Funding Source of the Year”) award to recognize exemplary projects that benefit sage-grouse.

d) Benchmarks

Recommended Actions #1 - #4 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:

The Local Working Group will discuss the status of the Recommended Actions at each annual meeting.

D. Cultural/Human Recommended Actions

1. Pesticide Management

a) Description:

Certain pesticides, especially insecticides, can effect sage-grouse both directly and indirectly.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Pesticide Management” proposed action is to minimize the negative effects of pesticides use on sage-grouse.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Environmental Protection Agency review pesticides commonly used in the vicinity of sage-grouse habitat relative to the impact those chemicals have on sage-grouse.
- 2) The Idaho Department of Agriculture compile a list of recommended pesticides and application methods (aerial hazing of birds prior to application, time of day for application) that are least harmful to sage-grouse. Discourage use of very toxic organophosphorus and carbamate insecticides in sage-grouse brood rearing habitats.
- 3) The Idaho Department of Agriculture provide the list of recommended pesticides and application methods in the study materials for the applicator licensing process.
- 4) The Idaho Department of Agriculture and the University of Idaho Extension Service make the list of recommended pesticides and application methods available to the farming community and other potential pesticide users.
- 5) The Idaho Department of Agriculture and the Local Working Group encourage farmers to report dead birds or birds displaying abnormal behavior on and around agricultural fields to the Idaho Department of Agriculture and IDF&G.
- 6) The Idaho Department of Agriculture implement a requirement that commercial pesticide applicators report sage-grouse mortality immediately to the Idaho Department of Agriculture and IDF&G along with location and chemical data.
- 7) Where possible, work to protect and improve brood areas in native habitat to reduce bird dependence on agricultural lands, thereby limiting brood exposure to pesticides.

d) Benchmarks

- Recommended Actions #1 - #6 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

- Recommended Action #7 should be implemented when possible and funding is available.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

The Idaho Department of Agriculture will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting, including statistics on sage-grouse and sage-grouse mortality and the chemicals responsible

2. Controlling Lek Access

a) *Description:*

Human or pet disturbance of sage-grouse on leks may negatively affect breeding activity and, hence, reduce sage-grouse production.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Controlling Lek Access” proposed action is to minimize human and pet disturbance around sage-grouse leks during breeding season, thereby preventing negative impacts on sage-grouse breeding.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) IDF&G and the land management agencies coordinate release of information about lek locations so that disturbance to birds is minimized. Agencies should generally not provide all lek locations to individuals simply interested in viewing birds. Instead, one to three lek locations should be identified as public viewing leks and, if demand is great enough, agencies should consider erecting 2–3 seasonal blinds at these leks for public use. Camping or the construction of blinds on active leks during breeding season should be discouraged vigorously.

d) *Benchmarks*

Recommended Action #1 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:*

IDF&G will present a status report on the recommended action to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting, including trends in human activities observed during lek counts.

3. Land Use

a) *Description:*

Sage grouse habitat has been fragmented by agricultural development, conversion of native range, residential development, and other factors. Habitat fragmentation reduces available habitat, isolates populations, can make sage-grouse more vulnerable to predation.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Land Use” proposed action is to discourage or mitigate any development that would result in loss or fragmentation of sage-grouse habitat.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group support legislative initiatives, incentives, and programs that would support ranching operations that enhance open space and the integrity of rangelands.
- 2) IDF&G and the Local Working Group work with county planning and zoning boards to make them aware of sage-grouse needs and assist them in their efforts to inform the public. Encourage zoning that protects open space and the integrity of rangelands.
- 3) The Local Working Group support actions to manage, conserve, and enhance sagebrush steppe habitats.
- 4) All land management agencies consider sage-grouse habitat needs in land exchanges and acquisition programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- 5) All land management agencies adjust timing of energy exploration, development, and construction activity to minimize disturbance of sage-grouse breeding activities. Energy-related facilities should be located ≥ 3.2 kilometers from active leks whenever possible. Human activities within view of or < 0.5 kilometers from leks should be minimized during the early morning and late evening when birds are near or on leks.
- 6) The Local Working Group assist landowners interested in working with land trusts to protect sagebrush habitat.

d) Benchmarks

Recommended Actions #1 - #6 will be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress:

The land management agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. In addition, the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide a report on changes in private land use patterns.

