

**MONTANA SAGE GROUSE**  
Habitat Conservation Program

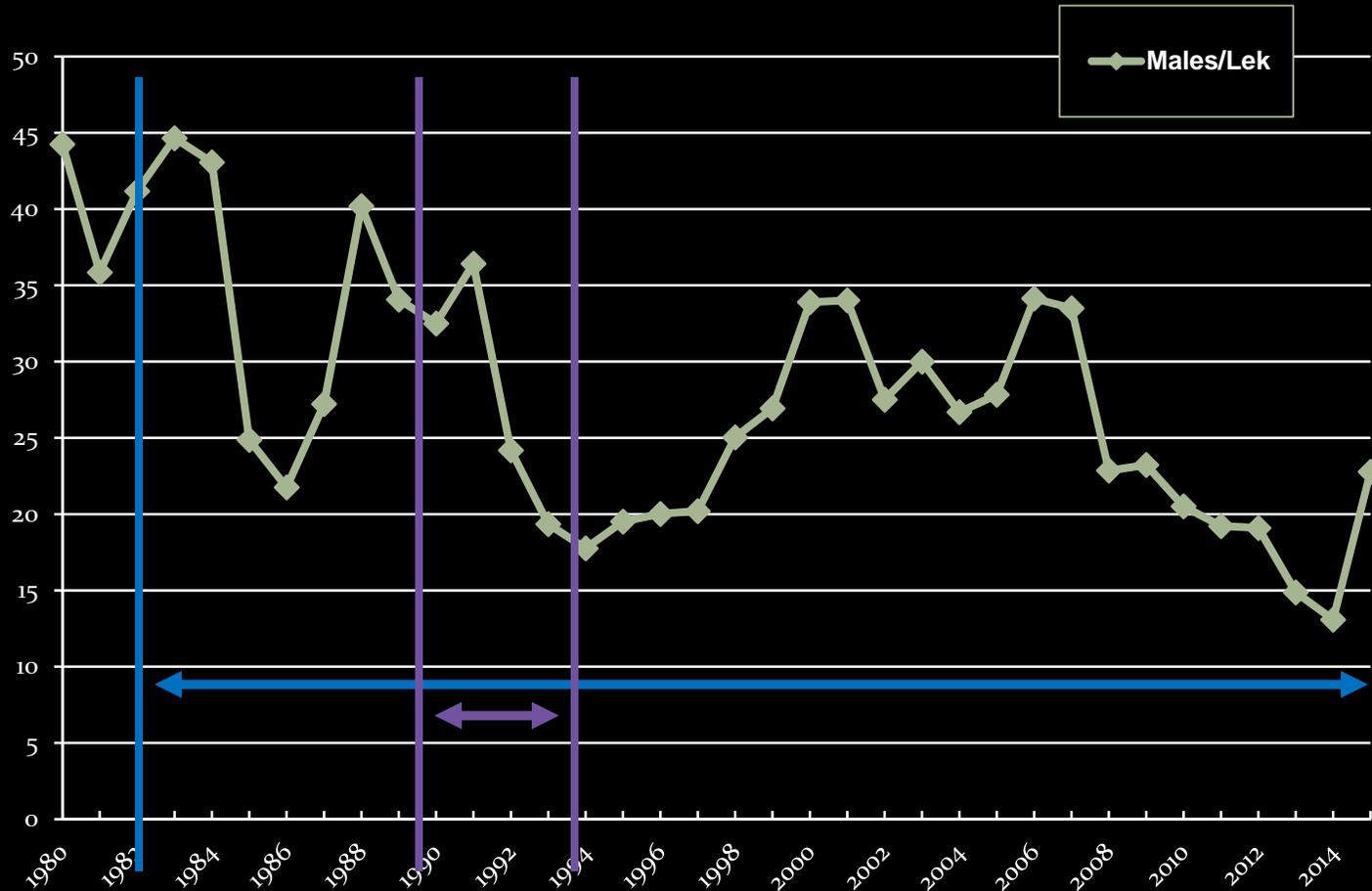


Carolyn Sime et al.



