

SAGE-GROUSE UPDATE, No. 10

SAGE-GROUSE UPDATE, NO. 10 SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

DDCT & WISDOM TRAININGS

The Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) web application and online tool has been up and running for +1 year with considerable success. The DDCT web application was rolled out in July 2012 to eliminate the need for specialized GIS software and to build consistency in the DDCT process. The web application is administered by the Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center (WyGISC) at the University of Wyoming. While web applications users are becoming increasingly familiar with the online tool and the review process, the process has been refined as agency personnel determine how best to coordinate and how to complete project reviews in an efficient manner.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service (FS), and WyGISC would like to offer three training opportunities to review 1) the DDCT web application and online tool, and 2) how the DDCT review process works and how coordination between agencies occurs. Trainings are open to agency personnel, non-agency DDCT-doers and web application users, and other interested persons.

Additionally, the WGFD and WyGISC would like to utilize this training opportunity to introduce folks to the Wyoming Interagency Spatial Database & Online Management (WISDOM) System. More information on pg. 2.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: DDCT & WISDOM TRAININGS

Sept. 25, 2013	Sept. 26, 2013	Sept. 27, 2013
Rock Springs	Worland	Casper
Western Wyoming Community College	Worland Community Center	Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
Rm. 1302	Conference Rm.	Hearing Rm.
9a—3p	9a—3p	9a—3p

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WISDOM OVERVIEW	2
BLM-WGFD COORDINATION	3
SGIT UPDATE	7
DDCT UPDATE	8
IN THE LOOP	8
CURRENT INTERAGENCY WORK	9

WISDOM

WYOMING INTERAGENCY SPATIAL DATABASE & ONLINE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

<http://wisdom.wygisc.org/>

The Wyoming Interagency Spatial Database & Online Management (WISDOM) System is a user-friendly tool that will allow any interested individual to discover, consider, and assess Wyoming's wildlife resources. WISDOM has been developed in partnership with the Western Governors' Association, WY Game and Fish Department, WY Geographic Information Science Center (WyGIS), WY Natural Diversity Database, The Nature Conservancy, WY Department of Environmental Quality, WY Office of State Lands and Investments, WY Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

WISDOM is intended to provide useful, landscape-level information during the early stages of project planning. It does not replace or supersede site specific analysis with appropriate agencies. WISDOM should be used in concert with all available data and expertise to ensure project plans address wildlife and habitat conservation at all levels.

WISDOM is an easily accessible web-based delivery system for providing a set of natural resource data layers. This non-regulatory, landscape-level information allows a user to visually explore the distribution of important Wyoming wildlife habitat, identify wildlife migration corridors, identify potential stressors to wildlife, and other relevant data.

