

# BLM Sage-grouse Planning 3.0 Resource Management Plan Amendments

## Draft Idaho Alternative for NEPA Analysis



08/26/'24 NASTL Summer Conference



# Background – BLM NEPA Process

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- Purpose
  - Stop population and habitat declines
  - Incorporate new science since 2015
  - Address 2019 court injunction order
- Outcomes
  - Range-wide EIS
  - State-specific RODs
  - 70 amended RMPs



# Background – Timeline

- 2010 – ESA listing warranted
- 2015 – Approved land use amendments 1.0
- 2015 – ESA listing not warranted
- 2019 – State-aligned land use amendments
- 2019 – Court-enjoined 2019 land use amendments 2.0
- 2021 – NEPA land use planning 3.0
- 2022 – NEPA scoping report
- 2023 – Draft NEPA alternatives (March)
- 2024 – DEIS (~~January~~) June
- **“Fatal Flaws Analysis” August**
- 2024 – FEIS (~~March?~~) ...October?
- 2024 – RODs and amendments (~~June?~~) 2025?

# BLM Alternatives – Development Process

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- National
  - WGA Sage-grouse Taskforce
  - BLM Alternatives
    - 1) 2015 amendments – No Action
    - 2) 2019 amendments – No Action
    - 3) Greatest protections
    - 4) Intermediate protections with ACECs
    - 5) Least protections with ACECs
- Idaho
  - OSC/IDFG Technical assistance
  - Interagency Sage-grouse Implementation Team



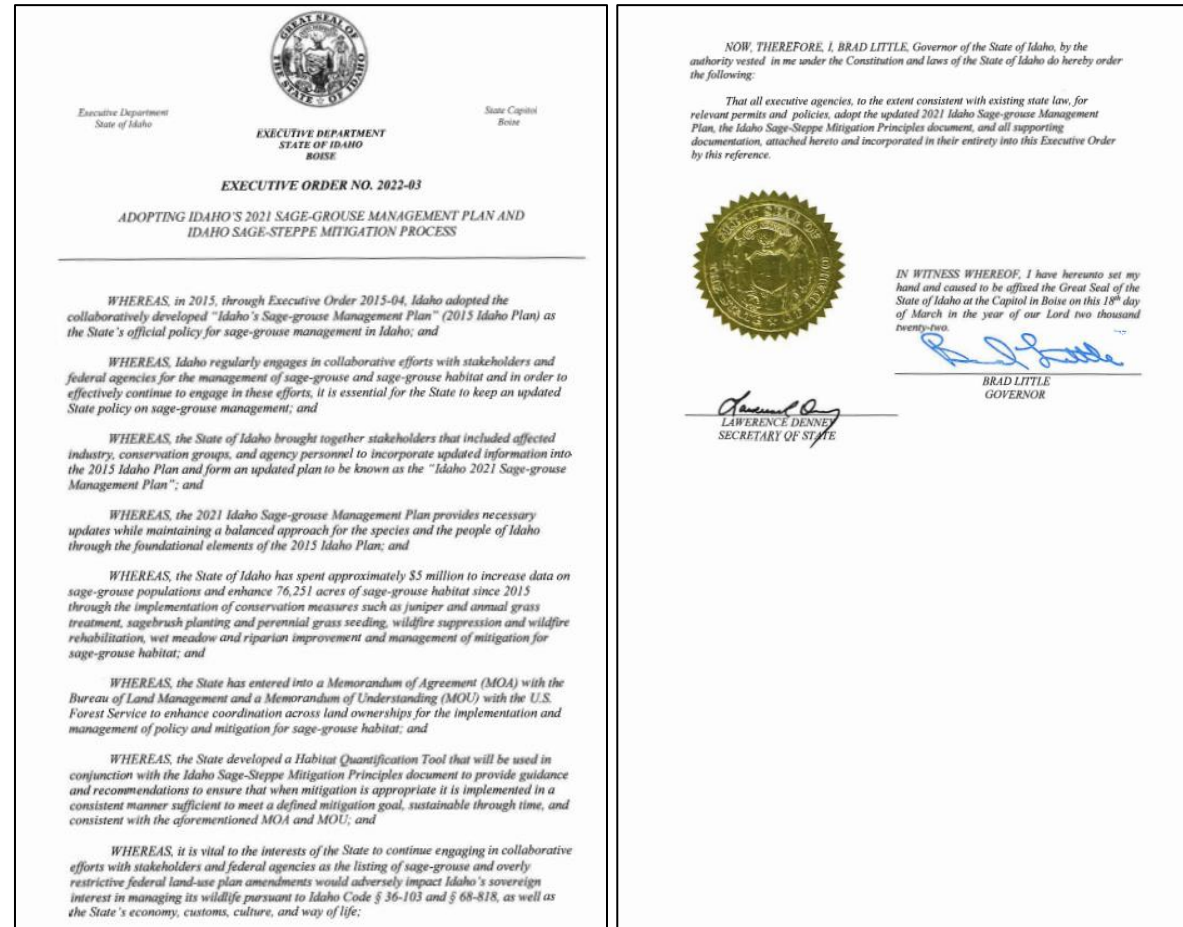
# State Alternative – Basis

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- Uncertainties in BLM process and alternatives
- Proactive stakeholder engagement
- Emphasis on Idaho data
- Balanced Idaho perspective & circumstances
- Governor's Idaho 2021 sage-grouse plan

