

Little Snake Field Office Resource Management Plan Revision

Wildlife Protections

Sensitive wildlife is protected at sensitive times in the Preferred Alternative through timing limitations placed on oil and gas activities on 1.2 million acres of the Field Office (63 percent), including:

- Five-month winter timing limitations in critical big game habitat
- Two-and-a-half month spring timing limitations in big game fawning and calving areas
- Three-month timing limitations in crucial sage grouse winter habitat
- Four-month spring limitations to protect nesting sage grouse

Wildlife is further protected in the Preferred Alternative through no-surface-occupancy or controlled-surface-use stipulations covering a number of species including:

- Nesting birds such as sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, raptors and waterbirds
- Prairie dog habitat and suitable Black-footed ferret habitat

Although the stipulations above protect animals and their nesting sites from disturbance during critical times, sagebrush habitat could still be fragmented over time. **To minimize habitat fragmentation in sagebrush communities from oil and gas activity**, the Preferred Alternative details a voluntary incentive program in which:

- The operator agrees to disturb no more than 5 percent of the surface acres within a lease at any one time and provides a Plan of Development detailing their specific strategy to limit habitat fragmentation and maintain large blocks of functional habitat
- BLM grants an exception to big game and sage grouse timing limitations within the lease
- Operators' activities will be closely monitored to ensure compliance
- The no surface occupancy requirement on ¼ mile around sage grouse leks is maintained

