

From: [Brent Esmoil](#)
To: [Nicole Alt](#); [Drue DeBerry](#); [Matt Kales](#)
Cc: jodi_bush@fws.gov; [Jeff Berglund](#)
Subject: RE: Update State planning efforts on Sharepoint - NLT noon Friday, Sept. 6
Date: Friday, September 06, 2013 11:12:06 AM
Attachments: [Summary Tables of Sage-grouse Planning Efforts 9-13.docx](#)

I don't know if we're the only office having problems with the Sharepoint site, but both Jeff and I were unable to make any changes to the summary table document. Consequently, I've attached our updated version here. Let me know if we're missing something, but the edit document function was only kicking back error messages for us.

Brent

Brent Esmoil, Deputy Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Montana Ecological Services Field Office
585 Shepard Way, Suite 1
Helena, MT 59601
406-449-5225, ext. 215
www.fws.gov/montanafieldoffice

From: Alt, Nicole [mailto:nicole_alt@fws.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, September 03, 2013 5:06 PM
To: FW6 Sage-grouse FMT; Terry Rabot; Michael Fris; Michael Thabault; Matt Kales; Jesse DElia; Pat Deibert
Subject: Update State planning efforts on Sharepoint - NLT noon Friday, Sept. 6

If you have not checked or updated that state planning efforts tracking document in the last 2 weeks, please review and update that information by NLT noon Friday, Sept. 6. FWS leadership have a briefing for the Secretary next week and they have requested up-to-date information for that briefing. Please call if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Click on "SUMMARY TABLES" and enter appropriate information.
<https://fishnet.fws.doi.net/projects/home/NSGC/State%20Conservation%20Plans/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Nicole

Nicole Alt
Deputy ARD Ecological Services
Mountain-Prairie Region
nicole_alt@fws.gov

Status of State, BLM, Forest Service, and other Planning Efforts

Below is a summary of State planning efforts, BLM and Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plans, and other local conservation efforts. This summary is meant to inform ongoing internal discussions to facilitate effective communication and targeting of resources and management attention. This document is NOT a decision document and should NOT be cited. It is PREDECISIONAL AND DELIBERATIVE. It is our best assessment of the situation as of the date of the document and our assessment is subject to change as plans change or as we receive new information.

Table 1. Summary of State Planning Efforts

Region	State	Plan Status	State Plan ¹	Communication ¹	Request for Concurrence Pending?
1	Idaho	Incomplete – In Revision	C ↑	A	Partial Support Letter Sent
	Oregon	Complete	B ↑	A	N
	Washington	Considering Revision	C ↑	B ↑	N
6	Colorado	Complete	E	A	N
	Montana	In Revision	D ↑	A	N
	North Dakota	In Revision	C ↑	B ↑	N
	South Dakota	In Revision	D	B	N
	Utah	Complete	E	B	Partial Support Letter Sent, Recommended Revisions
	Wyoming (updated 7/3/13)	Complete	A	A	Support Letter Sent
8	California	No Plan	G		
	Nevada	Considering Revision	B	B	

¹See Appendix for categories and criteria.

BLM USFS GRSG Planning Strategy Subregion/EIS Boundaries

Forest Service unit colors correspond to the region they will be analyzed within.

