

Julie - TAXONOMY

Julie McDonald - morphological - not good
FWS - Steve Chambers; Leberne Smith - older genetics
[] on genetics

- STATUS
- CONSERVATION ACTIONS - Ongoing

DATE: August 23, 2005

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BRIEFING FOR DIRECTOR

PREPARED BY: Terry Ireland, Ecological Services, Grand Junction, Colorado,

FROM: Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director, R6

SUBJECT: Gunnison sage-grouse *Status & Litigation - 2 BP*

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GREATER AND GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE:

Strong peer reviewed support for spp. designation

The Gunnison sage-grouse was recognized as a species by the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) in 2000 on the basis of differences in size (Hupp and Braun, 1991), genetic differences (Kahn et al. 1999, Oyler-McCance et al. 1999), courtship behavior (calls, strut rate; Young et al. 1994), and tail pattern and modified body plumes (Young et al. 2000).

Wilson Bull

Hupp and Braun (1991) discovered 33% smaller birds (body weight) in what are now Gunnison sage-grouse as well as shorter carpal and tarsal bones, and culmens, compared to what are now the greater sage-grouse.

Animal Beh

Young et al. (1994) found that male Gunnison sage-grouse mating displays differed from those of greater sage-grouse by having different movements of the wings, tail, and air sacs, and by conspicuously flipping their longer, thicker filoplumes on their neck. Young et al. (1994) also found differing acoustic sounds produced by the air sacs and wing swishes and a slower display rate by Gunnison's.

Ask

Kahn et al. (1999) found that mtDNA haplotype diversity was less in Gunnison than greater sage-grouse, and haplotype frequency of the predominant haplotype in Gunnison sage-grouse was greatly reduced in the greater sage-grouse - indicating no effective gene flow between the two species. Oyler-McCance et al. (1999) expanded mtDNA analyses to 3 other populations of Gunnison sage-grouse and also examined microsatellite nDNA, drawing similar conclusions about separation of the 2 species. Oyler-McCance (2005) found 5 different haplotypes across all individuals of Gunnison sage-grouse, 3 of which are found in greater sage-grouse, and 2 unique to Gunnison sage-grouse.

Molecular Ecology

Wilson Bull

Young et al. (2000) named a new species based on morphological, behavioral, and genetic evidence, and the AOU accepted that designation.

STATUS OF THE SPECIES:

no challenges to taxonomy - other than private lawyer

The Service designated the species as a candidate with a listing priority number (LPN) of 5 in 2000. The LPN was upgraded to 2 in the 2003 Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR) due to ongoing threats and continued population declines.

MAP.

The Gunnison sage-grouse currently exists in 7 isolated and fragmented populations, 6 in Colorado and 1 in both Colorado and Utah. The current range of the species is approximately 8% of its historic range. All populations have shown long-term declines in population size. Population increases were observed in 2005. The Gunnison Basin population is the largest with a 2005 population estimate of 4,764 individuals occurring over approximately 593,000 acres. The other 6 populations are extremely small, with only 25 to 334 birds occurring in degraded habitat of approximately 20,000 to 100,000 acres in size.

Approximately 54% of the occupied habitat is in Federal ownership with 42% managed by the BLM, 10% by the USFS, and 2% by the NPS. Private land accounts for 43% of the occupied habitat. The remaining 3% is made up of Colorado Division of Wildlife (2%), State of Colorado (0.9%) and State of Utah land (0.1%).

heavily fragmented

THREATS TO GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE:

land ownership patterns are also fragmented w/ each pop

All of the Gunnison sage-grouse populations have different levels of threats. However, human population growth and building development has impacted historical and current habitat in all populations and is considered a rangewide threat of high magnitude. Population growth of 18-102% over the next 25 years is expected in all the counties containing Gunnison sage-grouse populations.

US Census Bureau w/ projection
CO Dept Local Affairs & UT Gov Office

Key in a map

* - overlay of development on pop. esp Gunn. & San Miguel

- use to show fragmentation; esp Gunn. ID what fragmentation means to spp.

