

Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances



Penny Becker
Acting Diversity Division Manager

Cynthia Wilkerson
Lands Conservation & Restoration Section Manager

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA)



Voluntary Agreements between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and state, tribal, or private landowners to address needs of species on the "Candidate list" of the Endangered Species Act

Incentivize conservation and management actions

Provide assurances to landowners

Where do CCAAs Come From?

Section 10 of Endangered Species Act (ESA)

“Exceptions”

“The Secretary may permit, under such terms and conditions ... any taking otherwise prohibited by section 9(a)(1)(B) if such taking is incidental to, and not the purpose of, the carrying out of an otherwise lawful activity.”

A CCAA is...

- **A tool for the voluntary conservation of candidate species on non-federal land**
- **A tool that provide assurances. In exchange for implementing conservation measures, USFWS provides a permit authorizing incidental take**
- **Tailored to the needs of landowners**
- **Considered in USFWS decision-making and could:**
 - **Help to preclude the need to federally list the species**
 - **Affect listing as endangered versus threatened**
 - **Affect the designation of critical habitat**

Section 10 Tools from the ESA

- Safe Harbor Agreement
- Habitat Conservation Plan
- Research and Recovery Permits
- Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances



CCAA Structure & Components

- Template
- Covered Activities
- Conservation Measures
- 30 years length, but can walk away at any time

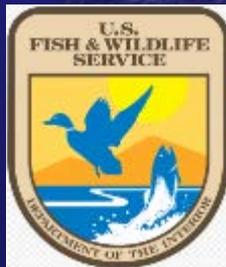


WDFW's Role in the CCAAs

- Facilitators
- Drafting Document
 - Landowners continue operations
 - USFWS's "CCAA bar"
- Implementation
 - Technical assistance
 - Monitoring
 - Permits: Umbrella vs Template



Fisher Recovery and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances





Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*)

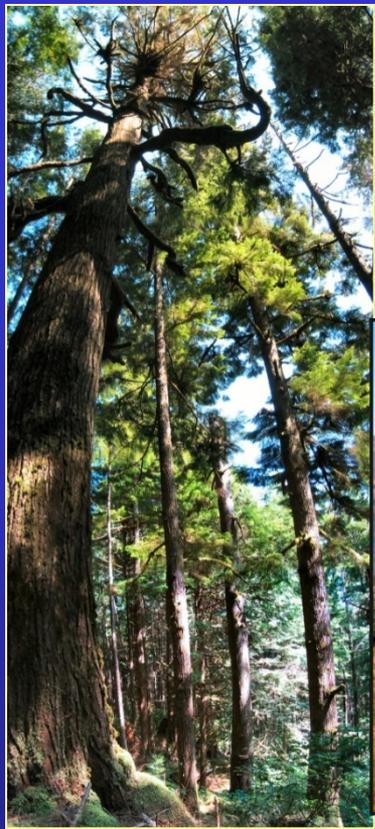
- Member of the weasel family with sea otters, wolverines, badgers, river otters, martens

- Poorly known, rarely seen, and easy to confuse with other species- Similar to marten, but larger, darker, and has longer tail
- Prey includes: Deer mice, Voles, Red/Douglas squirrels, Porcupines, Mountain beavers, etc.

Fishers use forest habitats



And large forested landscapes



- Canopy closure
- Large woody structures (e.g., large trees, large cavity trees, large snags, large logs)



Major Cause of Decline: Over-trapping

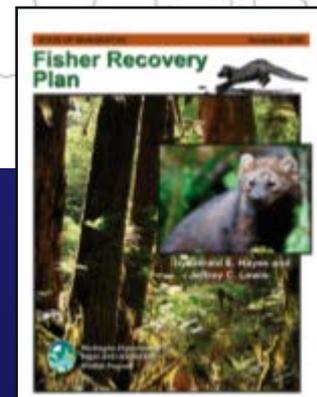


- Extremely valuable pelt in the late 1800s early 1900s
- Unregulated trapping until 1933, prohibited in 1934 to promote recovery
- Despite protection for 70 years, has not recovered



