



Greater Sage-Grouse

Conservation and Ecology

Mac Lacy, Senior Attorney
Oregon Natural Desert Association
OSB, ENR Section presentation
Mar. 22, 2018 - Portland, Oregon | lacy@onda.org

A Bird in Serious Trouble

- Perhaps only 50,000 birds left, from as many as 16 million pre-European settlement.
- ODFW estimates 2017 population in Oregon was 20,510 individuals, a 7.7% decline from 2016, and 30% below 2003 baseline estimate of 29,237.
- ESA listing history – from “not warranted” to “warranted” and back again. Listing criteria at 16 U.S.C. § 1533(a)(1).



The Sagebrush Sea

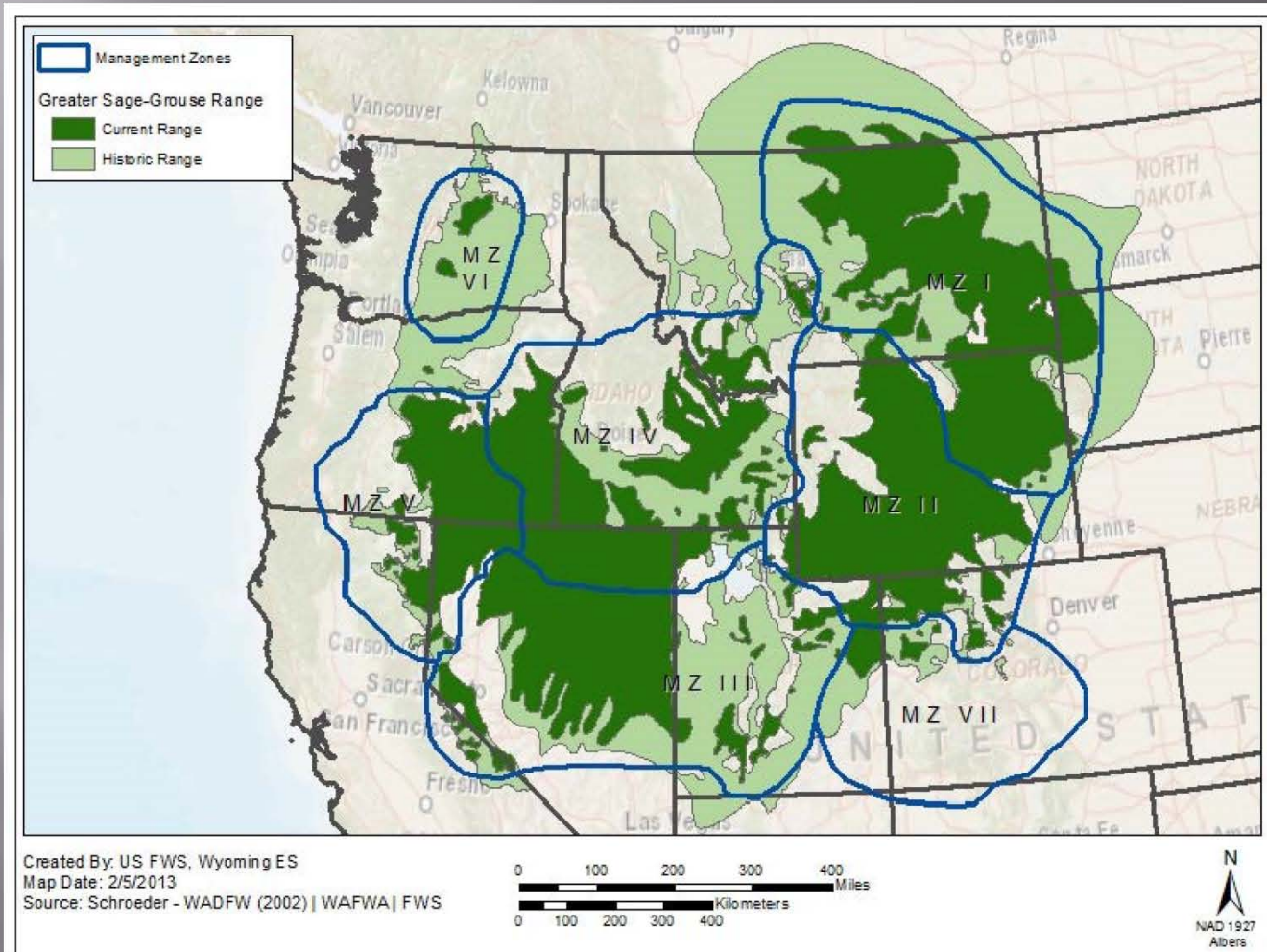


Figure 1. The current (occupied since the late 1990s) and historic (maximum distribution from the 1800s to early 1990s) range of the greater sage-grouse (Schroeder et al. 2004).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, CO. February 2013.

