



# United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
Office of the Director  
Reston, Virginia 20192

In Reply Refer To:  
Mail Stop 300

JUN - 9 2014

## Memorandum

To: Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Suzette M. Kimball *Suzette M. Kimball*  
Acting Director, U.S. Geological Survey

Subject: U.S. Geological Survey Role in Implementation of the Bi-State Greater Sage Grouse Action Plan

The comprehensive Bi-State Action Plan (Plan) for conservation of the Greater Sage Grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) will implement a science-based approach for conservation planning and decision making processes. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) made a commitment to work closely with the partners framing the Plan to produce the scientific data and tools which are incorporated in the Plan. We are pleased to offer continuing strong support to work closely with all parties to provide the data and analyses as the Plan is executed.

The Plan's proposed Science-Based Adaptive Management Plan (SAMP) will guide critical conservation decisions. USGS's science advisory role within the SAMP is to develop and apply state-of-the-art modeling and scientific information to inform adaptive management planning. We remain committed to this role and will continue to support the science-based approach needed for an adaptive management strategy.

Key to the Plan's adaptive management process is a Conservation Planning Tool (CPT) developed by the USGS that allows managers to compare predicted effects of alternative management actions and to forecast conservation returns-on-investment for different planning scenarios. The CPT contains robust analyses and modeling based on empirically-derived resource selection functions, space-use indices, and existing and newly-acquired telemetry data. For example, the CPT provides information that can be used to prioritize conifer removal projects and post-wildfire sagebrush restoration and to guide transmission line placement. The USGS will continue to provide the technical assistance needed by resource managers to use and refine the CPT in order to support long-term management efforts.

Complementary to the CPT is the Integrated Population Model (IPM) being developed by USGS scientists that can assess the long-term population trends of the Bi-State DPS based on field monitoring data. The IPM offers the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other Federal and State

agencies the capability to assess the status of the Bi-State DPS as necessary for species management and decisions.

The USGS has made significant financial commitments to support the science and technical assistance needs of Greater Sage-Grouse range-wide. This year, the USGS committed over \$2.5 million to sage-grouse research, which includes research specific to the Bi-State DPS, particularly the development of the tools and models outlined in this letter. Other research efforts are focused on threats to the species range-wide, impacts to sagebrush from fire and spread of invasive grasses, restoration/rehabilitation of sagebrush habitat, and understanding of the effects of change, all of which will advance knowledge in the Bi-State area. We expect to be able to continue to provide research support in future years at a comparable level and look forward to working with the Bi-State Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) to support research actions identified in the Plan.

As a member of the Bi-State EOC and the Advisory Technical Committee, the USGS remains committed to working with our Federal and State partners to advance our collective understanding of conservation needs for Greater Sage Grouse in California and Nevada. This partnership is a cornerstone of collaboration in the Bi-State area, and we are pleased to be part of this effort.