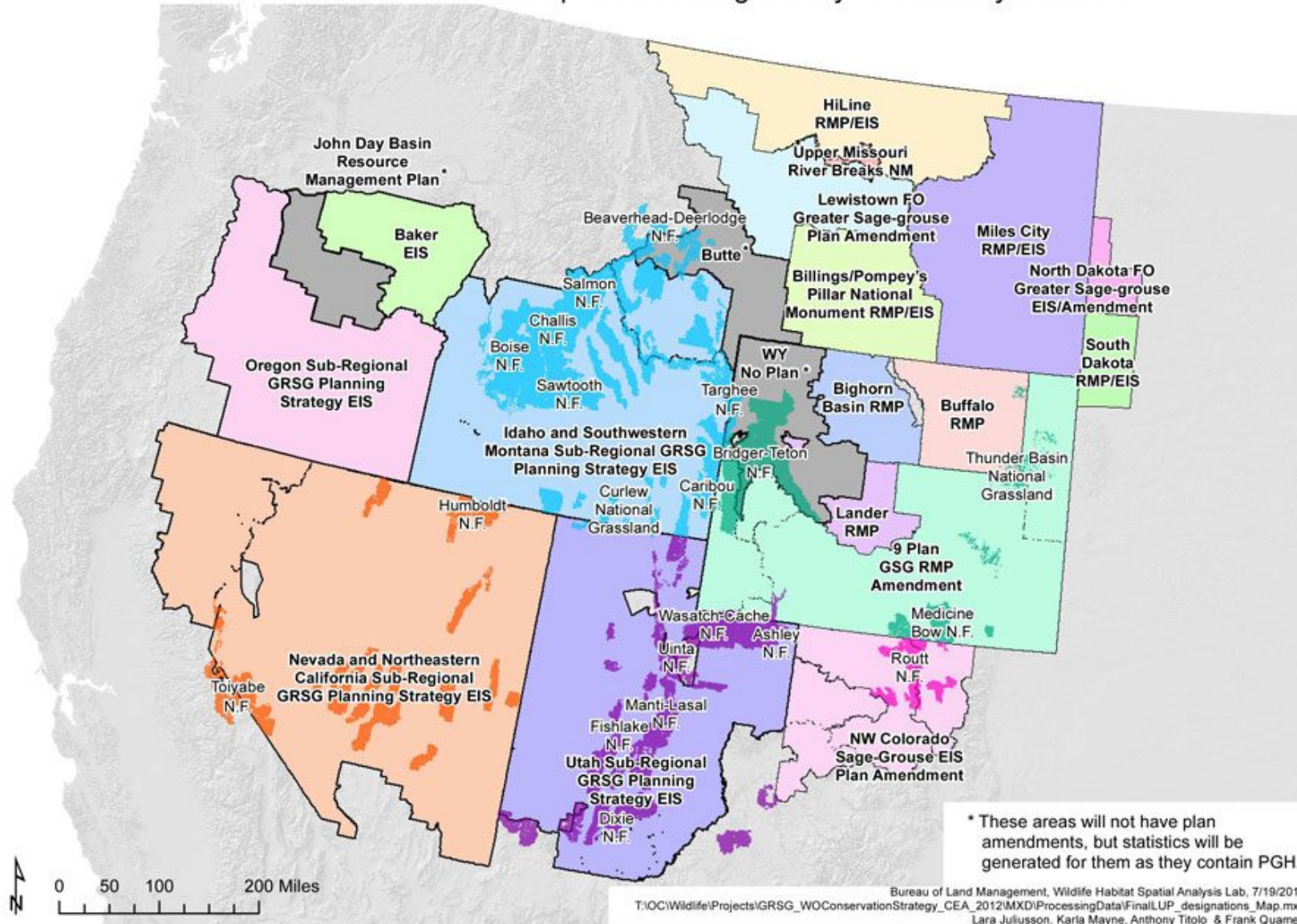


Table 2. Summary of BLM/FS Planning Efforts (green cells indicate phases that are complete; yellow cells indicate phases that are expected to be complete in the next 2 months).

Region	State	Planning Area	Draft	Proposed	ROD	Plan Assessment ¹	Communication ¹
1	Idaho	Idaho and SW Montana Subregion	Sept. 2013	March 2014	Summer 2014	C	A
	Oregon	Oregon Subregion (including Baker EIS revision)	Sept. 2013	March 2014	Summer 2014	C↑	A
	Washington	Washington	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	C↑	B↑
6	Colorado	NW Colorado	Aug 2013	February 2014	Summer 2014	C↑	B
	Montana	HiLine	3/23/13	October 2013?	Spring 2014	C↑	C↑
		Lewistown	September 2013	February 2014?	Fall 2014	C↑	C↑
		Billings/Pompey's Pillar NM	3/31/13	September 2013?	Spring 2014	C↑	C↑
		Miles City	3/8/13	October 2013?	Spring 2014	D↑	C↑
	North Dakota	North Dakota	July 2013	February 2014	Fall 2014	D↑	B↑
	South Dakota	South Dakota	06/14/13	October 2013	Spring 2014	D↑	B
	Utah	Utah Subregion	Sept. 2013	March	Summer	C	A

