

## SAGE GROUSE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

Governor Dave Freudenthal  
Wyoming State Capitol  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Governor Freudenthal,

On behalf of the Implementation Team you asked to identify actions and strategies which will effectively manage Sage-grouse and their habitats in Wyoming, we would like to recommend that you take the appropriate steps to formally adopt a process for conservation that includes the following:

Wyoming should develop a "Core Population Area" strategy to maintain habitats and viable populations of Sage-grouse in areas where they are most abundant. This approach is similar to the highly successful "Core Native Herd" approach used to manage Bighorn sheep in the state.

Wyoming will adopt a "statewide" approach to management of Sage-grouse in the state. While we recognize zonal recommendations within the region, we will work within our area of jurisdiction.

Core Population Areas will include habitats and existing populations for no less than two-thirds of the Sage-grouse in Wyoming. Based on initial evaluations, it is estimated there will be approximately 40 Core Population Areas, varying in size. Core Population Areas will reflect geographic and genetic distribution of Sage-grouse in Wyoming. Flexibility to adjust Core Population Area boundaries to adapt to emerging conditions and information is essential to future management.

Management within Core Population Areas will focus on maintenance and enhancement of grouse habitats and populations. Current management and existing land uses within Core Population Areas should be recognized and continued. Sage-grouse have clearly selected those areas based on existing conditions, and changes to those conditions should be carefully evaluated.

Development within Core Population Areas should occur only when it can be demonstrated that the activity will have no negative effects on Sage-grouse, using a case-by-case localized approach and appropriate ground-truthing.

Core Population Areas will be used to focus funding, assurances (including Candidate Conservation Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements

with Assurances), habitat enhancement, reclamation efforts, mapping, and other associated efforts to assure viability of Sage-grouse in Wyoming.

A non-regulatory approach will be used as much as possible to influence management within Core Population Areas. It is imperative that management alternatives reflect unique localized conditions, including soils, vegetation, types of development, climate, and other local realities.

Incentives to defer, reduce, or preclude development of all types in Core Population Areas will be necessary, but should follow a Controlled Surface Use (CSU) framework, rather than a No Surface Occupancy (NSO) approach.

Incentives to enable development of all types outside Core Population Areas will be necessary. These should include stipulation waivers, enhanced permitting processes, density bonuses, and other incentives. Development scenarios should attempt to maintain populations, habitats and essential migration routes outside Core Population Areas wherever possible.

Development of alternative strategies for maintenance of habitat, or proven enhancement strategies within Core Population Areas will be a priority. This will include such strategies as habitat leasing, conservation easements, and management plans (including CCAAs AND CCAs).

Incentives to accelerate or expand on required reclamation in habitats adjacent to Core Population Areas should be developed. These may include stipulation waivers, assistive funding for reclamation, and other strategies.

Existing rights should be recognized and may require compensation to facilitate management in Core Population Areas.

On-the-ground enhancements, monitoring, and ongoing planning should be facilitated by local working groups (LWGs) as much as possible.

Initial Core Population Areas were recommended jointly by technical experts from the oil and gas industry, Game and Fish, conservation organizations, and agriculture. Those recommendations were acted on by the Implementation Team in March, and the recommended boundaries are shown on the attached map.

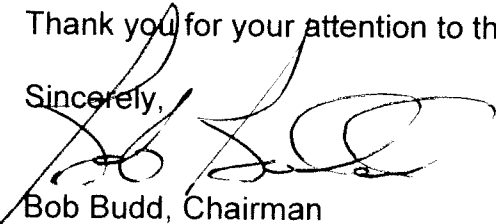
Core Population Areas will be further evaluated and refined by the recently initiated and funded mapping process headed by Wyoming Geographic Information System Center (WyGIS). Those results and associated ground-truthing are expected by the end of 2008.

It is the belief of the Implementation Team that this process is responsible, and will have a permanently beneficial effect on Sage-grouse in Wyoming. We would encourage you to engage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and appropriate state agencies in implementation of this process as soon as possible.

Finally, the group discussed the means of implementing these actions, and it would appear that your use of an Executive Order to direct Wyoming government may be the most expedient and effective at this time. However, the group will defer to and support your judgment in that regard.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Bob Budd, Chairman

SAGE-GROUSE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM