

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)
Twin Falls

Activity
Wildlife

Overlay Reference
Step 1 WL-2.9 Step 3

Multiply Use Analysis (cont.)

Priority consideration will be assigned to maintaining the productivity of existing seedings. Seedings in sage grouse strutting/nesting habitat will be evaluated to determine sites critical to sage grouse nesting needs. These specific sites will be eliminated or strip treated in 100 foot wide strips. A general objective will be to maintain up to 75 percent of the existing seeding acreage. However, if interdisciplinary evaluation shows that more modification is needed for the best resource management it will be done accordingly. The wildlife objective of maintaining 20 percent live sagebrush cover in the nesting-brood rearing sites will be the wildlife objective for the leave sites.

(Decision)
Multiple Use Recommendation:

Modify WL-2.9 --

Give sage grouse nesting, brood-rearing, and winter habitat needs priority consideration in these habitat areas. The guidelines developed by IDFG will guide the habitat management of these areas. Maintain existing range improvement practices that exist within these habitat areas. The key in determining the nesting-brood rearing habitat sites will be the location of leks relative to the 2-mile radius rule. Multiple use management of these areas will aim at maintaining adequate nesting cover. Brood-rearing needs in these areas will strive to maximize succulent forbs and insects. Management of wintering areas will be to maintain adequate sagebrush cover in identified winter areas.

Reason:

Sage grouse are an important resource and are dependent on sagebrush for many of their life functions.

Support Needs:

Lands --
Coordinate with wildlife on land exchanges. (same as MFP-1)

Alternatives Considered:

1. Reject WL-2.9.
2. Modify WL-2.9.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

UNITED STATES
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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name: WFP: Twin Falls
Agency: Wildlife - Sage Grouse
Overlay Reference: Step WL-2.10 Step 3

RECOMMENDATION: (*Decision*)

Limited work will be permitted along streams, meadows or secondary drainages (dry and intermittent). A 100-yard strip (minimum) of living sagebrush will be retained on each edge of meadows and drainages for protection of sage grouse habitat. Install protective fencing on selected springs, seeps, meadows and well overflow areas, as they become identified, to protect succulent forage and improve sage grouse habitat.

SUPPORT:

- Range - Designate leave areas for all range land treatment projects in sage grouse range.
- Recreation - Assistance in design to provide a pleasing aesthetic value.
- Archaeology - Assistance in design to protect cultural resources.
- Watershed - Assistance in design to enhance watershed values.
- Operations - Layout of no control work areas for land treatments. Construction of protective fencing.
- Wildlife - Location and design of leave areas for sage grouse and for protective fences. Coordination with range and operations on projects.

RATIONALE:

High quality water is an important habitat component for sage grouse. This is particularly true in the late summer and early fall. Wet meadows and riparian habitats are critical brood rearing habitats for most upland game birds. Sagebrush is essential for food and cover requirements of the sage grouse. Sagebrush areas are critical along the edge of meadows and drainages because sage grouse normally select areas along water for rearing broods and loafing. Protective fencing should be constructed on selected sites, especially meadow areas which are heavily grazed in the spring. Periodic livestock grazing will be necessary for wet meadow maintenance in some locals. Studies of the relationship of sage grouse to upland meadows in Nevada showed that meadows are critical in providing succulent forbs and insects as a food source for sage grouse chicks between one and eleven weeks of age.¹

The existing sage grouse habitat needs to be improved and maintained so as to support a population of 1,329 birds on public land in the Planning Unit by 1995. The Planning Area Analysis (PAA) shows that in the Planning Unit 40 percent of the sage grouse habitat is found on public land but only 26 percent of the hunting days take place on public land. From 1975 to 1995 hunter days are expected to make an 86 percent increase on public land. In 1980, \$18,598.98 was spent hunting sage grouse on public land in the Planning Unit. This will increase to an estimated \$187,866.20 by 1990. There have been annual fluctuations but sage grouse populations have generally shown an increasing trend since 1960 with a peak

¹ Oakleaf, R. J. 1971. THE RELATIONSHIP OF SAGE GROUSE TO UPLAND MEADOWS IN NEVADA. Job Final Report W-48-2. Nevada Department of Fish and Game.