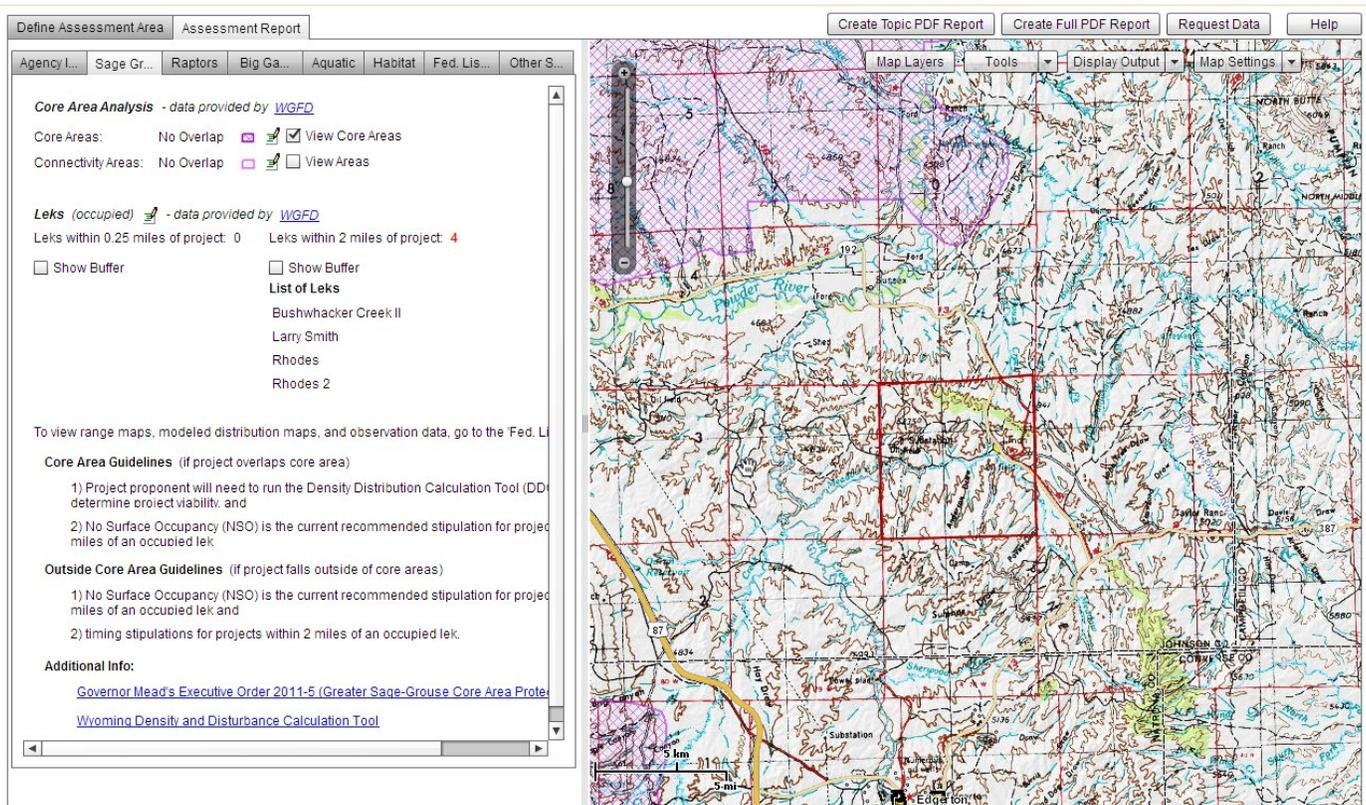


Figure 1—Screen shot WISDOM analysis of a specific township/range.

BLM—WGFD

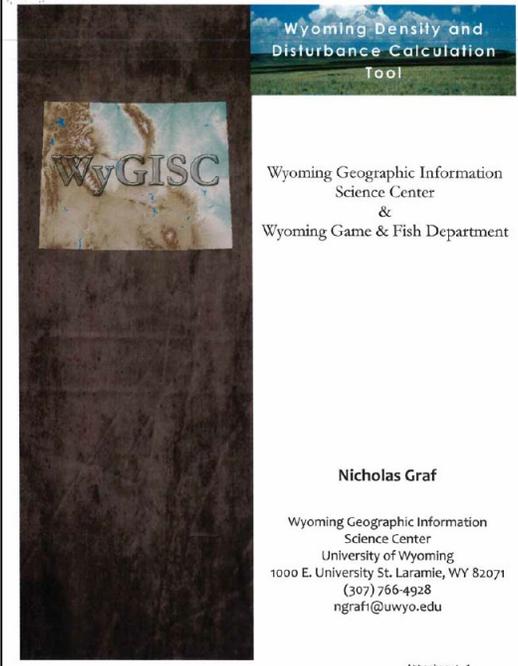
STEP-BY-STEP COOPERATIVE STRATEGY FOR USE OF WEB-BASED DENSITY AND DISTURBANCE CALCULATION TOOL (DDCT)

The BLM Wyoming State Office and Field Offices and the WGFD have made great efforts to effectively and consistently implement Wyoming’s core population area strategy as embodied in Executive Order 2011-5 and BLM IM No. WY-2012-019 for statewide sage-grouse conservation. Over the past few years, both the policies and the processes associated with statewide sage-grouse conservation have evolved based on new information and an increased understanding concerning the rules, regulations, and statutory requirements that guide various state and federal agencies that have a role in permitting activities in core areas.

In 2012, the DDCT process changed with the development of the web-based application and online tool. Subsequently, coordination procedures among agencies have needed tweaking. In particular, it has been important for the Wyoming BLM and WGFD to define specific coordination procedures to ensure projects being proposed in sage-grouse core area comply with each agency’s guiding policy and to effectively and efficiently process those DDCTs that do comply with Executive Order 2011-5 guidelines.

In 2013, the BLM Wyoming State Office finalized a *Step-by-step Cooperative Strategy for Use of Web-based Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT)* (IM No. WY-2013-035). The policy describes, in great detail, when to use the DDCT web application, how to use the DDCT web application, and who to coordinate with along the way.

