

Core Area Conservation: Wyoming's Sage Grouse Strategy



Wyoming Legislature

Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee

August 2015

History of the Issue

- 2003: Wyoming management plan
- 2005: “Not Warranted”
- 2007: Establishment of SGIT
- 2008: Freudenthal Executive Order
- 2010: “Warranted but Precluded”
- 2010: Revised Executive Order
- 2011: Mead Executive Order
- 2013 Court Ordered Decision
- 2015: Mead Revised EO
- 2015: Determination by USFWS

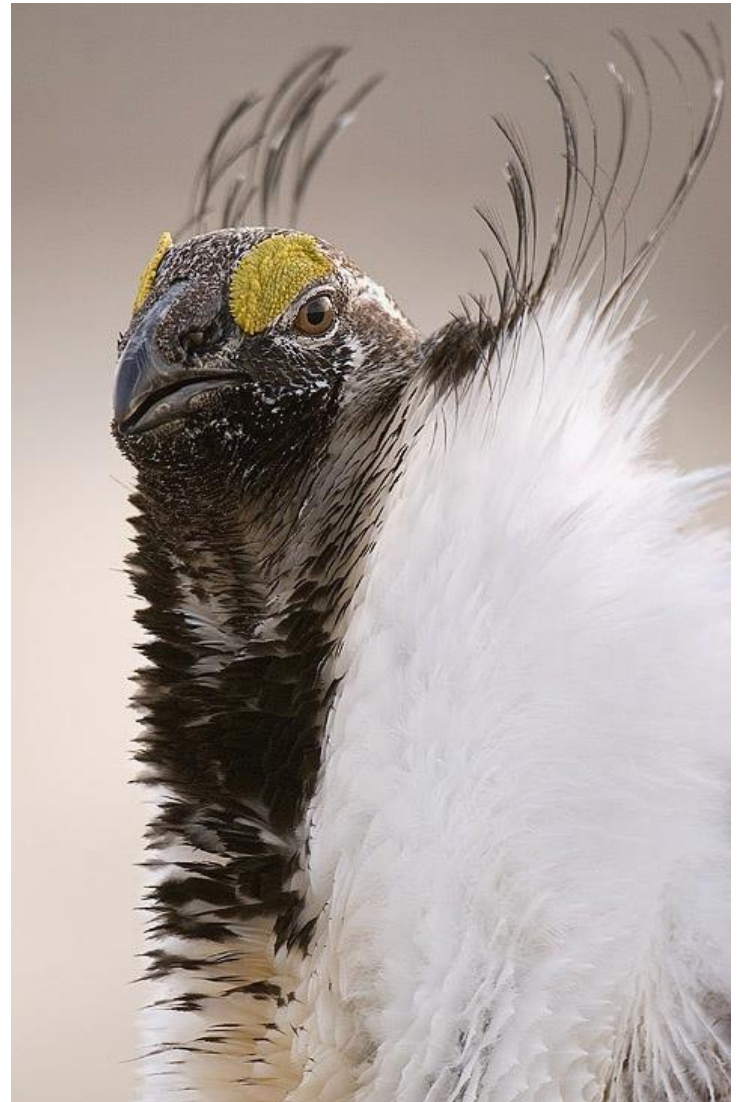


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Oppressive Nature of the ESA

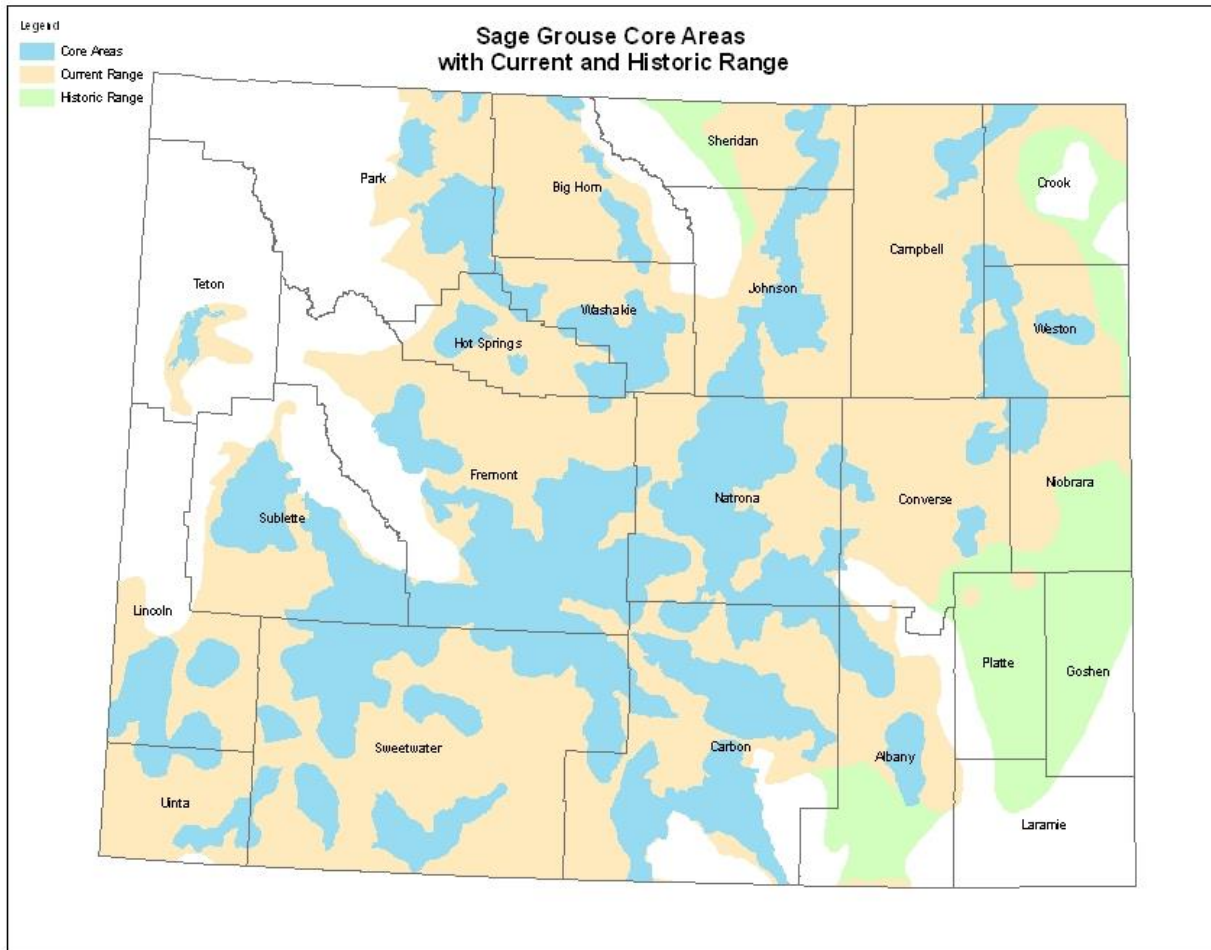
- Listing standards
- Unprecedented scale of review is range-wide
- Broad distribution of Sage-grouse
- Highly diverse threats to populations



