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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

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Notice of Availability of the Utah Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared the Utah Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Utah Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Planning Area and by this notice is announcing the opening of the comment period. BLM Utah is soliciting comments on the entire Draft EIS, as well as the specific planning issues mentioned in this NOA, and the cumulative effects analysis.

DATES: To ensure that comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS within 90 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes a notice of availability of the Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS in the Federal Register. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public participation activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or mailings.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the Utah GRSB Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS by any of the following methods:

- web site: <https://goo.gl/ywBXSb>
- mail: BLM Utah State Office, 440 West 200 South, Suite 500, Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Copies of the Utah GRSB Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS are available in the Utah State Office or on the project website at the addresses above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For further information contact Quincy Bahr, BLM Utah Sage-Grouse Coordinator, telephone 801-539-4122; address 440 West 200 South Suite 500, Salt Lake City, UT 84101; or by email qfbahr@blm.gov.

Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact Mr. Bahr. The FRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with Mr. Bahr. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Greater Sage-Grouse is a state-managed species that is dependent on sagebrush steppe ecosystems. These ecosystems are managed in partnership across the range of the Greater Sage-Grouse by federal, state, and local authorities. Efforts to conserve the species and its habitat date back to the 1950s. Over the past two decades, state wildlife agencies, federal agencies, and many others in the range of the species have been collaborating to conserve Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitats. The United States Department of the Interior (DOI) and the BLM have broad responsibilities to manage federal lands and resources for the public benefit. Nearly half of Greater Sage-Grouse habitat is managed by the BLM. The BLM is committed to

being a good neighbor and investing in on-the-ground conservation activities through close collaboration with State governments, local communities, private landowners, and other stakeholders.

In September 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the Greater Sage-Grouse did not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The USFWS based its “not warranted” determination, in part, on the conservation commitments and management actions in the BLM and U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) Greater Sage-Grouse land use plan amendments and revisions (2015 GRSG land use plan decisions), as well as on other private, state, and federal conservation efforts. Since 2015 the BLM, in discussion with partners, primarily Governors and state wildlife management agencies, recognized that several refinements and policy updates could help strengthen conservation efforts, while providing increased economic opportunity to local communities. The BLM and Department of Interior worked closely with Governors charged with managing Greater Sage-Grouse to determine whether some, none, or all of the 2015 Land Use Plans should be amended. After carefully considering the Governor’s input, and using its discretion and authority under FLPMA, as well as under direction from the Secretary, including Secretary’s Order (SO) 3353, the BLM proposes amending the Utah Greater Sage-Grouse land use plans that address GRSG management. This action is proposed to enhance cooperation and improve alignment with the state plans or management strategies, in accordance with the BLM’s multiple use and sustained yield mission. The BLM prepared the Utah GRSG Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS to address alternatives that will build upon its commitment to conserve and restore Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, while improving collaboration and alignment with state

management strategies for Greater Sage-Grouse. The BLM seeks to improve management alignment in ways that will increase management flexibility, maintain access to public resources, and promote conservation outcomes. The BLM used internal, agency, and public scoping to identify issues considered in the environmental analysis. As part of this analysis, the BLM also examined the range of alternatives evaluated in the BLM's 2015 GRSG land use plan decisions and their supporting NEPA analyses. This Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS is one of six separate planning efforts that are being undertaken in response to SO 3353, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States (June 7, 2017), and in accordance with SO 3349, American Energy Independence (March 29, 2017). The Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS proposes to amend the RMPs for field offices on BLM lands within BLM Utah boundaries. The current management decisions for resources are described in the following resource management plans (RMPs):

- Box Elder Resource Management Plan (1986)
- Cedar/Beaver/Garfield/Antimony Resource Management Plan (1986)
- Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Management Plan (2000)
- House Range Resource Management Plan (1987)
- Kanab Resource Management Plan (2008)
- Park City Management Framework Plan (1975)
- Pinyon Management Framework Plan (1978)
- Pony Express Resource Management Plan (1990)
- Price Resource Management Plan (2008)
- Randolph Management Framework Plan (1980)

- Richfield Resource Management Plan (2008)
- Salt Lake District Isolated Tracts Planning Analysis (1985)
- Vernal Resource Management Plan (2008)
- Warm Springs Resource Management Plan (1987)

The planning area includes approximately 48,158,700 acres of BLM, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, State, local, and private lands located in Utah, in 27 counties: Beaver, Box Elder, Cache, Carbon, Daggett, Davis, Duchesne, Emery, Garfield, Grand, Iron, Juab, Kane, Millard, Morgan, Piute, Rich, Salt Lake, Sanpete, Sevier, Summit, Tooele, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Wayne, and Weber. Within the decision area, the BLM administers approximately 4,017,400 acres of public lands as GRSG habitat management areas. Surface management decisions made as a result of this Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS will apply only to BLM-administered lands in the decision area.

The formal public scoping process for the RMP Amendment/EIS began on October 11, 2017, with the publication of a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (82 FR 47248), and ended on December 1, 2017. The following public meetings were held in Utah:

- Vernal, Utah; November 14, 2017
- Cedar City, Utah; November 15, 2017
- Snowville, Utah; November 16, 2017

The Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS addresses the designation of sagebrush focal areas; disturbance and density caps; modification of habitat objectives; changes to waivers, exceptions and modification criteria; the need for General Habitat Management Areas; exceptions to greater sage-grouse management within non-habitat portions of

Priority Habitat Management Areas; lek buffers; reversing adaptive management responses when the BLM determines that resource conditions no longer warrant those responses; prioritization of mineral leasing; land disposals and exchanges; predation; burial of transmission lines; direction to consider specific alternatives during implementation planning; and clarification of existing management related to mitigation standards, adjustment of habitat boundaries to reflect new information, grazing systems and prioritization of grazing permits, water developments management in relation to water rights, travel and transportation management planning, and surface coal mining. The Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS evaluates two alternatives in detail, including the No Action Alternative (Alternative A) and one action alternative (Management Alignment Alternative). The Management Alignment Alternative has been identified as BLM's Preferred Alternative for the purposes of public comment and review. Identification of this alternative, however, does not represent final agency direction, and the Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS may reflect changes or adjustments from information received during public comment, from new information, or from changes in BLM policies or priorities. The Proposed RMP Amendment/Final EIS may include objectives and actions described in the other analyzed alternative as well. Alternative A would retain the current management goals, objectives, and direction specified in the current RMPs for each field office. BLM Utah is soliciting comments on the entire Draft EIS, as well as the specific planning issues mentioned in this NOA, and the cumulative effects analysis. Please note that public comments and information submitted including names, street addresses, and email addresses of persons who submit comments will be available for

public review and disclosure at the address provided in the ADDRESSES section of this notice during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

AUTHORITY: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10, 43 CFR 1610.2

Edwin L. Roberson,

BLM Utah State Director.

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