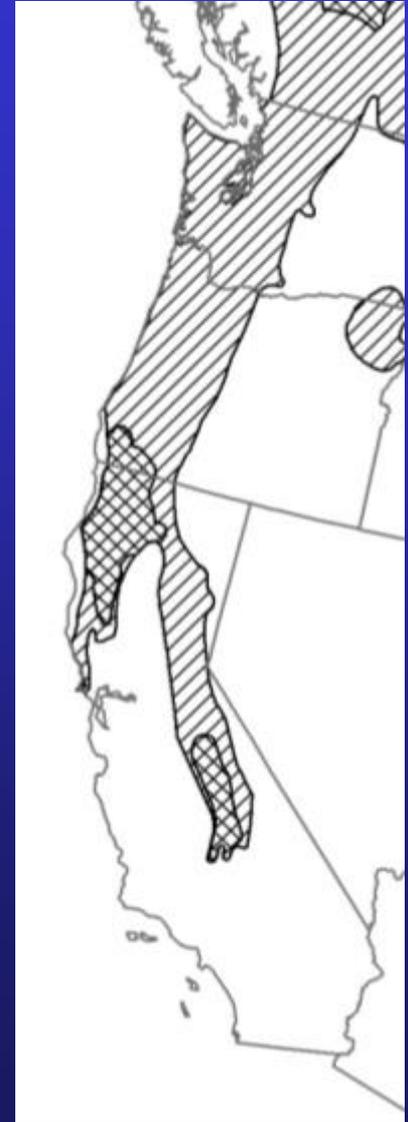
Steps toward fisher recovery in Washington

- Fisher Status Review, Listed as State Endangered Species – 1998
- USFWS: fisher listing warranted but precluded - 2004
- State Recovery Plan– 2006
- Olympic Reintroductions – 2008-2010
- **NEXT: CCAA**
- 2015: Cascade Reintroductions
- WITH SUCCESS... we are on our way to state down-listing and de-listing



USFWS Actions on Fisher

- USFWS: listing warranted but precluded - 2004
- Litigation moves fisher to queue (MDL)
- Proposal for West Coast fisher DPS released- Oct 2014
- WA may be included or excluded from a final Distinct Population Segment (DPS) if listed
- **USFWS and WDFW are working together to minimize possible regulatory burden of listing on landowners**
- Final Decision on listing- Oct 2015 or later



The Role of Non-Federal Lands in Fisher Conservation in WA

- Reintroductions are planned for Park Service and Forest Service Lands
- Private, State, and Tribal lands are important for movement across the landscape (predominantly males)
- If and when female fishers den on non-federal lands, they need protection during the denning season

Why a CCAA for Fisher?

- Assurances for landowners and tribes regarding on-going recovery actions/ translocations and ensure protective measures for reintroduced animals
- Conservation Measures include:
 - Access/Assistance with population monitoring
 - Limit disturbance and potential mortality of known denning females and young- activities, animal control
 - If agreed upon by landowner and WDFW, reintroduce on enrolled lands

Progress to Date for Fisher CCAA

- Now:
Drafting document with interested stakeholders and USFWS
- April/May: NEPA Analysis
- June/July: Federal Register/ Public Comment
- Sign on Landowners



Greater Sage-grouse Recovery and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances



Sage-grouse Natural History

- Largest North American grouse species
 - Males up to 30" long & 7lbs
 - Females up to 23" long & 4lbs
- Males gather to perform courtship displays on leks in spring- high fidelity
- Landscape scale, sagebrush obligate
- Long-lived, low reproductive rates

