



# Livestock Grazing and Greater Sage-grouse Conservation

Livestock grazing is the most widespread type of land use across the sagebrush range with almost all sagebrush areas managed for grazing. Improper livestock management, as determined by local ecological conditions, may have negative impacts on greater sage-grouse (GRSG) seasonal habitats. In addition, range management structures, if not properly sited and developed may be detrimental to GRSG.

## Grazing Direction and Guidance - Land Management Plan Amendments

Livestock grazing will be managed to achieve or maintain desired conditions in GRSG seasonal habitats. For breeding and nesting, a lek-centric approach will be applied to vegetation management. Grazing guidelines will apply in GRSG habitat on National Forest System lands within a buffer distance of 4 miles (Nevada and Utah), 6.2 miles (Idaho and Southwest Montana), and 5.3 miles on those portions of the Uinta, Wasatch, Cache, and Ashley National Forests that extend into the State of Wyoming around all occupied leks (those occurring both on and off NFS lands) as well as new leks discovered and documented by the State. These buffer distances represent an area where approximately 90percent of the hens from a lek may nest based upon state specific data.

Livestock grazing would be managed to maintain residual perennial grass height to provide for adequate GRSG nesting cover to increase the likelihood of successful nests. Residual overwinter perennial grass height will be maintained at 4" for cover before spring growth begins. During the breeding and nesting season, perennial grass height should be allowed to grow to at least or maintained at a height of 7" until June 15 in Idaho/Montana and Utah and until June 30 in Nevada and on those portions of the Uinta, Wasatch, Cache, and Ashley National Forests that extend into the State of Wyoming, to provide essential concealment cover to protect nesting GRSG from predation. After eggs hatch, 4" of perennial grass cover should be maintained in the uplands throughout the summer and into the fall. This provides residual cover the following spring during lekking and nest initiation in March and April before spring growth.





*Photo courtesy of Austin Catlin/USFWS*

When grazing occurs during the brood-rearing/summer season, an average of 4 inches of herbaceous vegetation should be retained in riparian/mesic meadows. Due to extensive dispersal capabilities of broods, riparian/mesic meadow herbaceous vegetation will be retained in all GRSG habitat, with greater than 10percent sagebrush cover, irrespective of lek buffers, to provide essential brood-rearing habitat for young GRSG.

## Key Points of Grazing Management

- The Forest Service is committed to working closely with grazing permittees during implementation to ensure that GRSG conservation and their operations can be harmonized, as much as possible, and that adequate transition time is provided consistent with the analysis.
- The decision allows for necessary time to gather additional site-specific data that may be needed to work with permittees and others to address impacts to those users.
- Under the land management plan amendments livestock grazing will continue, while managing to achieve or maintain desired conditions in GRSG seasonal habitats.
- No Forest Service grazing permits will be cancelled as a result of the land management plan amendments. Some Forest Service grazing permits will be modified.

