

MONTANA’S GREATER SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION STRATEGY ALL HANDS BALANCING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACROSS ALL LANDS

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The Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus* or GRSG) inhabits sagebrush grassland habitats exclusively and shares habitat with up to 300 other species. Montana is a key stronghold among the western states. Montana’s emphasis on habitat conservation on public and private lands is foundational to supporting and growing Montana outdoor economy. The Montana Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy, implemented by the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (Program), blends voluntary incentives with regulatory oversight through the permitting process and a new requirement to mitigate for impacts to designated habitat. The Program implements the Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act and Executive Order 12-2015. Key pillars include: 1. a consultation process to guide development; 2. grants to maintain, enhance, restore, and expand habitat; and 3. mitigation to offset impacts of development. Taking an “all lands, all hands” approach, the Program works collaboratively with private landowners, state agencies, and federal land management agencies. Since 2015, the Program has reviewed nearly 1500 proposed development projects in designated GRSG habitat on public and private lands. Approximately 43,148 acres have been placed in perpetual conservation easements through Sage Grouse Stewardship Fund grants. With the goal of no net loss-net gain preferred, the mitigation system incorporates market-based incentives and a Habitat Quantification Tool to quantify gains and losses of functional habitat due to conservation or development projects, respectively. Successful conservation depends on proactive stewardship of the remaining intact sagebrush landscape. Montana is well-positioned for the range-wide conservation assessment set for 2020.