

# USACE Natural Resource Management

## Non-migratory Birds



### Greater Sage-grouse

### FAST FACTS

**REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS:** This species was once widespread in the west, but its distribution and population density has been greatly reduced. This decline has been attributed to habitat loss due to overgrazing, burning, and agricultural conversion. (Birds of the World).

In a 2015 petition to list the Greater Sage-grouse, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined listing was not warranted. USFWS found that this species remains relatively abundant and well-distributed across its 173 million acre range and therefore is not likely to go extinct in the near future.

**MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION:** Protecting key habitats via the reduction or removal of threats is essential to maintain a stable, healthy Greater Sage-grouse population. Approximately 64% of the land in this species' range is federally owned while 31% is privately owned. This has necessitated the creation of public private partnerships such as the Sage Grouse Initiative and Working Lands For Wildlife. (USFWS)

It is crucial to conserve sagebrush plant communities as this species cannot survive without them. Efforts to prevent and suppress fire should be targeted toward intact sagebrush communities. Sagebrush communities which have already been impacted by wildfire should be reestablished using native seed mixes to minimize the potential for exotic plant invasion. (USFWS)

**HABITAT NEEDS:** The Greater-Sage grouse occupies a variety of sagebrush habitat across its range including tall sagebrush, low sagebrush, forb-rich sagebrush mosaic, riparian meadows, and sagebrush savannas. (Birds of the World)

- Found at elevations from 4,000 to 9,000 feet.
- Cannot survive in areas without sagebrush.
- Lek, where males display for females in order to reproduce, are sparsely vegetated locations such as grassy swales, disturbed sites, ridgetops, or dry lake beds. (USFWS)
- Nesting habitat is comprised of thick vegetation, typically grasses and/or shrubs.

**Size:** This large bird grows to be between 22 and 30 inches in length. (All About Birds, Cornell)

**Color:** Species is mottled brown and gray with a black stomach. Males have a black head and throat as well. Males have a pair of yellow, inflatable air sacs on chest which are surrounded by white ruff. Females have white markings behind the eye and dusky cheek patches. (All About Birds, Cornell)