4. Travel Management

a) Description:

Roads and cross-country motorized vehicle use can negatively impact sage-grouse by fragmenting habitat, degrading habitat, igniting wildfires, causing erosion, and spreading noxious weeds.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Travel Management” proposed action is to minimize the impacts of road development, road improvements, and cross-country motorized vehicle use on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) All land management agencies plan new road development and manage cross-country motorized vehicle use in the Upper Snake area to minimize impacts on sage-grouse habitat.
- 2) All land management agencies, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the Local Working Group identify those roads and trails that are negatively impacting sage-grouse habitat in the Upper Snake area. The land management agencies should manage those roads and trails to minimize adverse affects on sage-grouse.
- 3) All land management agencies develop travel management plans that will protect sage-grouse habitat in the Upper Snake area. Land management agencies that have travel management plans should revise those plans, if necessary, to ensure protection of sage-grouse habitat.
- 4) The Local Working Group, IDF&G, and all land management agencies cooperate in informing the public on the impacts of off-road vehicle use on sage-grouse habitat.
- 5) All land management agencies and local law enforcement enforce regulations for violations of road and off-road vehicle use.
- 6) The Local Working Group encourage establishment and assessment of fines adequate to serve as a deterrent for travel plan violations.

d) Benchmarks

Recommended Actions #1 - #6 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The land management agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. The report will address progress in developing new and modifying existing travel management plans, how those plans protect sage-grouse habitat, and how the relevant agencies will monitor implementation of those plans.

5. Utility Corridors

a) Description:

Depending on their location, utility corridors can negatively impact sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats. Raptors use poles and towers for foraging perches. Roads and other disturbances associated with utility construction and maintenance contribute to habitat loss and fragmentation.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Utility Corridors” proposed action is to minimize the negative impacts of utility corridors on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat.

c) Recommended Actions:

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) IDF&G inform land managers and utility companies of the potential negative impacts of utility corridors on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat.
- 2) The Bureau of Land Management, with assistance from other land management agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service develop habitat maps that display utility corridor locations associated with vital sage-grouse habitat areas.
- 3) All land management agencies request that utility companies install anti-raptor perches on existing and new poles and towers in vital sage-grouse habitat areas where predation from these perches has been identified.
- 4) All land management agencies, with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, work with utility companies to site new utility corridors in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on vital sage-grouse habitat areas where feasible.

d) Benchmarks

Recommended Actions #1 - #4 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The relevant agencies will present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting. IDF&G will report consultations with utility companies.

E. Information Recommended Actions

1. Develop Internet Home Page

a) Description:

The general public lacks access to information and documents about sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat, as well as how an individual’s actions can affect sage-grouse populations.

b) Objective:

The objective of the “Develop Internet Home Page” proposed action is to establish an Internet website to provide easy access to information and documents about sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat. Information products that should be made available on the website include: the final version of all work products reached by consensus of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group, relevant maps and data developed as a result

of actions described in this plan, and links to relevant Internet websites, available literature on sage-grouse, etc.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group identify an individual or organization to take the lead in developing the Internet website.
- 2) The website lead develop a conceptual design of the website and listing of all content and links for review and approval by the Local Working Group.
- 3) The website lead seek the assistance of volunteers to create the website. If donated labor cannot be secured, then the lead will solicit funding to hire a professional vendor to provide website development and maintenance services.
- 4) The website lead request placement of the website on space donated by an Internet service provider. If donated space cannot be obtained, the lead should seek placement on a government-owned server or purchase space.
- 5) The website lead maintain the website via support from the Local Working Group.
- 6) The Local Working Group retain the authority to review and approve all content for placement on the website.

d) *Benchmarks*

Recommended Actions #1 - #6 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) *Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:*

The website lead would present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

2. *Upper Snake Sage-grouse Information Repository*

a) *Description:*

The various agencies and organizations interested in sage-grouse currently do not share necessary data. In addition, data inconsistencies hinder coordinated efforts.

b) *Objective:*

The objective of the “Upper Snake Sage-grouse Information Repository” proposed action is to establish a central repository for sharing relevant data to enable all relevant agencies and individuals to access all available data.

c) *Recommended Actions:*

The Local Working Group recommends that:

- 1) The Local Working Group identify an appropriate entity to take the lead in establishing and maintaining an information repository.