Consequences of Listing

- Every bird – not populations or groups of birds
- Critical habitat is all suitable habitat
- Consultation required for all federal nexus
- All birds – All habitats
- More restrictive stipulations – NTT or more
- “Take” applies on all lands – private included
- “Take” = “harm” or “harass”.....
- Five years before review of status

Realities of Inaction



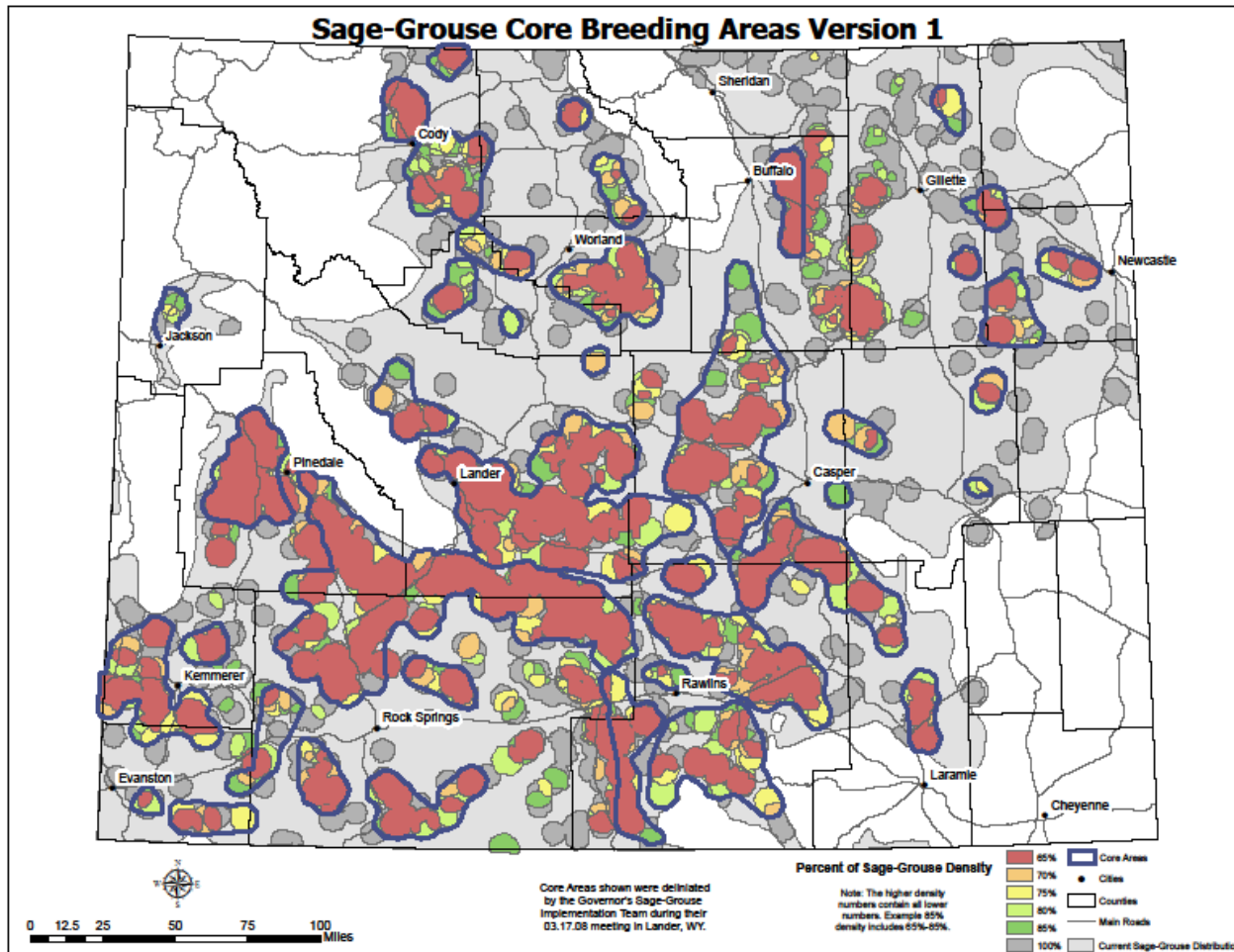
A listing would apply to ALL lands in pink, blue and green. Wyoming Core-Area strategy addresses 86% of the birds within the blue polygons.

