



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# BLM Greater Sage-Grouse Planning

2024 Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS



Draft EIS Public Meetings – April 2024

Photo by Jami Bollschweiler



# Prior BLM Sage-Grouse Planning Efforts

## 2015

- Land use plans across greater sage-grouse (GRSG) range amended or revised to provide for improved conservation.
  - Cited by FWS as a primary factor in reaching the 2015 not-warranted finding for GRSG after determining the species warranted listing in 2010.

## 2019

- All states except MT revisited their GRSG amendments.
- 2019 plan amendments preliminarily enjoined, but not removed.
- 2015 plan amendments in effect.





# Why a New Planning Effort?

- Extensive new information on GRSG published in the scientific literature since 2015.
- GRSG numbers continue to experience long-term declines
  - 16 areas tripped habitat triggers through 2019 (BLM 2020 Monitoring Report)
  - 42 areas tripped population triggers through 2019 (BLM 2020 Monitoring Report)
  - Modeled population decline of 37% since 2002 (Coates et al., 2021)
  - Spatial and temporal differences in the rate of decline, but all states have experienced long-term declining GRSG numbers.
- Changes in the sagebrush landscape due to drought and climate change necessitate consideration of some management decisions.
- Addresses past court concerns and improves plan durability.





# Current Planning Effort

The BLM is striving to slow or stop the decline of GRSG on BLM-administered lands . . . with the goal to conserve and manage GRSG habitats to support persistent, healthy populations, consistent with BLM's sensitive species policy (BLM-M-6840) and in coordination with state wildlife agencies.