- decline of Gunn. Basin

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- We are currently preparing a proposed rule to list the Gunnison sage-grouse as an endangered species throughout its range. Critical habitat will be proposed following the proposed rule, with a final designation to be made in conjunction with the final listing decision, which is anticipated in fall 2006.
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- genetic diversity 7/6/24 - imp: scattered throughout Basin

- Human development also increases road and utility corridors which increase habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation; human disturbance; weed invasion; and predation potential.
- The Gunnison Basin is characterized by pockets of development, the town of Gunnison, degraded habitat, and approximately 5,000 miles of highways, roads, and trails fragmenting the habitat.
- Energy development, particularly in the San Miguel Basin and Monticello-Dove Creek populations, also contributes to habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation from oil and gas well pads, pipelines, access roads, and powerlines, as well as increased disturbance from exploration and production activities (Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining 2004; Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission 2005; RSC 2005; BLM, unpubl. lit. 2005g). Energy development is expected to increase in the future.
- Inappropriate grazing management or repeated grazing has caused impacts to the grouse in much of its current and historic range. In the Gunnison Basin, only 2% of the land within 2 miles of leks monitored in 2004 met grass height conditions for sage-grouse.
- Past conversion of land from native habitat to hay or crop fields has occurred in all populations and has caused substantial habitat loss in the Monticello-Dove Creek population, exacerbating the impacts of other threats.
- The BLM has not incorporated Gunnison sage-grouse conservation measures into any Resource Management Plans and only 20% of the Allotment Management Plans.
- Encroachment by woody (non sagebrush) vegetation has also occurred in all populations and is highest in the Pinon Mesa population.
- Geographic isolation of the populations, due to reduction or loss of habitat linkages, has allowed for little dispersal between the populations resulting in genetic isolation and reduced genetic diversity, especially in populations outside of the Gunnison Basin. The sage-grouse in the Monticello-Dove Creek and Pinon Mesa populations are particularly isolated and have very little genetic diversity.

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- tie to how affects birds

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- explain why not genetic diversity & connectivity

→ Oyer McCance considered 6^{as} distinct

CONSERVATION ACTIONS:

- Local conservation plans have been approved by the Service for 6 of the 7 populations. The Gunnison Basin Plan was signed in 1997 and the others by 2000.
- A Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan was completed and signed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, the Service, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in June 2005. The Rangewide Plan provides the latest scientific information on population and habitat management and goals that may be used by the local work groups to help direct and prioritize conservation actions and funding. The Rangewide Plan was made available for public comment and peer review prior to its finalization.
- An application for a Colorado Statewide Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances was submitted by CDOW and is currently available for public comment. We anticipate issuing the CCAA permit in October 2005. The Service and CDOW have informed landowners in each of the population areas in Colorado of the pending listing decision, the CCAA, its schedule, and the associated implications for participating landowners. CCAAs are voluntary and only apply to non-Federal lands.
- Conservation easements have occurred in all the populations except Poncha Pass. Some of these are open space easements with no specific management plans for Gunnison sage-grouse incorporated but lack of development may still provide some benefit. Acreage of conservation easements range from 523 acres in the Crawford Area population to about 26,000 acres in the Gunnison Basin.

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more detail on why not enough

CONCLUSION:

- We are currently preparing a proposed rule with an anticipated publication date in November 2005. Based on the threats to the species and status of the populations, we propose to list the sage-grouse as endangered.
- Critical habitat will be proposed following the proposed rule with a final designation to be made in conjunction with the final listing decision, which is anticipated in fall 2006.
- The effectiveness of the recently signed Rangewide Conservation Plan has not been evaluated.

- get to why threat is probl. ⇒ why probl. to bird (GUSB)

* Slide spot peppergrass - IUCN Criteria - connect threats - their critically endangered & endangered vulnerable ⇒ threatened

- We will consider all ongoing conservation activities, including the CCAA, under our Policy for Evaluating Conservation Efforts prior to making the final listing decision.