Wyoming Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy



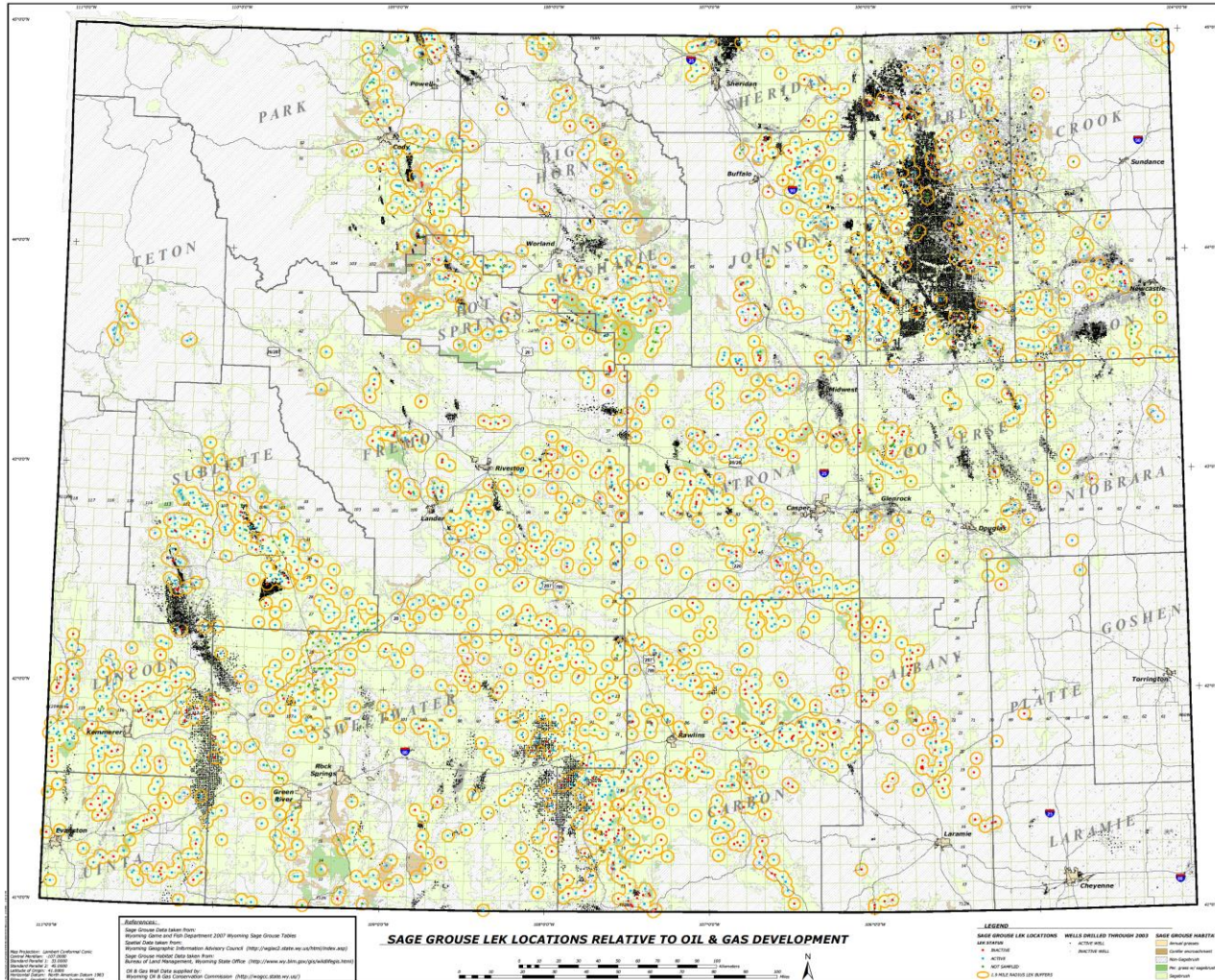
- Conserve populations and habitats where we can have the most effect (core areas)
- Maintain economic opportunity, particularly where conflicts are minimal
- Build a sound ecological and economic model for conservation
- Include major stakeholders in decision- making process

