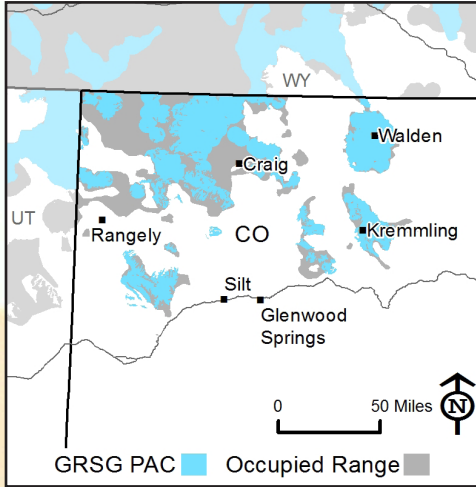
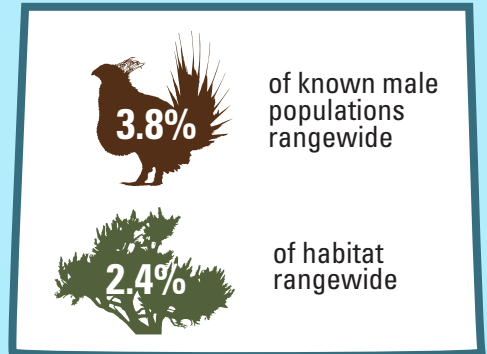




# Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation in Colorado



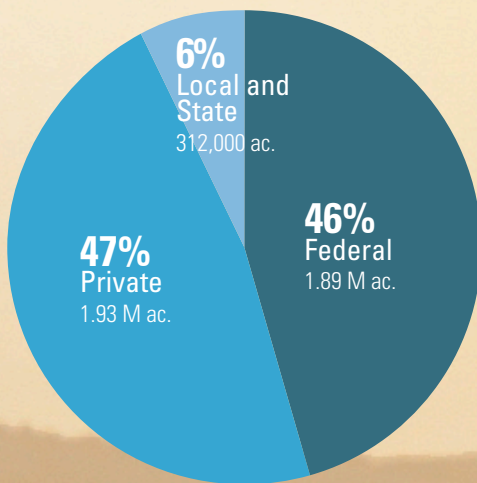
Colorado has been an active partner in the collaborative, science-based conservation campaign to protect the greater sage-grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem. Due to the collective efforts of federal, state and private partners across its range, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has found that the greater sage-grouse does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act. Greater sage-grouse will continue to be managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.



## Important Conservation Areas and Occupied Range for Greater Sage-Grouse in Colorado

### Land Ownership

Total Occupied Range: 4.15 million acres



## Greater Sage-Grouse in Colorado

Northwestern Colorado is located on the southern edge of greater sage-grouse range, but a high percentage of sage-grouse habitat in the state is considered a priority for conservation. Sage-grouse habitat is about evenly split between federal and private ownership.

The North Park and Northwestern Colorado populations hold significant sage-grouse numbers. The smaller populations to the south are in the Colorado Plateau Management Zone. The predominant threats in Colorado are habitat fragmentation and loss of sagebrush from activities such as energy development, associated infrastructure, agricultural conversion, invasive grasses and fire, with ex-urban development as a localized stressor.

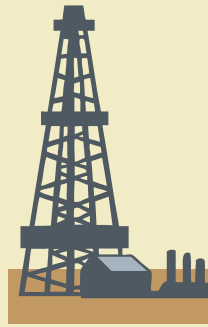
### Primary Threats

Loss and fragmentation of sagebrush habitat caused by:

- Energy development: oil and gas drilling;
- Infrastructure: transmission towers, fences, roads, and pipelines widespread;
- Invasive plants: cheatgrass widespread, conifer encroachment localized;
- Wildfire: a significant threat;
- Ex-urban development: a localized threat; and
- Agricultural conversion: widespread.

# Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy in CO

## FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS



Minimize New Surface Disturbance

## STATE AND PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

### Overview of State Actions

- Colorado has been a leader in greater sage-grouse conservation and research, working with numerous partners over the last several decades at the local and state and rangewide level. Since 2003, more than 80,600 acres of greater sage-grouse habitat has been protected by the state.
- Since 2003, more than 80,600 acres of greater sage-grouse habitat has been protected by Colorado Parks and Wildlife either through fee title purchase or conservation easements, at a cost of nearly \$53 million.
- Since 2008, Colorado's greater sage grouse plan has been implemented across approximately 3,855,841 acres across all landownership types. It provides guidance to address impacts to sage-grouse from habitat fragmentation and conversion, particularly from oil and gas drilling. It is a voluntary approach that focuses on reducing impacts from non-renewable energy development.
- Colorado's governor issued an Executive Order in 2015 to strengthen the state plan. Under the order, the state oil and gas permitting agency will evaluate its existing wildlife siting rules for potential improvement and develop a comprehensive tracking system for development in sensitive wildlife habitat. The order also prioritizes the completion of the Colorado Habitat Exchange, the first voluntary compensatory mitigation program to be initiated for greater sage-grouse.

### NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) has been a catalyst for sagebrush conservation across the West. SGI's vision of wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching provides win-win solutions for ranchers, sage-grouse and 350 other species. With more than 1,120 participating ranches in 11 western states, SGI and its partners have invested \$424.5 million in greater sage-grouse conservation on 4.4 million acres of private ranchlands.

Colorado is a leader in maintaining working ranches for livestock and wildlife, acquiring almost 70,000 easement acres since SGI began. Acquisitions in northwest Colorado stitched together a quarter million-acre landscape containing the state's largest population of greater sage-grouse and elk.



Sagebrush in Colorado

## RANGELAND FIRE STRATEGY



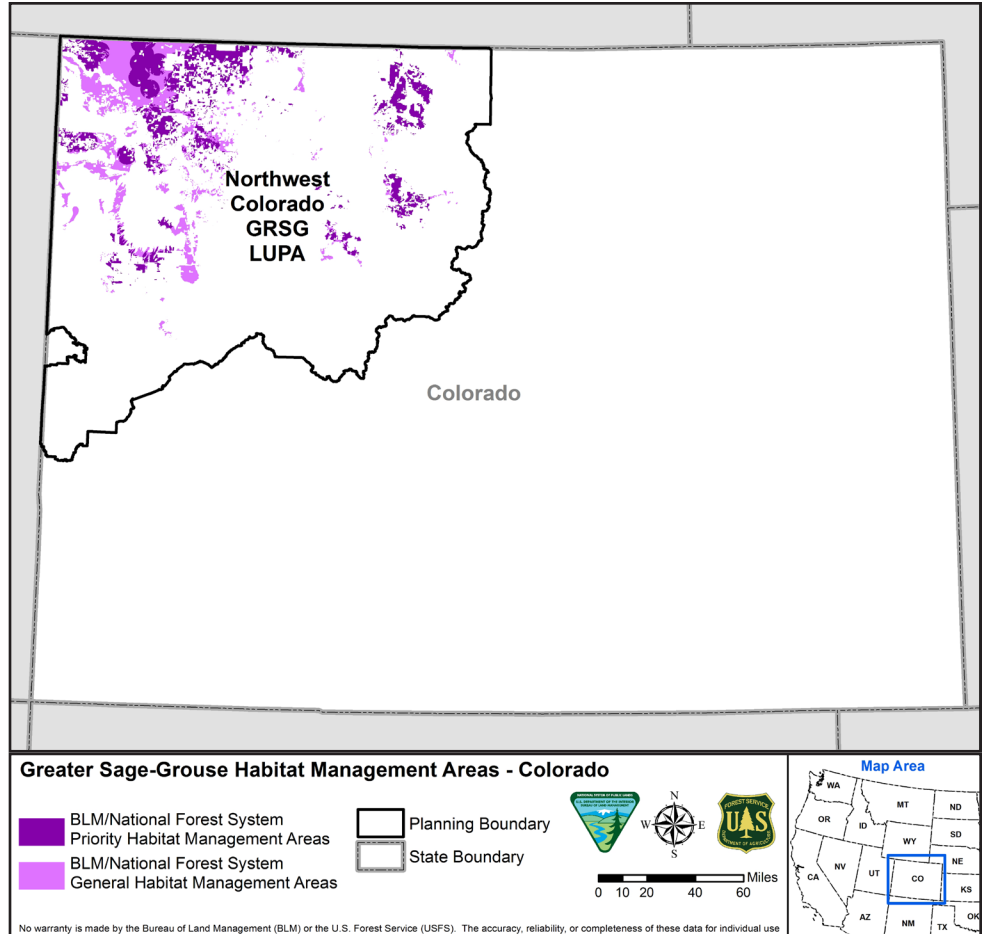
The Bureau of Land Management's fire program in northwest Colorado is slated to receive additional funding targeted specifically at improving, restoring and protecting greater sage-grouse habitat.



