



**Instruction Memoranda for Implementation of
Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendments**

Utah Sage-Grouse Local Working Groups
Fall, 2016

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**Approved Resource Management Plan
Amendments (ARMPA)**

The BLM plans were based on three objectives for conserving and protecting habitat:

1. Minimize additional surface disturbance: protect existing, intact habitat.
2. Improve habitat condition: Enhance habitat quality and quantity.
3. Reduce threat of fire to GRSB habitat: Wildfires can destroy sagebrush habitat and lead to the conversion of previously healthy habitat into weed-dominated landscapes.

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Instruction Memoranda (IM) Concepts

The BLM recently issued seven IMs to provide guidance for implementation of the GRSG ARMPAs. These IMs are structured around the following core concepts:

- Provide for range wide procedural consistency and transparency implementing the ARMPAs.
- Retain flexibility to adapt to local conditions.
- Gather monitoring data to support decision-making.
- Continue to coordinate with stakeholders to identify and consider local conditions.



Instruction Memoranda (IM)

- IM-2016-139: Policy for RMP Effectiveness Monitoring
- IM-2016-140: Adaptive Management Trigger Processes
- IM-2016-141: Setting Priorities for Review and Processing of Grazing Authorizations in GRSG Habitat
- IM-2016-142: Incorporating Thresholds and Responses into Grazing Permits/Leases
- IM-2016-143: O&G Leasing/Development Prioritization
- IM-2016-144: Sage-Grouse Habitat Assessment Policy
- IM-2016-145: Tracking and Reporting Disturbance



Monitoring

Two IMs deal specifically with monitoring:

- IM-2016-139: RMP Effectiveness Monitoring
- IM-2016-144: Habitat Assessment Policy

These IMs introduce three tools for monitoring:

- ePlanning: Plan implementation
- Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM): Consistent process for data collection
- Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF): Assessing indicators of if an area provides needed components

AIM data and HAF indicators will be compiled into a Habitat Assessment Summary Report.



HAF – Assessment at Multiple Scales

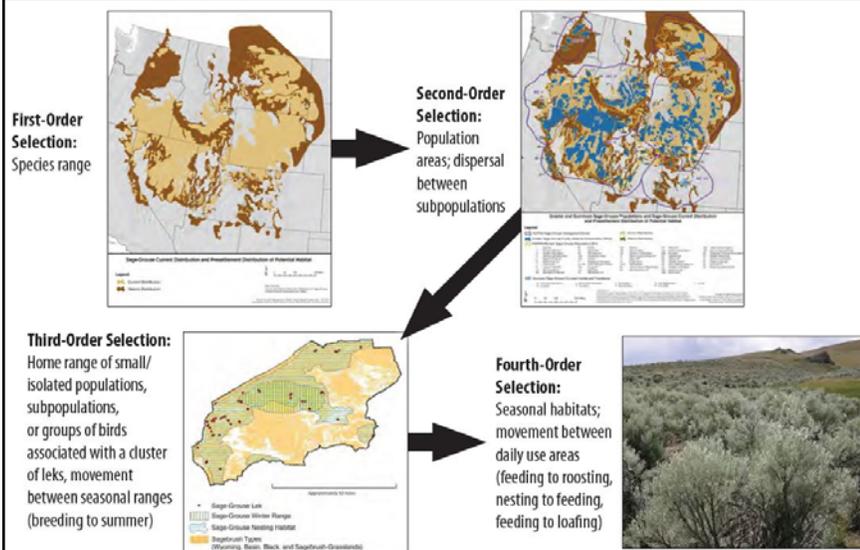


Figure 5. Habitat selection by sage-grouse based on Johnson's (1980) four orders.



Comparison of IM Monitoring Tools

AIM	HAF
<p><u>Consistent process</u> to collect quantitative information on the status, condition, trend, amount, location, and spatial pattern of renewable resources. This information can be <u>aggregated for use at multiple scales</u>. Each AIM-Monitoring survey uses a set of <u>core indicators</u>, <u>standardized field methods</u>, remote sensing, and a statistically valid study design to provide nationally consistent and scientifically defensible information to track changes on public lands over time.</p>	<p>Provides a comprehensive framework for <u>assessing sage-grouse habitat</u> in the sagebrush ecosystem and is a cornerstone of the habitat monitoring component of the sage-grouse conservation strategy. <i>The HAF establishes indicators*</i> to determine the status of sage-grouse habitat needs at multiple scales and for seasonal habitats. The results of these assessments provide the necessary information to <u>evaluate whether lands are meeting the GRSG-related land health habitat standard</u>.</p>



Setting Priorities for Grazing Authorizations in GRSG Habitat

- Generally, the highest priority areas are in SFA, then PHMA, then GHMA.
- Factors to consider when prioritizing include:
 - Areas where an evaluation indicates a need for a change to grazing management.
 - Areas without a completed land health evaluation, and
- There is a long list of additional considerations when prioritizing areas within GRSG habitat.
- Allotments with “important resource concerns” may also be high priority, even outside GRSG habitat.