Core Area Strategy - Start With the Birds We Have



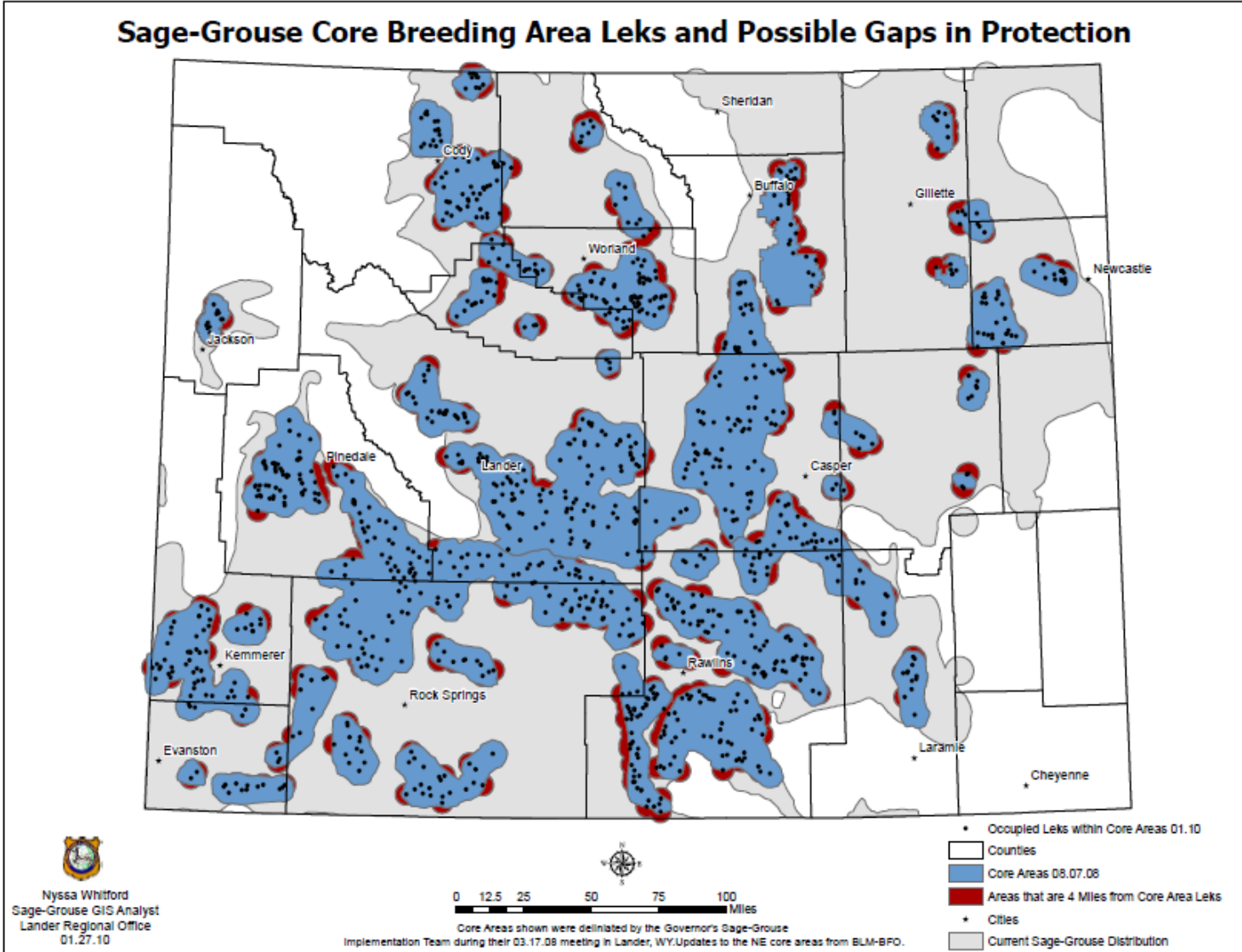
- Lek Driven
- Winter Areas
- Connectivity
- Habitat Quality
- BEST OF BEST
- Other Habitat With Potential For “Lift”