# Idaho Alternative – Elements

- Baseline – EO 2022-03
  - Idaho 2021 Plan
  - HMA map
  - Mitigation principles
- 2023 update
  - Idaho 2021 Plan
  - 2015 HMA map



# Idaho Alternative – 2023 Update

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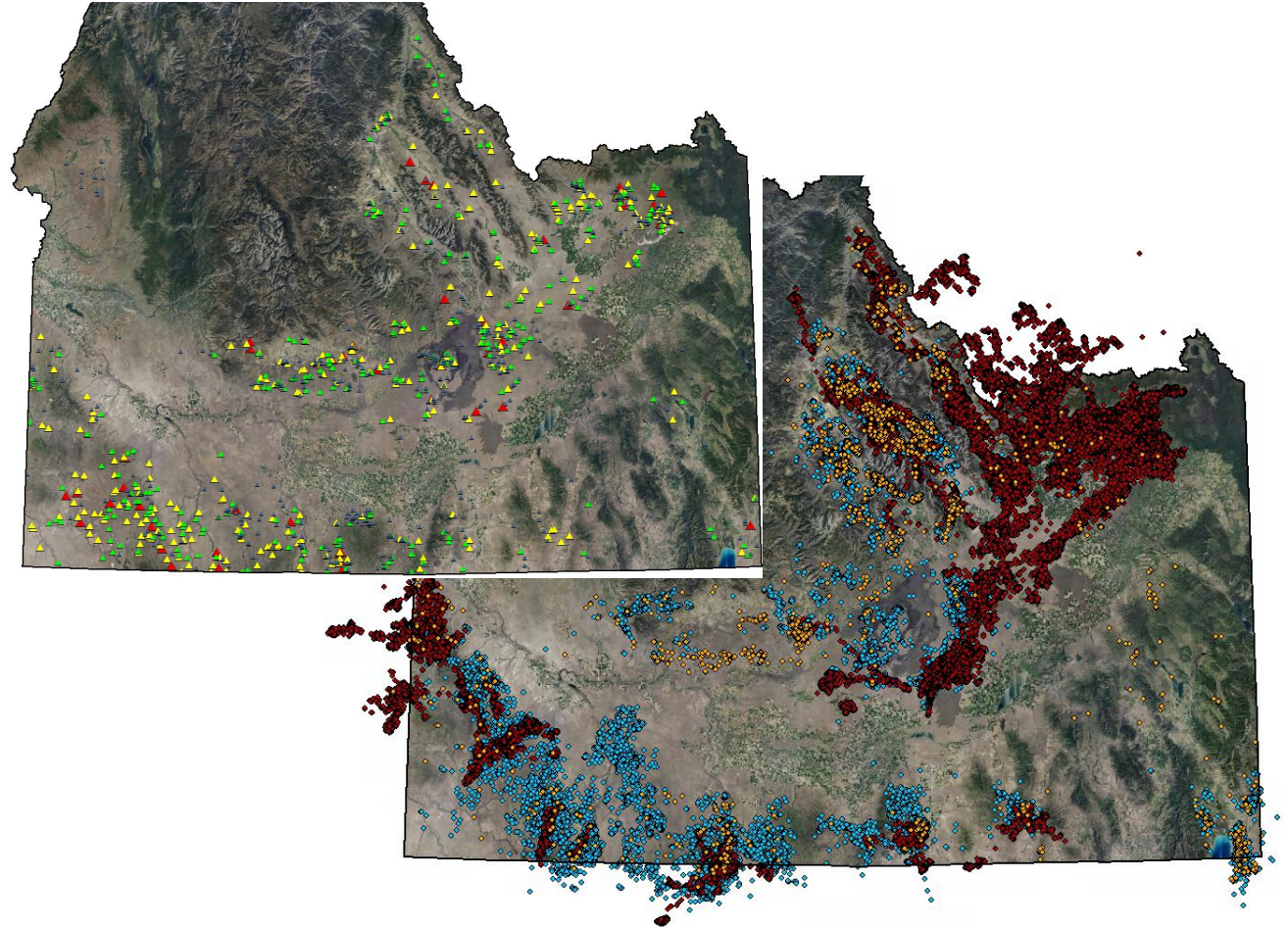
- Idaho Plan
  - Sufficient regulatory mechanisms
  - Management improvements
  - Stakeholder input
- HMA map
  - 2015 baseline
  - Best available data
  - Stakeholder input



# Idaho Alternative – Best Available Data

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- Lek counts
- Telemetry
  - Space use
  - Movements/connectivity
- Habitat models
  - Nesting
  - Late brood-rearing
  - Wintering
  - Sagebrush cover
  - Tree/annual grass cover