# BLM-USFS Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plans in CO

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land use plan amendment in Northwest Colorado addresses threats to the greater sage-grouse. The BLM-USFS plans provide a layered management approach that focus protections on the areas of highest importance to the species:

- Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA) are managed to limit or eliminate disturbance. Surface energy and mineral development is not allowed in these areas with very narrow exceptions for oil, gas and geothermal. Development is capped with limits on the amount and density of disturbance allowed. No lands within Colorado have been identified as Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA).
- General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA) provide greater flexibility for land use activities. Mitigation, buffers and required design features ensure that impacts from development are avoided, minimized and compensated in GHMA.



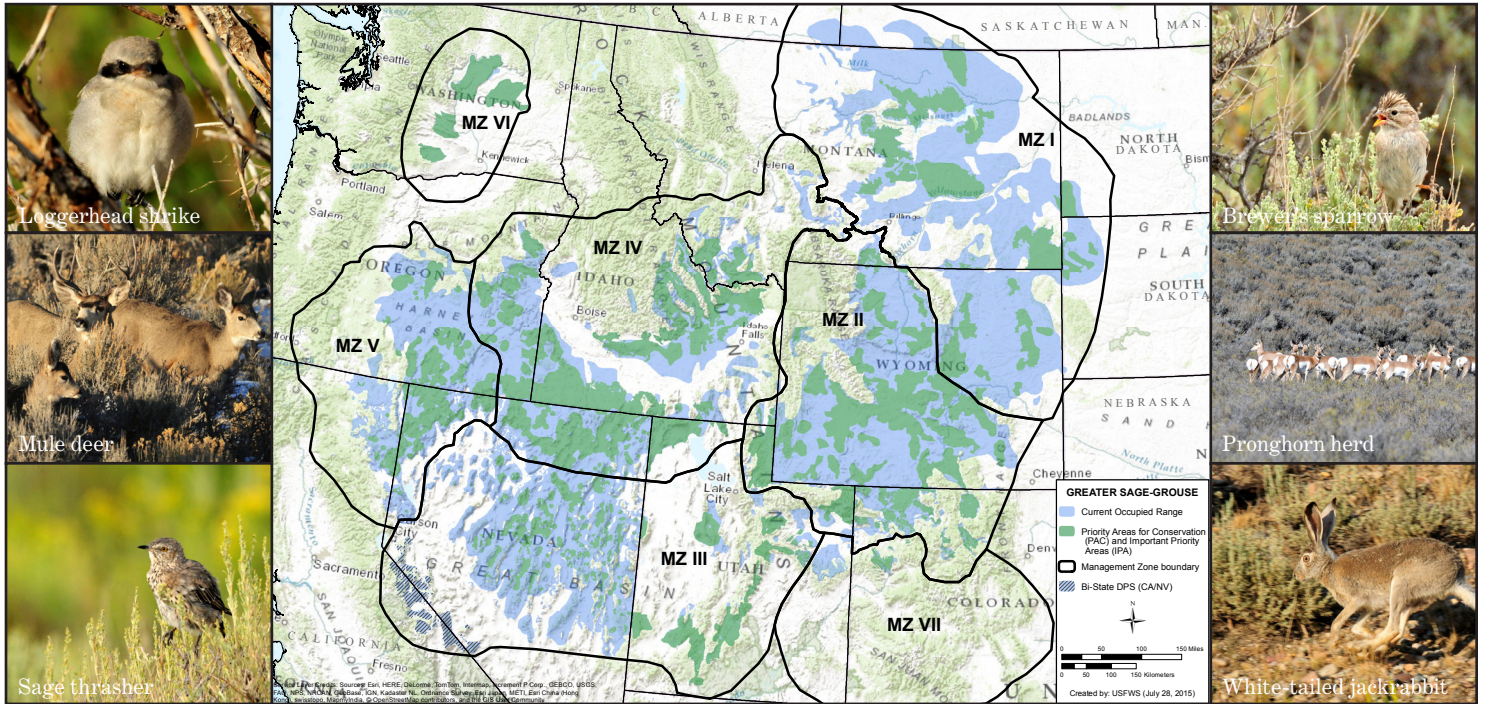
SFA Acres	PHMA Acres	GHMA Acres
None	926,700 acres	742,900 acres