Savage, D. E. 1969. RELATION OF SAGE GROUSE TO UPLAND MEADOWS IN NEVADA. Job Progress Report W-39-R-9. Nevada Department of Fish and Game.

UNITED STATES
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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (VFP)
Twin Falls

Agency
Wildlife - Sage Grouse

Overlay Reference
Step 1 WL-2.11 Step 3

RECOMMENDATION:

Allow livestock use in meadow areas as necessary to enhance sage grouse habitat. Cattle grazing should be curtailed in the nesting-brood rearing complex until after June 10. Delay sheep bands from utilizing known sage grouse nesting areas until the first week in June. Livestock grazing should be administered in such a manner to maintain and/or improve important sage grouse wintering areas.

SUPPORT:

- Range - Development of livestock grazing systems to adhere to the above recommendation.
- Recreation - Coordination with other resources to attain good aesthetic value.
- Watershed - Coordination with other resources to reduce erosion and enhance the watershed.
- Wildlife - Coordination with range in location of important and critical sage grouse use areas.

RATIONALE:

Livestock tend to concentrate in meadow areas and essentially remove all of the vegetation which is detrimental to sage grouse populations. Loss of sagebrush, grass and forbs reduces the quality of sage grouse habitat. By delaying the grazing until after June 10, the sage grouse will have largely completed their nesting. Sheep bands should be delayed until young sage grouse have hatched in the particular locality. Domestic sheep are known to have caused considerable nest abandonment around bedgrounds, in trailing areas, and during normal feeding.¹ Heavy utilization of important wintering areas may leave inadequate forage for sage grouse. This will depend on the size of the wintering area and the amount of sagebrush, depth of snow, and severity of the winter.

¹ Patterson, R. L. 1952. THE SAGE GROUSE IN WYOMING. Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. Sage Books, Incorporated. Denver, Colorado.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed.
(Illustration on reverse)

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Twin Falls

Activity

Wildlife

Overlay Reference

Step 1 WL-2.11 Step 3

Multiple Use Analysis

The visual resource recommendation to protect riparian areas supports this recommendation as do watershed recommendations WS-1.4, WS-1.5 and WS-2.2. The major conflict with range management centers around curtailing livestock use in the nesting-brood rearing complex until after June 10. A total of 16 allotments are included in this complex. As stated in the recommendation, turnout dates would have to be setback at least 1 month. Proposed and existing grazing systems ensure that most of the area is not grazed prior to 6/10.

(Decision)

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Reason:

Modify the recommendation as follows:
Through the use of intensive grazing management systems maintain and enhance nesting-brood rearing complexes and wintering areas for sage grouse.

Intensive grazing management systems will ensure that meadow and riparian areas receive periodic rest from spring grazing and that the bulk of riparian areas will be free from livestock while sage grouse are nesting. Wintering areas should be managed for improvement and/or maintenance.

Support Needs:

Range -

Develop intensive grazing systems and maintain existing systems to insure maintenance and enhance riparian areas nesting-brood rearing complexes and wintering areas for sage grouse.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Accept WL-2.11.
2. Reject WL-2.11.

Decision:

Accept the multiple-use recommendation.

Rationale:

Grazing management systems can be designed to benefit specific life cycle needs of sage grouse without underly restricting grazing use in the area.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (M/F)	Twin Falls
Activity	Wildlife - Sage Grouse
Overlay Reference	
Step	WL-2.12 Step 3

RECOMMENDATION:

Allow energy exploitation for oil and gas leasing, ORV races and other ORV use in critical sage grouse nesting-brood rearing complexes after June 15. Close critical sage grouse wintering areas to snowmobling.

