

# SAGE-GROUSE UPDATE

SAGEGROUSE\_UPDATE@EWYOMING.GOV, NO. 1

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## WORKSHOP TAKE HOME MESSAGES

On January 26, 27, and 28 we threw a lot of information out there for you to digest and incorporate into your agency and into your work. Some folks had questions about the policies and procedures up front, and some may have generated their questions after having a few days to process all the information. We are working on compiling a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)...and answers...based on the feedback that you provided. In the meantime, we'd like to highlight four main messages that we hope were conveyed at the workshops:

*\*\*referenced documents can be found on the ftp\_piaa site, in the PIAA\_Resources folder (see pg. 4 for instructions)*



Photo courtesy of Steve Chindgren

### 1. WHEN IS THE PROJECT IMPACT ANALYSIS AREA (PIAA) PROCESS NEEDED, AND WHO DOES IT?

**A PIAA will be determined and analysis completed for all applicable projects as outlined in the Governor's Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2010-04 occurring within the sage-grouse core areas or the connectivity areas.**

The PIAA process may be needed for both terrestrial and aquatic habitat projects. *WGFD Protocols for Treating Sagebrush to Benefit Sage-Grouse* also provides guidance on vegetation treatments in core area, which may or may not require the PIAA process.

As outlined in the *PIAA Process Manual*, the PIAA process will be conducted by federal land management agencies for proposals on federal land and by project proponents on state or private land.

For the time being, WGFD Biologists will need to digitize surface disturbance, and Nyssa Whitford, Sage-grouse GIS Analyst, will conduct the PIAA.

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2. WHAT IS THE 5% DISTURBANCE CALCULATION AND THE 1/640 DENSITY CALCULATION?

**Disturbance Calculation**

Per the *Governor’s Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2010-04* the PIAA process was developed to determine the maximum disturbance allowed in suitable sage-grouse habitat within the area affected by the proposed project. Surface disturbance within suitable sage-grouse habitat is limited to 5% of suitable habitat within the PIAA. The percent of disturbed habitat is calculated by dividing the total acres of disturbance within suitable habitat by the total acres of suitable habitat within the PIAA, and then multiplying that number by 100. All core areas are considered suitable habitat unless otherwise mapped using established vegetation mapping protocols. Areas within the PIAA that are determined to be unsuitable may be subtracted from the total acres of suitable habitat (denominator), as well as the total acres of disturbance (numerator).

**Density Calculation**

The density calculation was developed primarily as a result of research on sage-grouse and oil and gas development. Per the *Governor’s Greater Sage-Grouse Core Area Protection Executive Order 2010-04* well pad densities should not exceed an average of 1 pad per 640 acres, and the number of active mining development areas should not exceed an average of 1 site per 640 acres within the PIAA. Other disruptive activities, described on pg. 3, may also count towards the 1/640 density calculation.



**“DISRUPTIVE”  
AND  
“DISTURBANCE”  
ARE NOT  
INTERCHANGEABLE  
TERMS WHEN  
DISCUSSING THE  
PIAA PROCESS.**

PIAA PROCESS TERMINOLOGY

TERM	Disturbance	Disruptive Activity
<b>ALSO REFERRED TO AS</b>	“surface or vegetation disturbance”  “direct habitat disturbance”	“anthropogenic disturbance activity”  “indirect habitat disturbance”
<b>EXECUTIVE ORDER LIMIT</b>	5%	1/640
<b>PIAA CALCULATION</b>	disturbance calculation	density calculation

Table 1—Terminology used in Executive Order 2010-04 and the PIAA process.

3. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITY AND AN ANTHROPOGENIC DISTURBANCE ACTIVITY, AND WHAT COUNTS?

No, there is not a difference between the two terms.

Disruptive activities, as defined by *BLM IB 2007-029 Guidance for Use of Standardized Surface Use Definitions*, are those public land uses/activities that are likely to alter the behavior, displace, or cause excessive stress to existing animal or human populations occurring at a specific location and/or time. This term does not apply to the physical disturbance of the land surface, vegetation, or features.