Priorities for Monitoring Grazing Effectiveness and Compliance

Setting priorities for effectiveness monitoring and compliance monitoring will include:

- The first years of implementing a new grazing system,
- Areas with lotic and lentic (riparian) areas,
- Areas where thresholds and responses have been set, and
- Areas within each habitat category where livestock has the potential to affect seasonal habitat (spring grazing in breeding habitat, summer brood-rearing in riparian areas, and nesting habitat).

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Incorporating Thresholds and Responses into Grazing Permits

- The NEPA analysis of a fully processed permit renewal in SFA or PHMA will include at least one alternative that analyzes incorporating thresholds and responses into the terms and conditions of the permit (MA-LG-6).
- Indicators and desired conditions in the GRSG habitat objective table (ARMPA Table 2-2) will guide development of thresholds for seasonal habitats.
- Ecological site potential will be taken into account.
- Implementation of the response will follow BLM grazing regulations and NEPA requirements.

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Alternative Selection

In determining when to select the alternative with thresholds and responses, highest consideration will be in SFAs and PHMAs when:

1. A Land Health Evaluation incorporates the results of a GRSG Habitat Assessment; **and**
2. The results of the Habitat Assessment indicate that habitat is marginal or unsuitable; **and**
3. The AO determines that current livestock grazing is a significant causal factor for not meeting standard(s).



Threshold Concepts

- Develop at the site specific or allotment level.
- Focus on the standards/indicators not being achieved.
- Identify based on the GRSG habitat objectives, LHS, ecological site potential, and current condition.
- A team may give weight to one indicator as more important for a given area, or a limiting factor.
- Should be based on multi-year trends, not one year.
- The analysis should also identify the location, timing, frequency, and methodologies used for monitoring the threshold.



Response Concepts

- Evaluating multiple responses in the NEPA document will allow the BLM and permittees a suite of options for responding more quickly.
- The response(s) will identify what changes in livestock grazing management could occur if a threshold is exceeded (e.g., time, timing, and intensity)
- Percent utilization, bank alteration limits, and/or browse utilization limits are examples of threshold measurements that, if exceeded, would result in the AO applying one or several responsive management actions.

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Questions and Discussion

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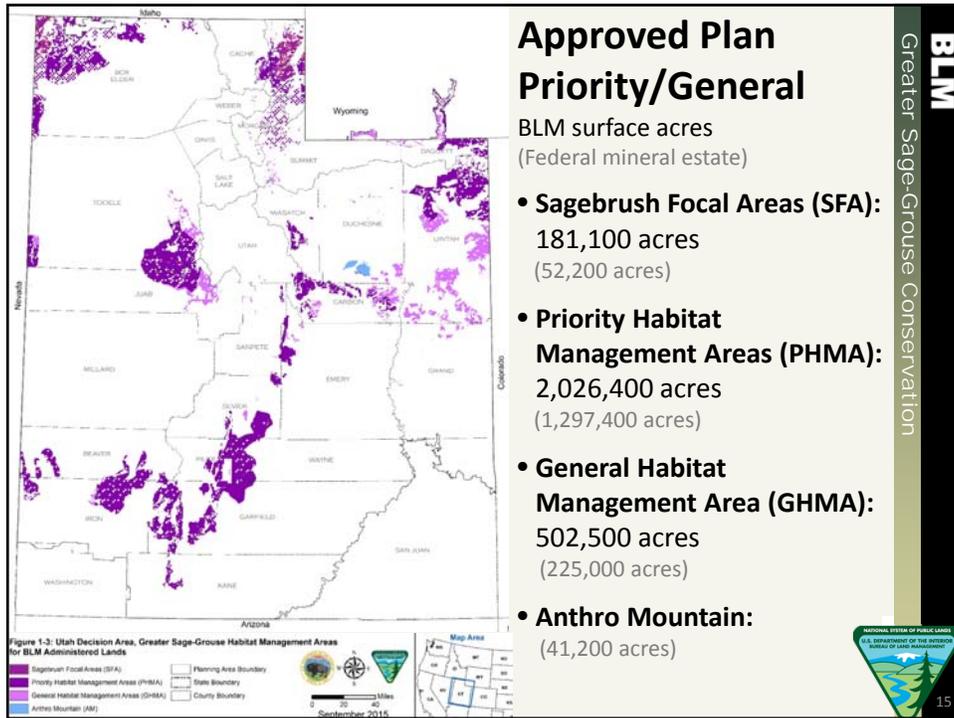


