

**Utah's Adaptive Resources Management  
Greater Sage-grouse Local Working Groups**

**Accomplishment Report**

**2009-2010**



Photo by Todd Black

**November 2010**

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**Utah's Adaptive Resources Management Greater Sage-grouse Local Working Groups**

**Submitted to**

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## Preface

This report summarizes the 2009 and early 2010 accomplishments of Utah's Adaptive Resource Management Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*, hereafter referred to as sage-grouse) Local Working Groups (LWGs). These groups were facilitated by staff affiliated with the Utah Community-Based Conservation Program (CBCP). This report incorporates the information requested under 50 CFR Chapter IV, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts (PECE) When Making Listing Decisions (USFWS 2003). Specific topics addressed by the LWGs plans include:

1. Staffing, funding, funding sources, and other resources necessary to implement LWG's plans.
2. Legal authority of the partners to implement the plan.
3. The legal procedural requirements (environmental reviews) needed to implement the plans and how this will be accomplished.
4. Authorizations or permits that may or will be needed and how these will be obtained.
5. The type and level of voluntary participation (number of landowners involved, types of incentives used to increase participation).
6. Regulatory mechanisms (laws, ordinances, etc.) that may be necessary to implement the plans.
7. A statement regarding the level of certainty that the funding to implement the plans will be obtained.
8. An implementation schedule to include incremental completion dates.
9. A copy of LWG's approved management plans (These reports are available on our web site [www.utahcbcp.org](http://www.utahcbcp.org)).

The conservation plans discuss the level of certainty that the management efforts identified and implemented will be effective. Specific topics addressed in the conservation plans include:

1. The nature and extent of threats to be addressed by the LWG's plans and how management efforts will reduce the threats described.
2. Explicit objectives for each management action contained in the plans and dates for achieving.
3. The steps needed or undertaken to implement management actions.
4. The quantifiable, scientifically valid parameters by which progress will be measured (e.g., change in lek counts, improved habitat conditions).
5. How the effects of the management actions will be monitored and reported.
6. How the principles of adaptive management resource management are being implemented.

The LWG sage-grouse conservation plans, previous annual reports, and meeting minutes can be accessed at [www.utahcbcp.org](http://www.utahcbcp.org).

## Executive Summary

The Community-based Conservation Program (CBCP) encompasses the historical range of sage-grouse in Utah as identified in the 2002 (2009 revised) Strategic Management Plan for Sage-grouse (Figure 1). The plan, approved by the Utah Wildlife Board on 1 June 2002 (revised 2009), mandated the organization of local sage-grouse working groups (LWGs) to develop and implement sage-grouse conservation plans. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) in cooperation with Utah State University Extension (USUEXT), private landowners, public and private natural resource, wildlife management, and conservation agencies and organizations have implemented the CBCP.

In 2009-2010, Utah's Adaptive Resources Management Greater Sage-grouse (hereafter referred to as sage-grouse) LWGs continued implementation of their Sage-grouse Conservation Plans (Plan). The LWGs include representatives from state and federal agencies of land and resource management, non-governmental organizations, private industry, local communities, and private landowners.

In this report we summarize efforts of the LWGs to implement the conservation strategies and actions outlined in their Plans. Please note that if a strategy or an action number is missing from this report or no comments are reported under a specific strategy; it means that no action(s) were reported during the period towards its completion. These strategies meet the guidelines set forth by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in their Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts (PECE) standards. The conservation strategies and actions address the five USFWS listing factors as they apply to sage-grouse in each LWG area. Plan recommendations and guidance are voluntarily being implemented by all LWGs. The LWGs meet regularly to review actions and encourage adoption of Plan conservation strategies and actions. In 2009-2010, additional emphasis was placed on identifying population and habitat conditions and issues specific to each LWG conservation area.

Each LWG plan contains a table of ranked threats that currently or potentially affecting sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats in their area. This threat analysis, combined with recommended strategies and actions, provided a framework for LWGs to implement their Plans over the next ten years. Plans are being implemented using an adaptive resource management approach. As new information emerges from local and range wide conservation efforts, the LWGs are using it to update management strategies, and priorities in their area. All 10 Utah LWGs have completed sage-grouse conservation plans. These plans and summaries of LWG activities can be found online at [www.utahcbcp.org](http://www.utahcbcp.org).

In 2010, the USUEXT/UDWR LWG partnership (Utah Community-based Conservation Program) was recognized by the Utah Center for Rural Life at Southern Utah University with a 2010 Utah Rural Honors Award. The award was presented by Gov. Gary Herbert at the 2010 Utah Rural Summit, held in Cedar City, Utah on the SUU campus. The award recognizes the unique partnership for engaging Utah rural communities in proactive efforts to conserve sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species.

