



U.S. Forest Service

Sage-Grouse Bulletin #15

January 2020

Summary: Sage-Grouse Bulletin #15 provides an update on the Forest Service objections process and the release of the Forest Service 2015-2019 annual monitoring report.

The Objections and Resolution Process – Next Steps.

- The Reviewing Officer, Allen Rowley, Associate Deputy Chief for National Forests Systems from the Washington Office, is working on concerns identified in the objection letters and as clarified in discussions with objectors and interested persons during the December in-person meeting.
- Additional calls or meetings with objectors may take place during January and February.
- The process will conclude when the Forest Service Reviewing Officer provides written guidance to the Responsible Officials (the Regional Foresters in Regions 2 and 4) with any required changes to the greater sage-grouse plans. The timeline for final decisions is uncertain until the scope and scale of changes to the plans are determined.

Annual Monitoring Report

- The Intermountain, Rocky Mountain, and Northern Regions have produced an annual monitoring report which includes information from 2016-2019.
- The report has been posted on the Intermountain Region Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r4/home/?cid=STELPRD3843381>
- Because information is gathered continuously, the report is provisional and will be updated, but points of interest include:
 - Forest Service projects improved habitat for sage-grouse on nearly 480,000 acres.
 - Fires burned approximately 260,000 acres of greater sage-grouse habitat on National Forest System lands.
 - Cumulative anthropogenic disturbance was at 0.03% on greater sage-grouse biologically significant units from 2015-2018.
 - Greater sage-grouse numbers in western states continue to cycle and are currently within the natural range of variability.
 - In the years 2016-2019, the FS made 165 project decisions on National Forest System Lands covered by the 2015 Greater Sage Grouse Amendments, of which 100% were reported to be in compliance with 2015 sage grouse conservation plans.
 - The plans emphasize avoidance of surface development in sage-grouse habitat and no exceptions were allowed for fluid minerals development in sage-grouse management areas.
 - Adaptive management triggers have been analyzed in several states; triggers were not tripped in Montana or Colorado, but some population and habitat triggers were surpassed in Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. Specific areas and responses are described in the report.

Web-based Mapping Tool

- Historical and current range maps have been added to the web tool which shows potential changes to sage-grouse management areas:
<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PublicInformation/index.html?appid=9f1cf6d8425e49949d0006a0ae574b84>

January 23, 2020