Start With the Birds We Have

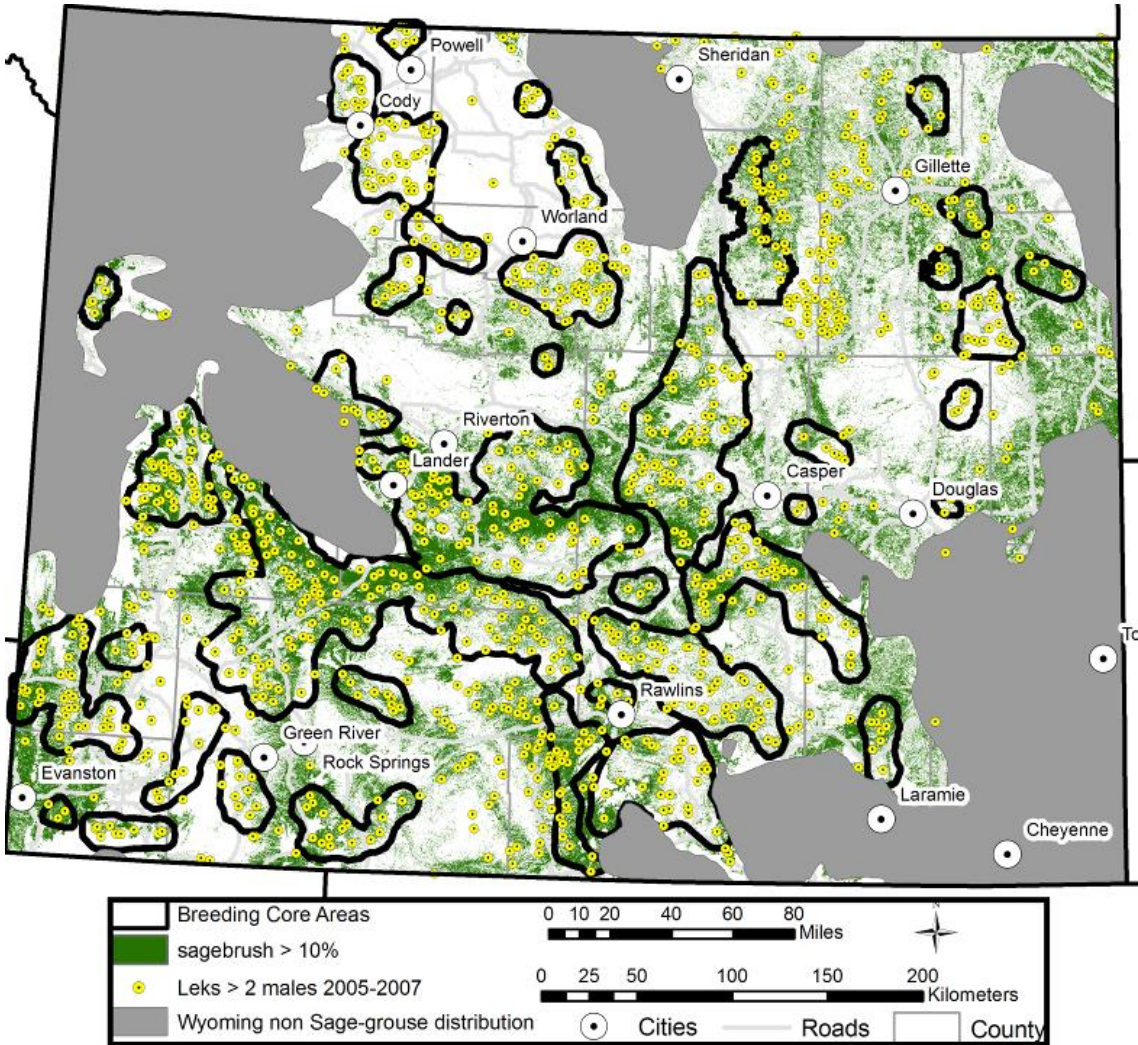


Recognize existing uses and valid existing rights, within the context of likely and credible development potential.

Adjustments Based on Local Knowledge



Verification of Assumptions Was “Spot On”



Wyoming Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy



1. REMOVE OR AMELIORATE THREATS
 - Biological Base
2. PROVIDE ADEQUATE REGULATORY MECHANISMS
3. AVOID, MINIMIZE, MITIGATE

