

BUFFALO/SKEDADDLE POPULATION MANAGEMENT UNIT
PRIVATE LANDS RISK ASSESSMENT

Private Lands

Approximately 416,620 acres are private lands. Large tracts of contiguous private lands include Madeline Plains and Grasshopper Valley in the northern and northeastern portions in California, Willow Creek Valley northeast of Susanville, California, and to a small extent the Shinn Ranch, Horn Ranch, Smoke Creek Ranch, and Rush Creek Ranch complex in California and Nevada.

State Lands – California

The State of California, either through its State Lands Commission or the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), administers 29,759 acres. Lands administered by the California Department of Fish and Game are primarily lands associated with springs.

Risk 4: Direct loss of lek.

Contributing Factors: Paving, surface mining, land exchanges, converting native lands to cultivated agriculture(Risk Level – Low).

There is anecdotal information that sage grouse will continue to strut on leks that have been paved, mine tailings, and in plowed fields. Sage grouse conservation cannot, realistically, be considered sound based solely on limited strutting habitat. The increase in human activity which accompanies each of these risks, and the potential loss of ability to see each other in a cultivated field with crops makes these activities best described as direct loss of lek habitat.

Conservation Measures: BLM will not exchange lands that have an active or inactive lek within them. Converting native lands to cultivated agriculture is an activity tied primarily to private lands. Private land owners will be contacted by the appropriate State Wildlife Agency and advised of leks located on their lands. The private land owner and appropriate agency will coordinate on potential conservation, as well as any of the other activities listed that will harm a lek. This is an educational process. Funding is available through the Farm Bill to assist private landowners in conserving sagebrush habitat on their lands. Another option for assistance is the State of California Wildlife Conservation Board providing funding to private landowners for conservation easements.

Paving on BLM administered lands is a potential which will be excluded from leks, or from areas which will affect lek activities. Mining such as material pits

where it is the option of the permitting agency to approve or deny a lease will not be allowed on or around a lek. Mining for locatable minerals such as gold, under the 1872 Mining Law is not as easily controlled. Conservation measures will be made a part of the mine's operations plan.

Responsible Parties: BLM, CDFG, NDOW, Private Land Owners, Permitting Agencies, NRCS.

Monitoring: Should one of the risk activities be permitted, a monitoring plan to insure all mitigations of the permit are being met will be part of the permit.

Risk #3: Increasing Permanent or Long-Term Loss of Nesting, Brood Rearing, and Winter Habitat.

Contributing Factors: Conversion to cultivated agriculture, Surface mining, Utility development, Urbanization, and sale of Riparian habitat. Risk Level – Low.

Structures such as telephone and power transmission lines pose hazards to sage grouse because they provide additional perch sites for raptors. Conversion of sagebrush communities to cultivated crops usually results in habitat fragmentation or loss. Broods have been known to utilize cultivated crops during brood rearing activities. The use of insecticides on these crops, however, has the potential to kill sage grouse. This is discussed below. Overall effects of mining, oil, and gas developments on sage grouse are not well understood (Braun 1998). These activities negatively impact sage grouse over the short term (Braun 1986) but research suggests some recovery of populations following initial development and reclamation of affected sites. Sage grouse may repopulate an area following energy development but may not attain population levels that occurred prior to development (Braun 1998). Therefore, short-term and long-term habitat loss appears to result from energy development and mining (Braun 1998). Development of springs for the exclusive use of livestock or domestic water sources has resulted in the loss of essential sage grouse habitat (Call and Maser 1985).

Conservation Measures:

Nesting Habitat	Brood Rearing Habitat	Winter Habitat
Do not allow utility development which will adversely impact sage grouse nesting, and as much as possible do not allow surface mining in nesting habitat.	Do not allow utility development which will adversely impact sage grouse nesting, and as much as possible do not allow surface mining in brood-rearing habitat.	Do not allow utility development which will adversely impact sage grouse winter habitat, and as much as possible do not allow surface mining in winter habitat.

<p>Conversion to cultivated agriculture and sales of riparian habitat only occur on private lands and will be addressed with private landowners. Private landowners will be advised if nesting occurs on their property.</p>	<p>Conversion to cultivated agriculture and sales of riparian habitat only occur on private lands and will be addressed with private landowners</p>	<p>Conversion to cultivated agriculture and urbanization will be addressed with private landowners.</p>
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Responsible Parties: BLM, CDFG, NDOW, Private Land owners, NRCS, University extension.

Monitoring: If the actions do not take place monitoring will not be required. If actions do take place monitoring and mitigation will be part of the permitting process.

Timelines: As they occur.