

Greater Sage Grouse PSR - Decision

220-200-100 and 220-610-010

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## Fish and Wildlife Commission Presentation Summary Sheet

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**Meeting date:**

4/23/2021

**Agenda item:**

Greater Sage Grouse Periodic Status Review (up-list) – Decision

**Presenter(s):**

Taylor Cotten, Conservation Assessment Section Manager, Diversity Division, Wildlife Program

**Background summary:**

Department staff briefed the Commission on the proposed up-listing for the “greater” sage-grouse. The sage-grouse was state-listed as threatened in 1998, and a state recovery plan was completed in 2004.

The potential for wildfires to eliminate sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) on extensive areas has been the greatest ongoing threat to sage-grouse in Washington, as we have seen in 2020. However, with the continued decline, all of Washington’s populations are now likely suffering from problems with genetic health and fitness related to small population size. Uncertainty about the long-term maintenance of habitat that depends on Farm Bill programs (CRP/SAFE) is also a major concern. Other major management issues include habitat that is fragmented by roads, agriculture, and development and degraded by past wildfires, historical excessive livestock grazing, fencing, electrical transmission lines, and exotic vegetation. Sage-grouse may suffer mortality rates above historical levels as a result of collisions with fences, powerlines, and vehicles, and higher populations of some generalist predators, especially ravens and coyotes.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and several partner organizations are working on habitat and other aspects of sage-grouse recovery. Without these efforts, the sage-grouse would likely decline to extinction in Washington. In Spring 2020, sage-grouse had not yet declined to population levels indicated in the 2004 state recovery plan for up-listing (<650 birds); however, that was before the devastating fires of September, and the threshold assumed that the Douglas County and Joint Base Lewis-McChord – Yakama Training Center (JBLM-YTC) populations were connected, which now appears unjustified. Due in part to their polygynous mating system, the effective size of the three populations are ~107 birds for Douglas County and ten birds for JBLM-YTC. Extinction of the Lincoln County population is all but certain, and of the JBLM-YTC within a decade or so is likely unless they can be increased substantially. The hope of any reintroductions in the future is tempered by the recent failure of the reintroduction project by the Yakama Nation, the probable failure of the Lincoln County population, and the continued loss of habitat in suitable condition by wildland fire.

Concurrent with this troubling decline, genomic analysis has indicated that Washington’s population is more distinct than the bi-state population that was proposed for listing as a threatened ‘Distinct Population Segment’ under the Endangered Species Act (USFWS 2019). For these reasons, it is recommended that sage-grouse be up-listed to endangered in Washington.

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**Staff recommendation:**

Up-list Greater Sage-Grouse to Endangered classification in the state of Washington.

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**Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:** The changes to the rule above were discussed in the March FWC meeting.

- Conserve, protect, and recover Washington’s native wildlife.
- Additional recognition to the conservation need of the species.

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**Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:**

None.

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

In February 2020, the agency sent out a press release and posted a request on our website to solicit information from the public to be included in the coming Periodic Status Reviews and Status Reports. In accordance with WAC regulations, individuals and organizations had one year to contribute information for the reviews. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff included this information as applicable in the status review documents. The documents were then reviewed by WDFW staff and external species experts before 90-day public comment periods on the document and our findings. There was substantial response to the 90-day public comment period on the Periodic Status Review with 1,257 comments in support of up-listing primarily from two form letter copies, and 1 comment not supporting the recommendation out of concern it could lead to federal listing.

Additionally, these individuals and organizations were informed of the opportunity to provide verbal testimony at the March 25-27, 2021 Commission meeting online.

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**Action requested and/or proposed next steps:**

Adopt WAC 220-200-100 and 220-610-010 as presented by staff.

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**Draft motion language:**

Motion: I move to adopt the recommended rule changes as presented by staff.

Is there a “second”?

If so, then motion maker discusses basis for motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

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**Post decision communications plan:**

- Website update
- News release
- WAC updates

**WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished.** Protected wildlife are designated into three subcategories: Threatened, sensitive, and other.