The Montana Department of  
**Natural Resources  
& Conservation**

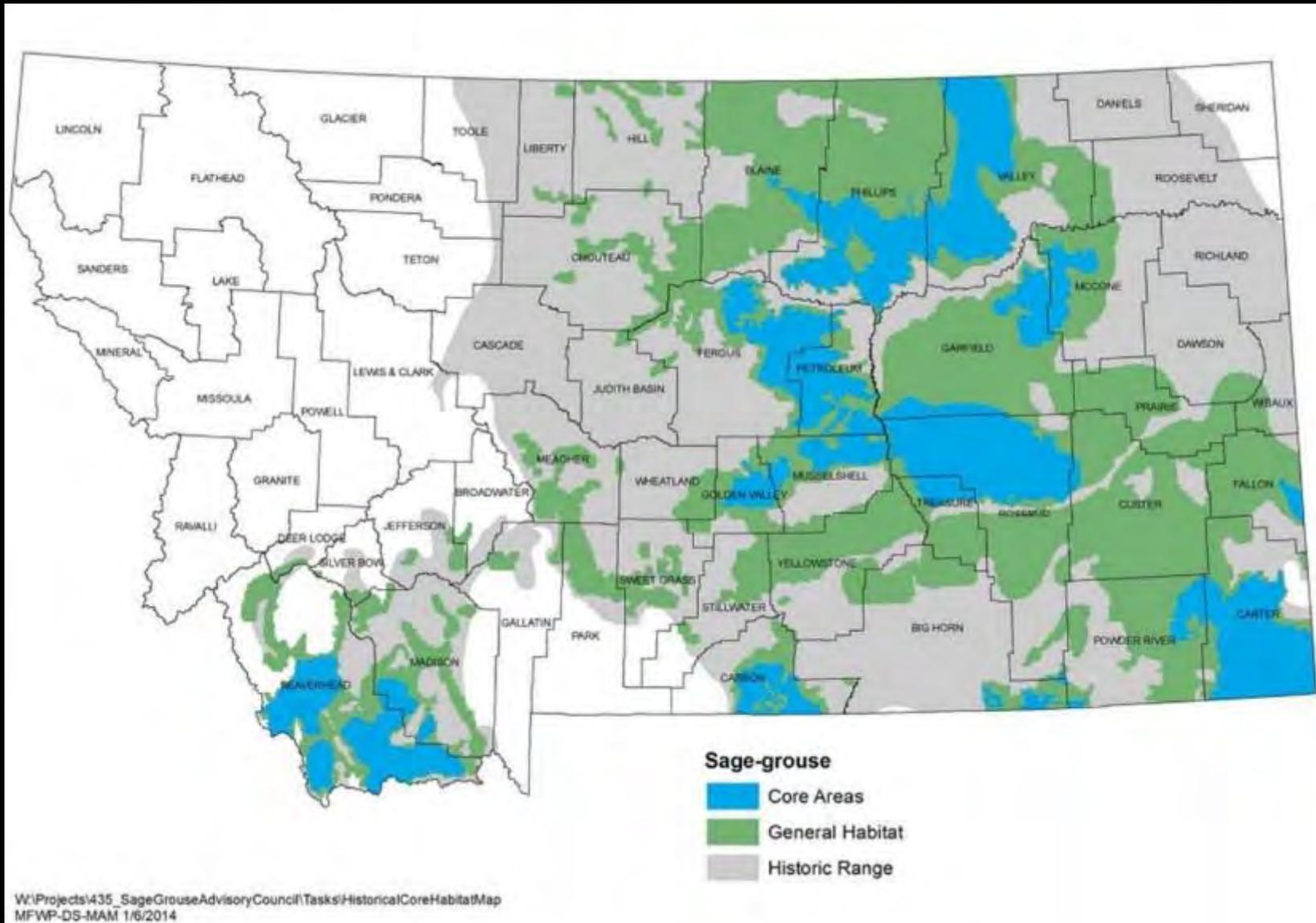
# Sage-grouse Lek Counts (AHM Leks) 1980 - 2015



**Short term variation (weather mostly)**  
**Long term trends (habitat issues)**

Source: MFWP

# HISTORIC SAGE GROUSE DISTRIBUTION



# SAGE GROUSE

## TIMELINE



- **1965-2005:** Population declines throughout the west
- **2005:** FWP Management Plan
- **2005:** USFWS: “listing not warranted”
- **2010:** USFWS: “listing warranted but precluded”
- **2010-2011:** USFWS sued
  - settlement agreement
  - decide by September 30, 2015

# CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Habitat Loss, Fragmentation, Invasive Species



**Lack of Regulatory Mechanisms to Address Threats**

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# SAGE GROUSE

## TIMELINE

- **2013:** MT Advisory Council
- **2014:** Executive Order 10-2014
- **2015:** Montana Conservation Strategy
  - Executive Order 12-2015
  - Montana Legislature
    - Sage Grouse Stewardship Act
- **2015: USFWS – ESA**
  - “listing not warranted”
  - state commitments
  - follow through critical to future decisions about whether to list
  - status review in five years



# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION STRATEGY

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- 1. Executive Order 12-2015**
- 2. Sage Grouse Stewardship Act, 2015**
- 3. Private Land Stewardship**

Photo: Lorelle Berkley

# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION STRATEGY GOAL:

- ✓ **Maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat; and**
- ✓ **Maintain flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy.**

