



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Instruction Memorandum No. WY-2016-024
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To: District Managers and Deputy State Directors

From: State Director

Subject: Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Policy on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Wyoming Administered Public Lands Including the Federal Mineral Estate

Program Area: All programs

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides guidance to the Bureau of Land Management Wyoming (BLM WY) Field Offices (FOs) regarding management of Greater Sage-grouse Core Areas identified in Version 4 of the State's Core Area Map, which was attached to Wyoming Executive Order (EO) 2015-4. The guidance in this IM recognizes that the BLM WY has issued Resource Management Plans (RMPs) providing direction on conservation goals, objectives, allocations and management actions in Greater Sage-grouse habitat including core areas and that those RMPs are based upon Version 3 of the State's Core Area Map. It also recognizes that EO 2015-4 utilizes a newer version of the State's Core Area Map (Version 4) which does not align completely with the areas identified in the Version 3 maps that served as the basis for the Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs) identified in the RMPs.

The BLM has determined that based on its Planning Regulations (43 CFR 1610) a Land Use Plan Amendment process is required for the BLM WY to consider incorporation of Version 4 of the Core Area Maps into the applicable RMPs. This IM provides guidance to FOs with respect to the management of such lands until such time as a subsequent planning process is completed.

Policy/Action: The BLM WY manages Greater Sage-grouse seasonal habitats and maintains connectivity in conformance with the Approved RMPs and according to the population management objectives set by the State of Wyoming. This guidance is consistent with guidelines and recommendations provided for in the Wyoming Governor's Sage-grouse Implementation Team's Core Population Area Strategy and the most recent Wyoming Governor's EO 2015-4. This IM is also consistent with the BLM WY Resource Management Plan decisions (Attachment 1) found in the following plans:

- Approved Resource Management Plan (ARMP) Amendment for Greater Sage-Grouse for the Casper, Kemmerer, Newcastle, Pinedale, Rawlins and Rock Springs Field Offices;

- ARMP for the Buffalo Field Office;
- ARMP for the Cody Field Office;
- ARMP for the Lander Field Office; and
- ARMP for the Worland Field Office

On July 29, 2015, the State of Wyoming issued Executive Order 2015-4 which replaced Executive Orders 2011-5 and 2013-3. As noted above, EO 2015-4 utilized Version 4 of the State's Core Area Maps. The purpose of this IM is to provide guidance on ensuring that Greater Sage-grouse conservation goals, objectives, allocations and management actions are applied in those areas until a subsequent plan amendment process is completed. It continues to be the goal of BLM WY to work toward the long-term conservation of Greater Sage-grouse habitats in Wyoming through coordination with partners, including the Governor's Office of the State of Wyoming, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and to also utilize input from the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), Local Sage-grouse Working Groups (LWGs), BLM cooperators and stakeholders.

Policy Statement 1: Terminology

The Approved Resource Management Plans for all offices, excluding Lander, references the terms PHMA and General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA) when discussing Greater Sage-grouse habitat. Those terms will continue to be used in BLM documents when addressing Core Habitat Areas, Connectivity Areas and Non-Core Sage-grouse habitat as defined in WY EO 2015-4. The Lander Approved RMP did not use the terms PHMA or GHMA.

Policy Statement 2: Application of Sage-grouse Decisions in Core Area Version 4

Until such time as a subsequent RMP Planning Amendment is completed incorporating the Version 4 maps, BLM WY must consider and evaluate the application of appropriate management direction (Attachment 1) regarding Sage-grouse PHMA (Core and Connectivity Areas) and GHMA to project proposals consistent with the PHMA maps currently incorporated into each RMP.

Areas identified as Core in Version 4 which were NOT identified as PHMA in the BLM Land Use Plans:

If a proposed project is located in an area not identified as PHMA under Version 3 of the Core Area Map, but is now Core Area under Version 4 (as attached to the State's EO 2015-4), the Field Office in at least one alternative of the action-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis should analyze the location as PHMA. On a project-by-project basis, FOs should evaluate conservation measures for specific proposals consistent with the designation of the area on the Version 4 maps. Those measures should be developed within the context of a specific proposal and should be analyzed in the associated NEPA analysis. The BLM WY FO will initiate a DDCT analysis in accordance with the procedures outlined on the WGFD website and will have a technical review completed. A policy review through WGFD will be required. The results of the DDCT analysis will be incorporated into the project NEPA analysis. Until the subsequent planning process is completed, parcels nominated for oil and gas lease sales in these areas should be deferred until completion of the plan amendment process.