SUPPORT:

- Minerals - Assistance in complying with above recommendation for energy exploitation for oil and gas leasing.
- Recreation - Designation of ORV use dates. Contact with ORV user groups. Development of ORV plan implementing the above recommendation.
- Wildlife - Designation of critical areas. Coordination with minerals and recreation.

RATIONALE:

Most effects of increased energy exploitation and oil and gas leasing to bird life of the sagebrush type can be detrimental. The impacts to sage grouse when they are concentrated in the winter and under additional stress can result in reduced numbers and productivity.

Occasional nest abandonment or destruction will be caused by vandals, unthinking persons, or by accident incidental to human recreational activities on the public lands. Of primary concern on public lands is the authorization of ORV races across habitats that are critical sage grouse areas. These events should be conducted after the reproductive period or in an area where no loss to habitats will occur. The potential of fire caused by hot mufflers and tail pipes or by sparks or hot exhaust in brushy or grassy areas must also be considered. Prevention of such fires is necessary to preserve important habitat. Restrictions on snowmobile use in critical wintering areas is important so as not to add additional stress to the species.

According to the Twin Falls County Survey, 28.6 percent of the people surveyed feel that since the public lands provide some of the best and most diverse wildlife habitat, the potential for improving this habitat--and thus increasing game and non-game populations---is present. They felt public land habitat should be improved solely for wildlife.¹

¹ Burley District Memo. 1607. RESULTS OF THE TWIN FALLS SURVEY. November 19, 1980.

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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
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Name (MFP)
Twin Falls

Activity
Wildlife

Overlay Reference
Step WL-2.12 Step 3

Multiple Use Analysis

This recommendation conflicts with minerals recommendations to explore for and develop minerals resources in sage grouse range. Recreations lack of recommendations to close sage grouse nesting areas during nesting periods conflicts with this recommendation. Lack of snowmobile closures on sage grouse winter range conflicts. No existing problems with ORV use in relation to sage grouse have been identified. Wildlife URA III states in regard to wintering areas "The sagebrush must be above the accumulated snow." Those areas are not conducive to snowmobiling and are thereby protected without additional regulations.

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Modify WL-2.12 -
Allow vehicle use on existing roads and trails and allow ORV events after June 15 in critical sage grouse nesting-brood rearing complexes. Close critical sage grouse wintering areas to snowmobiling. Coordinate this recommendaiton with M-2.1.

Support Needs:

Wildlife --
Monitor recreation and minerals activities to identify problems that may arise.

Recreation --
Monitor ORV use to ensure that sage grouse are not being unduly affected by human activities.

Minerals --
Monitor mineral activities to ensure that sage grouse are not being unduly offended by human activities.

Reason:

No existing problems have been identified in the sage grouse areas. Wildlife URA III says "Presently, the specific magnitude conflicts between visitor and ORV management and sage grouse disturbance is not known." Wildlife URA IV says occasional nest abandonment or destruction will be caused by vandals, unthinking persons and accidents incidental to recreational activities. The amount of production lost through such activities will probably not be significant to most sage grouse populations." Depending on the size of the population, there could definitely be a problem.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Reject WL-2.12.
2. Accept WL-2.12.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

Form 1600-21 April 1973

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name (MFP)

Twin Falls

Activity

Wildlife

Overlay Reference

Step WL-2.12 Step 3

Decision:

Rationale:

Modify the multiple-use recommendation.

- a. Allow vehicular use and oil and gas exploration without restriction except during the period from March 15 through June 15 in critical sage grouse nesting-brood rearing complexes. During this period, vehicular use will be limited to existing roads and trails.
- b. Close critical sage grouse wintering areas to snowmobiling.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)

Form 1600-21 (April 1974)

UNITED STATES
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MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN
RECOMMENDATION-ANALYSIS-DECISION

Name: WFP
Twin Falls

Act. by
Wildlife - Sharp-tailed Grouse

Overlay Reference
Step 1 WL-2.13 Step 3

RECOMMENDATION:

Maintain and enhance habitat for a sharp-tailed grouse introduction. Maintain a grass understory at least 12 inches in height. Maintain present cover on public land adjacent to dryland grain fields. Protect areas of Idaho fescue and Sandberg bluegrass inter-mixed with bitterbrush and sagebrush and draws and small canyons with dense stands of berry producing vegetation. Allow grazing in meadows and spring and seep complexes after August 1.