**(fulfill commitments so ESA listing never warranted)**



Photos: Joel Maes

Executive Order  
12-2015

Sage  
Grouse  
Stewardship  
Act:  
Mitigation  
Market  
Place

**GOALS:**

**Maintain viable sage  
grouse populations and  
conserve habitat**

**Maintain flexibility to  
manage our own lands,  
our wildlife, and our  
economy**

Sage Grouse  
Stewardship  
Act:  
Grant Fund

Private Land  
Stewardship

# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION STRATEGY

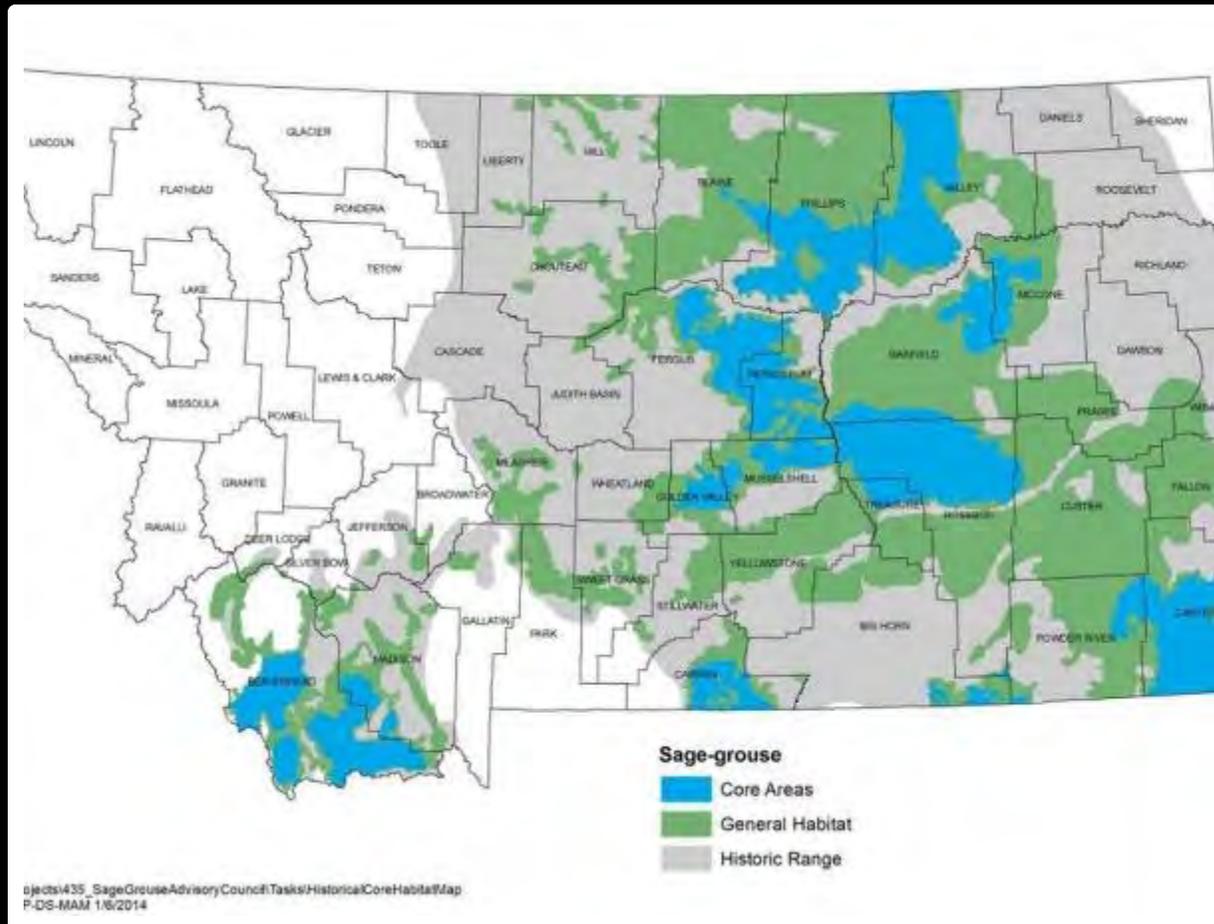
## 1. Executive Order 12-2015

- Mirrors Wyoming
- Establishes State Program
- Establishes Oversight Team (MSGOT)
- Designates key habitat areas
  - “core areas” strategy
- Consultation – state programs
  - permitted activities
  - grant programs
  - technical assistance
  - guide activities in designated habitats to achieve goal
    - consult, not regulate
    - mitigation: avoid, minimize, reclaim, replace or compensate



Photo: Joel Maes

# Core Areas Strategy: Focus on Designated Habitats



- Core Areas
- General Habitats

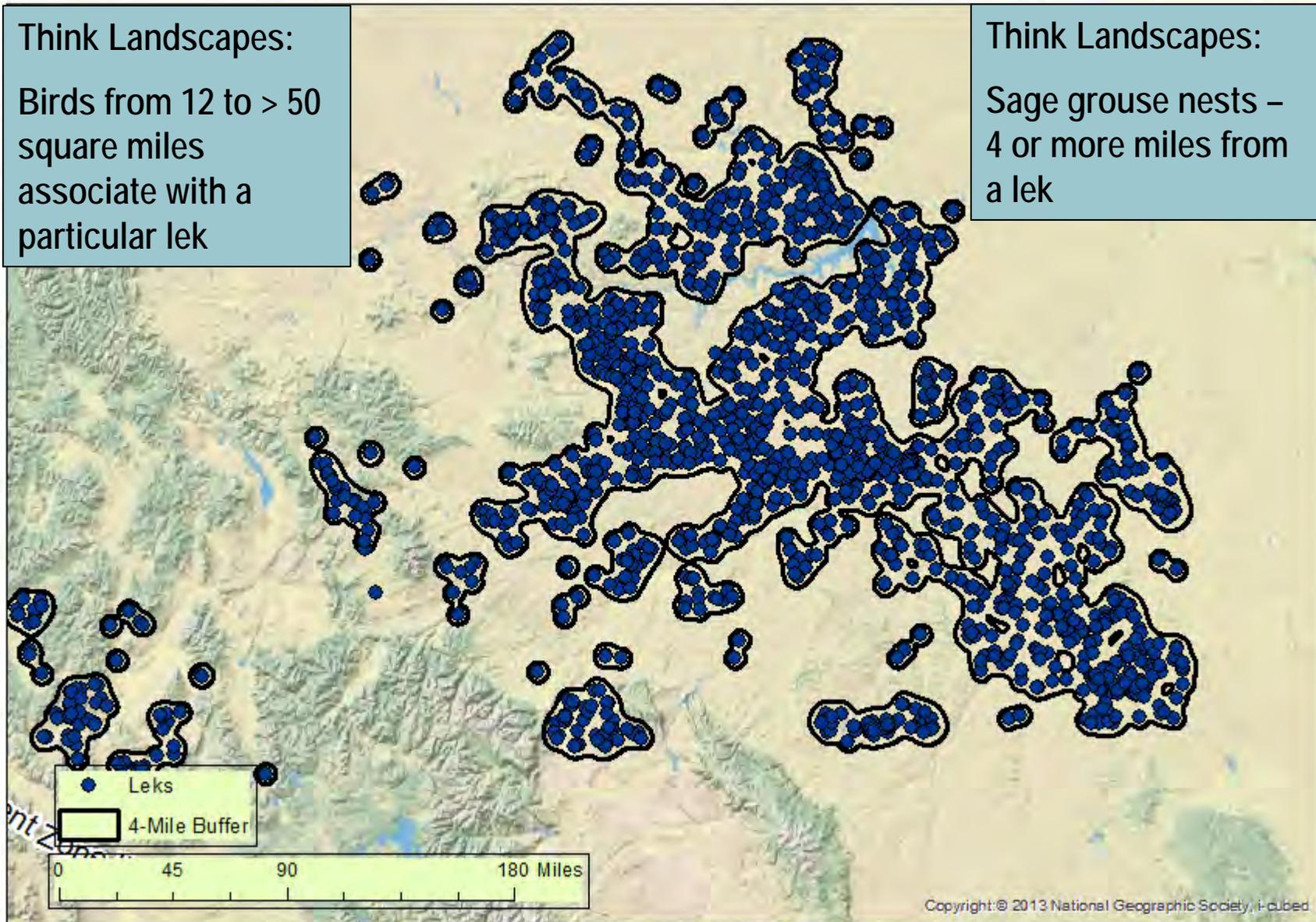
# Core Area Strategy and How the Map was Made