# Idaho Alternative – Stakeholder Input

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- Governor's 2012 Task Force
- Industry
  - Idaho Power
  - Simplot
  - Itafos-Conda
  - Bayer
  - Idaho Cattle Association
  - East Idaho Grazing Association
  - Triple Oak Power
  - Liberty Gold
- Owyhee Local Working Group
- US Air Force
- Idaho Conservation League
- Counties
  - Caribou
  - Clark
  - Custer
  - Fremont
  - Jefferson
  - Owyhee
  - Washington
- State
  - IDPR
  - USDA
  - IDL
  - OEMR

# Idaho Alternative – HMAs

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## PHMA

- High and medium-high Breeding Bird Density
  - Large areas of intact habitat
    - Medium and high habitat suitability
    - High sagebrush cover
    - Low tree cover
    - Low annual herbaceous cover
  - Important connectivity and seasonal habitat, especially winter
  - Lack of disturbance (e.g., invasives, wildfire, anthropogenic features)
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## IHMA

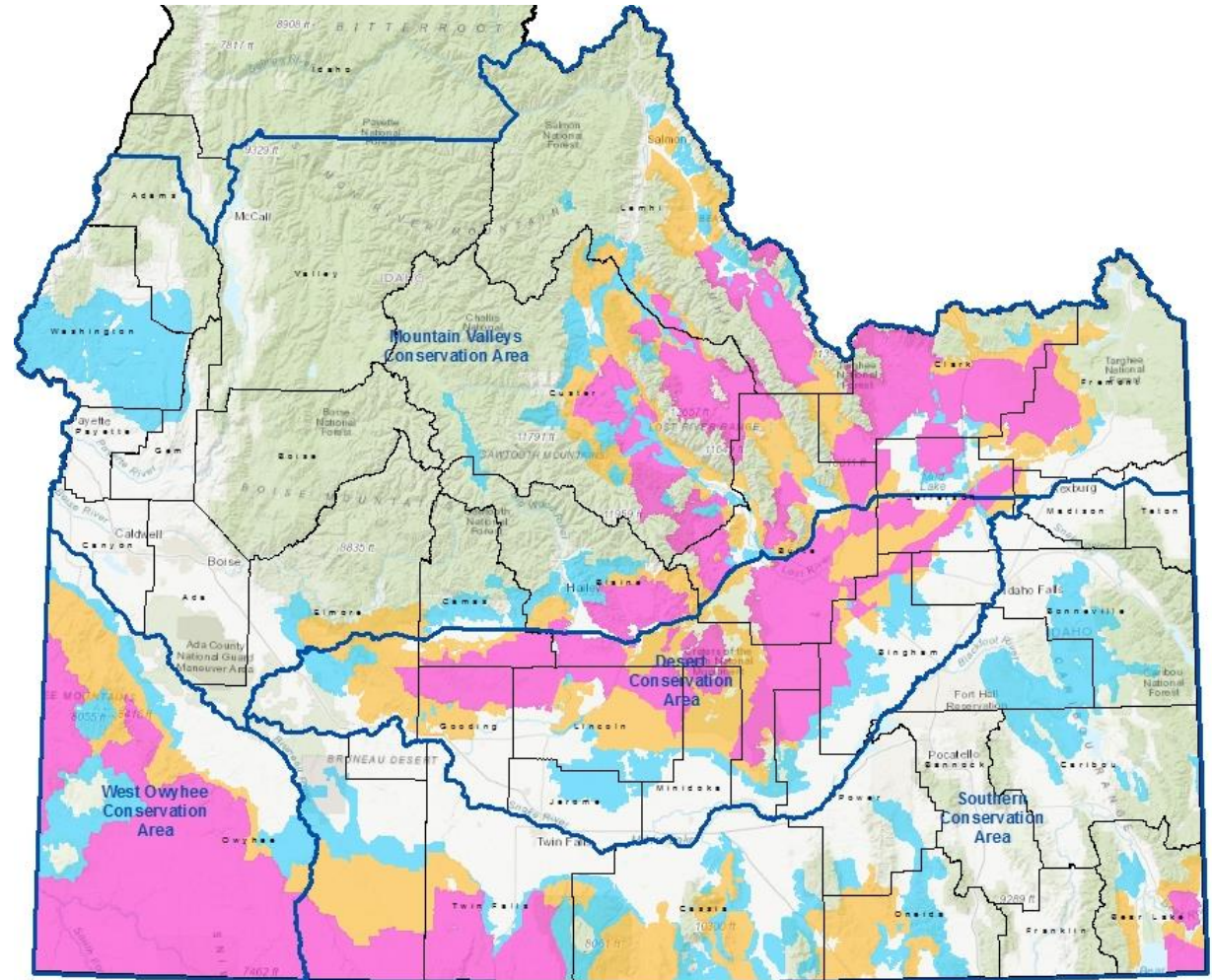
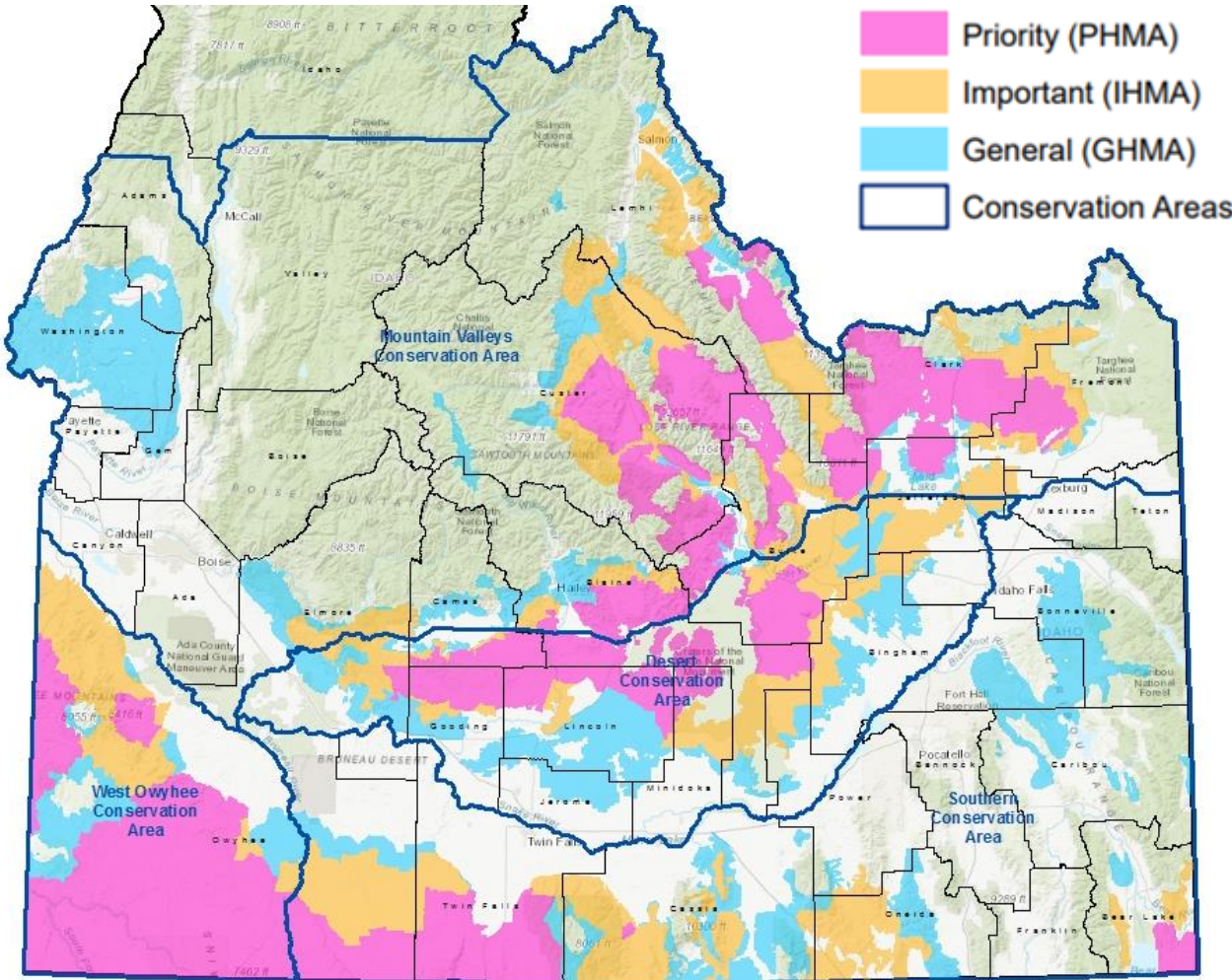
- Connects and buffers PHMA
  - Slightly lower habitat quality and/or more fragmented
  - Lower Breeding Bird Densities
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## GHMA