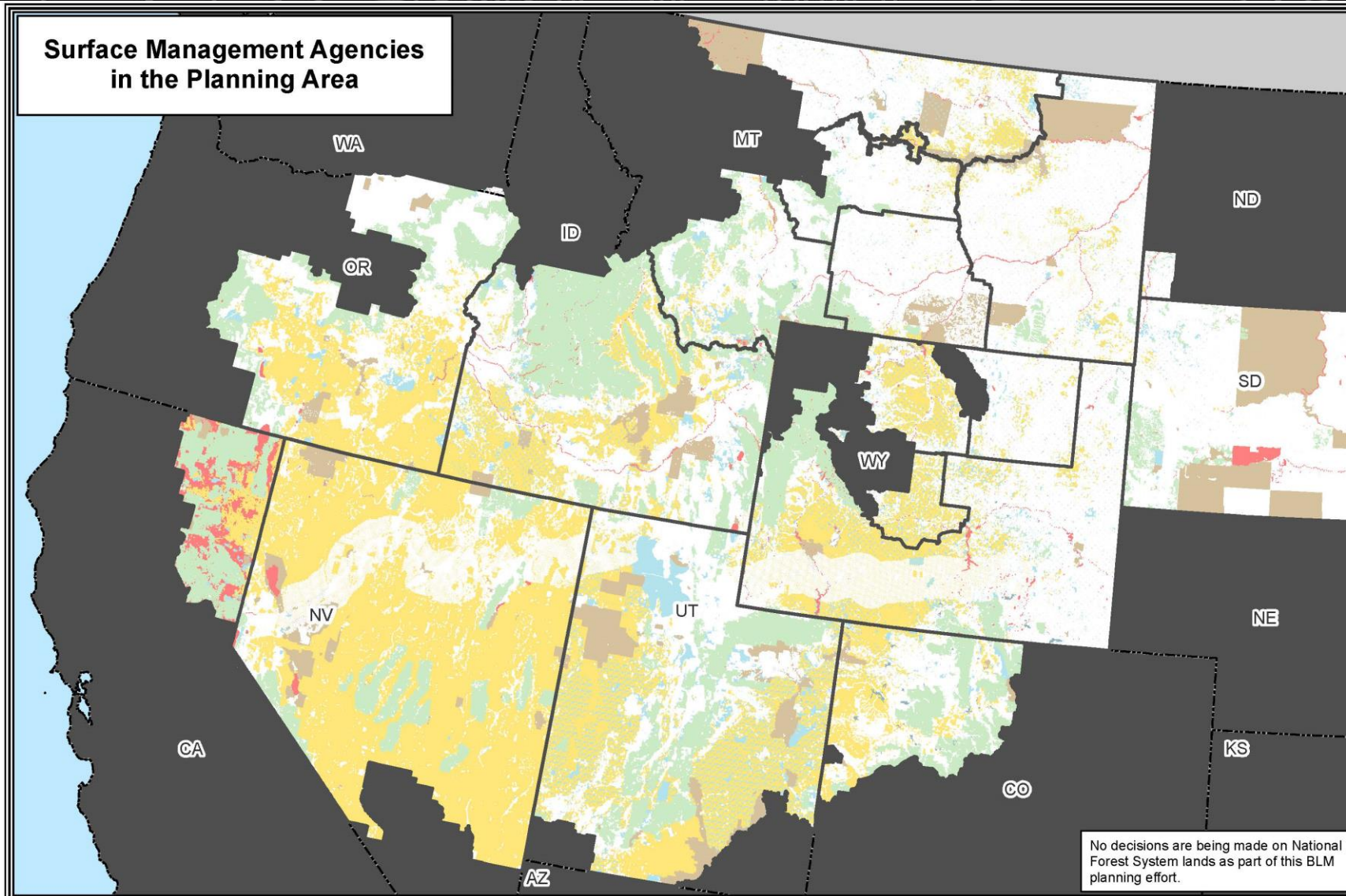




# Proposed Action

- The BLM is amending goals, objectives and management from previous planning efforts in 77 resource management plans (RMPs) to enhance greater sage-grouse (GRSG) conservation.
- This effort builds on the 2015 and 2019 GRSG planning efforts and is focused on addressing new scientific information which will enhance conservation and continue responsible uses on Public Lands.

