



## Washington State Audubon Conservation Committee (WSACC) Resolution Proposal

*Whereas preservation of sagebrush steppe habitat is an Audubon flyway priority, therefore be it resolved that WSACC supports the highest level of protection for Greater Sage-Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse species recovery goals and for a healthy ecosystem in the Bureau of Land Management Eastern Washington and San Juan Resource Management Plan.*

1. **Title:** Bureau of Land Management Eastern Washington and San Juan Resource Management Plan
2. August 28, 2013
3. **Contact:** Christi Norman, Audubon WA, 5902 Lake WA Blvd. S, Seattle WA 98118, 360-789-7282, cnorman@audubon.org
4. **Definition of the issue:** Federal land planning for conservation of shrub steppe and associated species, and Greater Sage-Grouse preventative action in face of possible Endangered Species Act listing.
5. **What specific action** (e.g. Audubon Washington policy position, a resolution, legislative or congressional actions, etc.) are you requesting from WSACC?  
Resolution of support for proposed Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plan changes based on Spokane Audubon field experiences and peer reviewed science to increase long-term grouse viability that also benefit the eco-system.
6. **What specific resources** (e.g. organizing volunteers, making phone calls, testifying at public meetings, writing letters to elected officials or editorial boards) can you, your chapter, or organization contribute to this action.  
Audubon WA will lead and coordinate public review with seven local chapters in submitting management plan EIS comments and public participation.
7. **Is strategic timing involved?**
  - a. If so, what is the deadline for a WSACC position?  
Yes, 60-day public comment period. Spring 2014.
8. **State your chapter's position on this issue.**  
National Audubon's Central Flyway Sagebrush Ecosystem Initiative and many others including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), National Resource Conservation Service, BLM, American Bird Conservancy, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Northwest, North Central Washington Audubon, Spokane Audubon, are working to recover Greater Sage-Grouse, in order to prevent a 2015 Threatened ESA listing and the resulting regulations.  
USFWS found that current Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource plans do not adequately identify habitat areas and regulate activities necessary to conserve grouse

species during their ESA review. BLM is re-writing 95 management plans in the western US as part the BLM *National Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy*. Our goal will be to add significant acreage as highest priority habitat and to add Core Strategy protocols to protect Sage Grouse during mating, nesting, and brood rearing to further species recovery in the Spokane District BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP).

- a. **Include a copy and date of relevant motions** taken by your chapter board. Audubon WA Board of Directors took on preservation of shrub steppe habitat within the Central Flyway as one of two major program directions in September 2012.

**9. List points in support of your or your chapter's position.** See attached Draft EIS letter. Sage Grouse remain viable in Washington, presenting significant conservation opportunities despite a 92% statewide loss. WDFW is charged with managing the species and is committed to recovery. The BLM/WDFW Swanson Lakes area is the most active grouse rehabilitation site in the state. In addition, the designation of a new BLM Crab Creek/Lake Creek area should be managed for specific grouse populations as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Several climate models suggest that eastern Washington may become one of the few climatically suitable areas for shrub-steppe ecosystems under future climate change (WHCWG 2012). Preservation of known habitat areas within the Columbia Plateau ecoregion where Greater Sage-Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse occur now must be protected to ensure connectivity corridors and future habitats exist for the species survival.

Range wide scientific investigations produced new information to guide the 20-year BLM RMP Plan revision to conserve sagebrush steppe habitat (Knick, et al. 2011, 2013). Audubon Rockies used this new information to make 15,000,000 acres off-limits to wind development in Wyoming using the one disturbance per square mile rule.

- b. **Include specific reference** to scientific studies and/or legal citations, e.g. laws or administrative code. Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG, 2012). (Knick et al 2011, 2013).

**9. Who takes a different position on this issue?**

Off Road Vehicle (ORV) users, potential mining/energy developers, Cattlemen with current BLM leases.

**10. Contact information** for at least one person or group from both or all sides of the issue (name and telephone) and position taken.

- Arlene Brooks, WA State Director, Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association, 253-686-9217, 21520 SE 346<sup>th</sup> Auburn WA 98092;  
Position taken: PN 4-Wheel Drive Assoc. wants off-road unrestricted access to Juniper Dunes;

- Krista Jo Gordon Region Development Manager – West Clipper Windpower Development Company, Inc. 1350 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200 Denver, CO 80202 Tel: (303) 951-6959;  
Position taken: West Clipper Windpower Company wants BLM to reclassify visual resource management areas for developing wind power on BLM lands in order to designate certain areas as renewable energy zones, including Clipper’s project area in Benton County.

**11. What is the rationale for the different position?**

Pacific Northwest 4-Wheel Drive Association: Conservation of ESA species does not trump BLM’s multiple use mandate.

West Clipper Windpower Company: The reclassification of visual resource management areas is possible from their interpretation of “support for and prioritization of renewable energy development on public lands as expressed in Section 211 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and Secretary Salazar’s Secretarial Order 3285.”

**12. Identify and describe which of the following WSACC conservation objectives are addressed by your request:**

- Protecting/Conserving at-risk birds
  - Protecting specific “state of the birds” species -*Greater Sage-Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse; secondarily sagebrush steppe obligates*
- Protecting/conserving at-risk habitats
  - Important Bird Areas (IBAs) *new- Lake Creek IBA*
  - Great Washington State Birding Trail Sites -*Palouse to Pines Loop, Swanson Lakes, and Telford*
  - Protecting working forest lands-*N/A*
  - Protecting working farm lands- *CRP/SAFE farm enrollments for grouse habitat enhancement*
- Reducing risks to birds and wildlife- *Preventative planning regulations*
- Reducing risks to habitat- *Reducing use of vegetation treatments and fire*
- Focus on birds- *Sagebrush steppe obligate species*
- Focus on other wildlife- *Sagebrush steppe obligate species*
- Focus on bird habitat - *Sagebrush steppe and riparian-wetlands*
- Focus on wildlife habitat- *Sagebrush steppe and riparian-wetlands*
- Contributing to biological diversity-*Maintaining at-risk shrub steppe species*
- Curbing global climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions *N/A*

**FYI: San Juan Islands National Monument is included in the BLM Resource Management Planning. It is not included in this resolution because the issues are essentially salt water ecology.**

- San Juan Island National Monument habitat diversity is critical for varied wildlife, including black-tail deer, river otter, mink, and birdlife such as the threatened Marbled Murrelet and the recently re-introduced Western Bluebird. Shorelines and inter-tidal areas support marine mammals, including orcas, seals, and porpoises.