An anthropogenic disturbance activity is a disruptive activity, as defined above, that would require permitting if occurring on BLM lands. These activities count towards the PIAA density calculation, which is an aver-

age of 1 disturbance activity per 640 acres.

There is no cut and dry answer to the question “what counts and what doesn’t count?” Counting disturbances within a delineated PIAA may be contingent upon the level of disruption, location, impacted area, and length of time that it will persist. The *Anthropogenic Disturbance Activities (1 per 640): To Count or Not To Count?* document on the ftp\_piaa site does outline some of the disturbance activities that do count and do not count when considering the PIAA density calculation. But ultimately, it is up to the Biologists to make determinations on these activities based on local conditions and knowledge.

4. WHO SHOULD I COORDINATE WITH FROM BLM/WGFD ON A PROJECT IN CORE AREA, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS?

As noted on pg. 1, the PIAA process will be initiated by the BLM for projects proposed on BLM lands. After the BLM Field Office (FO) Biologist reviews the proposal and determines it to be in a sage-grouse core area or connectivity corridor, the Biologist or Project Lead will then delineate the PIAA and conduct the analysis to determine whether or not the project will exceed the density (1/640) or disturbance (5%) caps.

The regional WGFD Wildlife Management Coordinator (WMC) should then be contacted by the BLM and provided a brief description of the proposed project, PIAA, and a description of any applied stipulations or conditions of approval. The BLM Project Lead and WGFD WMC will determine the level of coordination and appropriate form of correspondence needed for the project.

If official comments are needed from the WGFD, the BLM will send a signed request for comments letter with all of the appropriate information to the WGFD Habitat Protection Program (HPP) in Cheyenne (this initiates a 30 day comment period for the WGFD). HPP then sends the information out to the appropriate WGFD Regional Office. Habitat and Wildlife Biologist comments are coordinated by the WMC and sent back

to HPP. HPP reviews the PIAA, prepares the comments for WGFD Directors Office signature, and sends them out to the BLM FO. BLM may then incorporate the comments as appropriate.

If official comments are not needed from the WGFD, the WMC may relay this information to the BLM via email.

*BLM IM No. WY2010-012 Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Policy on BLM Administered Public Lands* is currently being updated and will include the coordination information described in this section. **The BLM/WGFD coordination procedure is outlined in a diagram on the ftp\_piaa site.**

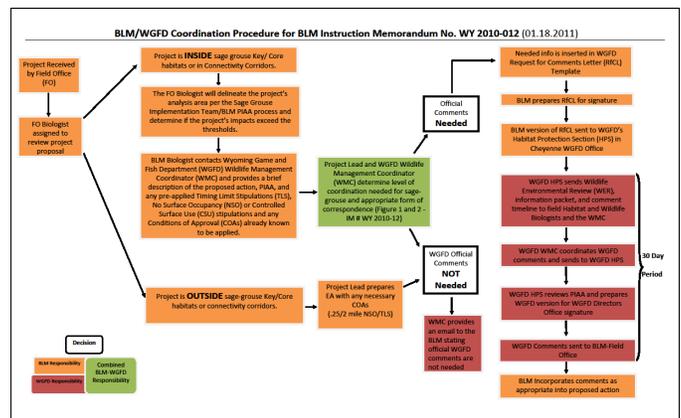


Figure 1—BLM/WGFD Coordination Procedure Diagram

## FTP PIAA SITE

The State of Wyoming and BLM have set up an FTP site to serve as a central storage location for data that you may be using to run a PIAA, as a place to house the documents that were used during the Interagency Sage-Grouse Workshops held in January, and as a place to post related forthcoming documents and updated information.

