

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE FOUND NOT WARRANTED FOR PROTECTION UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

1. **Q. What information did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service use to make this determination?**
 - A. The Service systematically collected information on the Gunnison sage-grouse, its habitats, threats and environmental factors affecting the species from a wide array of sources. The scientific literature on Gunnison sage-grouse and its sagebrush habitats is moderate so, where information was lacking and as appropriate, greater sage-grouse information was used to analyze habitat usage, threats, and environmental factors affecting the Gunnison sage-grouse. In addition, the Service received a substantial amount of unpublished information from other Federal agencies, States, counties, non-governmental organizations and individuals. We also solicited information on all Federal, State or local conservation efforts currently in operation or planned for the Gunnison sage-grouse or its habitats.

2. **Q. Did the CCAA, Rangewide Conservation Plan or local conservation plans help the Service avoid listing the Gunnison sage-grouse?**
 - A. No. The Service's decision not to list the Gunnison sage-grouse was based on a recent population trend analysis and a lack of evidence on substantial threats at the time of the finding. Even though we did not directly apply the CCAA, Rangewide Conservation Plan and local conservation plans to our decision, these efforts represent important conservation actions that will help ensure the long-term conservation of Gunnison sage-grouse and we encourage their continued development and implementation.

3. **Q. What does a Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) do for the species and the landowner?**
 - A. The standard that a CCAA must meet is that the benefits of the conservation measures implemented under a CCAA, when combined with those benefits that would be achieved if it is assumed that conservation measures were also to be implemented on other necessary properties, would preclude or remove any need to list the species. Landowners provide certain Gunnison sage-grouse habitat protection or enhancement measures on their lands. If the Gunnison sage-grouse is listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the permit obtained under the CCAA

authorizes incidental take of Gunnison sage-grouse due to otherwise lawful activities in accordance with the terms of the CCAA (crop cultivation, crop harvesting, livestock grazing, farm equipment operation, commercial/residential development, etc.), as long as the participating landowner is performing activities identified in the Certificate of Inclusion. Conservation measures deemed necessary on parcels of land will primarily be drawn from the Range-wide Conservation Plan or local conservation plans.

4. **Q. What are some of the differences between the greater sage-grouse and the Gunnison sage-grouse?**
 - A. Gunnison sage-grouse weigh one-third less than greater sage-grouse. The specialized feathers on the neck (filoplumes) are longer and give the appearance of a “ponytail” during the courtship display, unlike the greater sage-grouse. Mating calls are distinct between the two species. The current ranges of the two species are not overlapping. In summary, they’re different genetically, morphologically and behaviorally.
5. **Q. What foods do Gunnison sage-grouse eat?**
 - A. Food of the Gunnison sage-grouse is composed of nearly 100 percent sagebrush in the winter. Forbs and insects are important during the summer and early fall. Unlike many other game birds, Gunnison and greater sage-grouse do not possess muscular gizzards and, therefore, lack the ability to grind and digest seeds.
6. **Q. Where did the Gunnison sage-grouse occur historically?**
 - A. Historically, the Gunnison sage-grouse occurred in southwestern Colorado, northwestern New Mexico, northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah. Accounts of Gunnison sage-grouse in Kansas and Oklahoma are now believed to be reports of mistaken locations or misidentification of lesser prairie chickens and not considered within the historic range.
7. **Q. Where do Gunnison sage-grouse presently occur?**
 - A. Gunnison sage-grouse currently occur in seven widely scattered and isolated populations in Colorado and Utah, occupying 1,820 square miles. The seven populations are Gunnison Basin, San Miguel Basin, Monticello-Dove Creek, on Mesa, Crawford, Cerro Summit-Cimarron-Sims Mesa, and Poncha Pass. □Pin
8. **Q. Where is the largest population of Gunnison sage-grouse and who manages the land?**

A. The Gunnison Basin, which is roughly centered on the town of Gunnison and covers roughly 593,000 acres, contains the largest population of Gunnison sage-grouse. Approximately 51 percent of the occupied sage-grouse range in Gunnison Basin is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, 14 percent by the U.S. Forest Service, 2 percent by the National Park Service, 1 percent by Colorado Division of Wildlife, 1 percent by the Colorado State Land Board, and 31 percent is privately owned.