- 2) The information repository lead issue a data call for submission of all available data related to sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat in the Upper Snake area.
- 3) The Local Working Group establish a protocol for access to the information repository and its contents and a list of individuals/organizations that will be allowed access to sensitive information.
- 4) The Local Working Group seek funding for proper implementation of the information repository, if necessary.

d) Benchmarks

Recommended Actions #1 - #4 should be implemented immediately and on an on-going basis.

e) Proposed Method for Monitoring Progress:

The information repository lead would present a status report on all Recommended Actions to the Local Working Group at its annual meeting.

III. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A. Population Objectives and Monitoring

The Local Working Group adopted the relevant population objectives from the Idaho Sage Grouse Management Plan.

The Local Working Group expects to be consulted whenever the population objectives in the Idaho Sage Grouse Management Plan are revised.

The Local Working Group will review population data and habitat information at its annual meetings. Upon achievement on the population objectives, the Local Working Group may determine that recommended actions in this Plan are no longer necessary.

B. Future Meetings of the Local Working Group

1. *Membership in the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group*

After release of the Final Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations, the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group will have three categories of members.

- **Charter Members.** Individuals who are listed on the List of Contributing Members will constitute the Charter Members of the Local Working Group.
- **Representative Members.** Each of the following agencies have one representative member:
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - U.S. Forest Service

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Department of Energy
 - Idaho Department of Fish and Game
 - Idaho Department of Lands
 - Idaho Department of Agriculture
 - Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.
- **Affiliate Members.** After attending two consecutive full meetings of the Local Working Group, individuals become Affiliate Members of the Local Working Group who are allowed to participate in consensus decision making processes. Affiliate Members must attend at least half the meetings each calendar year to retain Affiliate Member status.

2. Leadership for the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group

Membership of the Executive Committee should not exceed 7 members elected by the membership of the Local Working Group, including:

- Four Representative Members
- Three others (charter and/or affiliate members) representing agricultural, sportsmen, and conservation perspectives.

The duties of the Executive Committee include:

- Provide technical oversight for any projects conducted by the Local Working Group (including those funded by the Office of Species Conservation).
- Select the official representative to the Sage-grouse Advisory Committee (SAC, see below), as appropriate.
- Oversee development of information as requested by the SAC for the Upper Snake area.
- Serve to support communication among all interested parties related to sage-grouse in the Upper Snake area.
- Solicit information from all relevant agencies and organizations, consistent with the “Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress” listed throughout the Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations.
- Develop the agenda for each meeting of the Local Working Group.
- Provide direction to a neutral process facilitator and any other staff, as appropriate.
- Provide adequate notice of future meetings so as to allow participation by all interested parties.

- Seek funding for Local Working Group projects.

The Executive Committee may elect a chair, if desired. The chair position will hold limited responsibilities and authorities as appropriate for a consensus body and designated by the Executive Committee. The position shall last no more than one year and shall rotate among individuals so as not to become burdensome. If staff support is hired at some point, the Executive Committee will provide supervision and direction to staff.

3. Representation of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group to the Idaho SAC

The State of Idaho has convened a statewide panel to provide advice and coordination to sage-grouse conservation efforts. The SAC began meeting in 2003. Upon request from the SAC, the Executive Committee will nominate possible replacements in coordination with the full Local Working Group. The individual appointed to serve on the SAC is responsible for attending all meetings of the SAC and conveying the perspectives and views of the entire Local Working Group in a fair and objective manner and keeping the Local Working Group informed.

4. Agendas for Local Working Group meetings

The Executive Committee shall compile materials and information in accordance with the “Proposed Methods for Monitoring Progress” listed throughout the Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations. The Executive Committee will determine if oral presentations are needed and select the most important topics for discussion. (Where possible, printed materials will be used to keep all members well informed.)

In addition, the Executive Committee may schedule discussion of proposed changes to the Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations as follows.

5. Goal for Adaptable Plan

The Local Working Group recognizes that it will be necessary to modify the Plan. New research findings, changes in funding, changes in agency directives, and a possible change in the legal status of sage-grouse are examples of events that could initiate a review of the Plan. Accordingly, the Local Working Group has established a mechanism for amending the plan, described below.