Region	State	Planning Area	Draft	Proposed	ROD	Plan Assessment ¹	Communication ¹
				2014	2014		
	Wyoming (updated 7/15/13)	Bighorn Basin (Supplement)	July 2013	February 2014	July 2014	C	B↑
		Buffalo	June 2013	Spring 2014	Summer 2014	C	B↑
		Lander	9/9/11	2/22/13	August 2013	A	B↑
		9 Plan	Sept. 2013	April 2014	Summer 2014	C	B↑
8	California/ Nevada	Nevada and NE California Subregion	Sept. 2013	March 2014	Summer 2014	D↑	B↑

¹See Appendix for categories and criteria.

State-by-State Narratives

Region 1

Idaho

- **State Plan:** The State developed a draft alternative for BLM process with FO. FO did not believe it to be adequate. State knew there was work to do. By end of August, gave a product to BLM without FWS endorsement. State wants to know what FWS wants. Entered into red light/green light process. Nothing in writing, all verbal. Most recently, the Governor's office contacted the Service for meeting. FWS/BLM/State continue to develop alternative for BLM process. The FO continues to work with the State to develop a more comprehensive Plan.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** BLM developed a draft alternative with FO. Relationship with BLM has been strong. BLM has good leadership and they are pro-active. BLM has been pressured by State to use its plan as preferred alternative. BLM has said they do not want to include a preferred alternative in draft documents.
- **NRCS & other efforts:** NRCS is working collaboratively with the FO to target GRP/FRPP and EQUIP dollars towards conservation on landscape scales. The relationship is strong. Currently working on the development of a CCA with Idaho National Laboratory. The process is going smoothly and the relationship is good.

Oregon (Last updated 7-2-2013)

- **State Plan:** There is a 2011 State Plan which FWS supported (but noted the lack of regulatory mechanisms); if implemented, it would go a long way to reduce threats in Oregon. Voluntary and recommendations only. The State plans to develop an implementation strategy – expected in January 2014. The Governor created workgroups staffed by State, USFWS, and other feds and NGOs.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** FO task is to provide increased guidance, direction, and participation to BLM RMP and Oregon effort.
- **NRCS & other efforts:** Met with NRCS staff to improve working relations and developing increase coordination for landowner conversations.

Washington (Last updated 7-2-2013)

- **State Plan:** The state plan is generally good but needs updating, to be reviewed for its sufficiency with the COT report, and an associated implementation plan. Coordination has been good. The State has agreed to updating the state plan.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** BLM has a limited portion of habitat, so BLM-Washington RMP is not sage-grouse centric in its purpose and need. The challenge for management is that most of the BLM lands have not been occupied by GrSG. Just in the last year or two, birds from the State's translocation efforts have moved into BLM managed habitat. So there is a reluctance to be particularly conservative in areas of habitat not yet occupied. The State is at the table with BLM and in agreement with FWS on being conservative in impacts to sage grouse due to their population status, but FWS hasn't seen a final draft

of the EIS yet. Washington is excluded from the planning IM that directs the BLM's national effort in resource management planning regarding sage-grouse. FWS and BLM are entering into an MOU for FWS to act as a cooperating agency. A draft MOU is being reviewed for signature.

- **NRCS:** An excellent working relationship and combined efforts to manage habitats on private lands have occurred, including incorporating significant private acreage into sage-grouse management through NRCS programs. The FWS shares a range conservationist/biologist under the Sage Grouse Initiative program, to address threats on private lands within occupied GrSG habitat.

