
MONTANA’S GREATER SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION STRATEGY: ALL HANDS ACROSS ALL LANDS

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The greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) was once a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act across its range. Unprecedented efforts by states, federal agencies, private organizations, and private landowners led to adoption of conservation strategies to address threats caused by habitat fragmentation, development, and loss of sagebrush. Montana’s Conservation Strategy is based on the collaborative work of a governor-appointed advisory council, the Montana Sage Grouse Stewardship Act passed

during the 2015 Legislative Session, and Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015. Montana's Strategy has three parts. First, Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015 establish regulatory mechanisms to guide development in designated habitats. The Orders require consultation to assess potential impacts caused by activities requiring a state permit, involving state grant funds or technical assistance, or resulting from the state's own work. Federal agencies will align project review with the Orders. Specific parameters and disturbance thresholds apply, particularly for human activities near leks. Second, the Stewardship Grant Fund serves to maintain, enhance, restore, expand or benefit sage grouse. The Fund facilitates free-market mechanisms for voluntary, conservation on private lands by funding projects that produce credits. Credits can then be purchased by developers in a habitat exchange. Third, the habitat exchange establishes a compensatory mitigation framework to address impacts which cannot be avoided, minimized, or restored and replacement is required. Montana's goal is to maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat and maintain Montana's flexibility to manage its own lands, wildlife, and economy. Success requires collaboration across all landownerships to address all threats.