CONTACT: Mary Henry, ARD-ES, R6 (303) 236-4210

DATE: August 22, 2005

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BRIEFING FOR DIRECTOR

PREPARED BY: Terry Ireland, Grand Junction, Colorado, Ecological Services Office

FROM: Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director, Region 6

SUBJECT: Litigation history of Gunnison Sage-grouse

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING DOCUMENT: Provide information on litigation background and status.

BACKGROUND:

- The Gunnison sage-grouse was formally recognized as a species by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) in July 2000.
- In 2000 the Service made the Gunnison sage-grouse a candidate species. This was confirmed in the 2000 CNOR published on December 28, 2000 (65 FR 82310-82312). The sage-grouse was given a listing priority number of 5.
- In 2000 the Service also received a petition to list the Gunnison sage-grouse from the American Lands Alliance, Biodiversity Legal Foundation and four other groups.
- On January 10, 2001, the American Lands Alliance, The Larch Company, and Sinapu sued the Service. The Court found that the determination that a species should be on the candidate list is equivalent to a 12-month Finding.
- On March 17, 2004, the American Land Alliance, Center for Native Ecosystems, The Larch Company, and Sinapu sued the Service challenging our warranted but precluded finding, and our failure to emergency list the species, alleging that the Service is failing to make "expeditious progress" on listing.
- The 2003 Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR) was published May 4, 2004, and elevated the species' listing priority number to 2 (69 FR 24876-24904).
- In October 2004, FWP approved and the Service offered a September 2, 2005, settlement date for submission of a proposed listing determination to the Federal Register. The plaintiffs asked the Service to emergency list the species. The Service rejected that offer and the case was not settled.
- In March 2005, the Service provided a declaration in the case telling the court that it had determined that emergency listing was not warranted, but that it intends to complete a proposed and final listing determination within the next 2 years.
- The Service allocated funding to the proposed rule with approval from FWP, and noted in the 2004 CNOR that it was working on a proposed rule for the species.
- The court has dismissed motions for summary judgment in the case and ordered the parties to report on the status of settlement discussions by Friday July 29th.
- A joint report between the plaintiffs and the Service was filed on July 29th to the Court, and a four week extension was granted to finalize a settlement date by August 25, 2005.

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FY 05

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MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

- After approval by FWP, Region 6 is currently preparing a proposed rule.
- Negotiations on a settlement date for a proposed rule continue. A Draft Stipulated Settlement Agreement that includes a settlement date of November 15, 2005, for a proposed rule and a November 15, 2006, final determination publication date was recently received from plaintiffs and is under consideration. The Region has submitted a memorandum to FWP to settle on March 6, 2006 for the proposed rule and March 6, 2007 for a final determination.

CONTACT: Mary Henry, ARD-ES R6 (303) 236-4210

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE FY06 BUDGET PROJECTIONS

August 23, 2005

NOTE: These calculations are based on November 2005 and November 2006 settlement dates. If dates are later, the dollar amounts should be spread between FY06 and FY07.

1. PECE Analysis

Colorado - 20 days	\$11,120
Utah - 10 days	\$5,560
WY - 10 days	\$5,560
<u>Travel (CO & WY)</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>
PECE Total FY06	\$23,240

2. Proposed Listing Rule

FY05: \$120K	
FY06:	
Peer review	\$3,000
Public meeting	\$5,000
<u>10 staff days</u>	<u>\$5,560</u>
Proposed Rule Total FY06	\$13,560

3. Final Listing Rule

FY06:	
<u>200 biadays</u>	<u>\$111,200</u>
Final Rule Total FY06	\$111,200

TOTAL FY06 LISTING REQUEST FROM WO: \$148,000

4. Proposed Critical Habitat Rule

FY05: \$120K (including approx. \$40K carried over into FY06)	
FY06:	
<u>100 biadays</u>	<u>\$55,600</u>
Proposed Rule Total FY06	\$55,600

5. Final Critical Habitat Rule

FY06:	
<u>200 biadays</u>	<u>\$111,200</u>
Final Rule Total FY06	\$111,200

TOTAL FY06 CRITICAL HABITAT REQUEST FROM WO: \$166,800

TOTAL FY06 REQUEST FROM WO: \$314,800

Figure 1. Current and Historical Gunnison Sage-grouse Range (modified from RSC 2005).