The areas in the newly identified Core Areas (Version 4) include approximately 282,000 of BLM - managed surface acres statewide (387,000 acres of BLM-managed oil and gas estate) that are currently designated as GHMA, and are depicted in Attachment 2 with an acreage breakdown by field office in Attachment 3.

Areas NOT identified as Core in Version 4 which were identified as PHMA in the BLM Land Use Plans:

Areas identified as PHMA in the sage-grouse ARMPs that are not identified as Core Areas (Version 4) by the State of Wyoming's Core Area Protection Strategy (EO 2015-4) will continue to be managed as Core Areas subject to all applicable requirements until a subsequent planning process is completed. When implementing plan requirements, the BLM may also consider the status of these areas under EO 2015-4. Requests for exceptions, waivers, or modifications of oil and gas lease stipulations and management decision exceptions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the plan requirements and applicable guidance. Until a subsequent plan amendment is completed, the BLM will evaluate all proposed activities in these areas to determine the appropriate restrictions to be applied through the action-specific NEPA analysis. The BLM WY FO will initiate a DDCT analysis in accordance with the procedures outlined on the WGFD website and will have a technical review completed. A policy review through WGFD will not be required. Until the subsequent planning process is completed, parcels nominated for oil and gas lease sales in these areas will have the applicable stipulations attached, as defined in the RMP.

This policy applies to all BLM permitted activities, including fluid mineral parcels nominated for lease sale. These areas include approximately 58,000 acres of BLM-managed surface (196,000 acres of BLM-managed oil and gas estate) statewide currently managed as Core Areas, and are depicted in Attachment 2 with an acreage breakdown by field office in Attachment 3.

Policy Statement 3: State of Wyoming identified 'de minimus' activities

Some surface disturbing and disruptive activities were identified as 'de minimus' in Attachment C of EO 2015-4 and are considered by the State of Wyoming to have negligible or no impacts to Greater Sage-grouse and are exempt from review for consistency under EO 2015-4. Under the BLM regulations, permitted activities are subject to the applicable restrictions found in the ARMPs. Activities involving surface disturbance or disruptive activities that require a BLM permit will be subject to the management decisions found in the appropriate RMP Amendment or Revision. For surface disturbing activities identified as 'de minimus' in EO 2015-4, the BLM Wyoming Field Offices will initiate a DDCT analysis in accordance with the procedures outlined on the WGFD website and have a technical review completed. A policy review through WGFD will not be required. The results of the DDCT analysis will be considered in the project-specific NEPA analyses.

Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Budget Impact: None

Background: The Approved RMPs are built upon the foundation for Greater Sage-grouse management established by and complementary to the Governor's Executive Order 2011-05, Greater Sage Grouse Core Area Protection (Core Area Strategy), State of Wyoming Executive Department (2011). These actions establish similar conservation measures and focus restoration efforts in the key areas most valuable to the Greater Sage-grouse. On July 29, 2015, the State of Wyoming issued Executive Order 2015-4 which replaced Executive Orders 2011-5 and 2013-3. Through the Governor's Consistency Review of the Plans, it was determined that guidance and recommendations provided in EO 2015-4 were consistent with the Proposed RMPs issued on May 29, 2015. Therefore, throughout the plans, references

to the State of Wyoming's Core Area Protection strategy were updated to reference EO 2015-4. In addition, EO 2015-4 modified the Core Area boundaries, the boundary changes were different from the maps and acreages presented in the Proposed RMPs, and therefore EO 2011-5, Core Areas Version 3, remained the reference for the Core Area boundaries in the plans. The BLM WY will be working to incorporate the Greater Sage-grouse conservation goals, objectives, allocations and management actions consistent with Version 4 of the core areas into the RMPs throughout the State through a land use plan amendment process. This IM will assist in preserving decision space that may be needed in the selection of potential alternatives during that process.

Manual or Handbook Sections Affected: No manual or handbook sections are affected.