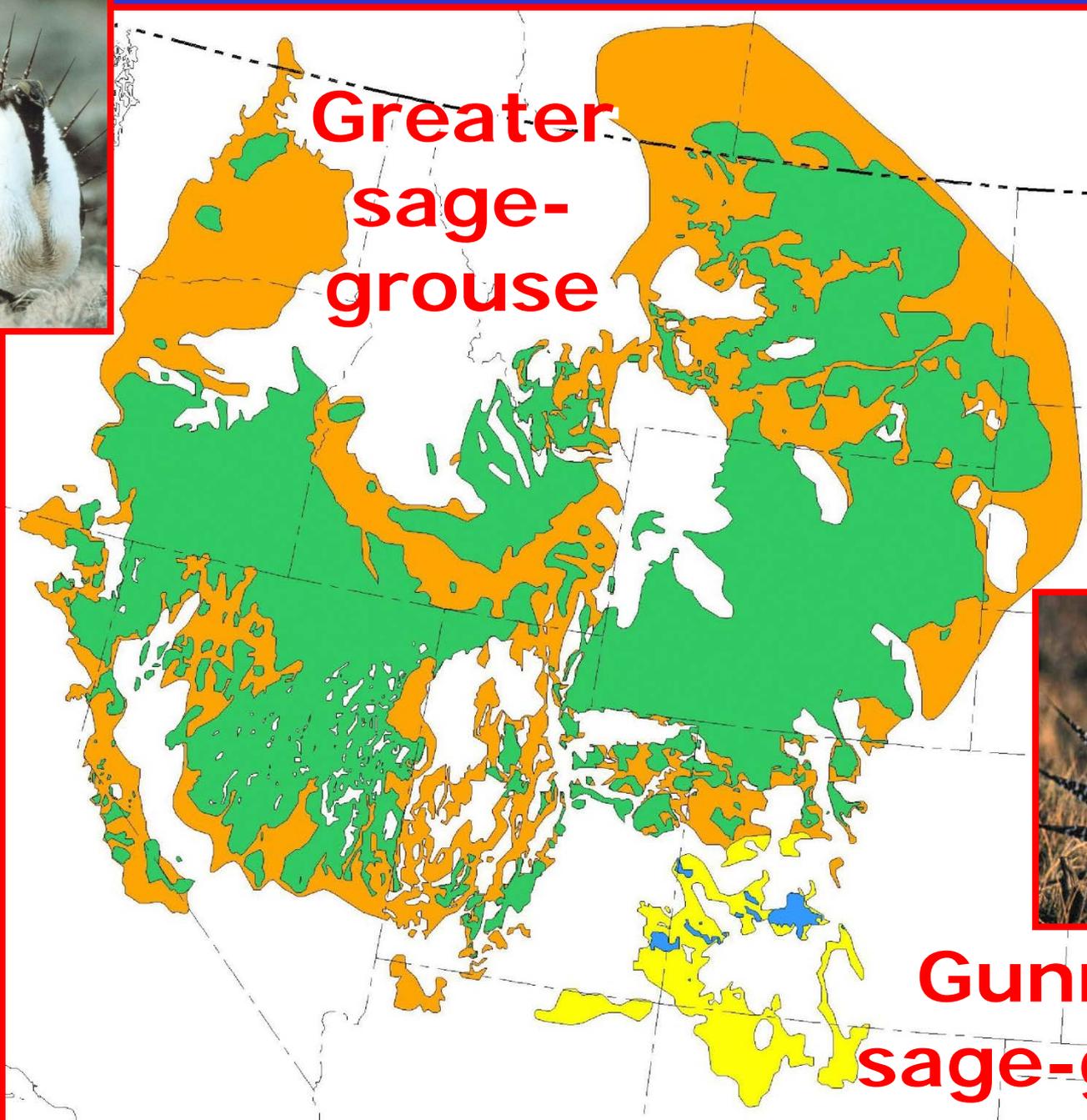


Sage-grouse Habitat Needs

- Leks are found on open sites surrounded by denser shrub-steppe cover used for escape, thermal and feeding cover
- Leks established within or adjacent to nesting habitat (2.1-4.8mi)
 - Sagebrush with an understory of native grasses and forbs
 - Horizontal and vertical structural diversity that provides insects, herbaceous forage, and cover



