

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

Members of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies signed an MOU in 1999 and were joined by federal agencies in 2000 to develop a conservation assessment and management strategy for sage-grouse. Each state committed to proactively contribute to local needs of sage-grouse and sagebrush shrub steppe habitat management thus contributing an overall national conservation plan.

Oregon formed a Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Team in the Fall of 2001 to coordinate conservation, management, and research on sage-grouse. The Team is a cooperative alliance of government and private entities. In August 2005, ODFW adopted Oregon's Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy. Working with the Team, and considering new information gathered since 2005, a revised and updated plan has been drafted. Taking into consideration public comment on the plan, a revisions and edits to the draft plan will be presented to the Commission for proposed adoption on April 22, 2011.

Concurrent with the effort to update Oregon's plan the USFWS considered three petitions to give protection to greater sage-grouse under the Federal Endangered Species Act. In March 2010, USFWS recommended that sage-grouse warranted listing under the Federal ESA but was precluded by higher listing priority. This finding will provide the flexibility necessary for Oregon to continue state-led conservation efforts on the bird's behalf.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- Several public meetings have been held as well as meetings with stakeholder groups and public officials (see Attachment 4).
- A separate email account was established to receive public comments.
- The revised draft plan is posted on the ODFW website.
- Public comment solicited from July 6 to December 3, 2010 and again on a revised draft from March 3 to April 22, 2011.

ISSUE

Consideration of proposed changes to the revised draft "Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon." These changes include: responses to issues raised in public comments; responses to concerns raised by the Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Team; responses to concerns identified by staff; and housekeeping, stylistic, and typographical changes. Once decisions have been made concerning changes to the draft document, consider adoption of goals, objectives, and core area methods as administrative rule.

ANALYSIS

Based on public comment and stakeholder input the department in cooperation with other government agencies (state and federal) and private entities have revised and updated the Plan for the conservation and management of sage-grouse in Oregon. The revised draft includes a

refinement of population estimates, implementation accomplishments, and proposed core area approach to habitat mitigation. The following summarizes the major revisions to the July 6, 2010 draft:

- Provided more direct linkages to the Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- Updated population information through 2010.
- Added sections on impacts on habitat from Climate Change and Feral Horses in habitat section
- Revised language on Core Areas and further explained the differences and linkages of Core Areas to ODFW’s Mitigation Policy.
- Provided additional explanation about how Core Areas would be implemented.
- Added Climate Change to conservation guidelines section.
- Added Social and Economic Analysis from the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) as an appendix to the document.

In addition, amended draft administrative rules are proposed (see Attachment 3). The draft rules include:

- Population objectives based on a more defensible method for estimating populations.
- Improved habitat objectives.
- Addition of methodology for determining Core Area and low density habitat (not the maps, but the process).
- Reference to recommended Conservation Guidelines.

OPTIONS

- Option 1. Accept proposed changes as written
- Option 2. Amend proposed changes
- Option 3. Deny proposed changes

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1.

DRAFT MOTION

I move to approve the 2011 “Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon” and amend draft rules as proposed by staff.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon filing