*Photo Credit:*  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

*Natural Resource Management (NRM)*

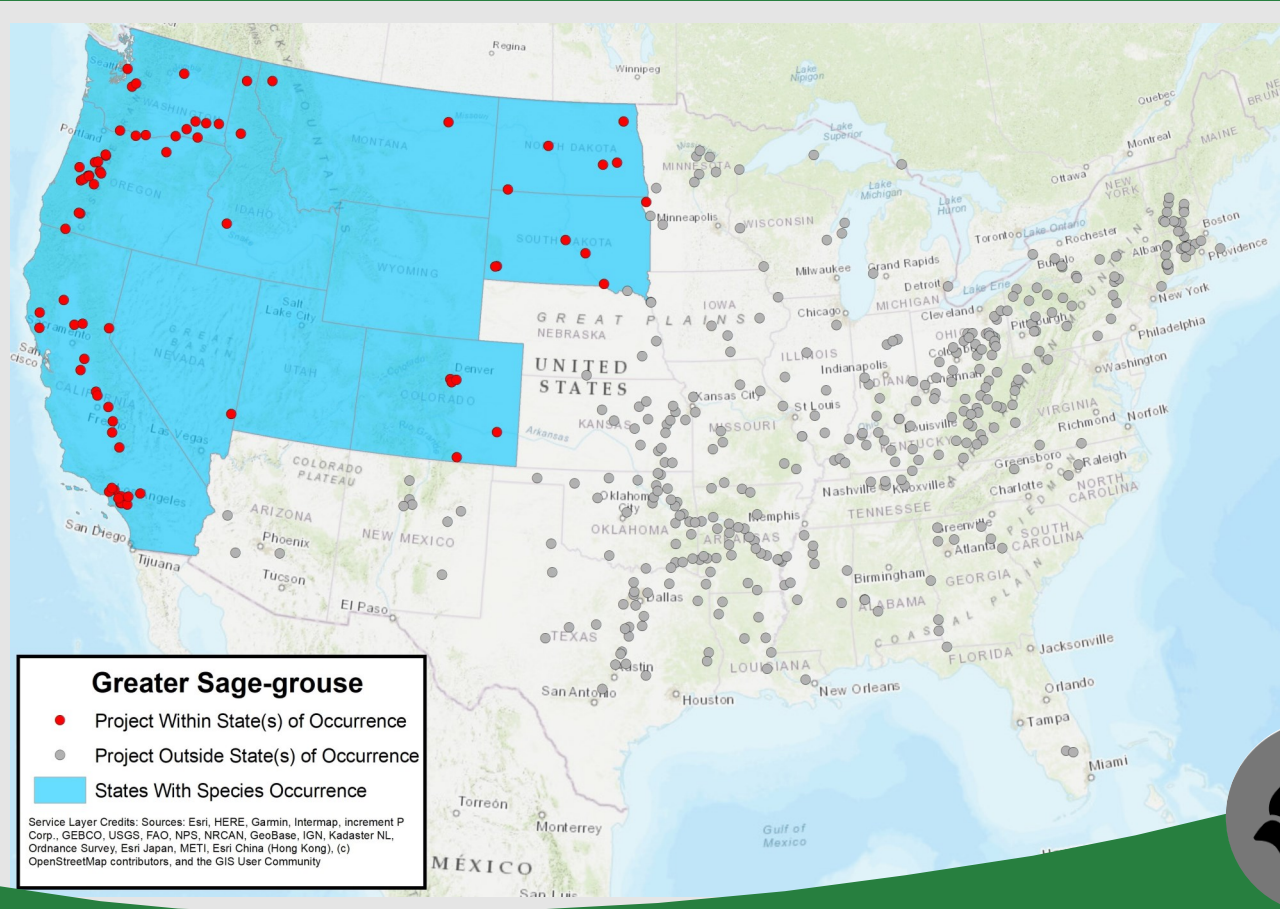
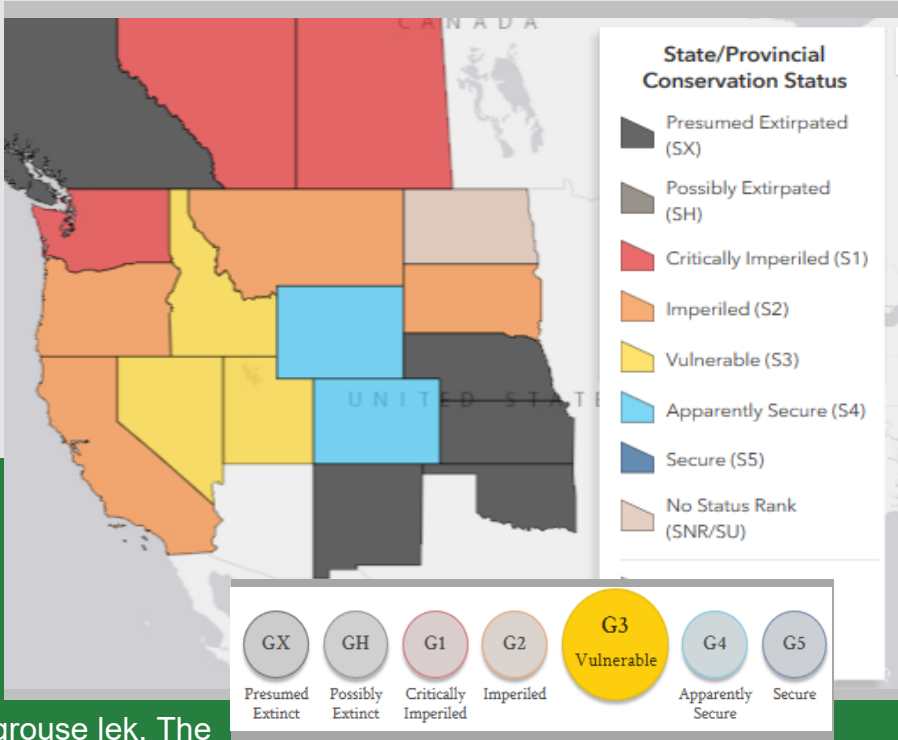
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**USACE ROLE:** NatureServe notes that number of males per lek and the number of active leks continue to decline. Consequently, the bird is considered a Vulnerable species across its range. NatureServe lists the Greater Sage-grouse as Critically Imperiled in Washington, and Imperiled in both Oregon and California. The USACE operates a number of projects in states where this species is considered to be at greater risk.

**WHAT IS USACE DOING:**

When the USACE, Sacramento District received a permit request to expand mining operations in an existing mine in Colorado in 2016, it was determined the applicant's preferred alternative plan would negatively impact a Greater Sage-grouse lek. The USACE required this plan to be removed from consideration after the environmental analyses determined there would be an impact to the lek. Furthermore, the USACE operates a number of projects in states where this species is considered to be at greater risk. As such, USACE works diligently to analyze project plans to ensure they will not have negative impacts on the species or its habitat. All current and future projects are closely coordinated with resource agencies.



Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellowship, Institute for Water Resources

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