**Greater
sage-
grouse**



**Gunnison
sage-grouse**

Threats & Causes of Decline

HABITAT LOSS & FRAGMENTATION



Including

Fires:

- Loss of sagebrush
- Cheatgrass increases



Army Training:

- Fires
- Degraded Habitat
- Disturbance



Over-Grazing:

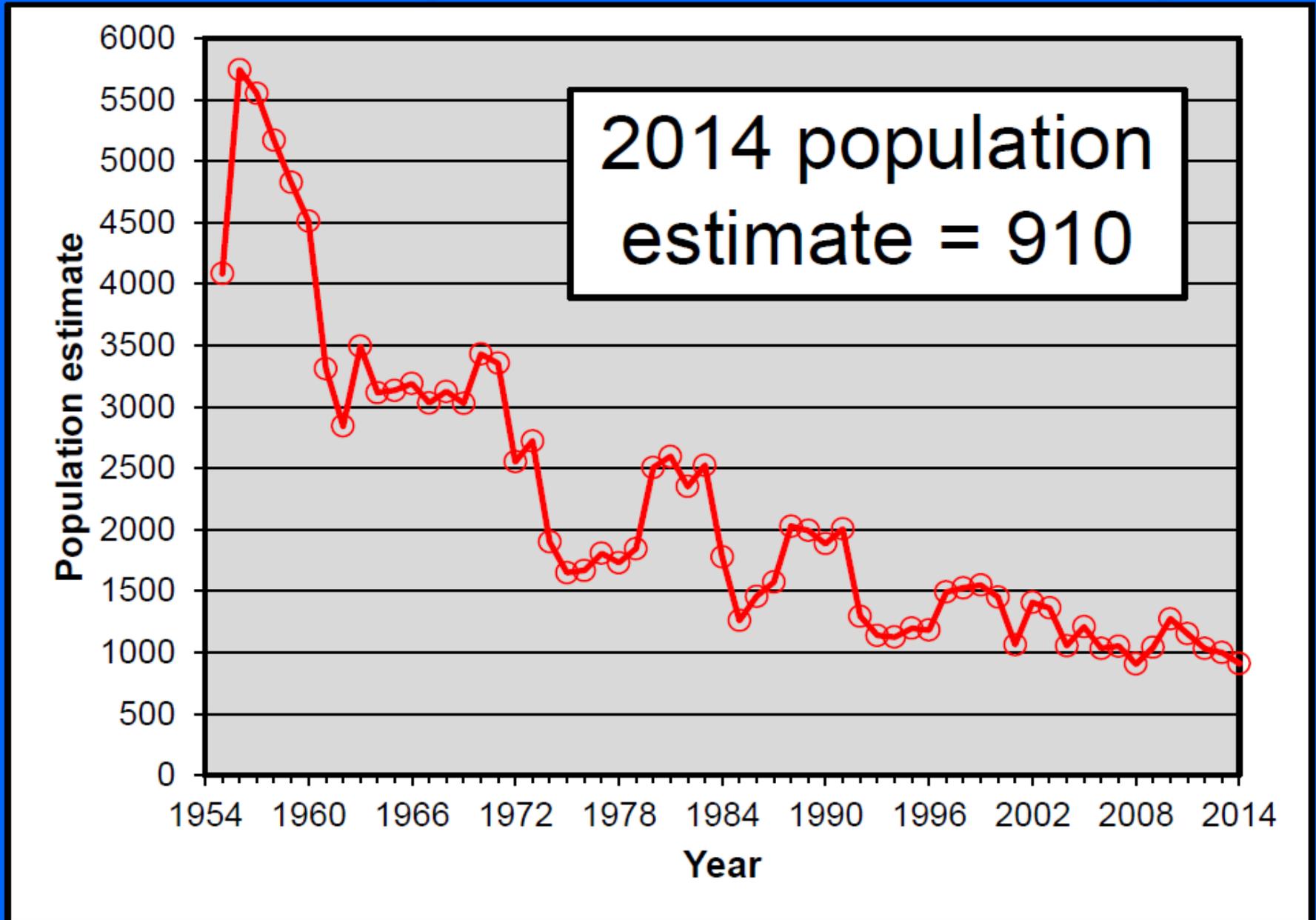
- Loss of native bunchgrass understory and forbs
- Degraded habitat at springs and seeps