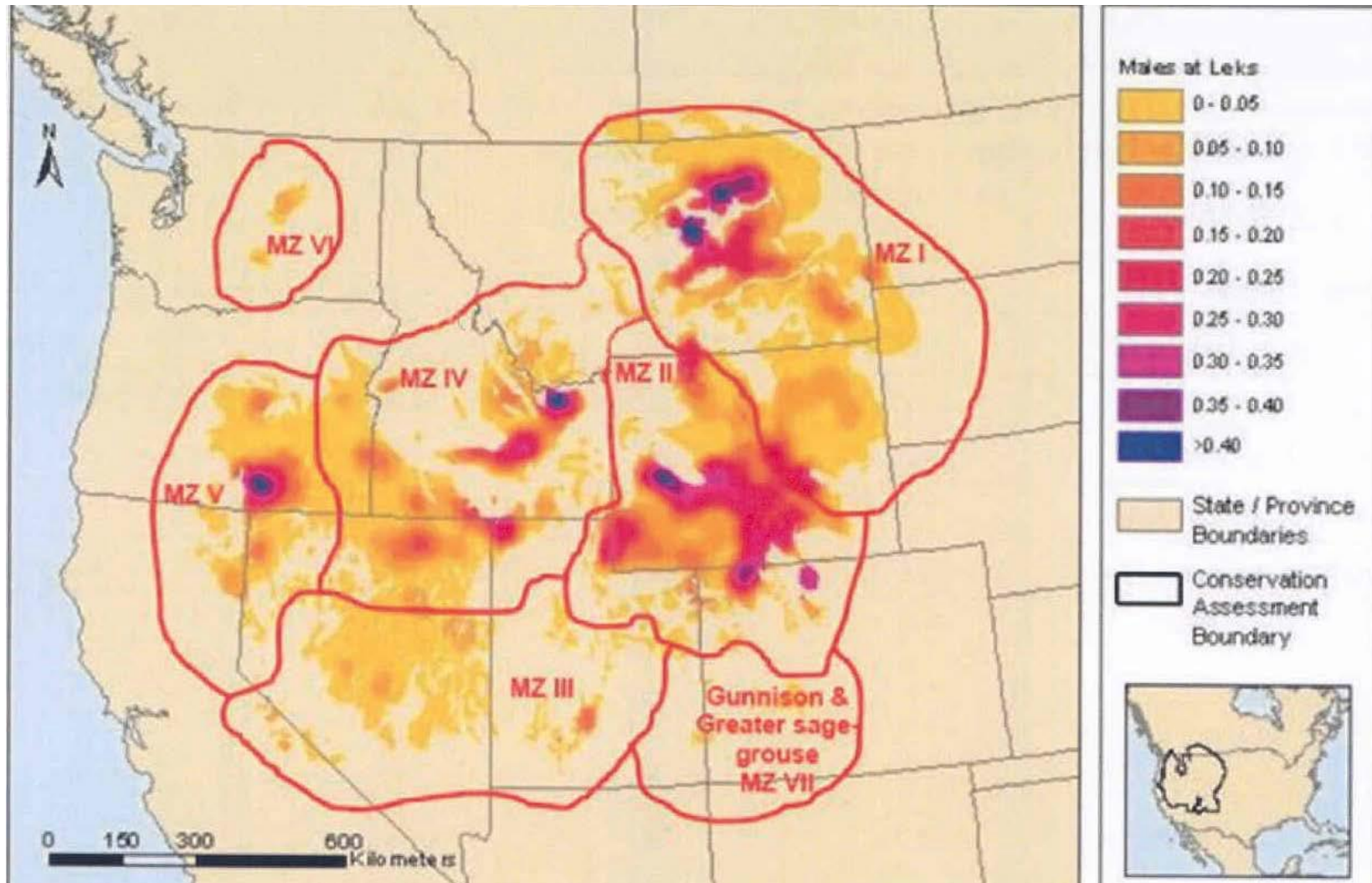


Best Available Science

- AVOIDANCE
- MINIMIZATION OF FOOTPRINT
- MITIGATION

- UNDERSTAND TOLERANCES
- ADEQUATE MONITORING
- ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Applying Information Range- Wide



Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy

- Defensible management strategy
- Flexibility in core areas with adequate data
- Better understanding of SG tolerances
- Avoid, minimize, mitigate

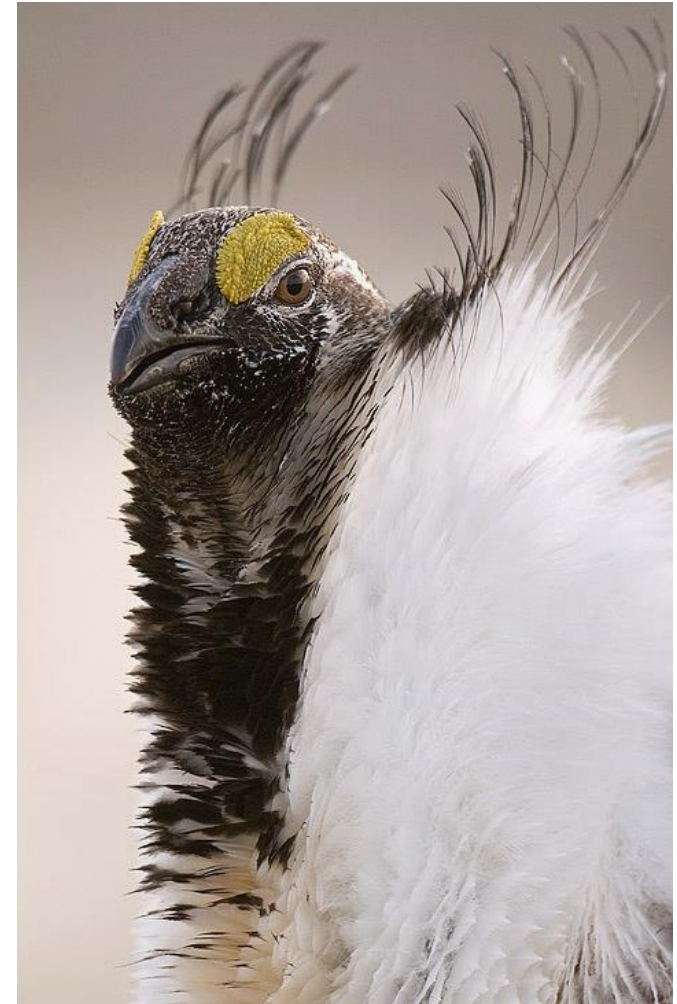
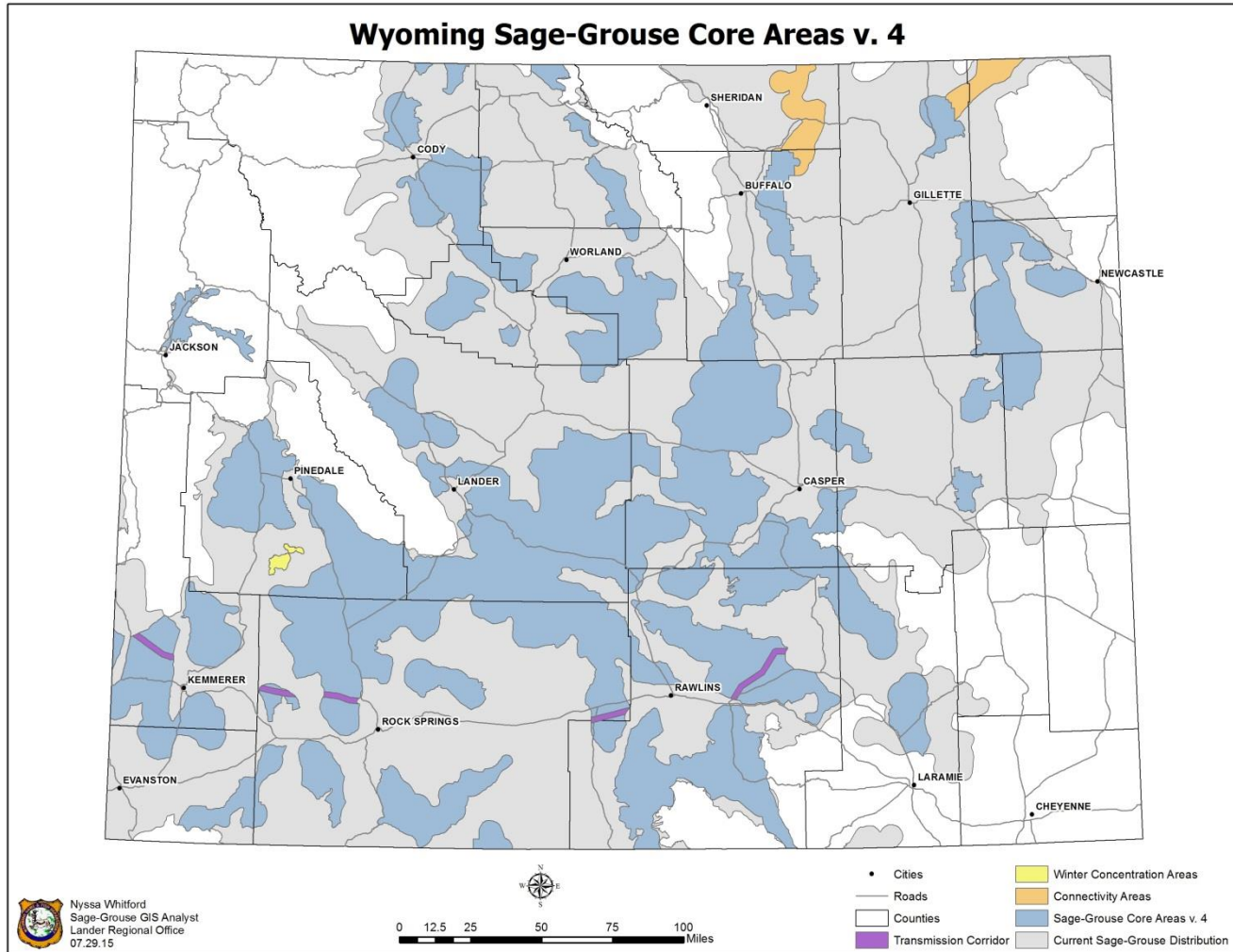