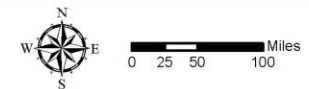




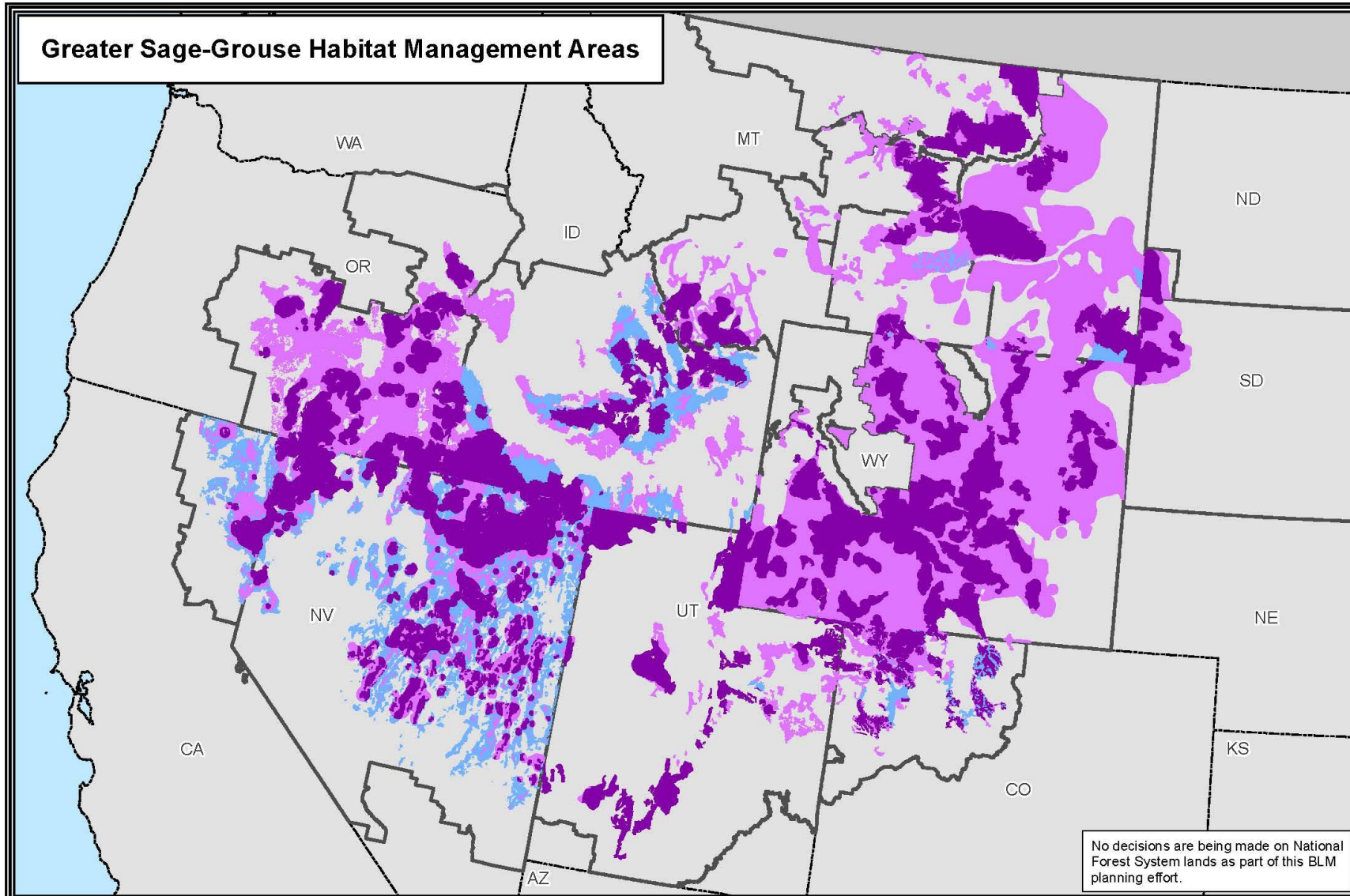
Map 1.1a



| Legend |                           |  |                  |
|--------|---------------------------|--|------------------|
|        | Planning Area Extent      |  | Private          |
|        | State Boundaries          |  | Local Government |
|        | Bureau of Land Management |  | Other / Unknown  |
|        | US Forest Service         |  |                  |
|        | Other Federal Lands       |  |                  |
|        | State                     |  |                  |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed.



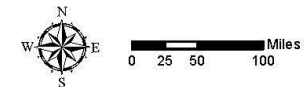
No decisions are being made on National Forest System lands as part of this BLM planning effort.