Think Landscapes:

Birds from 12 to > 50 square miles associate with a particular lek

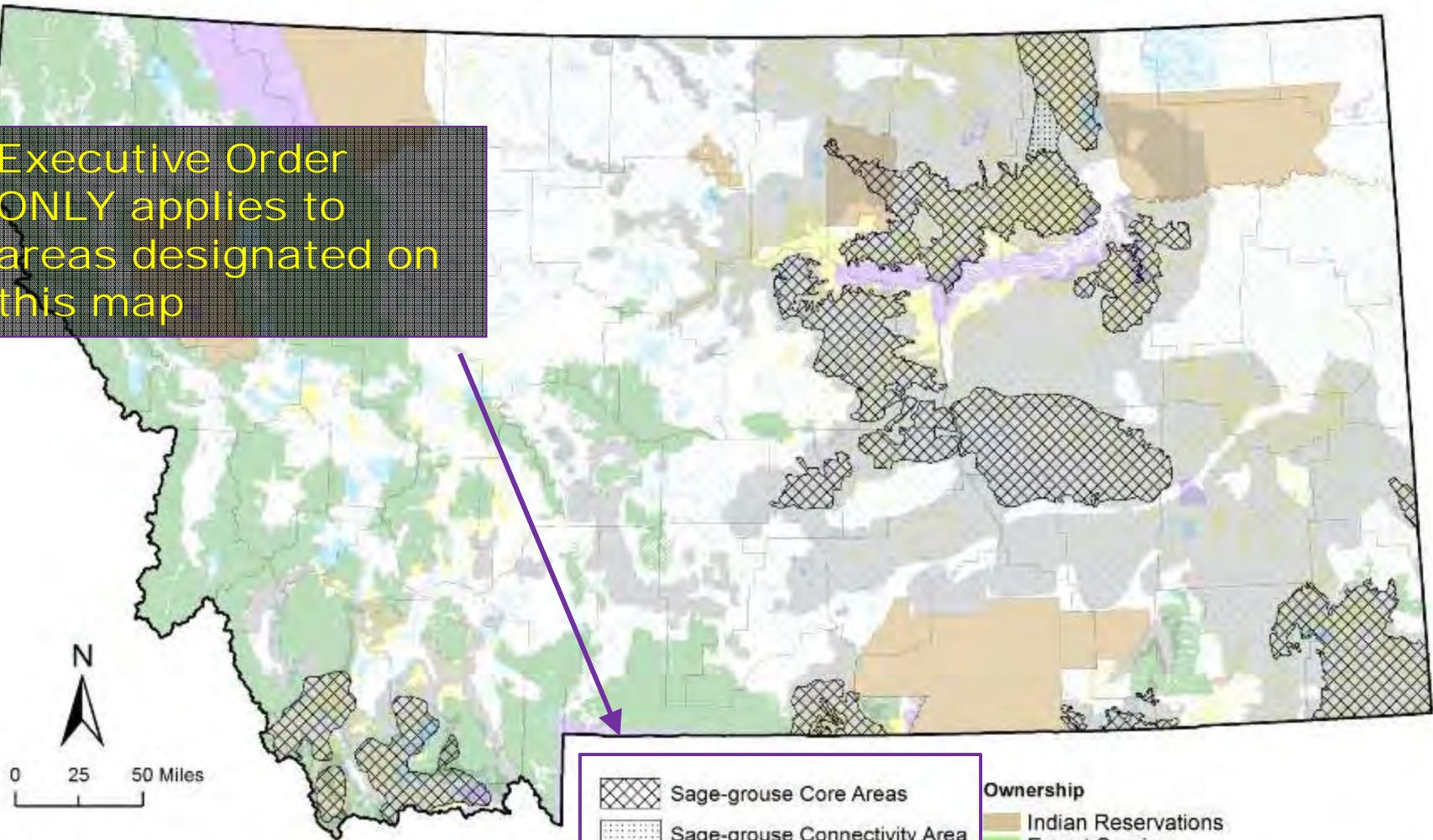
Think Landscapes:

Sage grouse nests – 4 or more miles from a lek



## Sage-grouse Core Areas and General Habitat in Montana

Executive Order  
ONLY applies to  
areas designated on  
this map



- Sage-grouse Core Areas
- Sage-grouse Connectivity Area
- Sage-grouse General Habitat

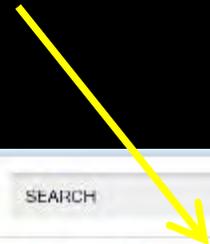
- Ownership**
- Indian Reservations
  - Forest Service
  - Other Federal Lands
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - State and Local



<https://sagegrouse.mt.gov>

[Executive Order](#)

[Start Consultation Process](#)



MONTANA.GOV  
OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE

SERVICES AGENCIES LOGIN SEARCH

Home Team Grants FAQ Projects



Montana Sage Grouse  
Habitat Conservation Program

SAGE GROUSE LINKS

[Governor's Executive Order 12-2015 SGHCP](#)

[Sage grouse Core Areas and General Habitat Map](#)



[Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Quick Facts](#)

[Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy Quick Facts](#)

Press release: Sage grouse listing not warranted

Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program



This site may be temporarily unavailable from 6pm to 8pm, February 19 for routine maintenance.

The Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program sets forth Montana's Conservation Strategy for the conservation, regulatory protection, and management of sage grouse. The Conservation Strategy is based on the collaborative work of the Montana Greater Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council, Executive Order 10-2014, the Montana Sage Grouse Stewardship Act passed during the 2015 Legislative Session, and Executive Order 12-2015.

MONTANA SAGE GROUSE OVERSIGHT TEAM

The Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) was created by Executive Order 10-2014 and further defined by the 2015 Legislature through Senate Bill 261. The Montana Greater

1. Proponent submits information

2. Program reviews proposed development: surface disturbance and activity

3. Compare to Executive Order thresholds and stipulations

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects/>. The page is titled "Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program".

**Left Sidebar:**

- Logo: A stylized sage grouse.
- Text: "Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program"
- Section: "STEP 1: DRAW YOUR PROJECT ON THE MAP." with a "POLYGON" button.
- Section: "STEP 2: FILL OUT YOUR INFORMATION." with input fields for:
  - FIRST NAME\* (First Name)
  - LAST NAME\* (Last Name)
  - ADDRESS 1\* (Mailing Address)
  - ADDRESS 2 (Apt. Unit, Suite)
  - CITY\* (City)
  - STATE\* (Montana)

**Main Map Area:**

- Map of Montana showing county boundaries and various geographical features.
- Map controls: "Switch Basemap", "Layers", "Search", "Draw", "Info", "Print", "Submit".
- Map text: "Need to redraw a shape? Ctrl + click on the shape for Windows / ⌘ for Mac - click"