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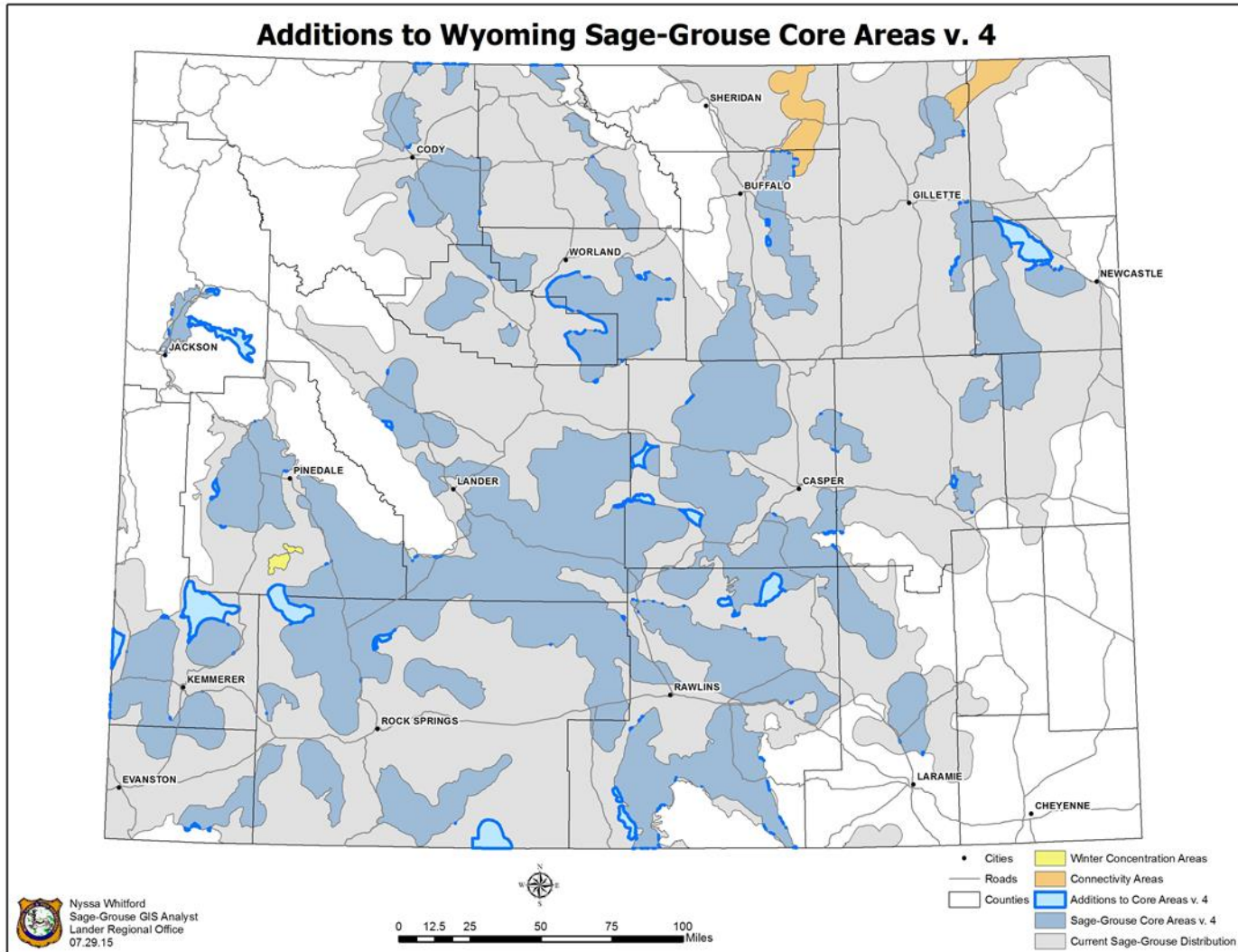
Changes to Existing Executive Order

