



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

News Release

Nevada State Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLM Proposes Increased Flexibility and Access in Sage-Grouse Plans

Proposed amendments would align conservation efforts at state and federal levels

RENO, Nev. – In keeping with Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s commitment to work closely with states to enhance conservation, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and proposed plan amendments addressing Greater Sage-Grouse conservation on public land in Nevada.

The proposed plan amendments aim to better align BLM resource management plans with state plans for conserving sage-grouse populations, strike a regulatory balance and build greater trust among neighboring interests in Western communities. They also address a legal vulnerability that was exposed when a Federal District Court in Nevada determined that the BLM had violated the National Environmental Policy Act when it finalized the 2015 plans.

“We have appreciated the opportunity to work with Governor Sandoval’s team on a carefully crafted amendment to the 2015 plans,” said **Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt**. “We know the successful conservation of the Greater Sage-Grouse requires the shared stewardship vision of the states, private citizens, landowners and federal land management agencies including those within the Department of the Interior.”

Bernhardt continued, “With today’s action we have leaned forward to address the various states’ issues, while appropriately ensuring that we will continue to be focused on meaningfully addressing the threats to the Greater Sage-Grouse and making efforts to improve its habitat.”

The BLM developed the changes in collaboration with Nevada **Gov. Brian Sandoval**, state wildlife managers in Nevada and California, and other concerned organizations and individuals, largely through the Western Governors Association’s Sage-Grouse Task Force.

“The State of Nevada is pleased the final EIS is finished,” **Gov. Sandoval** said. “We appreciate the opportunity to have worked closely with the Department of the Interior on our concerns, and thank them for incorporating our input into the final plan amendments.”

The proposed changes refine the previous management plans adopted in 2015. Under the 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the BLM is required by law to work cooperatively with states on land-use plans and amendments.

“The analysis in the Final EIS builds on the analysis of threats, risks and environmental effects found in the 2015 documents, and any new information identified during the current planning process,” said **Acting Nevada State Director Brian Amme**. “The proposed changes will enhance cooperation with our stakeholders by ensuring that the BLM’s approach to managing sage-grouse habitat is better aligned with the individual state plans and conservation actions.”

In Nevada and northeastern California, the proposed amendments would remove the Sagebrush Focal Area designations in the 2015 plans and replace the adaptive management strategy with the causal-factor analysis strategy in the State of Nevada’s sage-grouse plan. The proposed amendments would not change the restrictions or access limitations in habitat management areas that are set in the 2015 plans but would provide more flexibility for approving exceptions.

The proposed changes for lands in designated habitat in Nevada would allow land disposal actions (i.e., sales) if they meet goals set by Congress in specific legislation, such as the Lincoln County Land Act of 2000 and the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006. The amendment process also offered an opportunity for the BLM to align its mitigation requirements under FLPMA with those established under Nevada law.

The BLM has also published Final EISs for lands it manages in Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming.

Publication of the Final EIS and proposed amendments in tomorrow’s *Federal Register* initiates a 30-day protest period, which will run through January 8, 2019. The Nevada Governor also has 60 days to review the proposed amendments for consistency with state and local laws and regulations. The process will conclude with a Record of Decision (ROD) following resolution of any protests received during the 30-day review period.

Approval of the Final EIS Proposed Plan Amendments would require amendments to eight current BLM resource management plans covering public lands in Nevada: Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon NCA, Carson City Consolidated, Shoshone-Eureka, Elko, Ely, Tonopah, Wells and Winnemucca.

Anyone who participated in the process for the Nevada and Northeastern California EIS and who has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the proposed land use plan amendments in the Final EIS will have the opportunity to protest the proposed plan amendments.

The Final EIS is now available online at <https://goo.gl/uz89cT>. Instructions for filing a protest with the Director of the BLM regarding the Proposed RMPA/Final EIS are found online at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/filing-a-plan-protest>. All protests must be in writing and mailed to the appropriate address or submitted electronically through the BLM ePlanning project website. To submit a protest electronically, go to the ePlanning project webpage <https://goo.gl/uz89cT> and follow the instructions at the top of the home page.

If submitting a protest in hard copy, it must be mailed to one of the following addresses:

U.S. Postal Service Mail: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, WO-210,
P.O Box 71383, Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Delivery: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, WO-210,
20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM, Washington, D.C. 20003

Protests submitted electronically by any means other than the ePlanning project website will be invalid unless a protest is also submitted in hard copy. Protests submitted by fax will also be invalid unless also submitted either through ePlanning project website protest section or in hard copy.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personally identifiable information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personally identifiable information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask the BLM in your comment to withhold your personally identifiable information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land located primarily in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The agency's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. Diverse activities authorized on these lands generated \$96 billion in sales of goods and services throughout the American economy in fiscal year 2017. These activities supported more than 468,000 jobs.