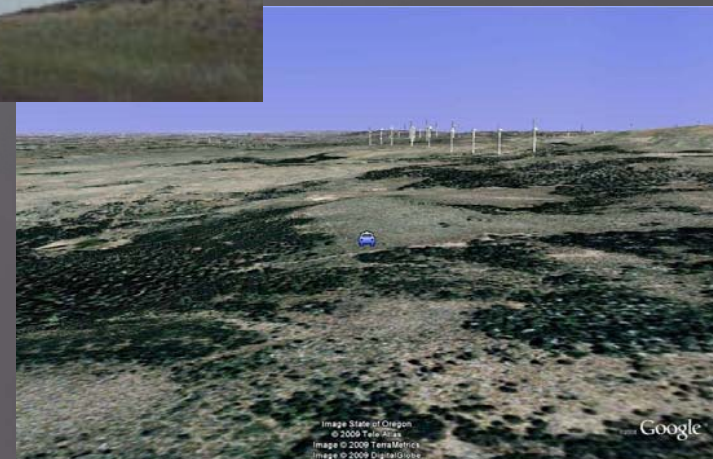
Sage-grouse Ecology

- Sagebrush obligate & landscape-scale species.
- Life cycle revolves around the seasons: breeding, nesting, brood-rearing, over-wintering.
- Two remaining habitat strongholds: one anchored around southeastern Oregon, and a second centered on southern Wyoming.



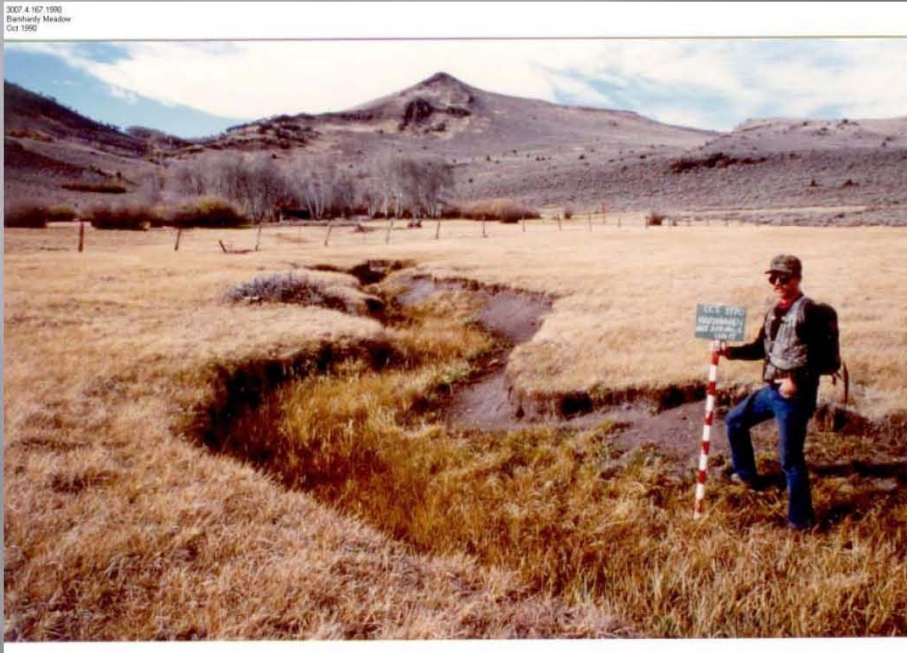
Threats to Sage-Grouse

- Fragmentation and loss of sagebrush habitat, including increasing isolation of populations.
- Human activities including livestock grazing and rangeland infrastructure, energy development and transmission, expanding road networks.
- Habitat conversion, e.g. as weeds spread and replace sagebrush, via grazing, roads, wildfire, etc.