Map 1.1b

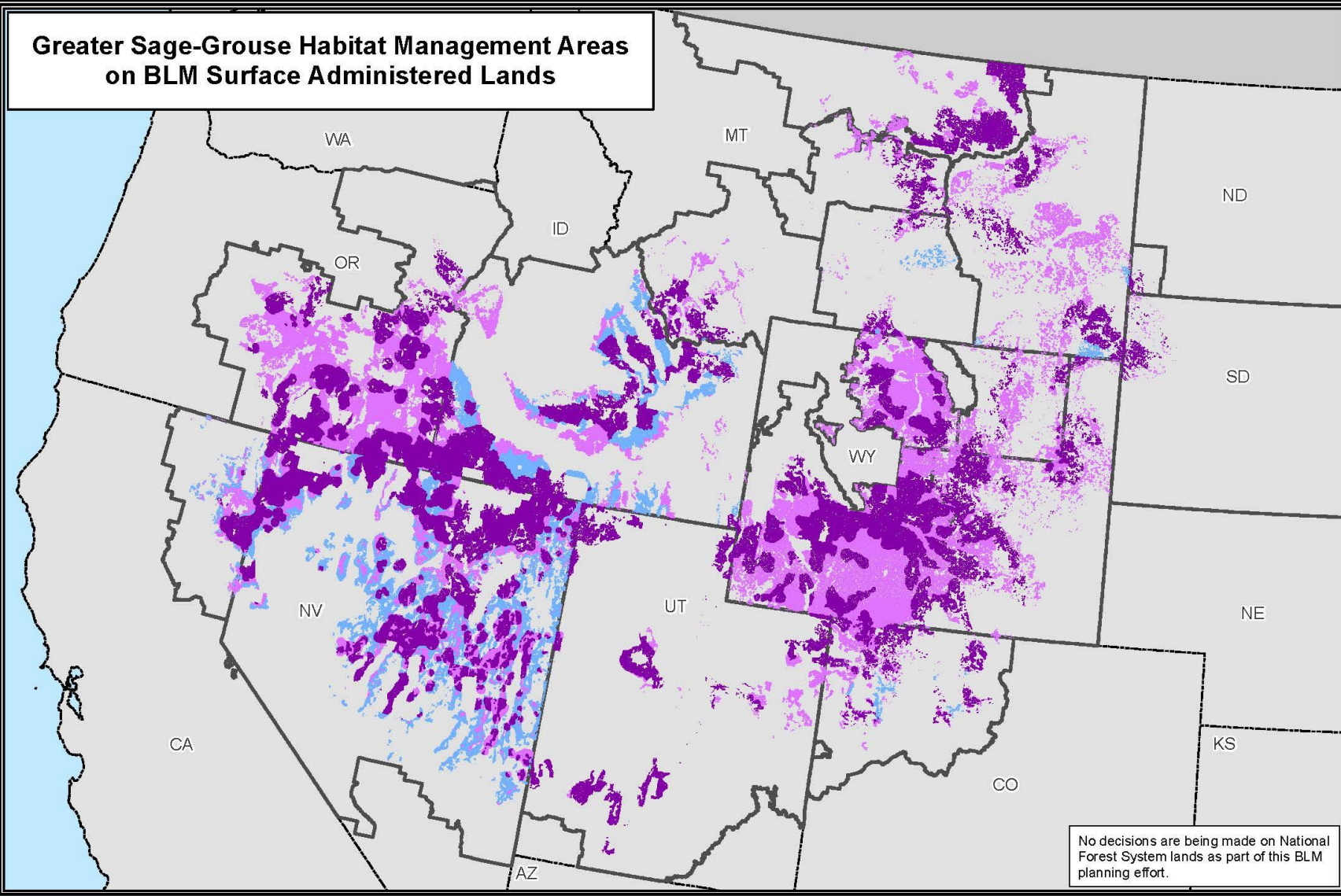


**Legend**

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  Priority Habitat Management Areas |  Planning Area Extent |
|  General Habitat Management Areas  |  State Boundaries     |
|  Other Habitat Management Areas    |  |



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No decisions are being made on National Forest System lands as part of this BLM planning effort.

Map 1.1c



**Legend**

|                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Priority Habitat Management Areas | Planning Area Extent |
| General Habitat Management Areas  | State Boundaries     |
| Other Habitat Management Areas    |                      |



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# What is Changing?

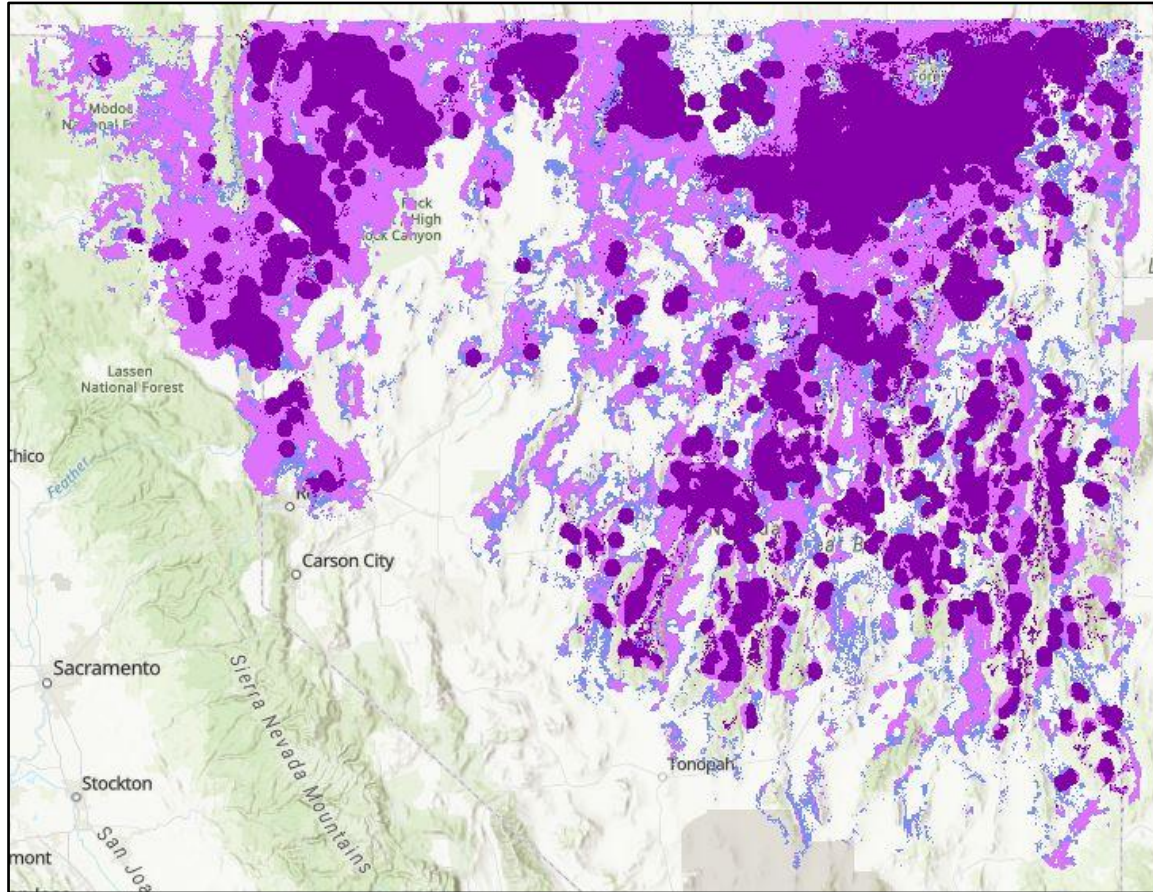
Existing RMP decisions from 2015 or 2019 other than those described will remain unchanged.



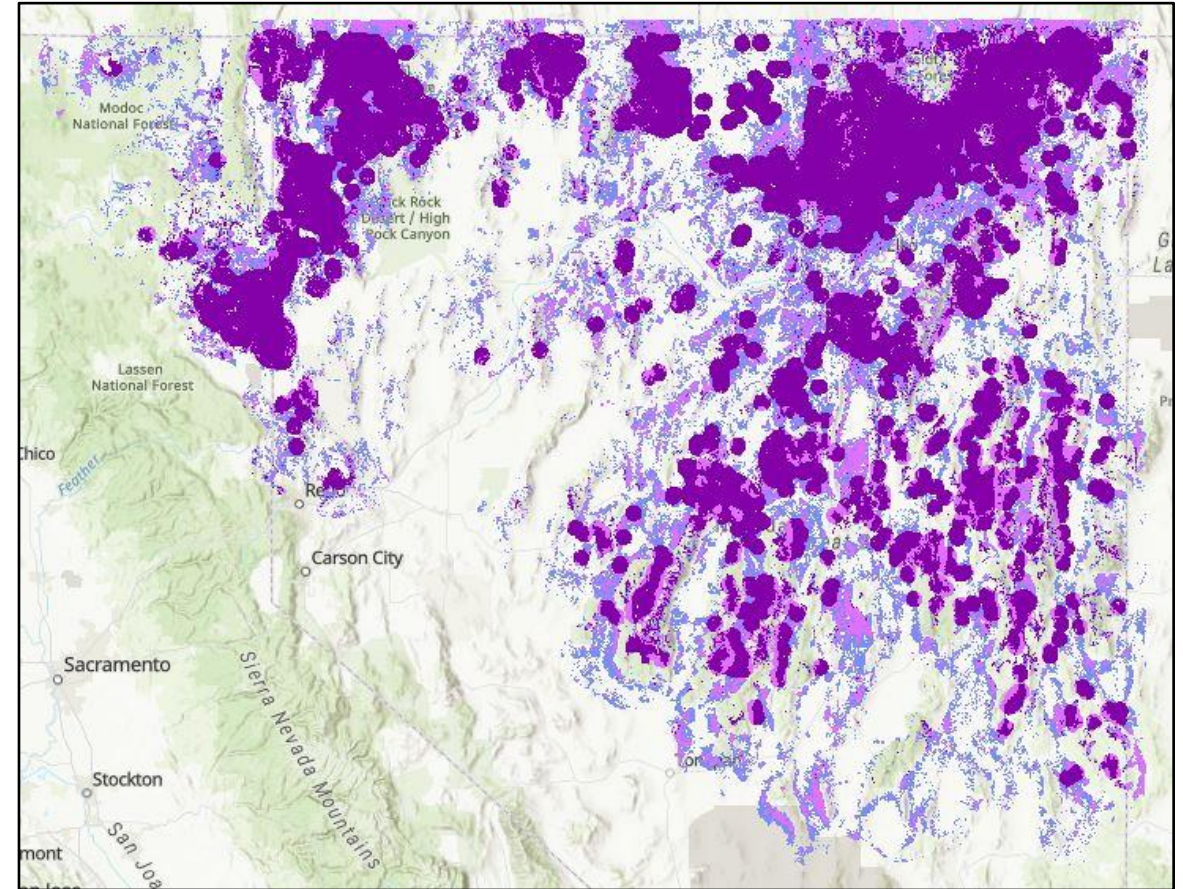
Habitat Management Area (HMA) boundaries were reviewed and updated, as appropriate, based on new science and State agency input.