6. Means for Amending this Plan

Any proposed changes to the Plan must be considered and approved at an announced meeting of the Local Working Group. Participants in decision making at the Local Working Group meeting will include all members. Other parties, including members of the general public, may observe and participate during public comment opportunities in the meeting.

Announcements for Local Working Group meetings must be distributed to the current mailing list no less than two weeks in advance of the meeting. Proposed changes must be distributed to all Charter, Representative, and Affiliate members. All meetings will be facilitated by a trained, neutral group process facilitator.

Every effort will be made to reach consensus among all members before making any changes to the plan. In the event that the members of the Local Working Group are not able to reach

consensus on a proposed change to the Plan, a subsequent meeting will be announced to the entire mailing list for a second attempt at consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved by the end of the second scheduled meeting of the full Local Working Group, the Executive Committee will have the discretion to call for a super majority vote (two thirds of the members in attendance at the meeting).

C. Public Outreach

After the Plan has been adopted, the Local Working Group will develop an Internet Home Page to disseminate information about sage-grouse in the Upper Snake region and ongoing efforts to increase bird populations and enhance habitat. All members of the public are welcome to attend any meetings of the Local Working Group.

IV. LITERATURE CITED

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- Zablan, M. A. 1993. Evaluation of sage grouse banding program in North Park, Colorado. Thesis, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

List of Contributing Members

The Final Plan for Increasing Sage Grouse Populations was developed through the donations of time, effort, and diverse perspectives of the Contributing Members of the Upper Snake Sage Grouse Local Working Group. Through an exhaustive collaborative effort, these individuals completed the task of developing a sage-grouse management plan for the Upper Snake area of Idaho, as defined in the Idaho Sage Grouse Management Plan.

The Contributing Members of the Upper Snake Sage Grouse Local Working Group, listed below, believe that the Final Plan for Increasing Sage Grouse Populations represents the best product that the Upper Snake Sage Grouse Local Working Group could produce through collaborative processes. As such, the Contributing Members believe that the Final Plan will serve as a useful tool to maintain and restore sage-grouse and their habitat.

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Lynn Bennett, U.S. Forest Service, Salmon-Challis National Forest

Lloyd Bradshaw, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Robert M. Brammer, Idaho Department of Lands

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Tim Reynolds, TREC, Inc.

Ron Rope

Alan Sands, The Nature Conservancy

Richard Savage, Savage Cattle

Steve Schmidt, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Charles Schwartz, Idaho Falconers Association

Arnie Smizer

Renee Snyder, U.S. Forest Service, Salmon-Challis National Forest

Ken Thacker, Bureau of Land Management

Sue Vilord

Mike Webster, Sheridan Ranch

List of Affiliate Members

Individuals who want to join the Local Working Group may request that their name/affiliations be added to the List of Contributing Members. After attending two full meetings of the Local Working Group, individuals are designated as Affiliate Members of the Local Working Group and allowed to participate in consensus decision making processes.

The following is a list of the Affiliate Members of the Upper Snake Sage-Grouse Local Working Group as of June 22, 2009:

Denise Adkins, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Christopher Jenkins, Wildlife Conservation Society

Sandi Arena, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Rob Larrañaga, Camas National Wildlife Refuge

Tracy Behrens, Idaho Department of Lands

Theresa Mathis, Bureau of Land Management

Scott Bergen, Wildlife Conservation Society

Hollie Miyasaki, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Keith Bramwell

John O'Neill, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Bob Breckenridge, Idaho National Laboratory

Eric Broeder, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Hubert Quade

Jack Depperschmidt, US Department of Energy

Wendy Reynolds, Bureau of Land Management

DJ Egan

Shane Roberts, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Curtis Hendricks, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Jeremy Shive, Stoller Corporation

Kristy Howe, Wildlife Conservation Society

Terry Thomas, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Quinn Jacobson, US Sheep Experiment Station

Jericho Whiting, Stoller

Appendix A. Average Maximum Counts of Male Sage-grouse

Average maximum counts of male sage grouse for all lek routes in the Upper Snake area are presented in the table below.