SUPPORT:

- Range - Development and implementation of livestock grazing systems to provide optimum sharp-tailed grouse habitat.
- Watershed - Assistance in implementation of recommendation to enhance watershed values.
- Wildlife - Coordination with range in location of sharp-tailed grouse areas.

RATIONALE:

Historically, there are sharp-tailed grouse reported for only the extreme southern portion of the Twin Falls Planning Unit and recent range maps and reports show no sharp-tailed grouse anywhere in the Planning Unit.¹ IDFG fully supports a sharp-tailed grouse introduction into the Twin Falls Planning Unit (Gary Will, Regional Wildlife Manager, Region IV-IDFG, 4-1-80, Personal Communication).

The sharp-tailed grouse is a "sensitive" species. These birds occur in semidesert shrub in grass cover types as well as near cultivated fields which provide important food and cover requirements during most of the year.² A healthy native grass understory is important to the grouse in the breeding and nesting seasons. Successful nests are usually in ungrazed or lightly grazed pastures where grass understory is at least 12 inches in height.³

Sharp-tailed grouse are found in brushy draws and densely covered hillsides in the winter time.⁴ These areas are important winter habitat. They provide essential protection from the weather and an important source of food. Native habitat is essential to sharp-tailed grouse populations.

¹ Parker, T.L. 1970. ON THE ECOLOGY OF THE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE IN SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO. Unpublished M.S. Thesis. Idaho State University. Pocatello, Idaho.

² Bent, A.C. 1963. LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN GALLINACEOUS BIRDS. Dover Publications, Inc. New York, New York.

³ Hillman, C.N. and Jackson, W.W. 1973. THE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE IN SOUTH DAKOTA. Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Technical Bulletin Number 3.

⁴ McArdle, B.A. 1977. THE EFFECT OF SAGEBRUSH REDUCTION PRACTICES ON SHARP-TAILED GROUSE USE IN SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO. Unpublished M.S. Thesis. Utah State University. Logan, Utah.

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Name (MFP)

Twin Falls

Activity

Wildlife

Overlay Reference

Step 1 WL-2. Step 3

(Decision)

Multiple Use Recommendation:

Modify 2-13 as follows -
Maintain and enhance habitat for sharp-tailed grouse through the use of intensive grazing management systems. Maintenance of a 12 inch high grass understory is important. Maintain present cover on public lands adjacent to dryland grain fields. Protect grass areas inter-mixed with bitterbrush and sagebrush in draws and small canyons with dense stands of berry producing vegetation.

The exchange proposal will have priority because of the multiple resource values as explained in the multiple use analysis.

Support Needs:

Range -
Develop and implement grazing systems to provide optimum sharp-tailed grouse habitat. Coordinate all land treatments with wildlife.

Wildlife -
Prepare a management plan which includes specific habitat components necessary for sharp-tailed grouse. Provide input in land treatment design and location.

Decision:

Accept the multiple-use recommendation.

Reasons:

Good quality grasslands and brushy cover are essential for sharp-tailed grouse populations. Implementation of grazing systems is the best method for attaining good quality grasslands. Limiting land treatments in draws and other selected locations will ensure brushy cover is available when needed.

The proposed exchange is for some scattered parcels within the habitat units. It appears that the total multiple use values would benefit from the exchange if it can be accomplished.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Reject WL-2.13.
2. Accept WL-2.13.

Rationale:

Grazing management systems can be designed to enhance sharptail habitat without underly restricting grazing use.

Note: Attach additional sheets, if needed

(Instructions on reverse)