- Lowest habitat quality
- Lowest Breeding Bird Densities

# 2015

# 2023



# Idaho Alternative – Summary Statistics

| HMA   | 2015         | 2023         | Change       |        |
|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| PHMA  | 6.02m acres  | 6.73m acres  | +0.71m acres | +11.8% |
| IHMA  | 4.52m acres  | 4.31m acres  | -0.21m acres | -4.6%  |
| GHMA  | 4.35m acres  | 4.08m acres  | -0.27m acres | -6.1%  |
| Total | 14.88m acres | 15.12m acres | +0.24m acres | +1.6%  |

# Idaho Alternative – Summary Statistics

| HMA         | Leks–2015 |      | Leks–2023 |      | Change |
|-------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|--------|
| PHMA        | 841       | 67%  | 911       | 73%  | +6%    |
| IHMA        | 311       | 25%  | 274       | 22%  | -3%    |
| GHMA        | 74        | 6%   | 63        | 5%   | -1%    |
| Outside HMA | 28        | 2%   | 6         | <1%  | <-2%   |
| Total       | 1,254     | 100% | 1,254     | 100% | 0%     |

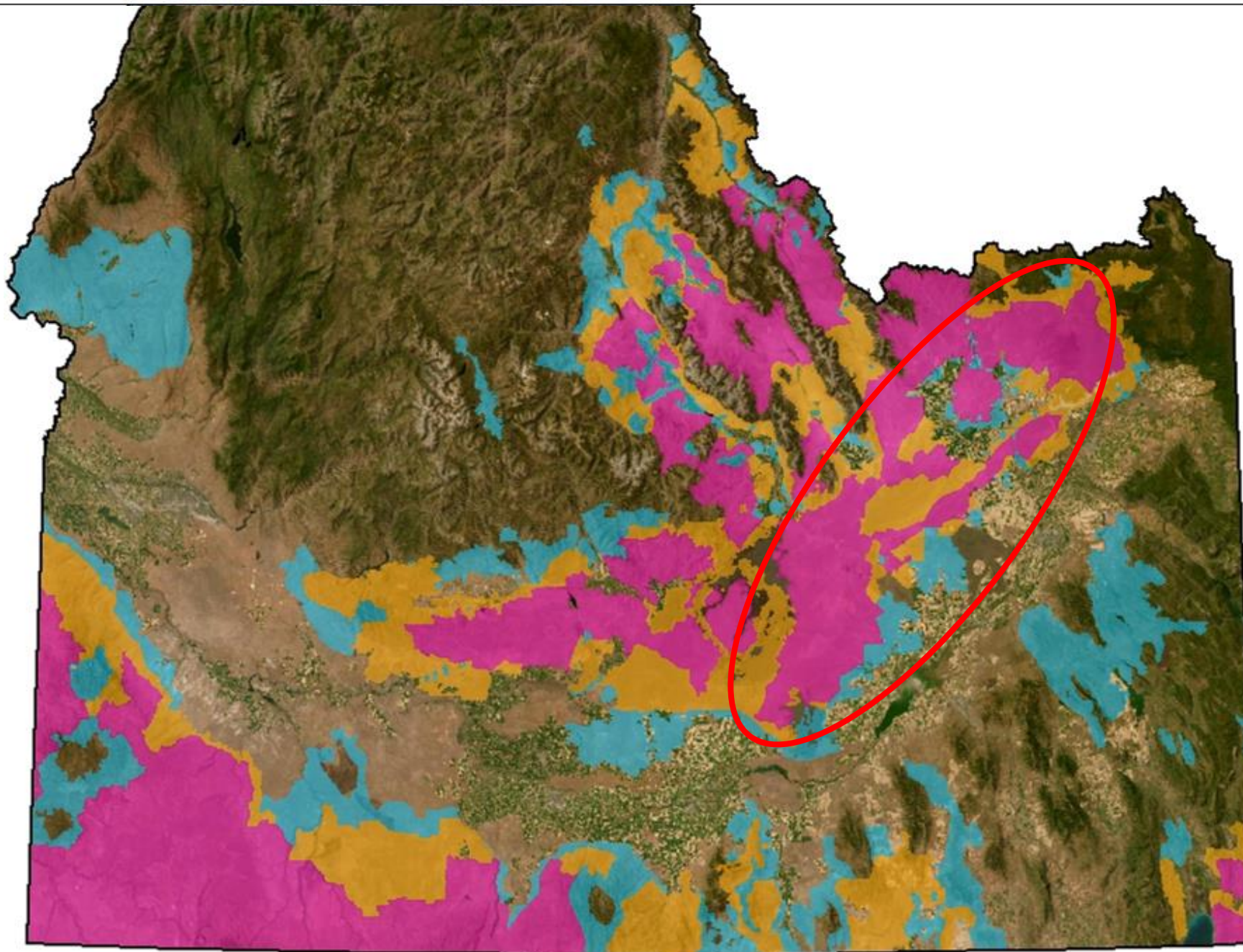
# Idaho Alternative – Summary Statistics

| HMA         | Males–2015 |      | Males–2023 |      | Change |
|-------------|------------|------|------------|------|--------|
| PHMA        | 9,030      | 80%  | 9,563      | 85%  | +5%    |
| IHMA        | 1,888      | 17%  | 1,520      | 14%  | -3%    |
| GHMA        | 212        | 2%   | 142        | 1%   | -1%    |
| Outside HMA | 95         | 1%   | 0          | 0%   | -1%    |
| Total       | 11,225     | 100% | 11,225     | 100% | 0%     |

# Idaho Alternative – Summary Statistics

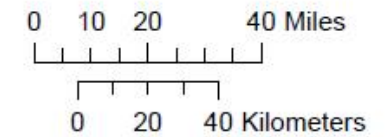
| Conservation Area | PHMA      |           |        | IHMA      |           |        | GHMA      |           |        |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|
|                   | 2015      | 2023      | Change | 2015      | 2023      | Change | 2015      | 2023      | Change |
| Desert            | 1,010,654 | 1,655,791 | +63.8% | 1,046,855 | 1,109,068 | +5.9%  | 1,132,856 | 561,326   | -50.5% |
| Mountain Valleys  | 2,115,734 | 2,173,645 | +2.7%  | 1,607,504 | 1,485,179 | -7.6%  | 1,548,345 | 1,515,982 | -2.1%  |
| Southern          | 856,657   | 827,630   | -3.4%  | 1,251,681 | 1,240,381 | -0.9%  | 1,287,406 | 1,538,592 | +19.5% |
| West Owyhee       | 2,033,504 | 2,072,176 | +1.9%  | 609,071   | 473,149   | -22.3% | 376,822   | 465,606   | +23.6% |
| Total             | 6,016,549 | 6,729,241 | +11.8% | 4,515,111 | 4,307,778 | -4.6%  | 4,345,429 | 4,081,506 | -6.1%  |