Continued next page...



Wyoming Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool

WyGISC
Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center & Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Nicholas Graf
Wyoming Geographic Information Science Center
University of Wyoming
1000 E. University St. Laramie, WY 82071
(307) 766-4928
ngraf@uwyo.edu

Attachment 1

Version 3.0 January 2013 Submit by E-Mail Print Form

Sage-Grouse Executive Order 2011-5 Worksheet

This worksheet is a tool for reviewers and preparers of the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Core Area Protection Executive Order 2011-5 (SGEO) Density/Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) (Attachment B-Permitting Process & Stipulations for Development) to help determine project compliance with the SGEO based on DDCT inputs and outputs, and other pertinent project information.

Please describe the following aspects of the project proponent:

Who is the project proponent? Contact Name: Phone: E-mail:

Address to send Executive Order 2011-2 Compliance Letter

Street Address:

City: State: Wyoming Zip Code:

- Agencies for whom a permit is required (Please check all that apply)
- Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality - Air Quality Division
 - Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality - Land Quality Division
 - Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality - Solid and Hazardous Waste Division
 - Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality - Water Quality Division
 - Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments
 - Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
 - Wyoming State Engineer's Office
 - Other State Agency

Sage-Grouse Executive Order 2011-5 Worksheet Questions

Part 1 - Project Location and Large Disturbance Features

1. Is the project located in a northeast WY core or connectivity area (i.e., Buffalo, North Gillette, Thunder Basin, Newcastle, Douglas, North Glenrock, or Natrona north of Hwy 20/26 and north of Casper Mts.)?
 - a. If yes, has the pre-1994 habitat conversion/treatment disturbance been accurately accounted for and removed from the disturbance (i.e., set to exempt)?
2. Were there any large sagebrush disturbing wildfires or treatments within the DDCT area?
 - a. If yes and included as disturbance, has a management plan been implemented to restore the area to functional sage-grouse habitat?
 - b. Is the wildfire/treatment area (pre-2011) being considered transitional sage-grouse habitat (i.e., the proponent and local agency personnel have agreed to count the burn or treatment area as non-disturbed habitat based on an implemented management plan and trend data)?
 - i. If yes, who is responsible for monitoring the transitional habitat until 2012?
3. Is the project (proposed disturbance and the permit area) within a Federal oil and gas unit established prior to August 1, 2008?
 - a. If yes, has the BLM discussed the unit Plan of Development (POD) with the unit operator to estimate disturbance within the unit over the next 10 years?
 - If yes, and a long-term POD can be documented, the unit may be counted as disturbance to the extent it will be developed if <100% of the current unit boundary.
 - If no, i.e., no discussion of the POD has occurred and/or no long-term POD is available, then the unit should be counted as 100% disturbed using the current unit boundary until such a plan or documentation is available.
4. Is the DDCT area overlapped by a pre-August 1, 2008 unit, but the project lies outside the unit?
 - a. If yes, has the BLM discussed the unit Plan of Development (POD) with the unit operator to estimate disturbance within the unit over the next 10 years?
 - If yes, and a long-term POD can be documented, the unit may be counted as disturbance to the extent it will be developed if <100% of the current unit boundary.
 - If no, i.e., no discussion of the POD has occurred and/or no long-term POD is available, then the unit should be counted as 100% disturbed using the current unit boundary until such a plan or documentation is available.

1

Attachment 3

Figure 2—BLM IM No. WY-2013-035 Attachments 1, 2, and 3

Purpose: IM No. WY-2013-035 transmits the workflow procedures for use of the web-based Wyoming Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) for Greater Sage-Grouse and guidance for its use in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wyoming Field Offices (FO). This guidance supplements the flowchart included as WY IM No. 2012-019 *Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Policy on BLM Wyoming administered public lands including Federal Mineral Estate*, Attachment 4, and replaces the manual included as Attachment 5. The purposes of the web-based tool are to (1) assist FO specialists in calculating levels of disturbance within Greater Sage-Grouse Core Areas, as defined by the Wyoming Governor’s Sage-Grouse Implementation Team, and (2) to maintain a central repository for all existing and proposed disturbances within the Core Areas. Specifically, this IM provides guidance on the workflow coordination between the technical review and the policy review for each DDCT project, the use of the web-based DDCT tool, and the accompanying most current Sage-Grouse Executive Order (SGEO) Worksheet.