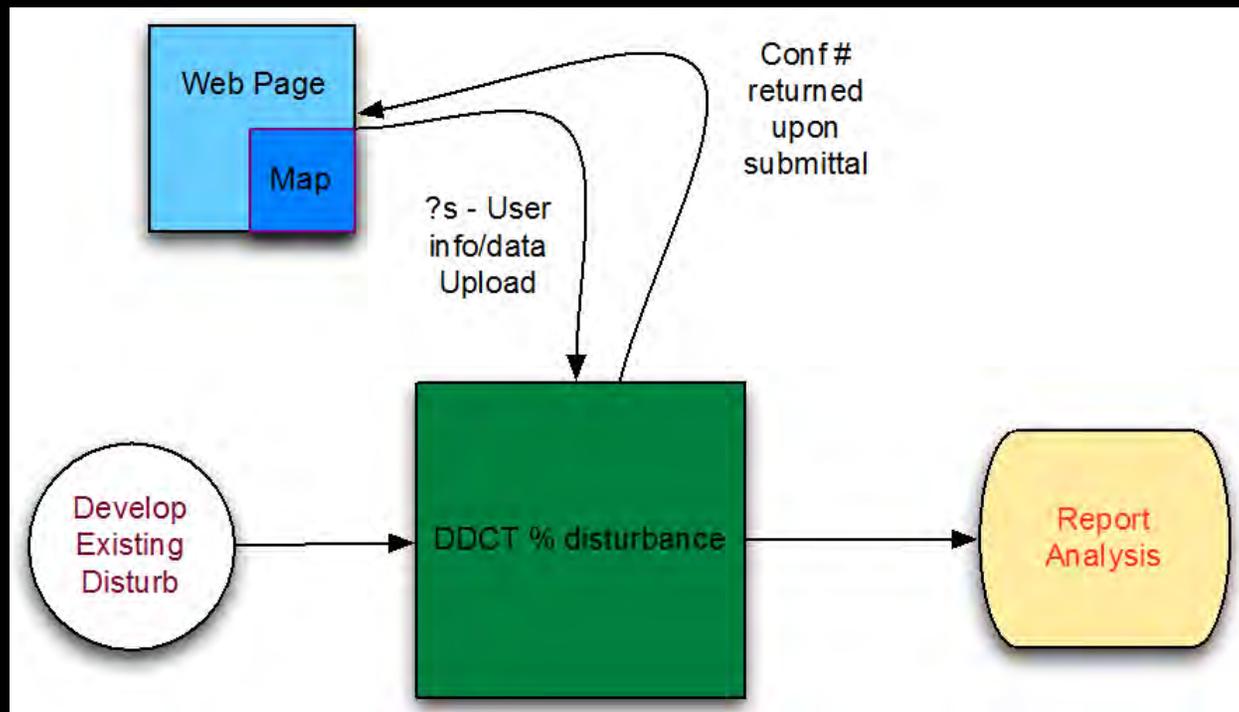
**Bottom Section:**

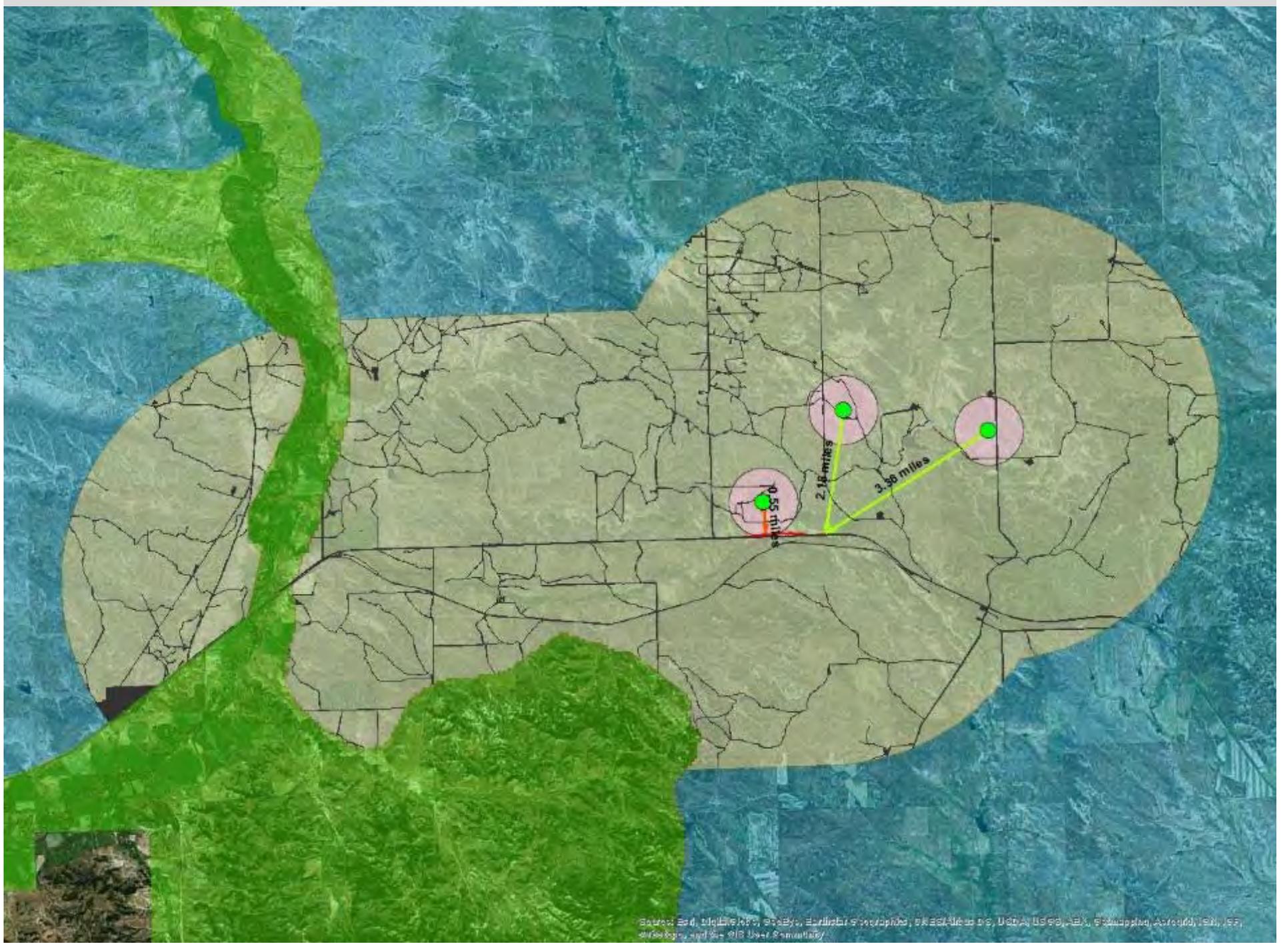
- LEARN MORE ABOUT MONTANA'S SAGE GROUSE HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM (MSGHCP)**
  - Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Home Page
  - Governor Bullock's Executive Order 12 2015 SGHCP
  - Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**
  - General Application Questions
  - Disturbance Process Questions
  - Website and Data Security Questions
- CONTACT MSGHCP**
  - Address: 1625 Eleventh Ave  
Helena, MT 59601
  - Email: [sagegrouse@mt.gov](mailto:sagegrouse@mt.gov)
  - Phone: 406-444-0554
  - Fax: 406-444-6721