Energy Transmission & Generation, Fences, Predators, Disturbance, West Nile Virus, Wild Horses, Genetics

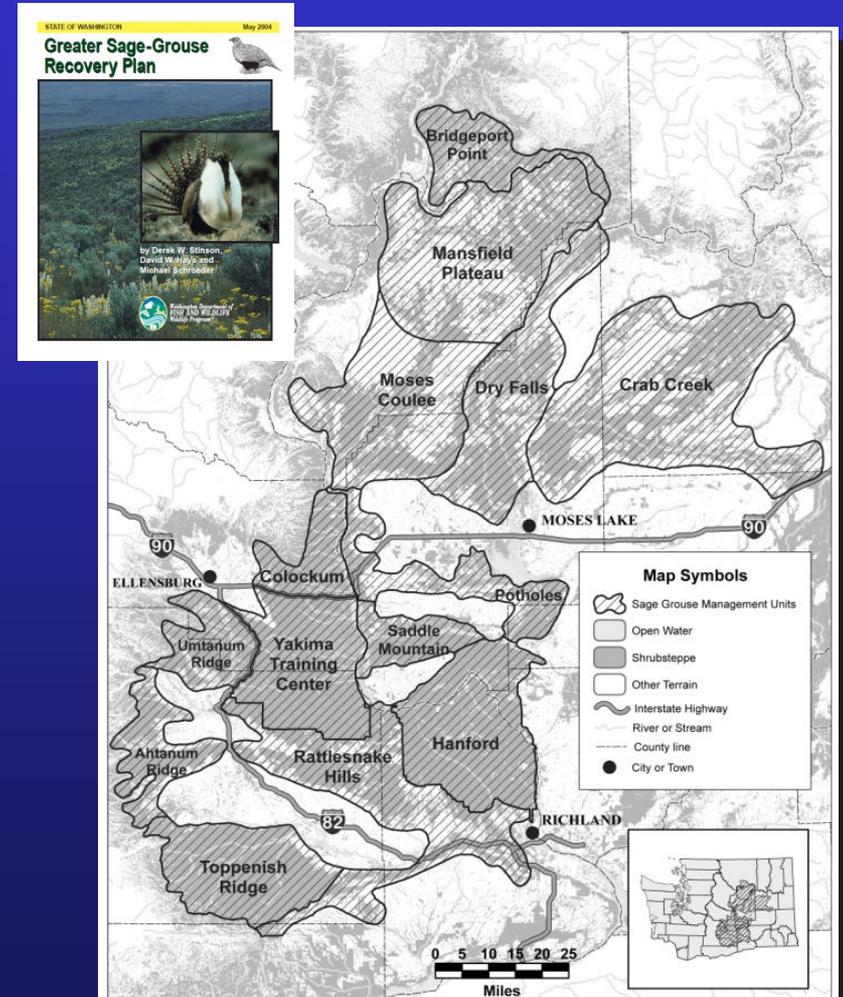


Greater Sage-Grouse in Washington

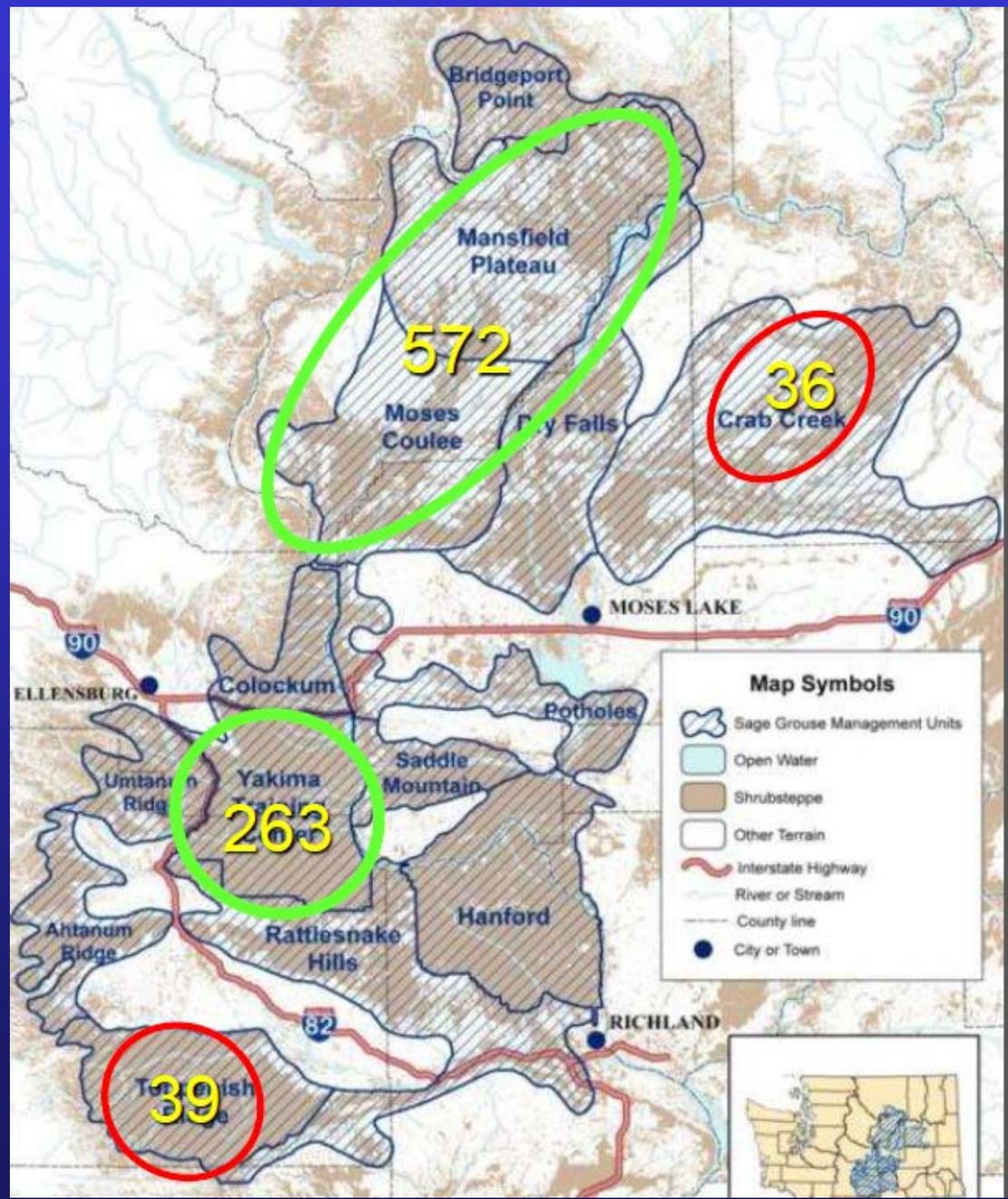


Steps toward Sage-grouse recovery in WA

- Sage-grouse Status Review, Listed as a State Threatened Species – 1998
- State Recovery Plan – 2004
- Recovery Implementation:
 - Reintroductions -
2006 Toppenish Ridge
2008 Crab Creek
 - Habitat enhancement
WDFW Wildlife Areas
Federal partners (BLM)
CRP/SAFE/SGI