Coordination: This IM was coordinated among the BLM Washington D.C. Directorate, WY BLM Field Offices, other BLM State Offices, the Wyoming Office of Governor Mead and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

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3 Attachments:

- 1 – Applicable Management Decisions Affected by this Instruction Memorandum (2 pp)
- 2 - Map showing the differences between Version 3 and Version 4 of the core areas (1 pp)
- 3 - Greater Sage-grouse Core Area Changes from Version 3 to Version 4 (1 pp)

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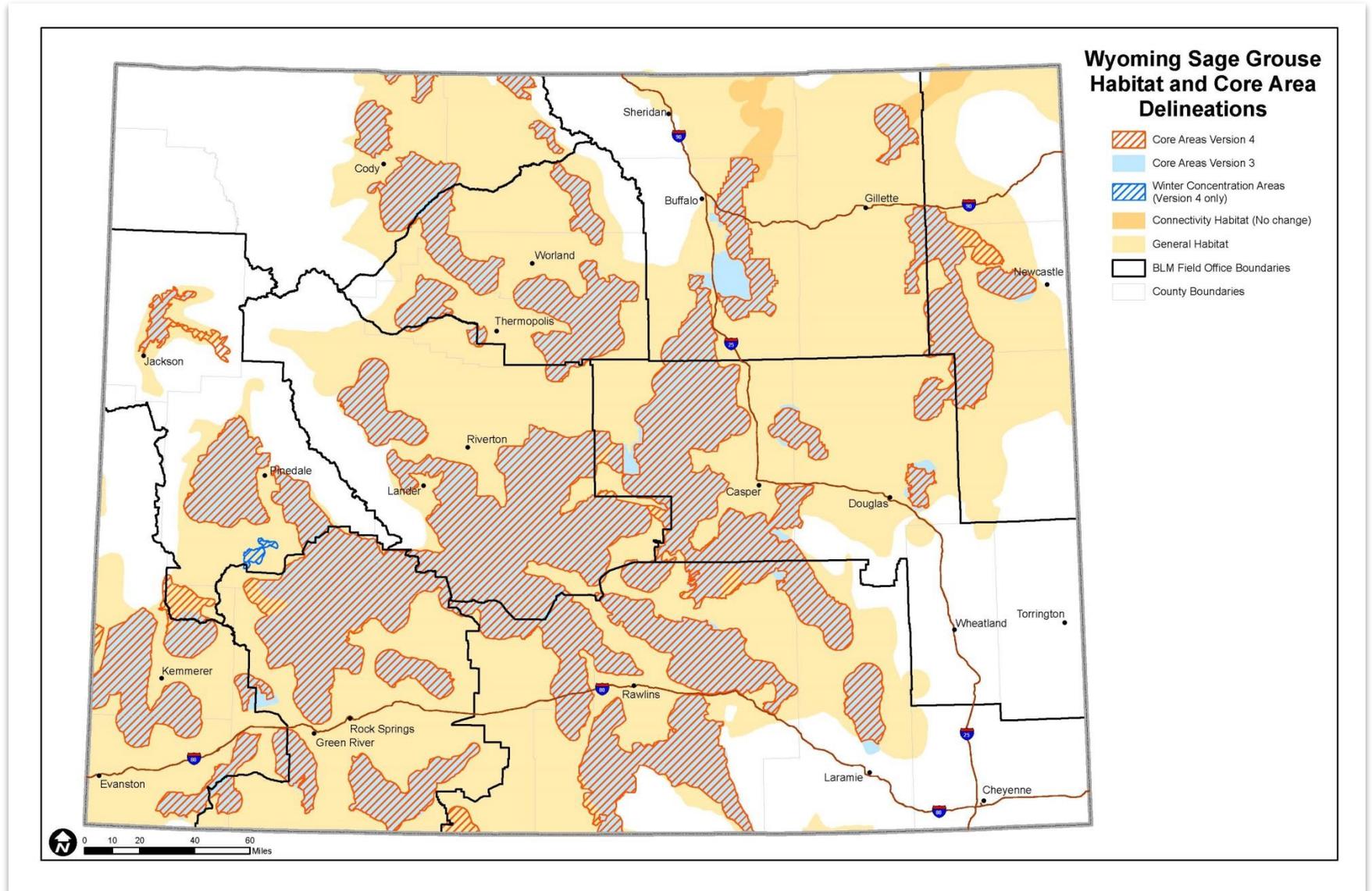
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Attachment 1: Applicable Management Decisions affected by this Instruction Memorandum

