



Sage Grouse Habitat & Wild Land Fire

There are benefits and negative outcomes of wild land fires on sage grouse habitat.

The Good

In limited instances, wild land fire can improve habitat by creating mosaics of grass/forb dominated sites mixed in with sagebrush dominated sites. This is a goal of prescribed burning.

The Bad

Wild land fire can result in wide-scale destruction of Wyoming big sage plant communities. Without prompt and appropriate fire rehabilitation, non-native or exotic plant species can become dominant.

The Fix

- Annual review of fire management plans to incorporate new sage grouse habitat information. Distribute to fire dispatchers for initial attack planning.
- Rehabilitation of cheatgrass-dominated areas by using site preparation techniques and seed mixtures appropriate for the soils, climate and landform of the area.
- Eradication of noxious weeds that have the possibility of directly impacting sage grouse habitat.
- Evaluation of recent prescribed burns and wildfires to determine if rehabilitation is necessary to achieve habitat management objectives.
- Emphasis of native plant species, adapted to the site, over non-native species when it is economically and biologically feasible. Seedings should include an appropriate mix of grasses, forbs and shrubs that will recover the ecological processes and habitat features of the potential natural vegetation.
- Development and maintenance of cumulative records for all vegetation treatment projects to determine site-specific and cumulative impacts to sage grouse habitats, and identify best management practices for successful vegetation treatments.
- Where practical, fire camps, staging areas and helibases are located away from known sage grouse habitat.

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Communications Committee:

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