Average Maximum Male Sage-grouse Counts for Upper Snake Sage-grouse Lek Routes												
Route Name	1957-1960	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2003	2004-2007	10 Year Average
Upper Big Lost ^d										43	77	66
Antelope Creak, Big Lost ^c									28	33	103	62
Lower Big Lost ^c									62	66		
Little Lost	215	214	326	198	251	197	142	81	96	102	86	98
INEEL ^a								18	57	124	121	102
Tractor Flat, (INEEL)								75	96	122	166	132
Upper Birch Creek	217	189	90	35	41	16	28	1	14	20	47	28
Lower Birch Creek	214	104	56	107	132	71	38	30	23	62	96	62
Crooked Creek	106	191	179	191	192	80	86	96	121	147	157	147
Lidy ^g	257	263	161	111	170	60	116	108	98	187	278	163
Medicine Lodge	140	110	146	216	234	133	130	56	90	137	214	153
Table Butte									145	122	230	170
Sheep Station ^a								73	141	209	283	216
Jacoby	225	237	273	217	365	79	39	54	109	104	202	143
Red Road	329	281	423	220	375	112	101	59	103	109	145	123
Plano							166	161	97	109	127	115
Market Lake						14	ncf	ncf	27	18		
Stible Road									103	101	61	87
Arco Desert/ Fingers Butte ^e		192	224	124	272	151	156	ncf	97	168		
Big Butte/Big Desert #1 ^e		69	237	95	246	153	208	42	89	137		
Sand Creek	83	38	109	55								
^a New routes established in 1995												
^b New routes established in 1997												
^c New routes established in 1998												
^d New routes established in 2001												
^e The leks counted on these routes may be different before and after 1990												
^f Lek routes not counted this period												
^g Lek route not counted 2004-2006												

Appendix B. Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group Mailing List

The following individuals attended at least one meeting of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group during development of Plan for Increasing Sage-grouse Populations:

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Robert Ball
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The following individuals are on the mailing list for the Local Working Group, but have never attended a meeting:

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Boise, ID

Ralph Wheeler
Amerian Falls, ID

Cameron Wheeler, Commissioner
Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Ririe, ID

Tom Wilcox
Snowville, UT

J. Stanley Williams
Pingree, ID

Bill Wood
US Forest Service, Salmon-Challis National
Forest
Salmon, ID

JoAn Wood
Idaho House of Representatives
Rigby, ID

Audubon Society, Portland
Portland, OR

Bingham County Cooperative Extension
Agent
Blackfoot, ID

Bonneville County Cooperative Extension
Agent
Idaho Falls, ID

Bonneville Humane Society
Idaho Falls, ID

California Wilderness Coalition
Oakland, CA

Custer County Cooperative Extension Agent
Challis, ID

Forest Guardians
Santa Fe, NM

Fremont County Cooperative Extension
Agent
St. Anthony, ID

Humane Society of the Upper Valley
Idaho Falls, ID

Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Pocatello, ID

Idaho Water Resource Board
Boise, ID

Idaho Wildlife Federation
Boise, ID

Idaho Wildlife Foundation
Boise, ID

In Defense of Animals
San Rafael, CA

Lemhi County Cooperative Extension Agent
Salmon, ID

Madison County Cooperative Extension
Agent
Rexburg, ID

Oregon Natural Resources Council
Portland, OR

Southwest Center for Biological Diversity
Tucson, AZ

Teton County Cooperative Extension Agent
Driggs, ID

The Wilderness Society, Idaho Office
Boise, ID

Wildlife Management Institute
Washington, DC

Wyoming Outdoor Council
Lander, WY

Appendix C. Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group Working Charter

Note: this "Working Charter" will remain in draft form throughout the lifetime of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group. It was developed by the Local Working Group's facilitator based on input from planning meetings held in August and September 1999. It can be changed at any time at the discretion of the Local Working Group. The existing provisions in the Working Charter will apply until it is amended by the Local Working Group.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group is to develop and coordinate implementation of a plan for increasing Sage-grouse populations in the Upper Snake region of eastern Idaho.

PRODUCT

The Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group will develop a plan for increasing Sage-grouse populations in the Upper Snake region in Idaho. The format and scope of the plan have yet to be determined. It is expected that the format and scope of the plan will be modeled on other relevant examples of plans, but it will be tailored appropriately to meet local needs in the Upper Snake region.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group include individuals from the following perspectives:

Animal Damage Control	Idaho Fish & Game
Audubon Society	Land Management Agencies
Environmental Science and Research Foundation	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Falconers	Range Society
Farmers	Sportsmen
Grazing Associations	State Extension Agents
Hunters	U.S. Sheep Station
Idaho Cattlemen's Association Wool Growers	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Additional perspectives could prove valuable to the Local Working Group's efforts. Accordingly, participation from the following perspectives is being sought:

Animal Right Groups	Local Environmental Groups
Botanical Society	Media
County Commissioners	Natural Heritage Program
Elected Representatives	Nature Conservancy
Extension Services/Weed Supervisors	Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Farm Bureau	State Attorney General
Governor's Office	U.S. Congressionals
Greater Yellowstone	U.S. Department of Energy
Idaho Environment Council	Water Resource Board
Irrigation Commission	Wildlife Federation

No one will be barred from participating in the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group.

DECISION MAKING METHOD

The Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group will make all decisions by consensus. Constraints that will be applied to each decision-making process will be identified beforehand. No decision will be made without having been announced in advance. It is the responsibility of each participant in the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group to participate in those meetings which s/he deems critical to their ability to continue participating in good faith.

Consensus is defined by the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group as everyone agrees to support the decision. Missing a meeting during which a previously announced decision is made does not constitute a good faith rationale for sabotaging that decision. Participation by all interested parties in each decision making process will be necessary for a successful process.

PROCESS

The participants of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group agree to make a good faith effort to support completion of each step in the process. The process that will be used by the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group will include the following steps to be completed:

Step 1. Conduct a thorough stakeholder analysis. The purpose of this step was to ensure active participation of all parties who will be needed for successful completion of each step in the Local Working Group's process and for successful implementation of each possible alternative that the group could potentially endorse.

Step 2. Establish a “working charter” for the Local Working Group. The purpose of this step was to develop a working charter specifying critical components of the process that the Local Working Group will use to achieve its purpose, including:

- the purpose of the Local Working Group;
- the end products that will document achievement of that purpose (who will prepare the products, whom they will be provided to, and what they should look like);
- the participants in the Local Working Group roles and responsibilities for all parties;
- decision making method that the Local Working Group will use;

- a series of steps for proceeding and schedule for completion of each step;
- roles and responsibilities of all participants; and
- ground rules/rules of engagement.

Step 3. Develop criteria for use in evaluating alternatives. The purpose of this step will be to consider the criteria that should be used to evaluate the various alternatives. Universal, objective criteria will allow for fair evaluation of all alternatives.

Step 4. Identify alternative strategies for increasing sage grouse populations. The purpose of this step will be to begin considering the alternative strategies that might have merit if included in a package of proposed actions for endorsement by the Local Working Group.

Step 5. Develop the alternative strategies for increasing sage grouse populations. The purpose of this step will be to develop a full understanding of what it would take to implement each alternative strategy. Fully developed strategies will include:

- a description of how each should be implemented to ensure consistent implementation, including assignment of responsibilities for each task critical to successful implementation,
- specific measurable and achievable objectives, (i.e., reduce predator population by 5% per year for three years in a row), and
- description of how implementation would be monitored/enforced.

Step 6. Discuss the legal constraints on each alternative strategy. The purpose of this step will be to ensure that the various committees understand what the agencies can and cannot do under current law.

Step 7. Predict the potential impacts of each alternative strategy. The purpose of this step will be to make sure that each alternative strategy is completely thought out. This step will include consideration of costs of implementing, who would bear those costs, political and social feasibility, and unintended impacts. It should be conducted in as fair a manner as possible, based on research findings, experience, etc.

Step 8. Evaluate each alternative strategy and its impacts according to the evaluation criteria). The purpose of this step will be to make sure that each alternative strategy is evaluated in a fair and objective manner, using standardized evaluation criteria.

Step 9. Select recommended package of proposed actions for increasing Sage-grouse populations. The purpose of this step will be to make sure the Local Working Group deliberately chooses from the full range of alternatives considered in constructing a package of actions that will increase regional Sage-grouse populations that all members can endorse and support. The purpose of this step will be consider how to minimize negative impacts (i.e., burdens on specific groups, costs, etc.) in light of real constraints (funding availability, agency mission, political realities).

Step 10. Document endorsement of the package of proposed actions by the Local Working Group. The purpose of this step will be to get the entire Local Working Group to demonstrate their support for the final product and make appropriate commitments for following through on actions that will be required for successful implementation.