When our interagency team set out on the road for the workshops that you attended, we underestimated the number of notebooks that we would need in order to supply one to all of the attendees at all three workshops. We apologize for the inconvenience that it caused some folks! However, all of the documents that were presented—a few have been slightly revised and updated post-workshop—are available on the ftp\_piaa website.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Enter <ftp://gf.state.wy.us/> in your Windows Explorer internet browser.
2. Enter Username: **ftp\_piaa** and Password: **piaa123** in the dialogue box.
3. Your webpage will read: FTP root at gf.state.wy.us, followed by a line of instructions.
4. Accordingly, click **Page** on the internet browser toolbar, and then scroll down the menu and click **Open FTP Site in Windows Explorer**.
5. Enter the same username and password as described in Step 2.

Now you will be able access GIS data (GISfiles folder) and documents from the workshops (PIAA\_Resources).

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## NEW AND UPDATED ITEMS

### **Folder: PIAA Resources**

- ◆ The PowerPoint presentation on the BLM IM and sage-grouse management has been added:  
*III\_a\_BLM\_IM\_Sage-grouseMgt2011\_Keefe\_presentation.pdf*
- ◆ The presentation on Density and Disturbance Calculations has been updated:  
*IV\_c\_Calculating\_Density\_&\_Disturbance\_Flanderka\_Updated020311*
- ◆ WGFD Sagebrush Treatment Protocols for Core Area Treatments have been updated:  
*IV\_g\_Vegetation\_Treatment\_Protocols\_Updated020211*
- ◆ The PIAA Process Manual has been updated: *V\_PIAA\_Process\_Manual\_Updated020711*
- ◆ All of the presentations and documents (updated) that were presented at the January workshops have been combined into one pdf. file: *January\_Workshop\_Notebook\_Complete*

### **Folder: GISfiles**

- ◆ The PIAA model has been updated: *BLMModel020311*

## WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON NOW?

Our working group's task didn't end with the completion of the January workshops. Ironing out some more of the big details and then some finer details is still necessary to get a coordinated and effective sage-grouse conservation strategy implemented on the ground.

### PIAA TOOLS AND DATA

As many of you voiced at the workshops, we need a centralized place to house the tools needed to run a PIAA and the data that is put into the PIAA process, and also the data that is put out by the PIAA process. Data access, storage, and stewardship are primary issues that we are currently working to address.

### PIAA TRAINING

Training for folks that will be conducting PIAAs is also a high priority, and we are working to organize this training on a regional level. This training will be focused on digitizing disturbance.

### 'SAGE-GROUSE UPDATE' LISTSERV

Many people expressed their desire to stay informed about new information relating to the Executive Order, PIAA process, and interagency coordination, and according to the feedback questionnaires, workshops and email updates were the preferred methods for this. While we currently don't have any additional interagency workshops in the pipes, we have created a listserv using the email address that you provided on the sign-in sheet at the workshops.

The purpose of the listserv is to disseminate new information on policies and procedures related to sage-grouse management in core areas. Additionally, you will be able to respond to this information with questions, concerns, or suggestions and the listserv can function as a group forum for learning and information exchange. We can provide examples of PIAAs, facilitate coordination,

and build a list of FAQs with the goal of implementing a consistent and effective statewide conservation strategy for sage-grouse.

Email updates from will be limited to 1 or 2 a month—some months there may not be any new information to share. You can unsubscribe from the listserv by clicking the link at the bottom of the "Sage-grouse Update" email message.

### SAGE-GROUSE WORKSHOPS FOR INDUSTRY

We are also planning a series of workshops for industry, state agencies, and other organizations that may be interested in receiving information on policies and procedures concerning sage-grouse management in Wyoming. The goal is to reinforce process consistency by keeping project proponents informed and also to encourage industry to continue to be a willing partner in the implementation of the core area strategy by giving them the tools they need to comply with the Executive Order.



Photo courtesy of John Dahlke

## Questions, comments, or concerns?

Email [sagegrouse\\_update@ewyoming.gov](mailto:sagegrouse_update@ewyoming.gov)

or contact Mary Flanderka at (307) 777-4587 or Amanda Losch at (307) 777-2967