Region 6

Colorado

- **State Plan:** There is a state conservation plan (2008), also signed by federal agencies. Not regulatory, but includes a developed conservation strategy, identifies risk factors and BMPs to minimize effects of those activities, identifies key parties to carry out BMPs and gives costs. However, it is purely advisory. The State compiled information regarding implementation. The FO evaluated the information and coordinated with our RO and RD, who provided input back to the State in June. Another RO/RD/FO meeting/call with the State to discuss COT objectives in relation to the plan occurred on July 15. We conveyed to the State ways to improve reporting on implementation of their plan: 1) write a narrative report containing a qualitative assessment of plan implementation and GRSG population status, 2) maintain a database containing details of accomplishments of plan components, and 3) include a spatial analysis of conservation measures and threats (conservation easements, habitat treatments, wildfires, oil and gas development, exurban development, etc.).
- **BLM RMPs revisions:** BLM-USFS issued a DEIS on August 16, 2013, beginning a 90-day public comment period. The Colorado ES office has begun reviewing the DEIS. Alternative D is the preferred alternative. Alternative D in the Cooperating Agency draft addressed most of the goals and objectives in the COT report including addressing private land issues such as agriculture and housing development to the extent possible. Consideration for incorporation of FWS recommendations to include conservation measures under Alternatives B or C will be done after the public review draft and may be incorporated into the final EIS. BLM worked with the US Forest Service in Colorado to incorporate their comments from the Cooperating Agency draft into the DEIS. Garfield County has submitted its own plan for the County, including remapping of PPH and PGH, and BLM has attached as an appendix to the public DEIS. Grand County has also started an effort to remap PPH and PGH but recently received CPW data that may influence their decisions. Jackson County (North Park GRSG population) has also inquired about the mapping process and is considering remapping PPH and PGH as well.
- **NRCS:** Unknown

Montana (Last Updated 9-5-2013)

- **State Plan:** There is an existing 2005 State Plan which does not include regulatory protection. FWS has communicated this to the State. New governor has established an Executive Order to start a task force for state plan revision. This first meeting of the task force was May 21-23, 2013, during which the Service's Sage Grouse Coordinator presented information regarding the listing process. The second meeting was June 11-12, 2013 and focused on infrastructure and wind. The third was June 25-26, and focused on energy and mining. Subsequent meetings were conducted July 16/17, July 30/31, August 13/14, and September 4/5. Each series of meetings focuses on a threat or group of threats, culminating in preliminary draft recommendations relative to those threats. The goal is to develop a draft plan by fall 2013, with a final in early 2014. Montana Ecological Services personnel are serving in an advisory capacity to the task force and will participate throughout the revision process. There should be a preliminary draft plan available for initial comment on September 17, 2013. Pressure from Farm Bureau, Ag. Community to move the needle on listing.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** The Service has been very involved in BLM's process so far, although involvement often has come at the last moment. The Service needs adequate lead time to provide quality input and has communicated this to BLM. Public 90-day review periods for three DRMP/DEISs have closed; the BLM is revising the effects analysis for all of these documents, which the Service has not seen. The Service is commenting as a cooperating agency outside of the 90-day review period on these three documents, and has provided comments for the Miles City and HiLine DEISs, which lacked effects analysis and clarity. Coordination will continue. Comments on the Billings DEIS will be issued shortly. The Service also commented on the Lewistown ADEIS and some recently revised draft materials (in response to Service comments), which have shown improvement from earlier versions. BLM is also serving in an advisory capacity to the MT sage-grouse task force, which has been beneficial communication-wise to both the MT and BLM efforts.
- **NRCS & other efforts:** The NRCS is working with partners. Good coordination and progress.

North Dakota:

- **State Plan:** State Plan revisions began last month. ND is seeking Section 6 funding for translocations from MT to ND. Purpose of the translocations is unclear given that a hunting season is still "on the books," but the intent is to curb the downward trend in abundance by boosting the reproductive potential of the population. Oil industry is willing to help. Similar to SD, ND has a hunting season, although it is currently closed.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** There are State concerns with lack of specificity and lack of current science in BLM revisions. The Service has been at the table, but the current statuses of the revisions are unclear. BLM in North Dakota is reluctant to give specifics on what will be done to conserve the species.

- **NRCS & other efforts:** unknown.