(1) Threatened species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as threatened include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
western gray squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>
sea otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
(greater sage grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> )
Mazama pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys mazama</i>
American white pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>

(2) Sensitive species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as sensitive include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
Gray whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Larch Mountain salamander	<i>Plethodon larselli</i>
Pygmy whitefish	<i>Prosopium coulteri</i>
Margined sculpin	<i>Cottus marginatus</i>
Olympic mudminnow	<i>Novumbra hubbsi</i>

(3) Other protected wildlife include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
cony or pika	<i>Ochotona princeps</i>
least chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>
yellow-pine chipmunk	<i>Tamias amoenus</i>
Townsend's chipmunk	<i>Tamias townsendii</i>
red-tailed chipmunk	<i>Tamias ruficaudus</i>
hoary marmot	<i>Marmota caligata</i>
Olympic marmot	<i>Marmota olympus</i>
Cascade golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus saturatus</i>
golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus lateralis</i>
Washington ground squirrel	<i>Urocitellus washingtoni</i>
red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
Douglas squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus douglasii</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
northern flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i>
Humboldt's flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys oregonensis</i>
wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
painted turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>
California mountain kingsnake	<i>Lampropeltis zonata</i>

All birds not classified as game birds, predatory birds or endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species; all bats, except when found in or immediately adjacent to a dwelling or other occupied building; mammals of the order *Cetacea*, including whales, porpoises, and mammals of the order *Pinnipedia* not otherwise classified as endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species. This section shall not apply to hair seals and sea lions which are threatening to damage or are damaging commercial fishing gear being utilized in a lawful manner or when said mammals are damaging or threatening to damage commercial fish being lawfully taken with commercial gear.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 19-13-013, filed 6/7/19,

effective 7/8/19

**WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species.**

Endangered species include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
pygmy rabbit	<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>
fisher	<i>Pekania pennanti</i>
gray wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
grizzly bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>
fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
North Pacific right whale	<i>Eubalaena japonica</i>
sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>
Columbian white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leucurus</i>
woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>
sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
snowy plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>
upland sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>
western pond turtle	<i>Clemmys marmorata</i>
leatherback sea turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
mardon skipper	<i>Polites mardon</i>
Oregon silverspot butterfly	<i>Speyeria zerene hippolyta</i>
Oregon spotted frog	<i>Rana pretiosa</i>
northern leopard frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>
Taylor's checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas editha taylori</i>
streaked horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris strigata</i>
tufted puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>
North American lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>
marbled murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
<u>yellow-billed cuckoo</u>	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>
Pinto abalone	<i>Halotis kamtschatkana</i>
<u>greater sage grouse</u>	<u><i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i></u>

[Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047. WSR 19-13-013 (Order 18-120), § 220-610-010, filed 6/7/19, effective 7/8/19; WSR 18-17-153 (Order 18-207), § 220-610-010, filed 8/21/18, effective 9/21/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047. WSR 17-20-030 (Order 17-254), § 220-610-010, filed 9/27/17, effective 10/28/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.020, 77.04.055, and 77.12.047. WSR 17-05-112 (Order 17-04), recodified as § 220-610-010, filed 2/15/17, effective 3/18/17. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047. WSR 17-02-084 (Order 17-02), § 232-12-014, filed 1/4/17, effective 2/4/17; WSR 16-11-023 (Order 16-84), § 232-12-014, filed 5/6/16, effective 6/6/16; WSR 15-10-022 (Order 14-95), § 232-12-014, filed 4/27/15, effective 5/28/15. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047, 77.12.020. WSR 06-04-066 (Order 06-09), § 232-12-014, filed 1/30/06, effective 3/2/06; WSR 04-11-036 (Order 04-98), § 232-12-014, filed 5/12/04, effective 6/12/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.047, 77.12.655, 77.12.020. WSR 02-11-069 (Order 02-98), § 232-12-014, filed 5/10/02, effective 6/10/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.040, 77.12.010, 77.12.020, 77.12.770, 77.12.780. WSR 00-04-017 (Order 00-05), § 232-12-014, filed 1/24/00, effective 2/24/00. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.020. WSR 98-23-013 (Order 98-232), § 232-12-014, filed 11/6/98, effective 12/7/98;

WSR 97-18-019 (Order 97-167), § 232-12-014, filed 8/25/97, effective 9/25/97; WSR 93-21-026 (Order 616), § 232-12-014, filed 10/14/93, effective 11/14/93. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.020(6). WSR 88-05-032 (Order 305), § 232-12-014, filed 2/12/88. Statutory Authority: RCW 77.12.040. WSR 82-19-026 (Order 192), § 232-12-014, filed 9/9/82; WSR 81-22-002 (Order 174), § 232-12-014, filed 10/22/81; WSR 81-12-029 (Order 165), § 232-12-014, filed 6/1/81.]



## **Summary of Public Comments Received During the Official Comment Period and WDFW Response:**

### PSR – Greater Sage Grouse

#### **Written Supporting Comments:**

There was substantial response to the 90-day public comment period on the Periodic Status Review with 1,257 comments in support of up-listing primarily from two form letter copies.

#### **Written Opposing, Neutral, and Other Comments:**

There was substantial response to the 90-day public comment period on the Periodic Status Review with one comment not supporting the recommendation out of concern it could lead to federal listing.