Cattle Grazing

Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge



1990

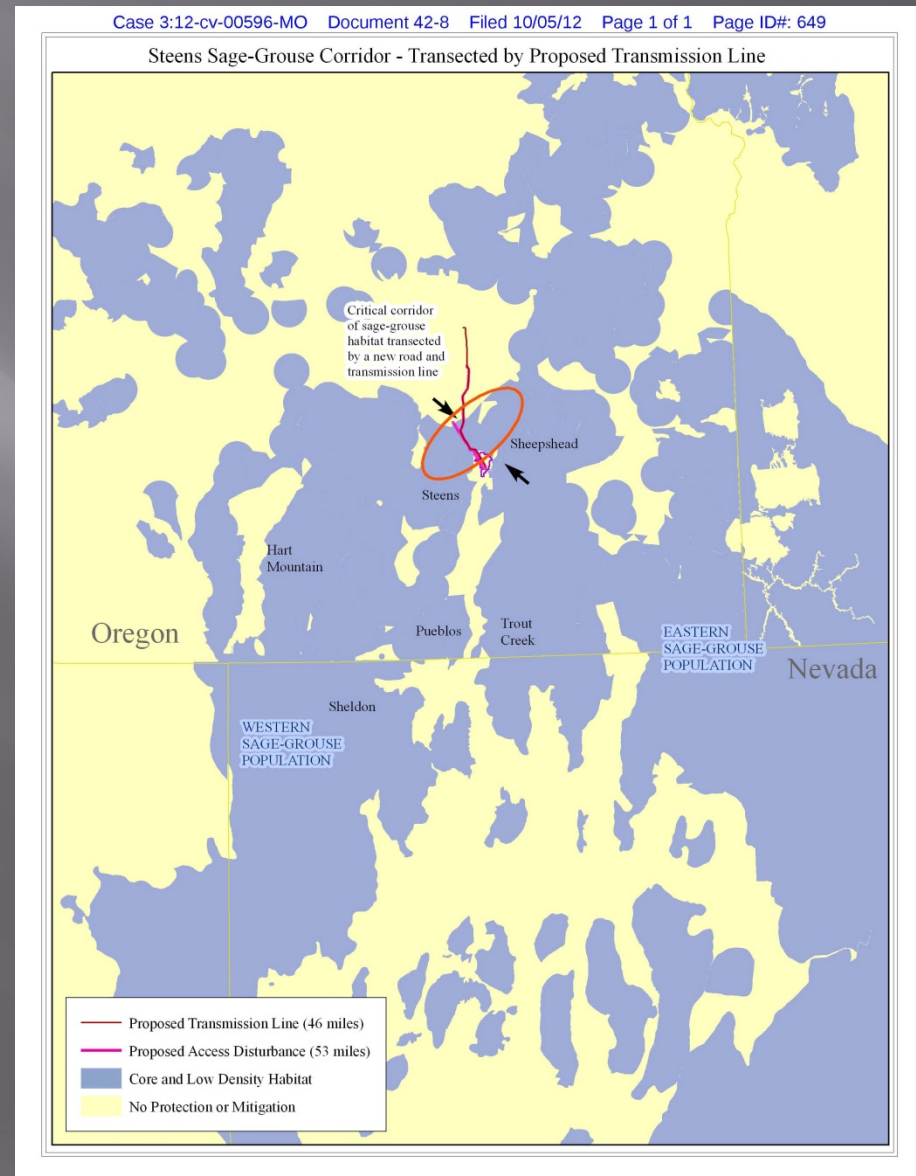


2013

Photographs courtesy Dr. Robert Beschta, Emeritus Professor,
Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society, Oregon State University

Sage-grouse Conservation

- Complexity and vast scale of habitat requires two-fold approach: core areas + connectivity corridors.
- BLM/USFS amend 98 land use plans across 10 states in 2015, adding important measures like Sagebrush Focal Areas, disturbance caps, adaptive management triggers.
- 11 lawsuits (ten by industry groups and state and local governments, one by conservation groups).



Revisiting the Federal Plans

- In 2017, at Secretary Zinke's direction, BLM proposes amending plans to weaken or remove protections and processes.
- Some rollbacks already accomplished (cancellation of proposed 10 million acre mineral withdrawal; rescission of mitigation policies).
- All lawsuits currently stayed.



Looking Ahead

- How dramatically will Dep't of the Interior revise the federal plans?
- Will BLM field offices continue to implement?
- PEISs to review things like fuel breaks and hazardous fuels reduction projects at a landscape scale.
- On track for a 2020 listing?