South Dakota (Last updated 8/2/13):

- **State Plan:** The existing plan does not provide any real regulatory mechanisms other than regulating hunting. The new State plan is under review internally and it should be out for our review in December. The State closed their hunting season effective July 2013.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** BLM has expressed to the Service that it will be key to ensure that all Service-preferred protection measures are represented in the various alternatives so that BLM can pick and choose from them when they sign the ROD. The implication is that there will not be one alternative in the NEPA document that includes all FWS desired measures for GSG. FO is reviewing the Draft with comments due in September.
- **NRCS & other efforts:** Initiatives are on the ground and moving. FWS feels good about their progress. The practices are focused on the correct areas for the most part.

Utah (Last Updated 7/18/13)

- **State Plan:** The State issued a final Plan on April 23rd 2013. The FO prepared a response letter (sent 5/8/13) that detailed areas of agreement and areas we would like to continue discussion on as they refine and implement the State Plan. Significant concerns still exist over several parts of the Plan but the Service and State have agreed to move forward with conservation efforts recognizing that we are not in complete agreement with several regulatory mechanisms proposed for federal lands and the lack of any regulatory mechanisms coupled to the land owner incentive approach for non-federal lands. Although communication with the State is good we do not expect significant changes in the State Plan in response to Service concerns. The State does not believe it can successfully implement regulatory mechanisms on private lands and believes landowner incentives will be successful. The State has invited the Utah FWS to serve as a member of an advisory group to implement the recently adopted Utah Conservation Plan for GSG. The first meeting was held 7/9/13. Along with other Federal agencies (FS, BLM, etc.) we have notified the State that we would contribute to the group only in an advisory role.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** BLM and FO are coordinating well. BLM has identified a full range of alternatives for consideration but has not identified a preferred yet. FO and BLM are holding regular coordination meetings as the EIS process proceeds
- **NRCS:** The FO is coordinating closely with NRCS

Wyoming (Last Updated 7/15/13)

- **State Plan:** Wyoming is the only state where the Service has formally supported the State Plan. Oil and gas companies are starting to modify plans to avoid and minimize disturbance in core areas and in important habitats. Companies no longer seeking relief from raptor seasonal and spatial buffers.

- **BLM RMP revisions:** The BLM has not given the Service enough time to review draft documents, but BLM and FO are meeting frequently. BLM saying that their preferred alternative will mimic the Executive Order, which the Service supports.
- **NRCS:** There is a CCAA for ranch operations (allotment holders on public lands) in progress. The SGI has been active in Wyoming, but we are not sure if NRCS is coordinating with the state. They have not coordinated with the ES office.

Region 8

California

- **State Plan:** CAL Fish and Game has no plan to complete a state plan, but have participated in plans for bi-state DPS and tends to follow Nevada regarding greater sage-grouse. The State is contemplating state listing.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** The BLM relationship with the Service is great. RMP revisions will track Nevada plan revisions and FWS expects conservation for the species.

Nevada

- **State Plan:** In the summer of 2012, Nevada produced a Report of which the most important component was a commitment to no net loss of habitat. So any acreage lost will be mitigated. In June 2013 the Legislature created by statute what was the Governor's Sagebrush Ecosystem Council. This group is currently working to create a state plan focused on an approach to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to sage grouse and their habitat from development activities. It will also address fire and invasive species. The Council has created a Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team to carry out more detailed planning and on-the-ground activities.
- **BLM RMP revisions:** NFWO continued to build a good relationship with BLM-NV. The status of planning efforts, following July 1st comments supplied to BLM, continues with moderate level input in from FWS. BLM has completed their local and regional reviews, and the draft LUPA/EIS has been submitted to their DC office for comments prior to publication of the Draft in September.
- **NRCS and other efforts:** NRCS is implementing SGI in Nevada, but to an unknown degree. NewMont Mine had approached FWS for a 2.2M acre Plan because their mining may impact sage-grouse, but there's been no activity from them for several months.
- **NFWO and Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team (ETT)** sponsored a foundational meeting (7/31) for a Nevada Cheatgrass Action Committee. Three landowners, including Newmont Mining, Southern Nevada Water Authority, and Smith Creek Ranch approached FWS volunteering the use of their lands for cheatgrass control efforts. NDOW has initially volunteered to coordinate initial field visits to the sites, which should take place in August. NFWO & ETT will continue to coordinate the overall Team project for the time being.

