



Conserving the Greater Sage-Grouse on Bureau of Land Management Lands

Montana 2023



The greater sage-grouse and many other at-risk species live in and depend on sagebrush shrublands that historically stretched from the Dakotas to California and now occupy about half of their historic extent. Greater sage-grouse populations have declined rangewide by 80% since 1965 and nearly 40% in the last 20 years, and the species appears to be on an extinction trajectory.

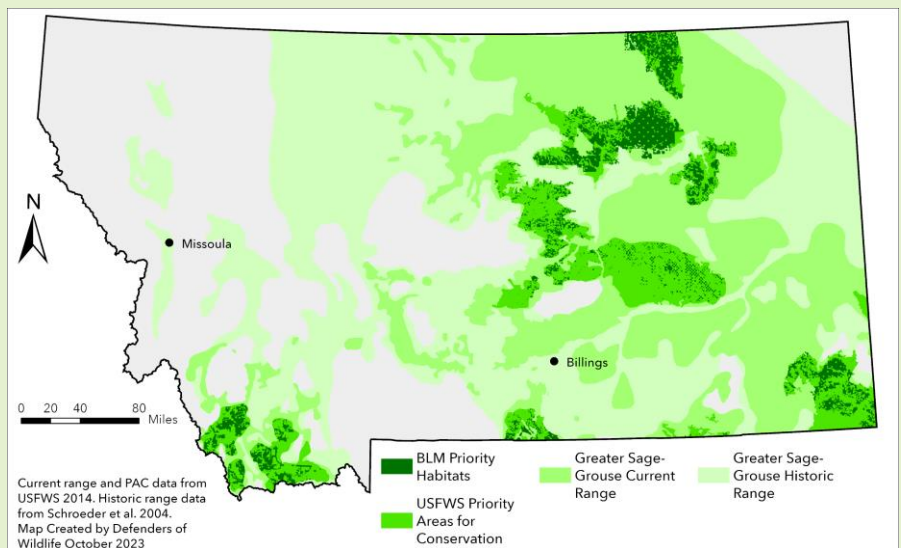
In response to petitions to list the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act, in 2013 the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and state wildlife agencies jointly identified areas essential for sage-grouse viability called Priority Areas for Conservation. In 2015, BLM finalized its Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy designating most of the PACs that overlapped BLM lands as Priority Habitat Management Areas (“Priority Habitats”) and committed to managing them to reduce disturbance.

To address continued declines and climate change impacts, BLM is revising its 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy. Key to sage-grouse recovery is protecting and restoring a network of intact and crucial habitats – including PACs – across its range and eliminating habitat stressors that compound the effects of climate change and drought.

What is the Condition of the Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat?

- Less than 14% of the Sagebrush Sea remains intact and functioning. In recent years, we have lost an average of 1.3 million acres of habitat per year.¹
- 47% of BLM-managed Priority Habitats nationwide and 19% in Montana are in substandard condition.²
- About three-quarters of BLM-managed Priority Habitats nationwide and 2% in Montana are experiencing chronic drought.³
- Nationwide, 7% of federal lands within sage-grouse Priority Areas for Conservation are protected.⁴

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT IN MONTANA OVER TIME

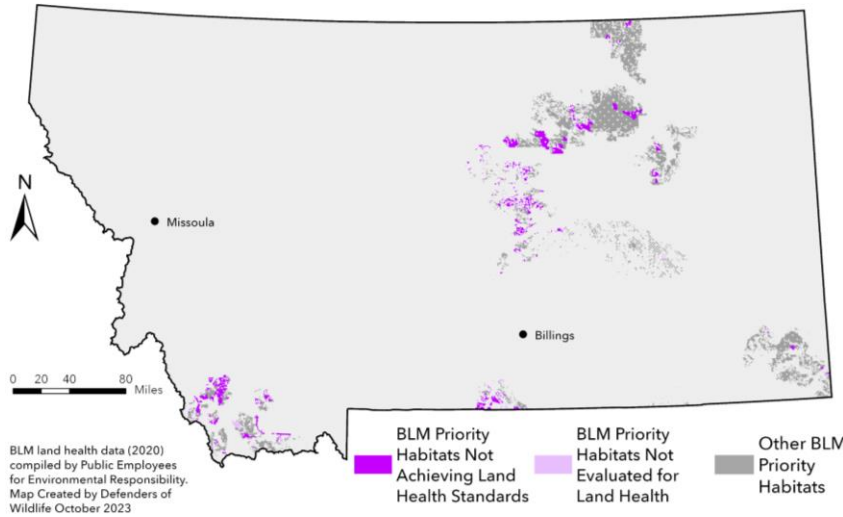


<i>Historic Range</i>	64,959,617 acres
<i>Current Range</i>	33,725,900 acres
<i>FWS Priority Areas for Conservation 2013</i>	9,599,870 acres
<i>Priority Areas for Conservation on BLM lands</i>	3,025,304 acres
<i>Priority Habitats on BLM lands 2015</i>	3,113,550 acres

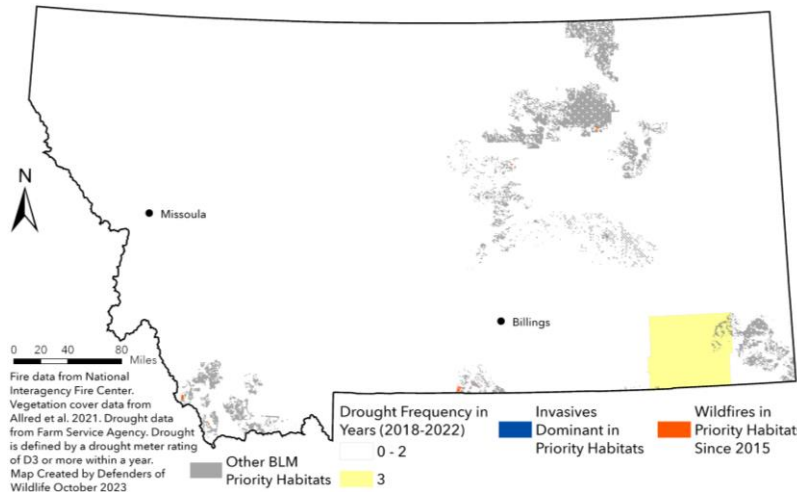
1. Doherty et al. 2022. [A sagebrush conservation design to proactively restore America’s sagebrush biome](#). USGS Open-File Report 2022-1081.
 2. This statistic reflects Priority Habitats that overlap grazing allotments that failed to achieve land health standards in the most recent land health evaluation. This is based on BLM land health data collected and analyzed by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. See <https://peer.org/areas-of-work/public-lands/grazing-reform/mapping-rangeland-health/>.
 3. County drought data from Farm Service Agency. In this context, a county is in chronic drought if it has a drought meter rating of D3 or more within a year for at least three of the last five years.
 4. In this context, protected lands are those in GAP 1 or 2 status in the US Geological Survey Protected Areas Data Base (2022).

How are Sage-Grouse Priority Habitats Faring in Montana?

The 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy established 3,113,550 BLM-managed acres in Montana as Priority Habitats with protective management direction. Despite this, grazing, invasive species, wildfires, energy development and other activities continue to take a toll.



587,682 acres (19%) failing land health standards. 33,577 (1.1%) acres have never been evaluated.



12,922 acres (0.4%) dominated by invasive weeds and 20,587 (0.7%) acres burnt since 2015.

2% experiencing chronic drought.

Between 2017 and 2022, 17,897 (0.6%) acres were leased for oil and gas and 86,223 acres (3%) were granted as rights-of-way (since 2015).