**Bottom Right:** Montana DNRC logo.

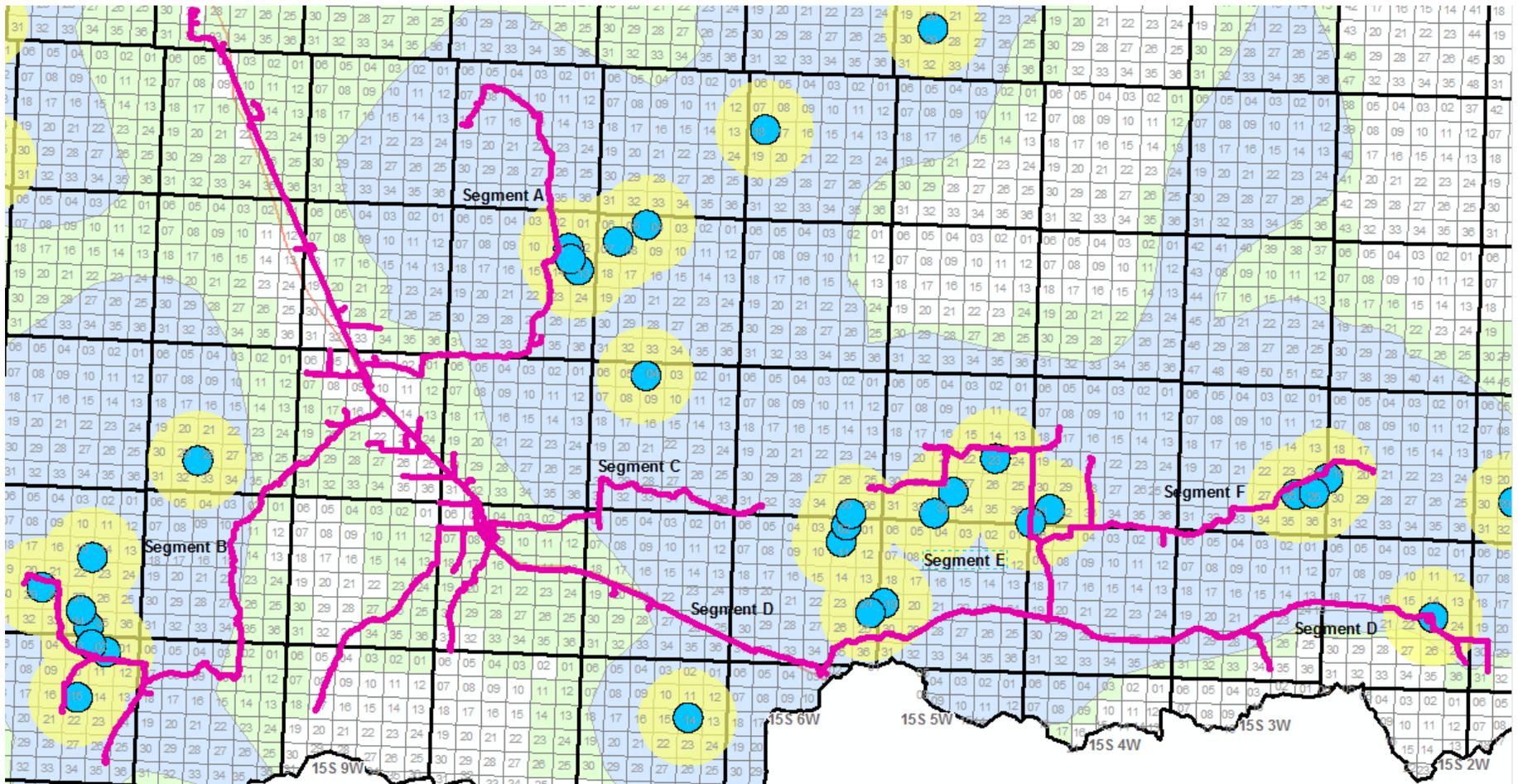
# Core Areas Only

## Additional Program Review: Density Disturbance Calculation Tool





# Fiber Optic Cable Project



	Project Area
	General Habitat Area
	Core Area
	Active Sage Grouse Lek - 2 mile buffer
	No Surface Occupancy 0.6 mile buffer

# Program's Consistency Review

- **Program Reviews Project Proposal**
  - Activity type
  - New surface disturbance or activity?
  - When would it occur?
- **General or Connectivity Habitat**
  - Executive Order Stipulations
    - General Guidelines
    - Industry Specific
- **Core Habitat**
  - Executive Order Stipulations
    - General Guidelines
    - Industry Specific
    - DDCT Results
- **Mitigation?**

## Coordinate with Land Management Agencies:

- BLM
- USFS
- DNRC State Trust Lands

# Executive Order: Mitigation Hierarchy



1. Avoid
2. Minimize
3. Restore / Reclaim
4. Replace (compensatory mitigation)



Executive  
Order  
12-2015

Sage Grouse  
Stewardship  
Act:  
Mitigation  
Market  
Place

**GOALS:**

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Sage Grouse  
Stewardship  
Act:  
Grant Fund

Private Land  
Stewardship

# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION STRATEGY

## 2. Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act (2015)

### ○ Stewardship Fund Grant Program

- Fund conservation benefits to sage grouse & habitat
- Create credits to sell to developers as offsets to impacts in a marketplace
- Oversight Team decides

### ○ Mitigation Framework

- address impacts of habitat loss using a marketplace
- avoid, minimize, restore, replace or compensate
- Conservation Bank (or)
- Habitat Exchange
- Oversight Team approves