Step-by-step Instructions for the Use of the Web-based DDCT:

For any new activity or development proposal submitted to or proposed by a BLM Wyoming Field Office:

1) The Federal agency specialist determines whether the project is in a Greater Sage-Grouse Core or Connectivity Area.

a. If the project is located within a Core or Connectivity Area, is the project an activity that is listed as Exempt (“de minimus”). Activities listed at <https://ddct.wygisc.org/ddct-cap-faqs.aspx>.

i. If yes, then no DDCT is necessary and analysis of impacts will continue as provided for in the National Environmental Policy Act.

ii. If no, then:

1. The specialist notifies the project lead that a DDCT will be required.

2. The specialist notifies the Application and Data Steward at WyGISC (wygiscweb@uwoyo.edu), from here on referred to as Data Steward, of the existence of the project.

b. If the project is not located within a Core or Connectivity Area, then no DDCT is necessary and analysis of impacts will continue as provided for in National Environmental Policy Act.

2) The project lead, working with the project proponent, determines who will complete the DDCT.

a. If it is determined that the BLM specialist will complete the DCCT, proceed to step 3.

b. If it is determined that the proponent/contractor will complete the DDCT, proceed to step 4.

3) The BLM specialist uses the DDCT process to determine whether or not the project proposal is consistent with guidelines contained in SGEO and WY IM No. 2012-019 or subsequent Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revisions/Amendments:

a. Obtain and review:

- i. All proposed disturbance locations associated with the proposed action, including the best estimate of infrastructure location/needs.
 - ii. Disturbance areas typically associated with the proposed disturbances (i.e. ROW width, well pad size, etc.).
 - iii. Any reclaimed/suitable habitat areas (those that were determined to be or calculated as disturbed in previous DDCTs and are now reclaimed to suitable or trending toward suitable in cases of wildfire – see <https://ddct.wyisc.org/ddct-cap-faqs.aspx> - Wildfires within a DDCT, Suitable Sage-Grouse Habitat Definition, Vegetation Monitoring for Suitability Criteria, etc.).
 - iv. Any additional information that may be helpful to delineate proposed disturbances.
- b. Register and/or access the Wyoming Density/Disturbance Calculation Tool (<https://ddct.wyisc.org>) to log project and obtain an assigned project number.
- c. Within the web application, digitize or upload the proposed project. The tool will generate the project assessment area boundary (i.e., DDCT boundary).
- d. Verify all existing disturbances are included and/or digitize any existing disturbances not yet accounted for within the project assessment area by digitizing disturbance using the web application or by uploading ArcGIS shapefiles.
- i. If necessary conduct additional onsite visits. Make project adjustments in order to minimize/co-locate disturbances and/or address other project conflicts.
 - ii. Using the web application, modify disturbances to reflect the final project proposal. This can be accomplished by either uploading only the changes that occurred or by uploading an entirely new file that replaces the original. If the proposed project size/shape/overall location changes, a new DDCT boundary will

- need to be generated and existing disturbances verified.
- e. Complete the entire SGEO Worksheet, providing as much detail as possible. *NOTE: This worksheet serves as the primary means of documentation of EO compliance and must contain information addressing every question.*
 - f. Notify the Field Manager/Resource Advisor/Wyoming State Office, as necessary, if any potential EO compliance issues arise.
 - g. Submit the DDCT results for technical review and the completed worksheet to the Data Steward.
 - i. If the project proposal is incorrect (missing information, existing disturbance not digitized, etc.), the Data Steward will return the project to the specialist to correct and resubmit. The Data Steward will use Mapbook as a means to communicate general submission

