



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deschutes County Board of Commissioners (Board)

FROM: Tarik Rawlings, Associate Planner
Will Groves, Planning Manager

DATE: November 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Greater Sage Grouse Management Strategy – Cooperating Agency Discussions with Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The Board of County Commissioners (Board) on November 21, 2022 will consider entering into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).¹ The purpose is to work together in preparing plan amendments to the Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) management in the BLM's land use plans. Deschutes County is identified as a cooperating agency within this BLM review process as the County has jurisdiction by law and special expertise applicable to the properties and factors included in the BLM's effort.² Attached for the Board's review are:

- MOU
 - Attachment A containing potential activities for cooperating agencies
 - Attachment B outlining a preliminary project schedule
 - Attachment C listing agency representatives

I. BACKGROUND

In April 2010, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that protection of the greater sage-grouse under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) was warranted. The BLM amended or revised land use plans in 2014 and 2015 in the States of California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming to provide for GRSG conservation on public lands. Subsequently, the BLM amended several of those plans in 2019 in the States of California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming.

¹ The Community Development Department's 2022-23 Work Plan identifies as a project, "Participate as a cooperating agency with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to evaluate alternative management approaches to contribute to the conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats on federal lands."

https://www.deschutes.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/110/2022-23_work_plan_annual_report_-_final.pdf. Page 35.

² MOU. Section V. Roles and Responsibilities. Subsection B. Pages 3-4.

This current planning process will build off the prior amendment and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) efforts by incorporating the new science, climate change considerations, and addressing continued GRSG and sagebrush habitat loss and GRSG population declines. Where existing planning decisions are still valid, those decisions may remain unchanged. Throughout the prior planning efforts, Deschutes County worked with BLM GRSG planning and management as a cooperating agency³.

The 2015 and 2019 efforts provide a foundation for GRSG conservation. Whether the changes were made through state-wide land use plan amendments or field office plan revisions, each of those efforts was a component of the larger effort to consider changes to BLM land use plans to provide for GRSG conservation. This NEPA effort will consider potential changes in GRSG management contained in BLM land use plans, culminating in the issuance of Records of Decision for each state/region.

II. NEXT STEPS

In order for Deschutes County to enter the cooperating agency relationship outlined in the attached MOU, the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners must sign page 7 of the MOU document. Upon receiving the Chair's signature, County staff will coordinate with BLM staff to monument the agreement.

ATTACHMENTS:

BLM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Attachment A: Cooperating Agency Participation in the Greater Sage-Grouse RMPA/EIS

Attachment B: Preliminary/Anticipated Schedule

Attachment C: Agency Representatives

³ Deschutes County signed an MOU as a cooperating agency with BLM in 2012. The 2022 MOU continues Deschutes County's collaborative relationship with the BLM and other cooperating agencies.