

# **Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Greater Sage-Grouse Planning**

**Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Council**

**July 2018**

# Presentation Outline

- **Planning timeline**
- **Forest Service plan components**
- **Proposed changes to 2015 sage-grouse plan amendment**



# Planning Timeline

- **November 2017: NOI to prepare an EIS**
- **June 2018: Supplemental NOI with 30-day comment period (ends August 1, 2018)**
- **August 2018: Draft EIS with 90-day comment period**
- **January 2019: Final EIS and Draft ROD, with 60-day objection period**
- **June 2019: Final RODs complete for all national forests**



# Purpose and Need

“The purpose of the proposed action is to incorporate new information to improve the clarity, efficiency, and implementation of greater sage-grouse plans, including better alignment with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and state plans, in order to benefit greater sage-grouse conservation on the landscape scale.”



# Forest Plan Components

- Desired Conditions
- Objectives
- Standards
- Guidelines
- Other plan content: e.g., adaptive management plan, mitigation framework



# Forest Plan Components

## **From 2015 Plan Amendment:**

Priority habitat management areas and general habitat management areas may contain areas of non-habitat, and management direction would not apply to those areas of non-habitat.

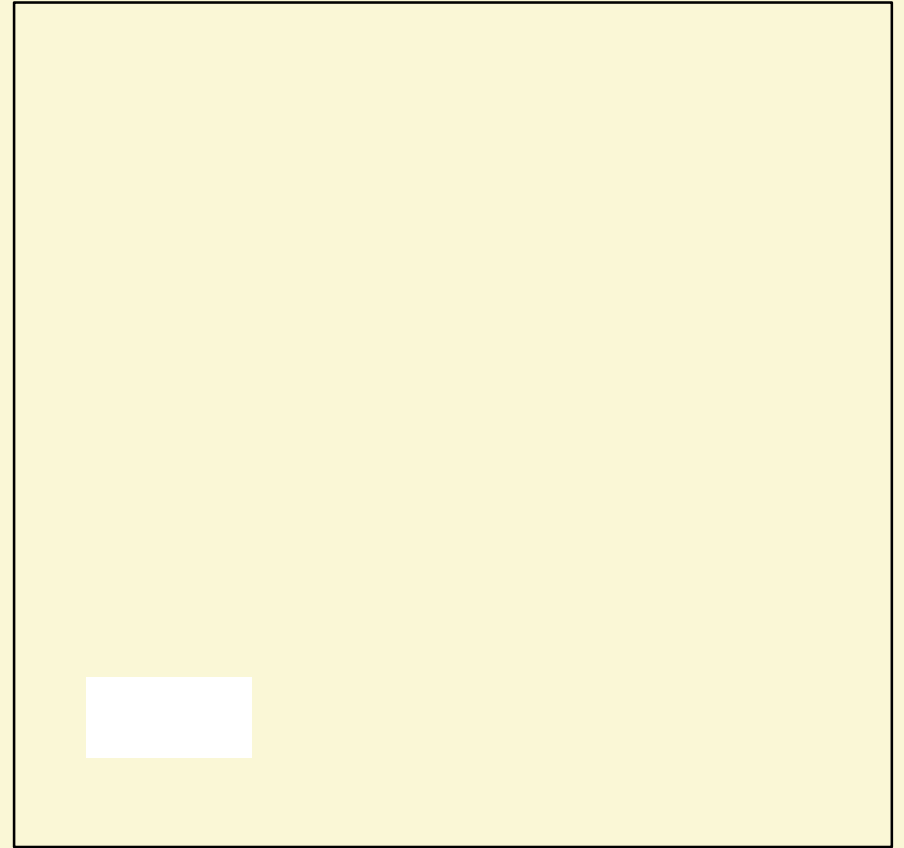
## **Proposed in 2018:**

In PHMA, GHMA or OHMA, if the location of the proposed authorization is determined to be unsuitable habitat or non-habitat; lacks the ecological potential to become marginal or suitable habitat; and would not result in direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on greater sage-grouse and its habitat, then plan components would not apply.



# Habitat Management Areas

- Adopt Coates 2015 Maps, as adopted by the SEC.
- Propose update process that allows map updates to be made following NEPA sufficiency review.



# Habitat Management Areas

<b>HTNF</b>	<b>No Action Alternative</b>	<b>2018 Proposed Action</b>
SFA	565,555	0
PHMA	992,751	886,946
GHMA	796,401	1,094,917
OHMA	621,591	426,514

<b>BLM NV/CA</b>	<b>No Action Alternative</b>	<b>Management Alignment Alternative</b>
SFA	2,797,400	0
PHMA	9,309,800	9,265,800
GHMA	5,720,700	5,748,000
OHMA	5,876,500	4,868,900



# **Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFAs)**

- Remove SFA designations.
- Remove references to SFAs throughout the plan.
- Remove land withdrawal Guideline 24 due to cancellation of withdrawal from mineral entry for sagebrush focal areas.