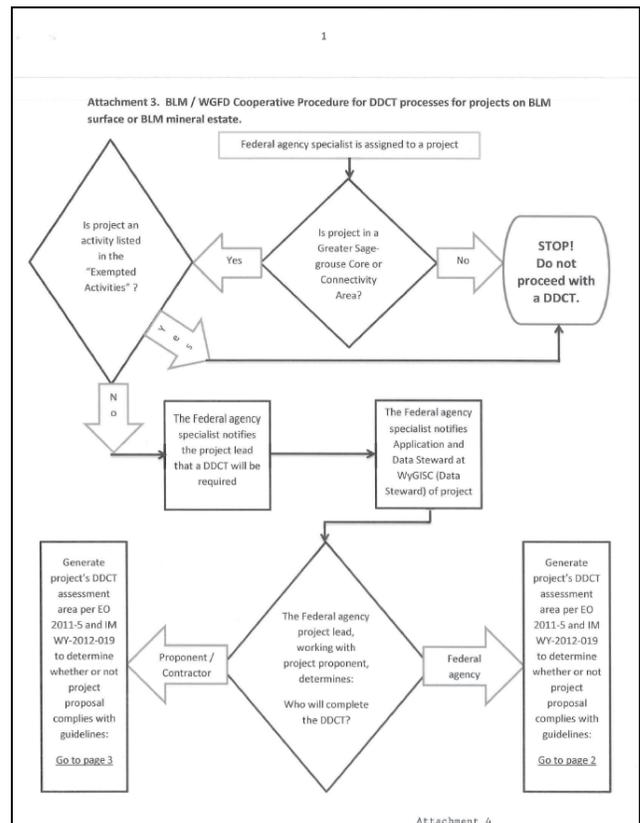


Figure 3—BLM IM No. WY-2013-035 Attachment 4, DDCT Workflow Diagram (3pp.)

and/or correction needs via easily downloadable pdf maps.

h. Once the Data Steward determines the submission is technically correct, he/she submits the Mapbook, final DDCT results, and completed worksheet to the WGFD Habitat Protection Program (HPP) for policy review.

i. WGFD HPP will coordinate with other State agencies and the Federal permitting agency as needed to resolve any EO compliance issues.

j. WGFD HPP will send a letter to the Federal agency and copy the response to the project proponent.

4) The project proponent / consultant uses the DDCT process to determine whether or not the project proposal is consistent with guidelines contained in SGEO and WY IM No. 2012-019 or subsequent RMP Revisions/Amendments:

a. Register and/or access the Wyoming Density/Disturbance Calculation Tool (<https://ddct.wygisc.org>) to log project and obtain an assigned project number.

b. Using the web application, digitize or upload the proposed project. The tool will generate the project assessment area boundary (i.e., DDCT boundary).

c. Within the web application or in ArcGIS, obtain current compiled existing disturbance data. Review the existing disturbance files. Verify all existing disturbances are included and/or digitize any existing disturbances not yet accounted for within the project assessment area as preliminary disturbance.

d. The project proponent/consultant will notify the BLM that the preliminary DDCT process is complete.

e. The BLM specialist notifies the Data Steward that the

project should be moved from proponent /contractor ownership to BLM ownership.

f. The BLM specialist reviews the preliminary DDCT, working with the proponent to resolve any discrepancies.

i. The BLM will conduct any necessary additional onsite visits and make project adjustments in order to minimize/co-locate disturbances and/or address other project conflicts.

ii. Using the web application, the BLM specialist will modify disturbances to reflect the final project proposal. This can be accomplished by either uploading only the changes that occurred or by uploading an entirely new file that replaces the original. If the proposed project size / shape / overall location changes, a new DDCT boundary will need to be generated and existing disturbances verified.

g. The project proponent/consultant will complete the SGEO Worksheet, providing as much detail as possible and submit it to the BLM specialist. *NOTE: This worksheet serves as the primary means of documentation of EO conformance and must contain information addressing every question.*

h. The BLM specialist will submit the DDCT results for technical review and the completed worksheet to the Data Steward.

i. The Data Steward performs a technical review:

i. If the project proposal is incorrect, (missing information, existing disturbance not digitized, etc.) the Data Steward will return the project to the BLM specialist.

ii. The BLM specialist will work with the proponent to resolve the discrepancies and, once resolved, will resubmit it to the Data Steward. The Data Steward will use Mapbook as a means to communicate general submission and/or correction needs via easily downloadable pdf maps.

j. Once the Data Steward determines the submission is technically correct, he/she submits the Mapbook, final DDCT results, and completed worksheet to the WGFD Habitat Protection Program (HPP) for policy review.

k. WGFD HPP will coordinate with other State agencies and the Federal permitting agency as needed to resolve any EO compliance issues.

l. WGFD HPP will send a letter to the Federal agency and copy the response to the project proponent.

