



Recommendation 3 – Fire Management in Xeric Sagebrush Habitats

Recommendation

With the attached white paper (See Appendix 1) provided by the Western States Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee as justification, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies adopts the following position statement:

“Sagebrush grasslands, which support sage-grouse and a host of other wildlife species, have declined in area by more than 50%. Remaining habitats are becoming increasingly important to the sustainability of sage-grouse. These habitats face considerable threats from wildfire, conversion, exotic plant invasion, and many forms of human development. In addition to these perturbations, treatments are often recommended to set back succession in sagebrush communities. Prescribed fire is often promoted to achieve this objective, which has the potential to alter sagebrush communities for long periods of time. As agencies responsible for conserving wildlife associated with these habitats, we strongly caution against the use of prescribed fire within xeric sagebrush communities. Exceptions may apply but only if a comprehensive assessment indicates desired sage-grouse habitat objectives will be achieved. Such areas typically receive ≤ 12 inches precipitation and include Wyoming big sagebrush, low-elevation mountain big sagebrush, and low or black sagebrush communities. Prescribed fire fragments and reduces available sagebrush stands and increases the risks for cheatgrass and other invasive weed establishment, leading to negative impacts to seasonal sage-grouse habitats. These changes can result in long-term effects on sage-grouse populations. Further, we recommend maintaining sagebrush through a conservative long-term approach to management and habitat restoration.”