## **Staff**

### **Project Director:**

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### **Funding:**

In July 2006, Utah State University entered into a 5 year agreement with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) to develop and facilitate the Utah Community-Based Conservation Program. This agreement provides up to \$136,000 annually in funding and in-kind matches through June 30, 2011, to conduct the program. Additional funding of up to \$160,000 a year is provided through by the Jack H. Berryman Institute through Utah State University Extension. Additional support in terms site and agency specific grants and contracts in the amount of \$300,000 were entered into in 2009-2010 to support local working group activities, project monitoring and evaluation.

### **Legal Authority**

The LWG Plans implement Utah's Sage-grouse Strategic Management Plan (Strategic Plan) that was approved by the Utah Wildlife Board in 2002 (UDWR 2002, revised 2009).

### **Project Goals**

1. Protect, enhance, and conserve Utah sage-grouse populations and sagebrush-steppe ecosystems.
2. Establish sage-grouse in areas where they were historically found and the current sagebrush-steppe habitat is capable of maintaining viable populations (Utah Sage-Grouse Management Strategic Plan 2002).
3. Protect, enhance, and conserve other sensitive wildlife species that inhabit Utah

sagebrush-steppe ecosystems.

4. Sustain and enhance socio-economic conditions in affected local communities.
5. Complete actions that make listing sage-grouse as threatened or endangered unwarranted and/or assist in recovery if the species are listed.
6. Increase local stakeholders and community involvement and ownership in the species conservation planning processes.
7. Increase LWGs awareness, appreciation, and the application of the use of science in making land use and population management decisions.