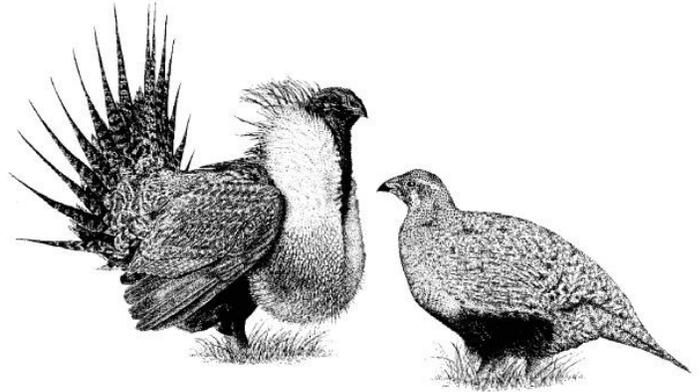


Illustration by Darrell Pruett

Contacts:

Jennifer Morton, BLM WY Greater Sage-Grouse Program Lead at (307) 775-6090

Buddy Green, Deputy State Director, Resources Policy and Management at (307) 775-6113.



SGIT UPDATE

SAGE-GROUSE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Last meeting: May 15, 2013 in Lander, WY

Topics of discussion:

- ◆ Winter Concentration Areas (WCAs) in NPL
- ◆ BLM RMP Grazing language
- ◆ Agency updates (BLM, USFWS, USFS, NRCS)
- ◆ Coal activities in core area
- ◆ Presentation on recent sage-grouse/disturbance related research
- ◆ Douglas core area update
- ◆ Reclamation in core areas

[5/15/13 Meeting minutes](#) available on the WGFD website on the [Sagebrush/Sage Grouse Management](#) page.

Next meeting: September 18, 2013 in Cheyenne, WY

Topics of discussion: TBA

DDCT WEB APPLICATION UPDATES

The DDCT Data and Application Steward at WyGIS is continually maintaining and modifying the online tool as needed. Data accuracy and review efficiency are top priorities. The following are recent updates to the application that might be helpful:

1. The 2012 NAIP imagery is now available for project development, digitizing disturbance, and disturbance review.
2. Shapefiles uploaded to the application for use in a DDCT must now be zipped. Each shapefile must be in its own zip file.

Questions?

WyGIS DDCT Data and Application Steward
ngraf1@uwyo.edu
 (307) 766-4928



KEEPING YOU IN THE LOOP

- ◆ View Conservation Media's *Saving Sage-Grouse: The Wyoming Example* video at <http://vimeo.com/62762110>.
- ◆ WGFD sage-grouse data are updated for 2013. New trend and GIS data are available. Please contact the WGFD for instructions on accessing and using these data.
- ◆ Wyoming sage-grouse RMP amendments for six BLM field offices (Casper, Green River, Kemmerer, Newcastle, Pinedale, and Rawlins) and three Forest Service units (Medicine Bow, Bridger-Teton, and Thunder Basin) are scheduled to be completed in 2014. For more information on the amendment and timeline, visit: <https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning?planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=18703>
- ◆ Information on Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) is available from the USFWS Wyoming Ecological Services field office online at: http://www.fws.gov/wyominges/Pages/LandownerTools/CCAA/CCAA_Home.html

WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON NOW?

Our working group (BLM, WGFD, USFS, NRCS, and other Wyoming State Agencies) continues to meet on a regular basis to discuss issues that come up regarding the implementation of the core area strategy. We are continuing to hammer out workable solutions to issues brought to our attention from folks in the field, and work to provide clarity on policy and process questions as they arise.

“VIABILITY”

The interagency group has been working with the USFS to discuss the “viability” of sage-grouse within forest unit boundaries. The USFS Planning Rule specifies that the agency must maintain the viability of species on the forest. In Wyoming, the discussion is particularly about sage-grouse on the Thunder Basin National Grassland, though sage-grouse occur on other USFS units. There is some concern that this guidance may conflict with the implementation of the core area policy with regard to protecting sage-grouse in core and non-

core areas. We are working together to ensure consistency in our approach to statewide sage-grouse conservation.

NOISE

Executive Order 2011-5 states, “The protective stipulations outlined in this Executive Order should be reevaluated on a continuous basis and at a minimum annually, as new science, information and data emerge regarding Core Population Areas and the habitats and behaviors of the Greater Sage-Grouse” (pg. 4, #19). The issue of noise and its impacts on lek attendance has been a topic of research in recent years. The interagency group has been considering new data and information from sage-grouse-noise research projects, and is reviewing current policy. An update on this process will be presented at the September 2013 SGIT meeting.



PHOTO BY MARK GÖCKE