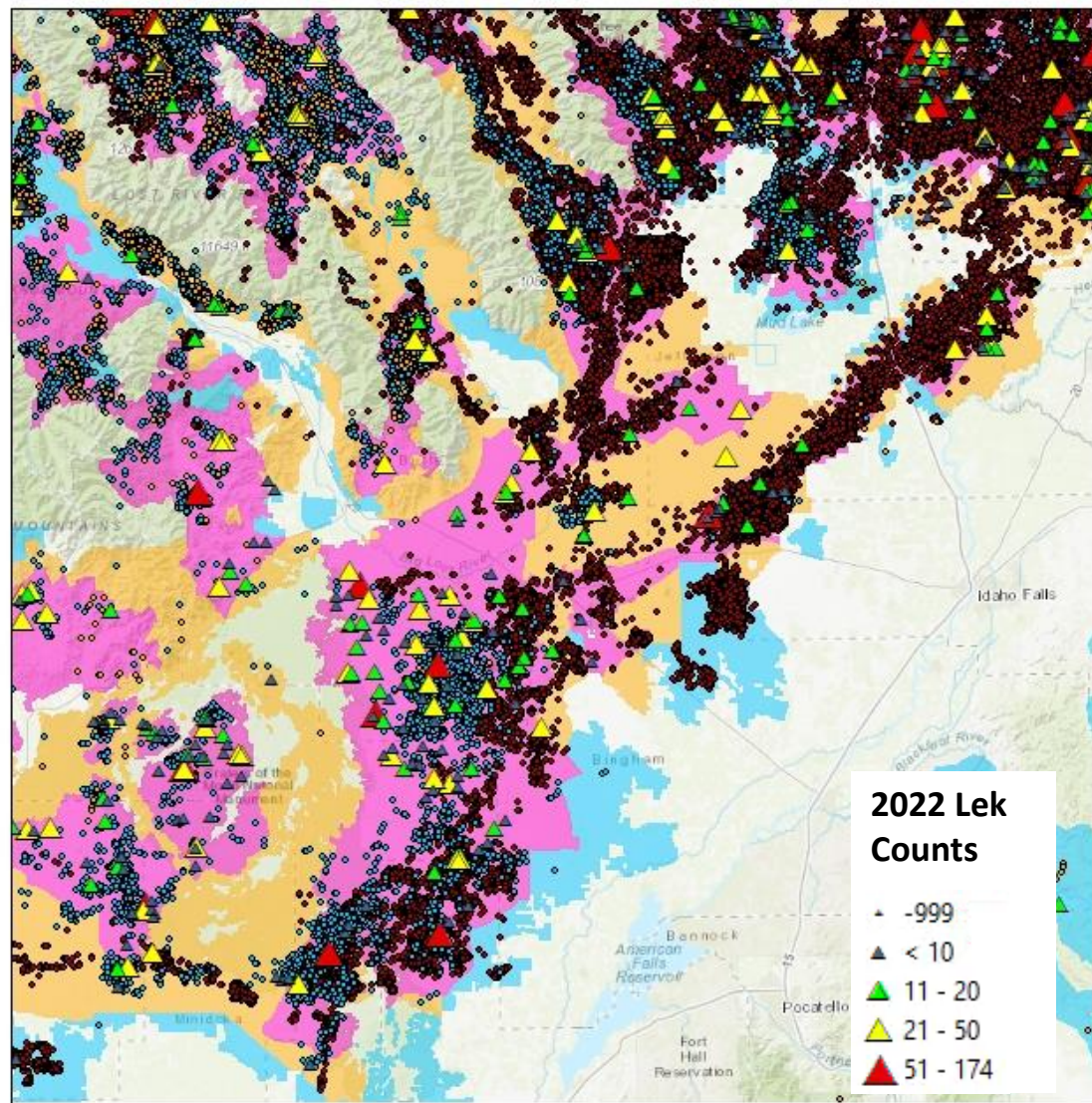
# 2023 Idaho State Alternative Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Management Areas (HMA)



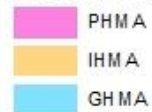
## Habitat Management Area

-  Priority (PHMA)
-  Important (IHMA)
-  General (GHMA)