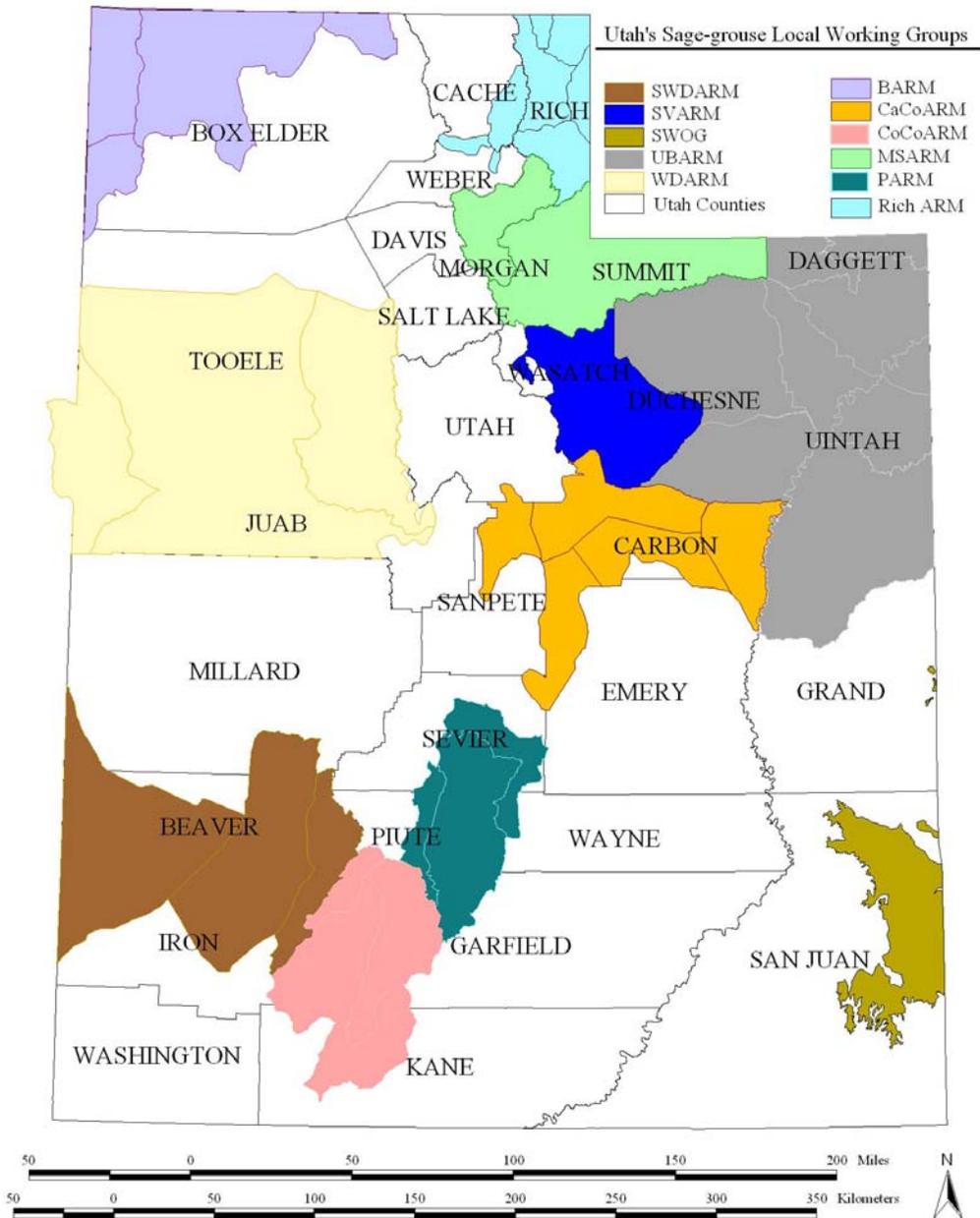


Figure 1. Utah Sage-grouse Conservation Areas, Utah Strategic Management Plan for Sage-grouse (UDWR 2009). (Note this report summarizes conservation actions completed to benefit greater sage-grouse. Thus it does not include Gunnison sage-grouse conservation actions. This species inhabits San Juan County).

## Color Country Adaptive Resources Management (CoCARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group

The CoCARM Local Working Group is facilitated by Dr. Nicole Frey. CoCARM is comprised of state and federal agency personnel, representatives from local government, academic institutions, private industry, and private individuals.

One of the main purposes of the Conservation Plan is to provide a framework of strategies and associated actions that can be implemented to abate threats, address information gaps, and guide monitoring efforts. Strategies and actions listed below (the order is irrelevant) were developed by CoCARM partners. Several other documents and publications provide recommendations and guidelines for management of sage-grouse populations and their habitats, many of which were reviewed in the Introduction of the Plan. Strategies developed by CoCARM are designed to be specific to the local area while taking into consideration the guidelines at a rangewide level.

Implementation of strategies and actions is strictly voluntary on the part of CoCARM partners. Despite this, we have designated for each strategy the public and private partners who might be involved in implementation. Designation does not imply responsibility or commitment of resources of any sort to implementing, initiating, or completing any actions; however, it does provide a framework of resources and expertise.

### Conservation Strategies and Actions:

- 1. Strategy:** Reduce threat of predators on sage-grouse over ten-year period.
  - 1.1 Action:** Determine predator community composition and depredation rate.
  - 1.2 Action:** Avoid creating or improving raptor-nesting habitat in sage-grouse habitat. Remove raptor perches when possible.
  - 1.3 Action:** Determine brood-rearing success in each focus area annually.
  - 1.4 Action:** Enlist Wildlife Services to reduce population numbers of problematic predator species.
  - 1.5 Action:** Support current predator management efforts by other groups or agencies in the focus areas.

*Predator control will begin in the Alton Sink/Valley area with the upcoming mining activity in the area.*

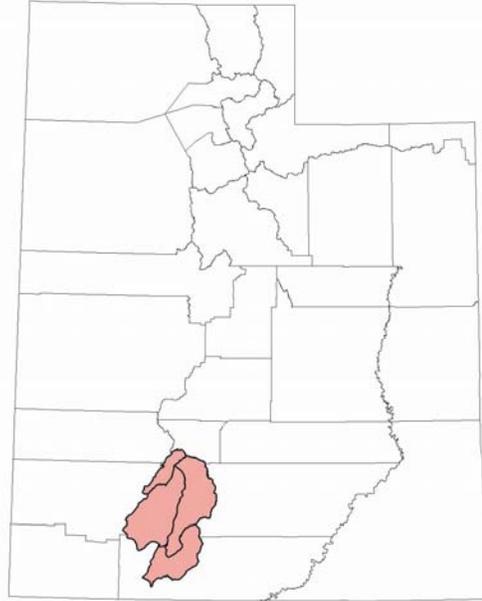


Figure 4. The Color Country Adaptive Resource Management (CoCARM) Sage-grouse Local Working Group Conservation Area consists of 4,956,258 acres located in south-central Utah.

2. **Strategy:** Improve age distribution of plants within sagebrush-steppe communities by 2016.
  - 2.1 **Action:** Identify and prioritize target areas needing improvement.

*Each year, all projects are presented to Utah Partners for Conservation Development. Partners of SWARM present their projects to the group for approval before presenting them to UPCD. Thus all projects meet with the approval of SWARM and the southern region.*

- 2.2 **Action:** Coordinate among agencies and landowners to fund implementation of projects and monitoring.
- 2.3 **Action:** Monitor the response of sage-grouse to changing habitat conditions.