- To provide the highest protections possible to leks, the BLM's northwest Colorado plan closes all areas within one mile around active greater sage-grouse leks to new fluid mineral leasing.
- The plans respect valid, existing rights, including those for oil and gas development, renewable energy, rights-of-way, locatable minerals and other permitted projects.
- During grazing permit renewals and modifications on lands within sage-grouse habitat, the BLM will incorporate locally developed management objectives for sage-grouse habitat and rangeland health standards, consistent with ecological potential. The BLM and USFS will prioritize monitoring for compliance, review and processing of grazing permits in the areas most important for sage-grouse first, SFA, followed by PHMA, with a focus on lands containing riparian areas and wet meadows.

About 90 percent of federal lands with high and medium oil and gas potential in Colorado are outside of federally managed priority conservation areas.

Acres of High & Medium Oil and Gas Potential and Lease Status on Federal Lands and Minerals within PHMA								
State	High/Medium Oil Potential				High/Medium Gas Potential			
	Within PHMA Already Leased	Within PHMA Subject to BLM/USFS RMP Decisions for Priority Habitat	Outside of PHMAs	Total High/Medium Oil Potential	Within PHMA Already Leased	Within PHMA Subject to BLM/USFS RMP Decisions for Priority Habitat	Outside of PHMAs	Total High/Medium Gas Potential
Colorado	349,000	564,000	11,673,000	12,586,000	359,000	530,000	8,063,000	8,952,000

# The Future for Greater Sage-Grouse in CO



## Redefining the Future of Conservation

FWS is confident that the unparalleled conservation effort by federal, state, and private partners has addressed the major threats to greater sage-grouse by putting the right protections in the most important places. A sustained commitment to sagebrush conservation is needed to ensure effective conservation for greater sage-grouse and the hundreds of other wildlife that depend on sagebrush habitat.

## Implementation

Partners will now begin to implement their commitments whether under state and federal plans, individual conservation agreements, or the Rangeland Fire Strategy. The BLM and USFS plans will be implemented in close coordination with state and local partners, as well as through continued collaboration with the Sage Grouse Task Force and local working groups. FWS will remain an active partner in the sagebrush conservation effort, funding new research, providing on-the-ground support for private landowners, as well as federal, state, industry and conservation partners.

## Enduring Benefits for All

Restoring the greater sage-grouse will benefit hundreds of other native plants and animals and communities across the West. What's more, these conservation efforts are led and strengthened by effective partnerships – ensuring that the gains we make for the greater sage-grouse will endure.



Greater sage-grouse in flight

All photos credit to and courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service unless specified otherwise.

## Sage Grouse Initiative 2.0

Since 2010, SGI has focused on arresting habitat loss in the highest priority areas for conservation from ex-urban development and conifer encroachment, and on reducing greater sage-grouse collisions with high-risk fences.

NRCS has committed to invest another \$211 million in SGI 2.0, with an expanded mission of addressing the synergistic problems of invasive weeds and wildfires, on slowing the loss of sagebrush to agricultural conversion and on protecting wet meadow habitat critical for brood-rearing. The program's goal is to bring the total amount of private land under conservation to 8 million acres.

SGI 2.0 contains the resources necessary to further easement work with partners across another 25,000 priority acres in Colorado. An additional 10,000 acres will be conserved in perpetuity for the separate species of Gunnison sage-grouse.