Step 11. Continuing work, as necessary and appropriate, to allow an ongoing role for the Local Working Group during implementation of the recommended package (to be completed after endorsement of the package of proposed actions) The purpose of this step is to

allow for ongoing monitoring, oversight, and evaluation of the actions that will be taken during implementation.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of the various participants in the Local Working Group are as follows:

Agency representatives are expected to keep coming, to fully represent their respective agencies' constraints, and to ensure that the right people are fully aware and supportive of the Local Working Group's efforts and progress.

All **individuals** will abide by the ground rules and "do their homework" by staying aware of and engaged in the process.

The **facilitator** will enforce the ground rules, conduct all meetings in a fair and objective manner, and document the group's progress.

GROUND RULES

The following ground rules will be standard for all meetings of the Upper Snake Sage-grouse Local Working Group:

- Constructive dialogue
- No personal attacks
- Agree to disagree
- One person talk at a time
- Stick to the effort (don't give up)

The facilitator will be responsible for enforcing the ground rules, with the permission of the Local Working Group members

Appendix D. Guidelines to Manage Sage Grouse Populations and their Habitats

Appendix E. Public Comments Received

Summary of Comments Received on the Public Review Draft Plan		
Commenter	Comment	Response from the Local Working Group
Habitat Recommended Actions		
Bell, Mark	Plant or seed more sagebrush in the Arco area.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Habitat Recommended Action 6 “Recovery/ Restoration” already includes recommended actions for restoration in areas that are degraded as a result of fire, invasion of undesirable plants and noxious weeds, over-grazing, non-native species seedings or other events.
Brown, Cliff	Remove more predators, like coyotes, fox, and crows.	No changes are needed in the Plan as the Population Recommended Action 3 “Predation” already includes recommended actions for predator management when recruitment falls below targeted levels.
Rose, Randy	Plant more food sources and cover in burned areas.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Habitat Recommended Action 6 “Recovery/ Restoration” already includes recommended actions for restoration in areas that are degraded as a result of fire, invasion of undesirable plants and noxious weeds, over-grazing, non-native species seedings or other events.
(No name provided)	Greater diversity of sagebrush steppe habitat (i.e., mosaic of open areas with forbs being released in the mechanically, chemically, or burned areas). Some places on the deserts are a giant monotype of adult sagebrush with over 45% canopy cover.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Habitat Recommended Action 3 “Management Strategies for Sustainable Sagebrush Grass Communities” already includes recommended actions for managing the density, structure, and composition of shrubs, forbs, and grasses at a standard that will maintain the long-term health and sustainability of the plant community and enhance the long-term health of sage grouse habitats.
Population Recommended Actions		
Bell, Mark	Close season for biological reasons to take pressure off growth.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Population Recommended Action 2 “Sage-grouse Hunting” already includes recommended actions for changing hunting seasons and bag limits based on population size and trends.
Bell, Mark	Define what is a healthy population. If the numbers continue to decline due to loss of habitat, then why have seasons that are detrimental to the growth.	Comment noted. Lek route counts have been added to the Plan (see page 1) and the Local Working Group will develop population goals for inclusion in the Idaho Sage-grouse Management Plan.