# Adaptive Management Plan

- Update Adaptive Management appendix and plan language to be consistent with the State Plan and NV BLM.
- Update adaptive management standards 11 and 12 to reflect changes in the Adaptive Management appendix.



# Mitigation

- Add language to Standard 5 to clarify the need to quantify residual impacts in PHMA and GHMA:  
“A common standardized method such as the State of Nevada’s Habitat Quantification Tool shall be used to quantify the residual impacts from project activities and any pursuant compensatory mitigation projects.”
- Incorporate references to mitigation and disturbance cap standards.
- Update Appendix B, Mitigation Framework to align with the current state of compensatory mitigation in Nevada.



# Exception Process

**Update Lands and Realty Standard 14 with standardized exception process:**

1. The location of the proposed authorization is determined to be unsuitable habitat or non-habitat; lacks the ecological potential to become marginal or suitable habitat; and would not result in direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on greater sage-grouse and its habitat.
2. Impacts from the proposed action could be offset through use of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, mitigate) to achieve a net conservation gain and demonstrate that the individual and cumulative impacts of the project would not result in habitat fragmentation or other impacts that would cause greater sage-grouse populations to decline.

# Exception Process

**Update Lands and Realty Standard 14 with standardized exception process:**

3. The proposed action would be authorized to address public health and safety concerns, specifically as they relate to local, state, and national priorities.
4. Renewals or re-authorizations of existing infrastructure in previously disturbed sites or expansions of existing infrastructure that have *de minimis* impacts or do not result in direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat.
5. The proposed action would be determined a routine administrative function conducted by State or local governments, including prior existing uses, authorized uses, valid existing rights and existing infrastructure (i.e., rights-of-way for roads) that serve such a public purpose.

# Exception Process

**Update Fluid Minerals-Unleased Standard 89, which requires no surface occupancy in PHMA, to include geothermal and the standardized exception process; remove Geothermal Leasing Standard 92:**

- The location of the proposed authorization is determined to be unsuitable habitat or non-habitat; lacks the ecological potential to become marginal or suitable habitat; and would not result in direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on greater sage-grouse and its habitat.
- Impacts from the proposed action could be offset through use of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimize, mitigate) to achieve a net conservation gain and demonstrate that the individual and cumulative impacts of the project would not result in habitat fragmentation or other impacts that would cause greater sage-grouse populations to decline.

# Seasonal Timing Restrictions

- Seasonal timing restrictions are included in plan Standards and Guidelines.
- Include seasonal habitat dates in a table and remove dates from specific standards and guidelines.

<b>Seasonal Use Period*</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>Breeding and Nesting</b>	March 1 – June 30
• <b>Lekking</b>	March 1 – May 15
• <b>Nesting</b>	April 1 – June 30
<b>Brood-Rearing/Summer</b>	May 15 – September 15
<b>Fall</b>	September 16 – October 31
<b>Winter</b>	November 1 – February 28



# Desired Conditions Table

- Rename the current Desired Conditions Tables 1a and 1b, which describe sage-grouse seasonal habitat preferences, and move to Appendix A.
- Update Desired Condition 3 and refer to new appendix.
- Revise current tables 1a and 1b with best available science, in coordination with state partners. As these tables are updated, adjustments would be made by the USFS through administrative changes.





# Livestock Grazing

- Remove Standard 40, which does not allow construction of new water developments, to allow appropriate livestock management.
- Add Standard 42: “In riparian areas and meadows within priority and general habitat management areas, utilization will not exceed 50%.”



# Livestock Grazing

Remove Table 3, Grazing Guidelines, to align with best available science:

- 7" upland perennial grass height within 4 miles of leks on June 30
- 4" of upland perennial grass height within 4 miles of leks at end of growing season.
- 4" stubble height in riparian areas and mesic meadows at end of growing season in all habitats.



# Other Changes

- Remove Objective 13. Tall structures will be retrofitted with perch deterrents during permit reauthorization or renewal as stated in Standard 17.
- Remove Wild Horse and Burro Guideline 71. Full range of appropriate management levels is needed for management.



# Other Changes

- Update Objective 29 and Table 2 to reflect availability of treatment acres and recommended treatments.

<b>ACRES PER DECADE</b>			
<b>FOREST</b>	<b>MECHANICAL</b>	<b>PRESCRIBED FIRE</b>	<b>GRASS RESTORATION</b>
<b>Humboldt- Toiyabe Total</b>	202000	0	43000
<b>Population Area 15</b>	200000	0	26000
<b>Population Area 26</b>	2000	0	17000



# Definitions

- Anthropogenic Disturbance: remove range structures
- Biologically Significant Unit
- PHMA, GHMA, and OHMA: Update consistent with current maps and Coates modelling work
- Lek, Active Lek, Pending Lek, Occupied Lek: Update definitions consistent with NDOW
- Suitable, Marginal, and Unsuitable habitat, Non-habitat: Add definitions from the Habitat Assessment Framework



NOI comments due August 1:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r4/home/?cid=stelprd3843381>

Another opportunity for comment coming up in September!

