

Sage-Grouse Range-Wide Issues Forum

November 2005-May 2006

Location: Western Region of eleven states and three Canadian provinces

Background

Petitions to protect the Greater Sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) began in 1999. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ultimately decided that the listing was “not warranted.” Yet these petitions prompted states with Sage-grouse populations to begin conservation planning at the local and state levels. To be successful, individual local plans needed to be coordinated. So the U.S. Institute was asked to work with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to bring diverse stakeholders together in a forum. The forum’s goal was to create a range-wide strategy for sage-grouse conservation. Over the course of five months, 35 stakeholders from 11 states and three Canadian provinces worked hard to develop and coordinate action strategies for conservation of Greater Sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat.

Results and Accomplishments

- The Greater Sage-Grouse Range-Wide Issues Forum report was released in May 2006. The report identified priority goals for species conservation. It also highlighted three critical elements needed for effective, range-wide conservation: organization, leadership, and funding. This report provides a valuable reference for local working groups and government agencies in their conservation planning processes.
- The Forum consolidated scattered efforts across the west into a single comprehensive strategy for species conservation.



Highlights/Innovation/Follow up

- The Forum brought regional and national attention to the importance of the sagebrush habitat.
- After completion of the Forum’s report, a group of interested stakeholders began organizing a new collaborative effort – the Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative (CSI). The CSI seeks to create incentives for landowners, local communities, and private industry to invest in habitat restoration and other conservation efforts. The CSI is also developing a conservation fund supported by users of the sagebrush habitat.
- As a set, these actions should result in long-term, verifiable recovery of the Greater Sage-grouse and its habitat. Improvement of other species of concern in the sagebrush range is also expected. This innovative initiative brings commercial industries, local conservation groups, and government agencies together to protect and restore sagebrush habitat.
- The Institute is continuing to provide facilitation support to CSI for key events and general outreach to affected stakeholders.

Credits

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