## DEIS Alternative 4



## Proposed FEIS Alternative 4



Milligan, M.C., Coates, P.S., O'Neil, S.T., Brussee, B.E., Chenaille, M.P., Friend, D., Steele, K., Small, J.R., Bowden, T.S., Kosic, A.D., and Miller, K., 2024, **Greater sage-grouse habitat of Nevada and northeastern California—Integrating space use, habitat selection, and survival indices to guide areas for habitat management**: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2024–1018, 70 p., <https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20241018>.



# Key New Science Considered

Recently published scientific literature that helps inform conservation management in the right places to enhance GRSG conservation.

New information includes:

- Genetic connectivity and important areas of genetic diversity;
- Models of breeding habitats and lek persistence;
- GRSG abundance;
- Impacts from climate change; and
- Changes in local conditions identified through coordination with partners.





# Range-Wide Management Considerations

- Habitat management area alignments and non-habitat criteria
- Mitigation process
- Habitat objectives
- Disturbance caps
- Fluid mineral development and leasing objective
- Oil and gas waivers, exceptions and modifications
- Renewable energy development and transmission
- Livestock grazing
- Wild horses and burro management
- Threats from predation
- Adaptive management approach





# Management for State-Specific Circumstances

## Nevada/California:

- Consideration of Priority Plus Habitat
- Fire/vegetation treatments prioritization
- Increased coordination with state and local partners
- Revised exceptions to allocations provided in 2019
- Non-energy leasable minerals management





# Alternatives

- Alternative 1
  - Applicable management actions from 2015 Amendments
- Alternative 2
  - Applicable management actions from 2019 Amendments
- Alternative 3
  - Greater sage-grouse preservation – including ACECs
- Alternative 4
  - Conservation focus with situational allowance for development
- **Alternative 5 (preferred alternative)**
  - **Conservation with additional flexibility over Alternative 4 for site-specific development**
- Alternative 6
  - Alternative 5 with the addition of ACECs for areas essential for long-term GRSG persistence





# Key Details in the Preferred Alternative

- **Habitat management areas**
  - Updates habitat prioritization using current science
  - Priority Habitat Management Areas are most restrictively managed
- **Habitat objectives**
  - Multi-scale qualitative objectives informed by site-specific science
- **Disturbance cap**
  - Adjusts evaluation unit to a biologically-defined area
  - Allow for exceptions to consider local conditions
- **Adaptive management**
  - Consistent thresholds across political boundaries with flexibility to consider state or local data, targeting our responses to the identified cause
- **Wind, Solar and Associated Transmission**
  - Avoidance (instead of closed), for more flexibility while providing for protection
- **Oil and Gas Leasing and Development**
  - Does not close new areas to leasing, and clarifies how to apply waivers, exceptions, and modifications as requested by the states