Photo: Joel Maas

Executive  
Order  
12-2015

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Private Land  
Stewardship

# MONTANA'S CONSERVATION STRATEGY

## 3. Private Land Conservation and Stewardship

- private lands key to success – thank you!
- encourage stewardship
- provide incentives for voluntary measures
  - sell credits in mitigation market place
  - NRCS SGI and other programs



Photo: Joel Maas

# USFWS 2020 Status Review Questions



Photo: Joel Maes

1. What happened to the land?
2. How are the birds doing?

# THE LAND: MITIGATION



Photo: Joel Maes

**Executive Order 12-2015  
Consultation**

**Activity Impacts Habitat;  
Creates Debits**

**Go to Market to  
Purchase Credits**

**Sage Grouse  
Stewardship  
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Mitigation  
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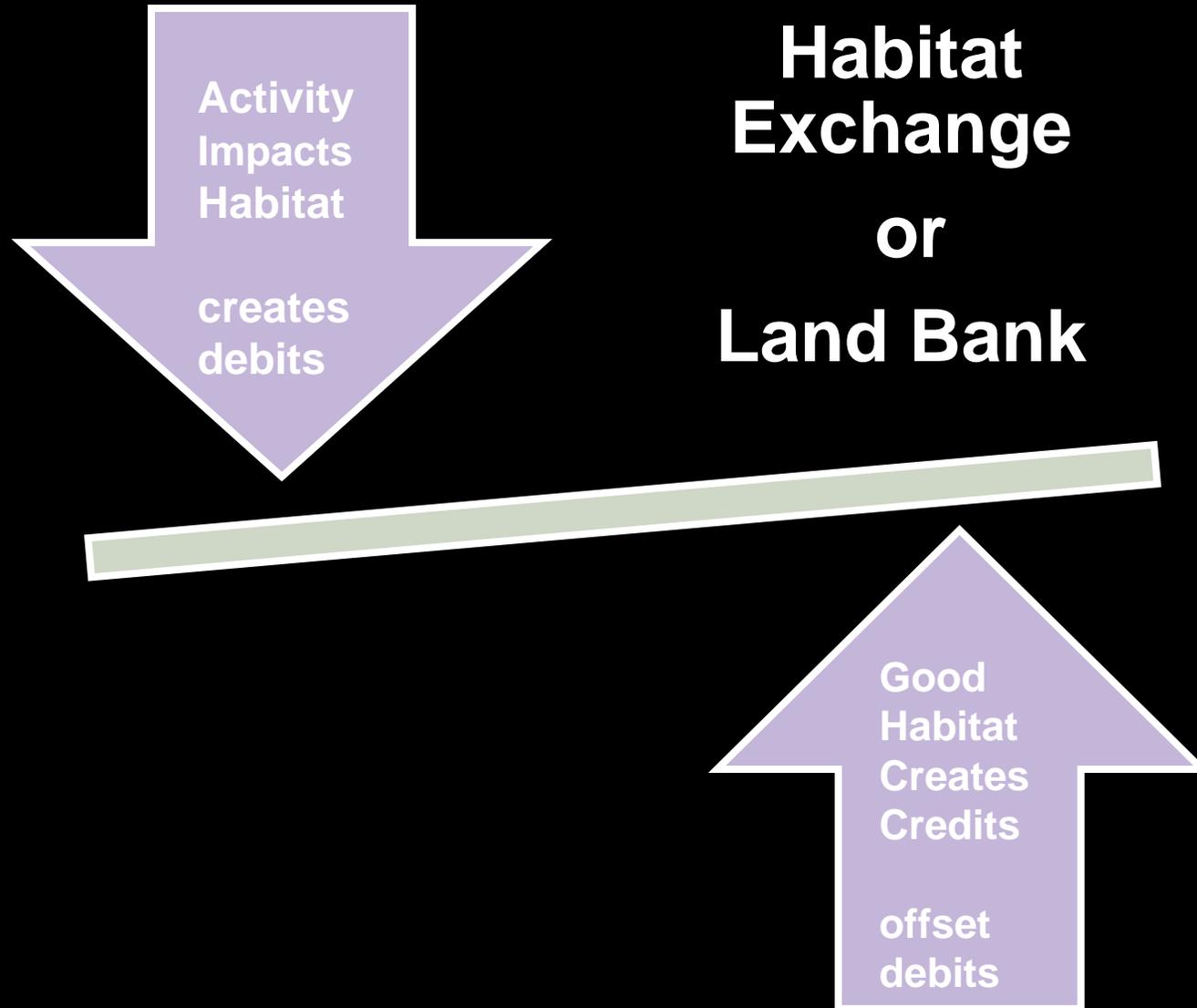
**GOALS:**  
Maintain viable sage grouse populations and conserve habitat  
Maintain flexibility to manage our own lands, our wildlife, and our economy

**Sage Grouse Stewardship Act:  
Mitigation Market Place**





# Mitigation Market Place



# MONTANA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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- **“All Hands, All Lands”**
  - work collaboratively across all lands and address all threats
  - keep working landscapes working
  - respect private property rights, existing uses
  - be proactive
  - base decisions and policies in science
- **Shared Goal: preclude need to list in the future**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Montana private landowners
- Montana Legislature
- Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team
- Local Governments
- FWP
- DNRC
- NRCS, BLM, USFS
- Conservation Districts
- All of you!

C<sup>S</sup>ime2@mt.gov

### Photo Credits:

- Dr. Joel Maes
- Lorelle Berkeley
- Mark Szczypinski