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Tracking and Reporting Surface Disturbance and Reclamation

- Existing disturbance input into SDARTT from locally available data and by digitizing disturbances using high resolution imagery.
- Proposed disturbances in PHMA will use SDARTT to determine if disturbance and density thresholds are exceeded (see items in "Habitat Degradation" column in Tables D.2 and E1).
- Proponents will be required to provide the actual disturbance footprints, to the extent consistent with applicable law,.
- SDARTT will also track reclamation, as defined by the MA-SSS-3B and documented by the ID Team.



Evaluation of GRSG RMP Adaptive Management Triggers

- The IM provides a framework and timeline for a coordinated evaluation and notification process.
- SO works with its partners to evaluate GRSG adaptive management triggers.
- If an event causes a significant habitat or population loss (e.g., wildfire), the data should be analyzed as soon as possible after the event occurs.
- Five steps are identified, from analyzing data by December 31 to Washington Office issuing a press release by June 1.

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Reporting Steps for Evaluating GRSG LUP Adaptive Management Triggers

- Step 1: Data collection and analysis (December 31)
- Step 2: Washington Office Notification (February 1)
- Step 3: Federal, State, County, and Tribal Partners Notification (within 2 weeks of Step 2)
- Step 4: FO/DO Outreach and Public Notification (typically by May 1) – State Director issues guidance to FO/DO; public notification via news release.
- Step 5: Washington Office Press Release (June 1)

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Oil and Gas Leasing and Development Sequential Prioritization

- Clarifies how oil and gas activities will be prioritized to avoid and minimize impacts on GRSG habitat.
- Does NOT direct the BLM to wait for lands outside GRSG habitat to be leased before allowing leasing within GHMAs, then waiting for lands within GHMAs to be leased before allowing leasing within the PHMA.
- Does NOT prohibit leasing in PHMA or GHMA.
- Honors valid existing rights on leases already issued, subject to attached stipulations and in consideration of the management in the GRSG RMP Amendments.

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Lease Prioritization Sequence

- The BLM will use this *Prioritization Sequence* for considering leasing in or near PHMA/GHMA:
 - Lands outside of GHMAs and PHMAs
 - Lands within GHMAs
 - Lands within PHMAs
- “Consider” parcels in these areas in this order “in any given lease sale.”
- The BLM will use the *Prioritization Sequence*, parcel-specific factors (next slide), other resource values, and workload capacity to configure quarterly lease sales.

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Evaluation Factors to Consider

- Within existing Federal oil and gas units.
- Adjacent/proximate to existing fluid mineral leases and developments or other land use development.
- Areas of lower-value GRS habitat or further away from important life history habitat features.
- Areas with completed field-development EISs that allow for adequate site-specific mitigation.
- Areas with higher potential for development.
- Areas where law or regulation makes leasing the lands in the government's interest (e.g., drainage, trespass drilling).
- Areas not exceeding the disturbance or density caps or where development of VERs would not exceed the caps.

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Implementing Responses (Incorporated into the Decision)

- If the response(s) are within the terms and conditions of a grazing permit, the response can be implemented immediately without an additional decision.
- The AO should make clear the intent to do so in both the NEPA document and final grazing decision.
- If the response requires a modification to a grazing permit, an additional grazing decision (either Proposed/Final or Full Force and Effect) will need to be issued.

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Implementing Responses (Not Incorporated into the Decision)

- For a response analyzed in a non-selected alternative in the NEPA document, the FOs will follow the decision processes provided in 43 CFR 4160.
- The new grazing decision will identify the response described in the pertinent alternatives. A DNA should be prepared when authorizing the new decision.
- If a management response is needed that was not analyzed in the NEPA analysis, work with the permittee to implement interim measures to minimize impacts to GRSG habitat. Expedite further NEPA analysis to modify the permit.

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