#### **Fish and Wildlife Commission Hearing, Public Comments:**

There was zero public testimony for the greater sage grouse during the March Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting.

#### **Rationale-Agency Action Regarding Comments:**

*[RCW 34.05.325 (6)(iii) Summarizing all comments received regarding the proposed rule, and responding to the comments by category or subject matter, indicating how the final rule reflects agency consideration of the comments, or why it fails to do so.]*

The greater sage grouse if uplisted to endangered would not be considered during this periodic status review as federally listed. If, in the future that is a recommendation, the department staff would go through the same process of a 1 year



# PROPOSED RULE MAKING

## CR-102 (December 2017) (Implements RCW 34.05.320)

Do NOT use for expedited rule making

CODE REVISER USE ONLY

OFFICE OF THE CODE REVISER  
STATE OF WASHINGTON  
FILED

DATE: February 11, 2021

TIME: 12:11 PM

WSR 21-05-038

Agency: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

Original Notice

Supplemental Notice to WSR \_\_\_\_\_

Continuance of WSR \_\_\_\_\_

Preproposal Statement of Inquiry was filed as WSR 20-21-057 on October 14, 2020 ; or

Expedited Rule Making--Proposed notice was filed as WSR \_\_\_\_\_; or

Proposal is exempt under RCW 34.05.310(4) or 34.05.330(1); or

Proposal is exempt under RCW \_\_\_\_\_.

Title of rule and other identifying information: (describe subject)

WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished.

WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species.

### Hearing location(s):

Date:	Time:	Location: (be specific)	Comment:
March 25-27, 2021	8:00 a.m.	Webinar	This meeting will take place by webinar. The public may participate in the meeting. Visit our website at <a href="http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission/meetings">http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission/meetings</a> or contact the Commission office at (360) 902-2267 or <a href="mailto:commission@dfw.wa.gov">commission@dfw.wa.gov</a> for instruction on how to join the meeting.

Date of intended adoption: April 22-24, 2021 (Note: This is NOT the effective date)

### Submit written comments to:

Name: Wildlife Program

Address: PO Box 43200, Olympia, WA. 98504

Email: [Rules.Coordinator@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Rules.Coordinator@dfw.wa.gov)

Fax: (360) 902-2162

Other: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/86HJTCJ>

SEPA Comments: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/sepa/open-comments>

By (date) March 11, 2021

### Assistance for language translation, alternate format or reasonable accommodation:

Contact Title VI/ADA Compliance Coordinator

Phone: (360) 902-2349, TTY (711)

Email: [Title6@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Title6@dfw.wa.gov)

For more information, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>

By (date) March 18, 2021

**Purpose of the proposal and its anticipated effects, including any changes in existing rules:** The purpose of this rule proposal is to classify the "greater" sage-grouse as endangered in the state of Washington under WAC 220-610-010. Anticipated effects include the additional recognition and prioritization of the conservation need and actions around greater sage-grouse. If the status change is approved, "greater" sage-grouse will be removed from WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished and added to WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species.

Also, in WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species; administrative changes such as capitalization to species names have been made for consistency.

**Reasons supporting proposal:** Greater sage-grouse in Washington were listed as threatened in 1998 with a recovery plan completed in 2004. The state-wide population estimate, based on lek counts, was 676 birds in 2019. Preliminary data for 2020 suggested that the population in Lincoln County declined from 13 to ten, the population on the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) – Yakima Training Center (YTC) declined from 78 to 65, while the population in Douglas County increased from 585 to 653, for a statewide total of 770. Subsequent to those counts, the habitat of all three populations were affected by wildfires. Preliminary assessments suggest that the Douglas County population will be reduced by ~50% due to loss of sagebrush on half the occupied habitat, and mortalities primarily from high predation due to lack of cover. The struggling Lincoln County population will probably be extirpated.

The potential for wildfires to eliminate sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) on extensive areas has been the greatest ongoing threat to sage-grouse in Washington, as we have seen in 2020. However, with the continued decline, all of Washington's populations are now likely suffering from problems with genetic health and fitness related to small population size. Uncertainty about the long-term maintenance of habitat that depends on Farm Bill programs (CRP/SAFE) is also a major concern. Other major management issues include habitat that is fragmented by roads, agriculture, development and degraded by past wildfires, historical excessive livestock grazing, fencing, electrical transmission lines, and exotic vegetation. Sage-grouse may suffer mortality rates above historical levels as a result of collisions with fences, powerlines, vehicles, and higher populations of some generalist predators, especially ravens and coyotes.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and several partner organizations are working on habitat and other aspects of sage-grouse recovery. Without these efforts, the sage-grouse would likely decline to extinction in Washington. In Spring 2020, sage-grouse had not yet declined to population levels indicated in the 2004 state recovery plan for up-listing (<650 birds); however, that was before the devastating fires of September, and the threshold assumed that the Douglas County and JBLM-YTC populations were connected, which now appears unjustified. Due in part to their polygynous mating system, the effective size of the three populations are ~107 birds for Douglas County and ten birds for JBLM-YTC. Extinction of the Lincoln County population is all but certain, and of the JBLM-YTC within a decade or so is likely unless they can be increased substantially. The hope of any reintroductions in the future is tempered by the recent failure of the reintroduction project by the Yakama Nation, the probable failure of the Lincoln County population, and the continued loss of habitat in suitable conditions by wildland fire.