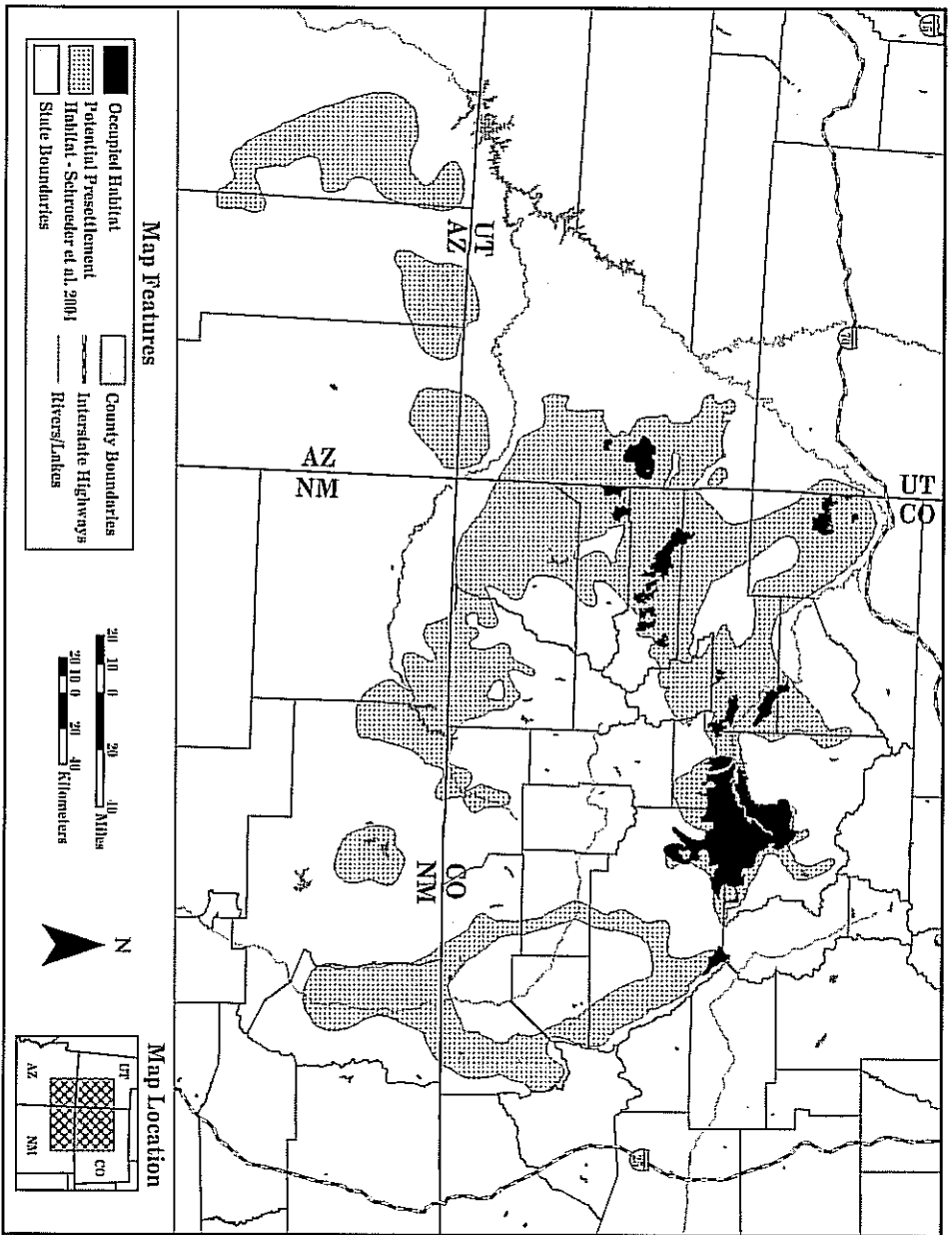


Figure 2. Locations of Current Gunnison Sage-grouse Populations.