- Primarily clarifications and corrections
- More orderly presentation
- Consistency with Resource Management Plans
- Lengthy process through SGIT
- Final review by Governor

Changes to Existing Executive Order

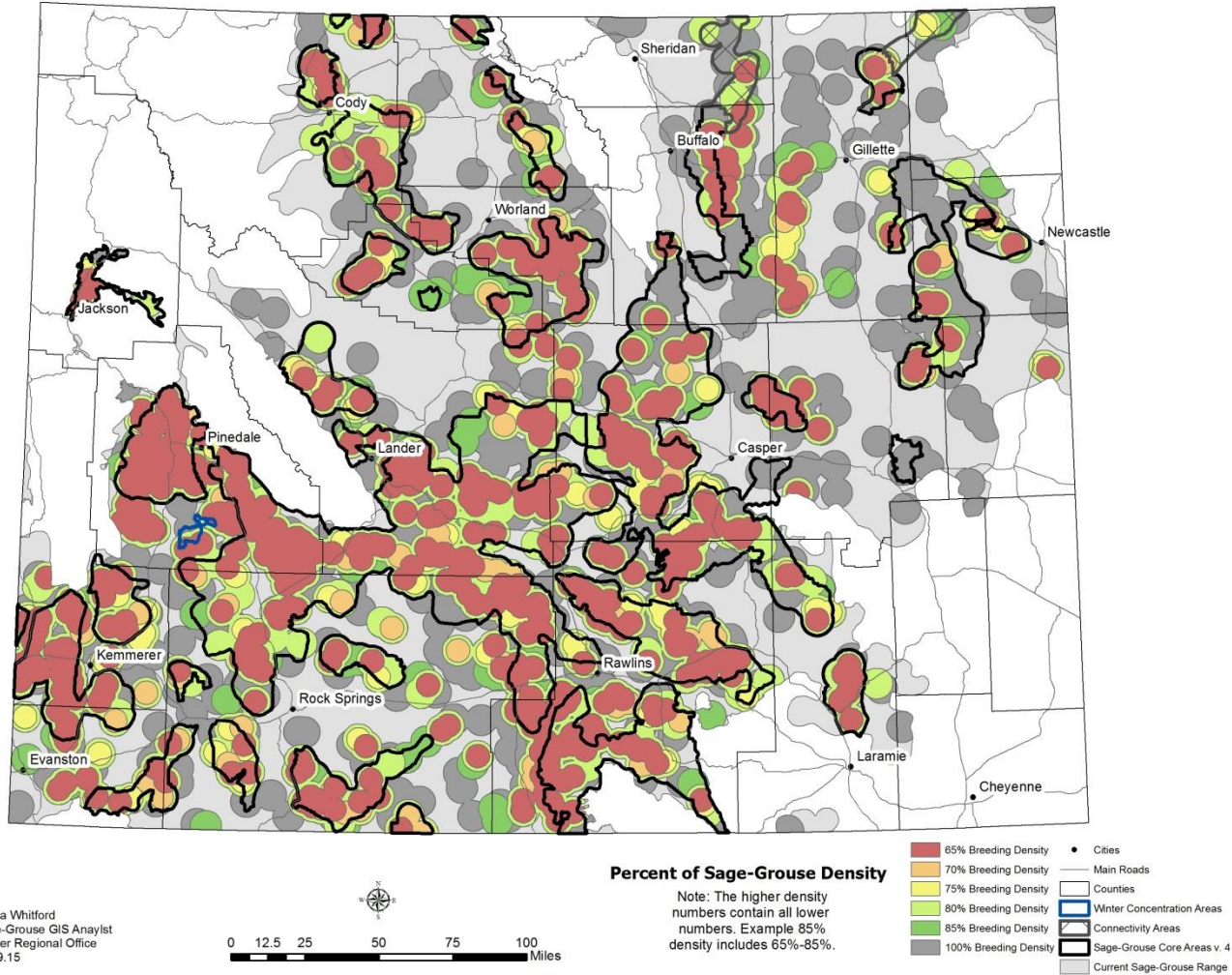


Changes to Existing Executive Order



Changes to Existing Executive Order

Sage-Grouse Core Areas v. 4 and Wyoming Sage-Grouse Breeding Density 2010-2014



Changes to Existing Executive Order

- Added approximately 150,000 net acres
- Three primary additions – Fontenelle, Hiawatha, Baggs
- Added nearly 1,300 males on leks
- Increased total males from 78% to 82%
- Recognizes existing rights

Expectations:

- August 2015 - Completion of federal RMPs
- September 2015 - Recommendation from USFWS
- March 2017 – Listing IF warranted
- Congressional Action is a possibility
- Litigation is certain

Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy

“The Fish and Wildlife Service believes that the core area strategy...if implemented by all landowners via regulatory mechanisms, would provide adequate protection for sage-grouse and their habitat in that State” (75 FR 13910).