Summary of Comments Received on the Public Review Draft Plan		
Commenter	Comment	Response from the Local Working Group
Ellsworth, Pete (President, Back Country Houndsmen)	The way to increase the sage grouse population is by reducing the predator numbers in that Region. The most economical and efficient way to that would be to give a bounty on those predators that are reducing grouse populations. A \$10 bounty on each coyote, \$5 on fox, \$2 on raccoons, badgers, skunks, crows, and ravens. The total cost of that program would be less than almost any other and would have more direct and immediate effect than anything else.	No changes are needed in the Plan as the Population Recommended Action 3 “Predation” already includes recommended actions for predator management when recruitment falls below targeted levels.
Rose, Randy	Close some areas that are low on bird reproduction, and numbers.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Population Recommended Action 2 “Sage-grouse Hunting” already includes recommended actions for changing hunting seasons and bag limits based on population size and trends.
(No name provided)	Habitat improvement = population improvement. Also, I believe an increase in raptors and predatory birds over the last ten years has had an effect on sage grouse populations.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Habitat Recommended Action 6 “Recovery/Restoration” already includes recommended actions for restoring degraded areas (areas with undesirable vegetation and areas in poor ecological condition). See also Population Recommended Action 3 “Predation” for recommended actions addressing predator management when recruitment falls below targeted levels.
Partnership Recommended Actions		
Bell, Mark	Watershed projects are available, as from the Guzzler program of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Idaho Birdhunters Association.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Partnerships Recommended Action 3 “Partnerships for Sage-grouse Conservation Projects” includes recommended actions that would allow for formation of partnerships with any/all potential partners. The suggestions (for potential collaborating organizations) are appreciated.
Bell, Mark	Work with the non-profit organizations that have volunteers and get serious about planting habitat. Example brush burned on thousands of acres by Arco left to be desert.	Suggestion noted.
Rose, Randy	Get some sportsman involved in planting and planning.	Suggestion noted.
(No name provided)	NRCS, RMEF, LWCF, BLM, USDA FS, even some environmental groups may help.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Partnerships Recommended Action 3 “Partnerships for Sage-grouse Conservation Projects” includes recommended actions that would allow for formation of partnerships with any/all potential partners. The suggestions (for potential collaborating organizations) are appreciated.

Summary of Comments Received on the Public Review Draft Plan		
Commenter	Comment	Response from the Local Working Group
Cultural/Human Recommended Actions		
Bell, Mark	Perhaps range control on dealing with over-grazing of grasslands. Cattle tend to destroy anthills to roll in and the grouse is dependent on them as a food source. May be a touchy but true concern. Making grazing wait for awhile in the spring instead of as soon as snow is off.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Population Recommended Action 8 “Grazing Management” already includes recommended actions for grazing management to minimize negative impacts on sage grouse.
Bell, Mark	Make a big deal about it in the news and get people concerned and they will respond. Be prepared if you get an overwhelming support group to make it happen.	Comment noted.
Rose, Randy	More cover also BLM water resources.	The intent of this comment was unclear to the Local Working Group.
Information/Education Recommended Actions		
Bell, Mark	Quarterly Fish and Game Regional awareness meetings as to what the public can contribute. Volunteers and transplants.	No changes are needed in the Plan as the Information/Education Recommended Actions already include provisions for an Internet website. All future Local Working Group meetings will be open to the interested public. The Local Working Group notes that IDF&G public meetings are costly and not well attended.
Bell, Mark	Sportsmen are aware of the problem but have you notified the general public of the dilemma? Educate and propose several fixes.	Comment noted.
Rose, Randy	Sent out all planned information to hunters that buy the stamp so they can get involved.	Comment noted.
(No name provided)	Teach the public; avoid the word “educating” the public.	Comment noted. The Local Working Group will change all wording to avoid the term “educating” the public.
General Comments		
Bell, Mark	Suspend season until such time that the numbers increase – sportsmen will be willing to do that.	The Plan delineates conditions under which hunting should be restricted. Note that hunting seasons are not determined by the Local Working Group.
Lee, William F.	Ban all motorized vehicles except on established roads designated by IDF&G.	No changes are needed in the Plan as Cultural/Human Recommended Action 4 “Travel Management” already includes recommended actions for minimizing the impacts of motorized vehicle use on sage grouse and sage grouse habitat.
Moate, Bob	I read all 37 pages. Looks good. Very complete. The challenge will be to implement the program over the long-term.	The Local Working Group thanks Mr. Moate for his interest.

Summary of Comments Received on the Public Review Draft Plan		
Commenter	Comment	Response from the Local Working Group
Morris, H.N.	Numerous comments.	The Local Working Group thanks Mr. Morris for his interest.
Rose, Randy	Get the sports man involved as they are in Ducks Unlimited and Rocky Mountain Elk - more habitat, water sources, etc. Close some areas that are low in reproduction.	Comment noted.
Waters, Dann	37 pages is a lot. I do not live in the area, but hunt there from time to time. I enjoy the sage grouse after my big game tags are filled. I believe that habitat improvements that help one animal will help others too.	The Local Working Group thanks Mr. Waters for his interest.
(No name provided)	These ideas are generally well known by the working group. The main point is: actions need to take place. Change grazing (faster than what is changing now), teach the public, etc.	Comment noted.