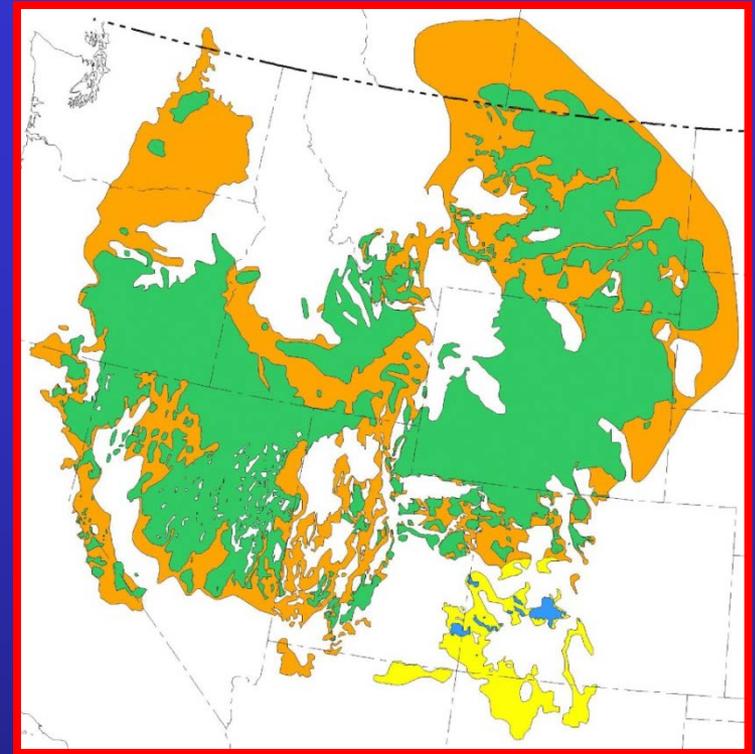


Recovery Focus: Priority Areas For Conservation (PACs)



Range-wide Status

- ~80-90% decline from pre-settlement numbers; 30% since 1985
- 1999-2003: 8 petitions to list (WA 2001 candidate, range-wide, Gunnison, bi-state)
- 2005- Not Warranted
- 2010- Warranted, but precluded by higher priorities



Recent USFWS Actions

- 2011- Litigation moves Sage-grouse to queue
- Congress extends timeline for decision on Columbia Basin and Range-wide listing- Sept 2015 proposal, Sept 2016 final



- Now is the time to work together for conservation to include in listing decision and to minimize possible regulatory burden of listing on private landowners

The Role of Non-Federal Lands in Sage-grouse Conservation in WA

Private, State, and Tribal lands are important for nesting and lek habitat and for movement across the landscape

Why a CCAA for Sage Grouse?

- "Maintain and improve greater sage-grouse habitat while contributing to the economic sustainability of landowners and maintaining the ranching culture and agricultural way of life throughout the range of the sage grouse in Washington State."
- Conservation across the landscape/non-federal ownership
- Assurances for landowners

Covered Activities

- **Agriculture**
- **Habitat Management and Restoration**
- **Recreation**
- **Specific herbicide use**
- **Grazing Management**
- **Residential infrastructure associated with ranch or farm management**

Conservation Objectives

- Conserve native sage-grouse habitat. Maintain or improve the suitability of enrolled lands for sage-grouse
- Minimize direct disturbance to, or mortality of sage-grouse
- Minimize artificially high predation of sage-grouse
- Prevent West Nile virus from becoming a serious threat to Washington's sage-grouse population.

Progress to Date for Sage Grouse CCAA

- Now: Drafting document with interested stakeholders and USFWS
- April/May: NEPA Analysis
- June/July: Federal Register/ Public Comment
- Sign on Landowners

Questions?