Concurrent with this troubling decline, genomic analysis has indicated that Washington's population is more distinct than the bi-state population that was proposed for listing as a threatened 'Distinct Population Segment' under the Endangered Species Act (USFWS 2019). For these reasons, it is recommended the sage-grouse be up-listed to endangered in Washington. |

**Statutory authority for adoption:** RCWs 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, and 77.12.240

**Statute being implemented:** RCWs 77.04.012, 77.04.055, 77.12.047, and 77.12.240

**Is rule necessary because of a:**

- |                         |                              |  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Federal Law?            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Federal Court Decision? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| State Court Decision?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

If yes, CITATION: | |

**Agency comments or recommendations, if any, as to statutory language, implementation, enforcement, and fiscal matters:** None.

**Name of proponent:** (person or organization) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Governmental |

**Name of agency personnel responsible for:**

	Name	Office Location	Phone
Drafting:	Eric Gardner	1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501	(360) 902-2515
Implementation:	Eric Gardner	1111 Washington St. SE Olympia, WA. 98501	(360) 902-2515

Is a school district fiscal impact statement required under RCW 28A.305.135?  Yes  No

If yes, insert statement here:

The public may obtain a copy of the school district fiscal impact statement by contacting:

Name: [ ]  
Address: [ ]  
Phone: [ ]  
Fax: [ ]  
TTY: [ ]  
Email: [ ]  
Other: [ ]

Is a cost-benefit analysis required under RCW 34.05.328?

Yes: A preliminary cost-benefit analysis may be obtained by contacting:

Name: [ ]  
Address: [ ]  
Phone: [ ]  
Fax: [ ]  
TTY: [ ]  
Email: [ ]  
Other: [ ]

No: Please explain: [The proposed PSR for the greater sage grouse does not require a cost benefit analysis per RCW 34.05.328.]

**Regulatory Fairness Act Cost Considerations for a Small Business Economic Impact Statement:**

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, **may be exempt** from requirements of the Regulatory Fairness Act (see chapter 19.85 RCW). Please check the box for any applicable exemption(s):

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under RCW 19.85.061 because this rule making is being adopted solely to conform and/or comply with federal statute or regulations. Please cite the specific federal statute or regulation this rule is being adopted to conform or comply with, and describe the consequences to the state if the rule is not adopted.

Citation and description: [ ]

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt because the agency has completed the pilot rule process defined by RCW 34.05.313 before filing the notice of this proposed rule.

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under the provisions of RCW 15.65.570(2) because it was adopted by a referendum.

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under RCW 19.85.025(3). Check all that apply:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(b)<br>(Internal government operations) | <input type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(e)<br>(Dictated by statute)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(c)<br>(Incorporation by reference)                | <input type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(f)<br>(Set or adjust fees)  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(d)<br>(Correct or clarify language)    | <input type="checkbox"/> RCW 34.05.310 (4)(g)<br>((i) Relating to agency hearings; or (ii) process requirements for applying to an agency for a license or permit) |

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt under RCW [\_\_\_\_\_].

Explanation of exemptions, if necessary: [ ]

**COMPLETE THIS SECTION ONLY IF NO EXEMPTION APPLIES**


If the proposed rule is **not exempt**, does it impose more-than-minor costs (as defined by RCW 19.85.020(2)) on businesses?

No Briefly summarize the agency's analysis showing how costs were calculated. [\_\_\_\_\_]

Yes Calculations show the rule proposal likely imposes more-than-minor cost to businesses, and a small business economic impact statement is required. Insert statement here:

The public may obtain a copy of the small business economic impact statement or the detailed cost calculations by contacting:

Name: [       ]  
Address: [       ]  
Phone: [       ]  
Fax: [       ]  
TTY: [       ]  
Email: [       ]  
Other: [       ]

<b>Date:</b> February 11, 2021	<b>Signature:</b> 
<b>Name:</b> Annie Szvetcz	
<b>Title:</b> WDFW Rules Coordinator	