	SG Amendment	Lander	Worland	Cody	Buffalo
Leks					
Core	MD SSS 5	MD 4104	MD 4107	MD 4107	SS WL-4025
Connectivity	MD SSS 5	N/A	N/A	N/A	SS WL-4025
General	MD SSS 6	MD 4104	MD 4107	MD 4107	SS WL-4025
Nesting/Brood Rearing Habitat					
Core	MD SSS 7	MD 4105 & 4107	MD 4108	MD 4108	SS WL-4025
Connectivity	MD SSS 8	N/A	N/A	N/A	SS WL-4025
General	MD SSS 9	MD 4105	MD 4108	MD 4108	SS WL-4025
Winter Concentration Areas	MD SSS 10	MD 4108	MD 4109	MD 4109	SS WL-4025
Density Restrictions	MD SSS 2	MD 4109	MD 4110	MD 4110	SS WL-4025
Disturbance Restrictions	MD SSS 2 (core) MD SSS 3 (connectivity)	MD 4109	MD 4110	MD 4110	SS WL-4025 (core and connectivity)
Noise	MD SSS 12	MD 4117	MD 4111	MD 4111	SS WL-4025
Mitigation	MD SSS 4	N/A	MD 4114	MD 4114	SS WL-4010 WL-4001
Adaptive Management	MD SSS 13	N/A	MD 4116	MD 4116	SS-WL-4010
RDFs and BMPs	MD GMD 10	MD 2002	MD 4113	MD 4113	SS WL-4022
ROWs General	MD LR 1	MD 4110	MD 6029	MD 6033	ROW-6006
Underground Corridors	MD LR 3	MD 6023	MD 6028	MD 6032	SS WL-4022
Overhead t-lines	MD LR 3	MD 4111	MD 6028	MD 6032	SS WL-4022
Renewable energy	MD RE 1	MD 4112	MD 4081	MD 4081	SS WL-4021
Land retention	MD LR 7	MD 6002	MD 6016	MD 6016	L&R-6012
Roads	MD GMD 20	MD 4104	MD 4112	MD 4112	SS WL-4025

	SG Amendment	Lander	Worland	Cody	Buffalo
O&G	MD MR 1 MD MR 3	MD 4120	MD 2015	MD 2015	SS WL-4023
Geophysical Exploration	MD MR 2	N/A	MD 2014	MD 2014	O&G-2006
Locatable Minerals	MD MR 12	MD 4106	MD 4106 MD 4107 MD 4109	MD 4106 MD 4107 MD 4109	SS WL-4025
Saleable Minerals	MD MR 13	MD 2018	MD 4106 MD 4107 MD 4109	MD 4106 MD 4107 MD 4109	SS WL-4025
Coal	MD MR 16	N/A	MD 2005	MD 2006	Coal-2001
Grazing	MD VEG 4 MD LG 2 MD GL 4	MD 4102 MD 6065 MD 6059	MD 6126 MD 6130 MD 6142	MD 6026 MD 6130 MD 6142	Grazing-6017
Livestock Trailing	MD LG 9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Range Improvements	MD LG 8 MD LG 11 MD LG 12	MD 4113 MD 4115 MD 6057	MD 4072 MD 4077 MD 4101	MD 4072 MD 4077 MD 4101	SS WL 4016 SS WL-4017 SS WL-4020
Vegetation Treatments	MD VEG 2 MD VEG 3 MD FIRE 2	MD 3012 MD 3013 MD 4098	MD 3008 MD 4110	MD 3008 MD 4110	SS WL-4013
Vegetation Management	MD VEG 1	MD 6058	MD 4094 MD 4095 MD 4096	MD 4094 MD 4095 MD 4096	SS WL-4013
Reclamation	MD VEG 5 MD VEG 6 MD VEG 7	MD 1018 MD 1022	MD 1019 MD 1020	MD 1019 MD 1020	Soil-1002

Attachment 2: Map showing the differences between Version 3 and Version 4 of the core areas.



Attachment 3: Greater Sage-grouse Core Area Changes from Version 3 to Version 4

Acreage Breakdown		Acres Subtracted	Acres Added	Net Acreage Change
Buffalo Field Office	Surface Acres	1,691	587	-1,104
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	62,359	1,217	-61,142
Casper Field Office	Surface Acres	19,788	9,841	-9,947
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	64,701	21,667	-43,034
Cody Field Office	Surface Acres	844	29	-815
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	1,773	257	-1,516
Kemmerer Field Office	Surface Acres	4,376	18,116	+13,740
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	5,356	27,900	+22,544
Lander Field Office	Surface Acres	2,283	13,013	+10,730
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	2,848	14,869	+12,021
Newcastle Field Office	Surface Acres	7	143	+136
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	5,778	23,290	+17,512
Pinedale Field Office	Surface Acres	116	69,394	+69,278
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	231	120,315	+120,084
Rawlins Field Office	Surface Acres	15,211	100,514	+85,303
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	31,002	111,525	+80,523
Rock Springs Field Office	Surface Acres	11,852	69,584	+57,732
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	18,974	65,652	+46,678
Worland Field Office	Surface Acres	2,380	946	-1,434
	Federal Oil & Gas Estate	3,368	1,000	-2,368