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Idaho Department of Lands outlines plan to protect sage grouse habitat

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(BOISE) - The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) laid out **proposed conservation measures to protect sage grouse habitat** on rangelands owned by the state endowment trust. It also outlined proposed conservation measures for the department's roles in wildfire prevention and suppression, and regulating oil and gas development and some mining activity.

The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) heard an informational update on the draft plan today.

[View the draft IDL Proposed Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan here.](#)

The IDL draft plan complements Governor Otter's sage grouse plan for federal land management in Idaho.

The Governor's plan was submitted to the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in September 2012. The Governor's Plan was incorporated in the November 2013 BLM Draft Idaho and Southwest Montana Sub-Regional Sage-grouse Land Use Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement, where it was presented as a "co-preferred alternative."

With the development of federal land management practices for sage-grouse, the USFWS asked 11 western states with sage-grouse habitat to develop complementary conservation measures for state lands. The Governor's Office of Species Conservation and IDL Director Tom Schultz began developing conservation measures for endowment trust lands in Idaho to **further demonstrate Idaho's commitment to conserving sage-grouse to prevent a listing of the species** under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

In October 2014 Schultz tasked the development of the draft plan to a group of IDL experts who oversee programs that could be affected by a sage-grouse listing.

Governor Otter backed up Idaho's commitment with a budget recommendation of \$750,000 for sage-grouse conservation activities, including \$250,000 for IDL to implement cooperative fuel breaks on endowment rangelands and money to refurbish firefighting equipment for use by Idaho's rangeland fire protection associations - groups of ranchers trained and legally authorized to fight range fires in Idaho.

The IDL is soliciting feedback from the public on the draft plan through March 2, 2015. Comments can be e-mailed to Pat Seymour, Endangered Species Program Manager at pseymour@idl.idaho.gov. The IDL also is working with natural resource industry user groups, environmental organizations, and relevant state agencies to fine-tune the draft plan. Many of the participants also are members of the Governor's Sage Grouse Task Force.

In March the Land Board and Oil and Gas Conservation Commission will vote to approve portions of the plan that have to do with their respective authorities.

The USFWS will consider the Idaho

IDL Proposed Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan

Conservation Measures for Activities on State Endowment Trust Lands

More than 600,000 acres of state endowment rangeland in southern Idaho fall within identified "core" and "important" habitat zones. The acreage makes up about 44 percent of endowment rangeland ownership in Idaho.

For proposed activities by third parties on state endowment trust lands, IDL will implement sage-grouse conservation measures as enforceable stipulations in authorizing documents such as leases, permits, and easements. Authorized activities include:

- Alternative energy development (solar, wind and geothermal)
- Oil and gas exploration and development
- Mining
- Grazing
- Miscellaneous commercial activities
- The granting of access through rights-of-way, including easements

Additionally, IDL as the land manager will implement and support fire prevention and mitigation measures and wildfire suppression efforts to minimize the impact to sage-grouse and their habitat.

Conservation Measures for Regulated Activities in the Oil & Gas and Minerals Programs

For regulatory and assistance activities, conservation measures will be voluntary best management practices (BMPs) on private land. Where appropriate, IDL will include recommended BMPs in its authorizing documents to encourage compliance. Activities include:

- Abandoned Mine Lands projects
- Dredge and Placer Mine permits
- Mine Reclamation Plan approvals
- Oil and Gas Permits (seismic imaging surveys, well drilling)
- Oil and Gas Development

plan, including the IDL plan nested within the broader state effort, and conservation measures outlined by ten other western states and regulatory mechanisms for federal lands in the states, before it makes a decision whether to list sage-grouse under the ESA.

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News Media Contact:

Sharla Arledge, IDL Public Information Officer
(208) 334-0286 or sarledge@idl.idaho.gov

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