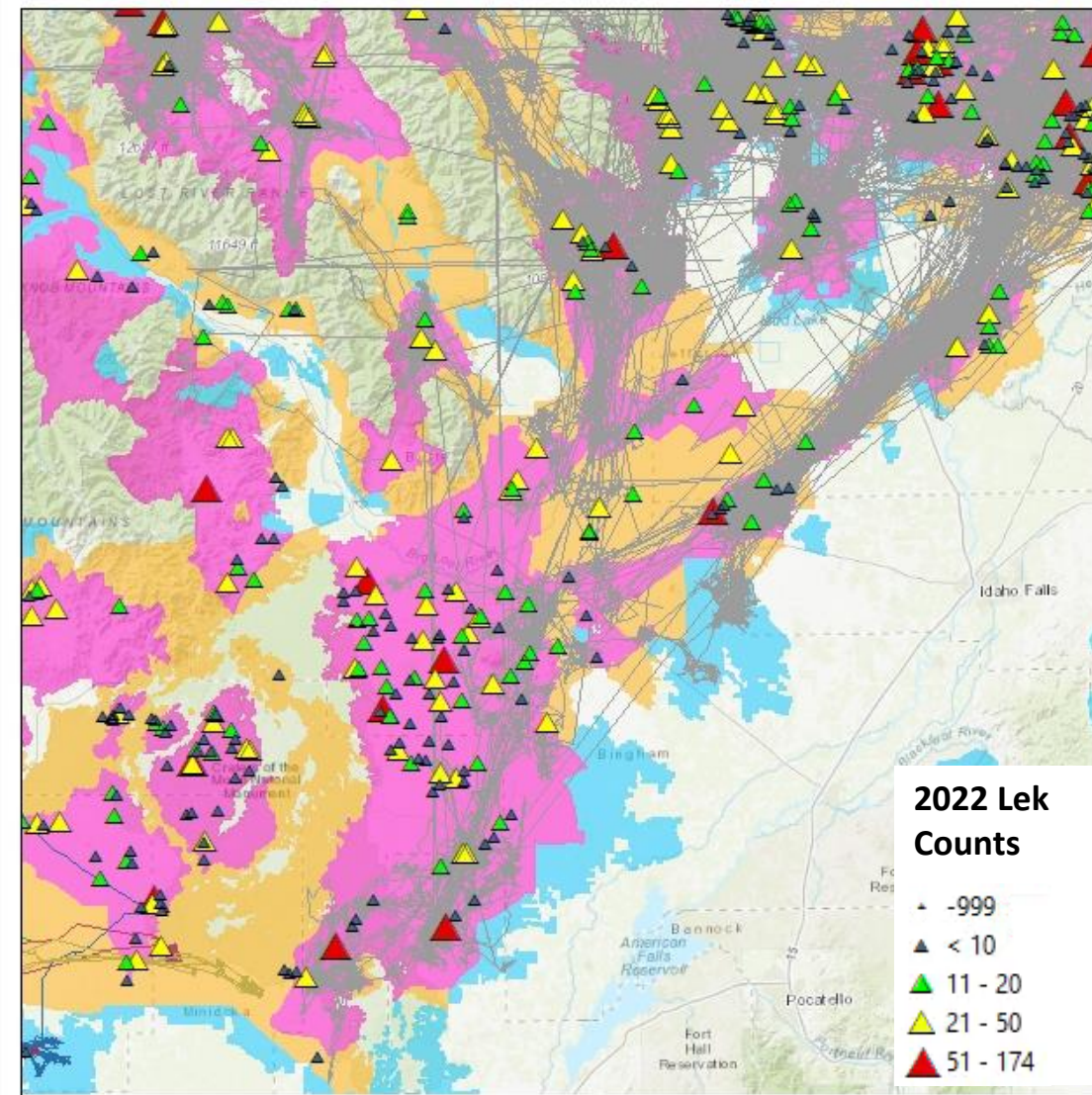


**Habitat Management Area**

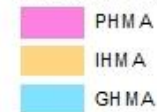


- VHF Telemetry
- GPS Telemetry
- Other Observations

2023



**Habitat Management Area**



— Individual

2023

# Idaho Alternative – Desert PHMA

| Ownership | Change – 2015-2023 |      |
|-----------|--------------------|------|
| BLM       | +380,404 acres     | 59%  |
| DOE       | +231,728 acres     | 36%  |
| State     | +11,452 acres      | 2%   |
| Private   | +11,890 acres      | 2%   |
| NPS       | +9,654 acres       | 1%   |
| Total     | +645,134 acres     | 100% |

# Idaho Alternative – Stakeholder Input

- 2023 HMA map
  - Increase mapping precision
  - Remove non-habitat
  - Acknowledged telemetry data
  - Questioned models and professional judgement
  - Apply site-specific local knowledge
- 2021 Idaho Plan