APPENDIX: Categories and Criteria for the Status of State, BLM and other planning efforts

Note: sufficiency in this context is NOT an official FWS position, it simply represents the opinion of individuals filling out this table. This is an iterative process and subject to change as new information becomes available. We need to have open internal deliberations as we move through our assessment of the adequacy of State and BLM plans. As such this table should be treated as PREDECISIONAL AND DELIBERATIVE ONLY.

State Plans

Plan Assessment

A – State plan is complete and sufficiently addresses sage-grouse conservation needs. Regulatory mechanisms are in place and the plan is reasonably certain to be implemented and effective.

B – State plan is complete and sufficiently addresses sage-grouse conservation needs; however it lacks regulatory mechanisms that are reasonably certain to be implemented or effective. The State is actively working on developing regulatory mechanisms to implement the plan prior to September 2015.

C – State plan is incomplete. Progress is being made on completing a plan that sufficiently addresses sage-grouse conservation needs. The plan is expected to include regulatory mechanisms that are reasonably certain to be implemented and effective.

D – State plan is incomplete. Progress is being made on completing a plan, but there are significant uncertainties as to whether it will contain regulatory mechanisms that sufficiently address sage-grouse conservation needs.

E – State plan is complete; however it either lacks regulatory mechanisms that are reasonably certain to be implemented or effective (and it doesn't intend to develop them) OR it does not adequately address sage-grouse conservation needs.

F – State plan is incomplete. Progress on the plan is stalled or the plan is not expected to provide regulatory mechanisms that adequately address sage-grouse conservation needs.

G – No State plan in development

Communication

A – Excellent, no issues. Communication is frequent and effective.

B - Good ; some minor issues, but both parties are actively seeking ways to improve communication.

C – Insufficient communication; issues are not getting resolved or elevated effectively. People are not getting invited to meetings or calls in a timely manner and no indication that the responsible party is working to improve communication.

D – Poor communication. The parties involved are not working effectively to resolve issues or find solutions. Management intervention needed.

Modifiers that can be inserted after the Letter category

↑ - Trending positive – There is an expectation that the plan will move into a lower-letter category (toward A) in the future.

↓ - Trending negative – There is an expectation that the plan will move into a higher-letter category (toward Z) in the future.

BLM and Forest Service Management Plans

Plan Assessment

A – BLM/FS Plan and EIS complete and sufficiently address sage-grouse conservation needs. Plan is reasonably certain to be implemented and effective.

B – BLM/FS Draft Plan and Draft EIS published and preferred alternative sufficiently addresses sage-grouse conservation needs.

C – BLM/FS Draft Plan and EIS incomplete. Progress is being made on publishing a preferred alternative that sufficiently addresses sage-grouse conservation needs. All indications so far are that the Plan will sufficiently address sage-grouse conservation needs.

D – BLM/FS Draft EIS incomplete. Progress is being made on publishing a preferred alternative, but there are significant uncertainties as to whether it will contain measures that sufficiently address sage-grouse conservation needs.

E – BLM/FS Draft EIS incomplete and we expect that their preferred alternative will not sufficiently address sage-grouse conservation needs.

F – A plan amendment or revision is not expected to be completed in time for consideration in our FY2015 decision.

Communication

A – Excellent, no issues. Communication is frequent and effective.

B - Good; some minor issues, but both parties are actively seeking ways to improve communication.

C – Insufficient communication; issues are not getting resolved or elevated effectively. People are not getting invited to meetings or calls in a timely manner and no indication that the responsible party is working to improve communication.

D – Poor communication. The parties involved are not working effectively to resolve issues or find solutions. Management intervention needed.

Modifiers that can be inserted after the Letter category

↑ - Trending positive – There is an expectation that the plan or EIS will move into a lower-letter category (toward A) in the future.

↓ - Trending negative – There is an expectation that the plan will move into a higher-letter category (toward Z) in the future.