# Acreages by Alternative

Habitat Management Area (HMA) boundaries (i.e., Priority , General, Important, Restoration, and Other) as well as ACECs were reviewed and updated, as appropriate, based on new science and State agency input.

| HMA Type             | Alt 1      | Alt 2      | Alt 3      | Alt 4      | Alts 5/6   |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Priority HMA         | 32,465,000 | 32,535,000 | 69,199,000 | 36,701,000 | 34,803,000 |
| Important HMA (ID)   | 2,736,000  | 2,796,000  | -          | 2,477,000  | 2,503,000  |
| General HMA          | 26,383,000 | 25,878,000 | -          | 25,946,000 | 23,718,000 |
| Restoration HMA (MT) | 165,000    | 165,000    | -          | 94,000     | 94,000     |
| Other HMA (NV)       | 4,862,000  | 4,870,000  | -          | 3,806,000  | 2,977,000  |
| New GRSG ACECs       | -          | -          | 11,139,472 | -          | 11,139,472 |





# Acreages by Alternative

Nevada and Northeastern California acres of Habitat Management Area:

| HMA           | Alt 1             | Alt 2             | Alt 3             | Alt 4             | Alt 5 & 6         |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| PHMA          | 9,266,000         | 9,268,000         | 21,138,000        | 9,780,000         | 9,661,000         |
| GHMA          | 5,783,000         | 5,749,000         | n/a               | 7,552,000         | 6,183,000         |
| OHMA          | 4,862,000         | 4,870,000         | n/a               | 3,806,000         | 2,977,000         |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>19,911,320</b> | <b>19,887,000</b> | <b>21,138,000</b> | <b>21,138,000</b> | <b>18,821,000</b> |



# Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)

Congress requires the BLM consider ACECs on public lands where special management is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important values, resources, systems, or processes.

- BLM received expansive ACEC nominations from the public.
- To respond to nominations and meet legal obligations BLM evaluated GRSG habitat for areas that met importance criteria on public lands.
- Alternatives 3 and 6 consider designation of the potential ACECs.
- The RMP defines ACEC management – it is not pre-determined.
- ACECs differ from PHMA as these areas should have characteristics that are more than locally significant.
- See Draft EIS Appendix 5 for a summary of evaluation process.





# Key Points

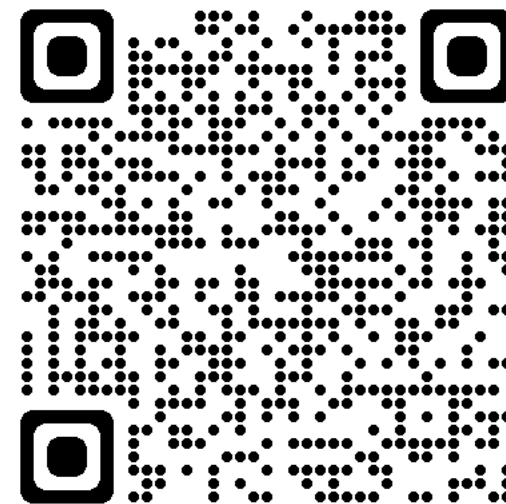
- Populations are still declining, and we need to be able to react quickly and decisively with our partners across state lines.
- Preferred alternative reflects most recent science and information on adapting management of GRSG habitat to a changing climate – which will increase the effectiveness and flexibility of our implementation actions.
- Preferred alternative combines what was most successful from 2015 and 2019 while addressing issues important to individual states, such as wild horses, renewable energy, and grazing.
- The plans are durable by balancing a consistent management approach across GRSG range while addressing unique conditions in individual states. This builds on our long-standing collaboration with state agencies who share management responsibilities.





# Next Steps and Opportunities for Input

- Draft EIS Comment Period March 15 – June 13, 2024  
Submit comments at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2016719/570>
- Final EIS, including State specific proposed plans, anticipated Fall 2024
- 60-day Governor's Consistency Review
- 30-day Concurrent Protest Period





# Discussion and Questions