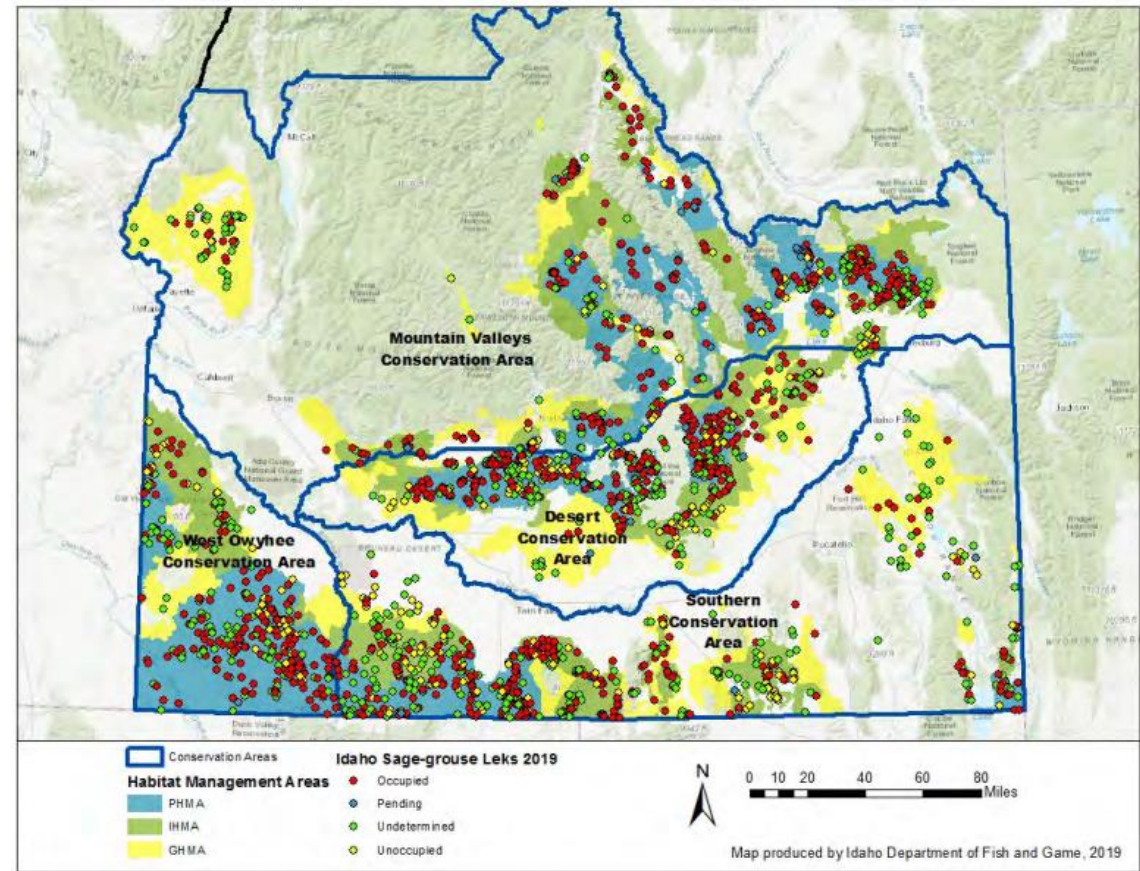


Figure 1. Idaho's Sage-Grouse Management Area

# Stakeholder Input – 2021 Idaho Plan

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- Adaptive Management
- Anthropogenic Disturbance
- Lek Buffers
- Lek Definitions
- Livestock Grazing
- Predators
- Rights of Way

# Idaho Plan – Adaptive Management

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- Comments

- Decrease scale of areas affected by triggers – Industry
- Keep triggers at Conservation Area scale – ICL
- Project proponents should be on Technical Team – Industry

- Recommendations

- Change trigger application to BLM Fine Scale Areas
- Retain that stakeholders with specialized knowledge can be on Technical Team

# Idaho Plan – Lek Definitions

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- Comments
  - BLM, USFS, and IDFG should use same lek definitions – Industry
  - Leks on private land should not affect federal land projects – Industry
- Recommendations
  - Add adoption of WAFWA lek definitions (BLM also considering)
  - Change protective buffers to Active and Pending Active leks
  - Retain NEPA analysis across ownerships for direct/indirect/cumulative effects with federal nexus

# Idaho Plan – Livestock Grazing

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- Comments

- Concerns that HMAs could affect livestock grazing – ICA/IDL/Counties
- Prioritizing permit renewals for allotments below health standards is a punishment – Washington Co
- Streamline permit renewals if meeting health standards – Washington Co

- Recommendations

- Retain emphasis that grazing permits should not be affected if meeting rangeland health standards
- Retain emphasis on permit renewals in PHMA/IHMA with declining populations if grazing is causal factor affecting rangeland health standards

# Idaho Plan – Predators

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- Comments
  - Concerned with predator numbers, especially Corvids – Custer Co
  - Concerns that researchers lead predators to nests – Custer Co
- Recommendations
  - Add BLM should initiate discussions with the State if predation is a causal factor for triggers
  - Retain recommendations to reduce opportunities for avian predators

# Idaho Plan – Rights of Way

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- Comments
  - Flexibility needed to maintain/operate existing ROWs – IPC
  - Only GHMA should occur adjacent to B2H, Gateway West, SWIP and other permitted transmission lines to facilitate energy development – Triple Oak
- Recommendations
  - Add acknowledgement for utility maintenance and access needs
  - Retain HMAs are based on best available data and existing conditions

# Idaho Plan – Key Recommendations

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- Increase trigger precision with Fine Scale Areas
- Retain No disturbance caps
- Continue tiered buffers approach
- Adopt WAFWA lek definitions
- Emphasize grazing should not be affected if meeting health standards
- Add that BLM should discuss predation with State if a causal factor
- Acknowledge utility maintenance access/activity needs
- Continue basing HMAs on best available data for existing conditions