3. **Strategy:** Improve water availability and riparian habitat in brood-rearing habitat by 2016.

- 3.1 **Action:** Survey and evaluate current water sources and needs.
- 3.2 **Action:** Partner with watershed specialists to identify new water sources.
- 3.3 **Action:** Consider new water developments that are multi-use and multi-purpose.

*NRCS has addressed new water developments in the EQUIP and WHIP grants it has worked on this year. This includes installing new pipeline and modifying old lines to create wet meadows for grouse during the course of other vegetation treatment projects.*

*FS and UDWR are considering new guzzlers in the Panguitch Valley area.*

- 3.4 **Action:** Coordinate with private landowners to protect current water availability that benefits brood-rearing habitat.

4. **Strategy:** Increase participation of public and private landowners within the Resource Area.

- 4.1 **Action:** Develop partnerships with landowners and interest groups to increase visibility of sage-grouse management.

*CCARM continues to work actively with the local landowners and industry personnel in the CCARM focus areas.*

- 4.1.1 **Action step:** Identify regional groups and their contact person.

- 4.2 **Action:** Develop fact sheet to distribute to special interest groups.
- 4.3 **Action:** Support partnership efforts for special designations that promote sage-grouse habitat.
- 4.4 **Action:** Host open houses, field tours, and presentations.

*CCARM hosted an open house to discuss the latest information on grouse from the UDWR. CCARM created 3 billboards explaining grouse habitat and natural history to post at trailheads.*

- 4.5 **Action:** Distribute annual reports to local management agencies, county commissioners, and other interested parties.

**4.6 Action:** Proactively seek partnerships when developing new projects.

**5. Strategy:** Locate and monitor new active lek sites within the Resource Area.

**5.1 Action:** Survey landowners and land users to determine extent of sage-grouse distribution.

*CCARM continues to search for new leks, or investigate historic leks.*

**5.2 Action:** Investigate possible new lek sites based on local reports.

*Local BLM employees noticed grouse in a newly treated area. Biologists have investigated the site, but it does not appear to be a lek. However it does appear to be summer habitat.*

**5.3 Action:** Survey for new lek sites during lek counts and survey historic sites for new activity.

**5.4 Action:** Rejuvenate historic lek site habitat for potential re-use.

**6. Strategy:** Increase sage-grouse populations using direct management in Resource Area by 2016.

**6.1 Action:** Evaluate potential of translocation to supplement local populations.

**6.2 Action:** Support and encourage prevention of illegal harvest of sage-grouse.

**Partners:** UDWR, USU EXT

**7. Strategy:** Minimize affects of new land developments and/or recreational uses on sage-grouse populations. This is something that we really need to work on. We haven't done much with this strategy this year. WORK WITH SITLA

**7.1 Action:** Provide consultations and recommendations for new land developments and/or recreational uses.

**Action:** Regularly discuss new developments and alternative land uses in management agencies at local working group meetings.

**7.2 Action:** Identify and maintain a list of contact people involved in land and recreational developments.

**7.3 Action:** Involve local county and city planning commissions in meetings.

**8. Strategy:** Reduce impacts of concentrated wildlife or livestock use of sage-grouse winter and brood-rearing habitat by 2016.

**8.1 Action:** Identify and prioritize target areas needing improvement.

**8.2 Action:** Implement habitat improvements and direct management actions to improve distribution of problem animal communities.

*CoCarm participating agencies are actively trying to improve water sources. By improving water sources, they intend to improve distribution. UDWR is proposing/planning to remove a portion of the pronghorn population, which may alleviate some pressure on the resources.*

**9. Strategy:** Reduce threat of invasive/unwanted plant species in sage-grouse habitat by 2016.

**9.1 Action:** Remove juniper and pinyon pines from brood-rearing habitat.

*UDWR/BLM/USFS/UACD have focused their efforts on projects to address this action through the UPCD process.*

**9.2 Action:** Reduce abundance of unwanted and/or invasive plant species.

9.2.1 **Action step:** Re-seed area after land disturbance such as mechanical treatments, fire, and human development.

*This is a standard practice for BLM/USFS/UDWR.*

9.2.2 **Action step:** Use dedicated hunters to help with re-seeding and rehabilitation efforts.

*CoCARM region often uses dedicated hunters to help with their restoration efforts. Several projects are planned to utilize dedicated hunters*

**9.3 Action:** Evaluate and use chemical applications where appropriate to restore habitat dominated by cheatgrass and/or noxious weeds.

**9.4 Action:** Evaluate the feasibility of using fire as a tool in areas where cheatgrass has been established or is prone to establish.