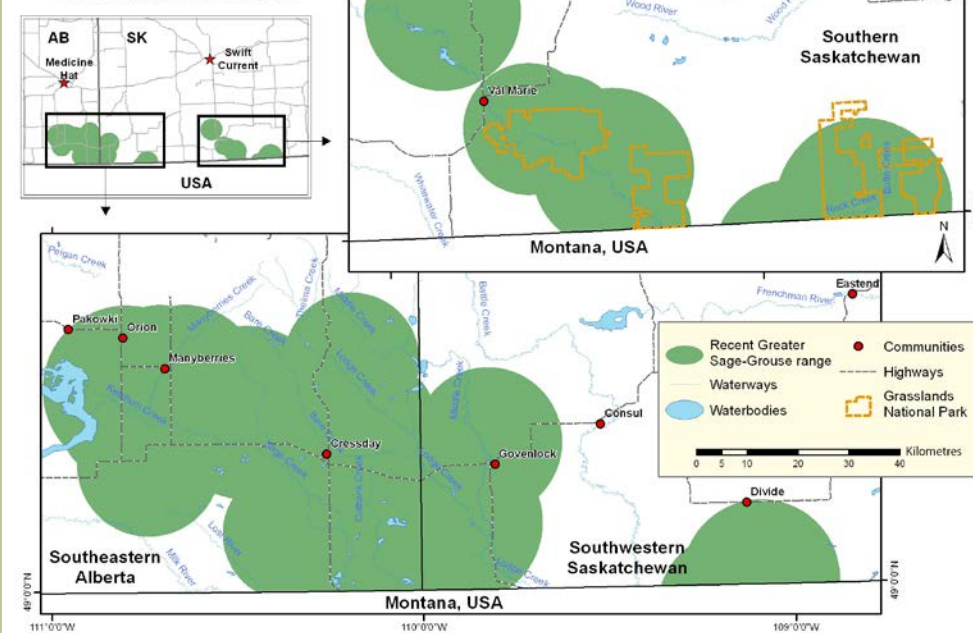


Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Distribution in Canada



The section on critical habitat in the amended Recovery Strategy also includes examples of activities that can destroy critical habitat. Examples of such activities include (but are not limited to):

- Removing, reducing or degrading sagebrush-grassland habitat;
- Altering the natural hydrology of the area;
- Creating chronic noise conditions within critical habitat; and
- Constructing, installing or planting vertical structures.

Activities may have an effect if occurring directly on critical habitat, and may also have negative impacts if they occur some distance away. For example, Greater Sage-Grouse are known to be sensitive to loud noises and may abandon critical habitat as the result of noisy activity.

Greater Sage-Grouse recovery will depend, in part, on preventing the destruction of critical habitat. SARA seeks to prevent the destruction of critical habitat through a number of different approaches including careful stewardship. As a last resort, prohibitions of certain types of activities that would destroy their habitat or cause excessive disturbance to the birds may be considered.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

To find out more about what is being done to protect plants and animals that are in danger of disappearing from the wild in Canada including the Greater Sage-Grouse, please visit the Species at Risk Public Registry at: www.sararegistry.gc.ca

General locations of potential critical habitat for the Greater Sage-Grouse in Alberta and Saskatchewan

HOW CAN I BECOME INVOLVED?

If you have Greater Sage-Grouse or Greater Sage-Grouse habitat on or near your land, you are an important steward and have an opportunity to play an important role in the recovery of these endangered birds. There are a number of conservation programs available to assist you in developing and implementing conservation plans for wildlife on your land.

The next steps in the recovery planning process for the Greater Sage-Grouse will be the development of action plans, which will include appropriate activities to aid the recovery of the Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada. The Government of Canada is committed to working with all interested parties in the development of these action plans. You can play an important role in the recovery of the Greater Sage-Grouse. Over the next few years, we will be seeking your comments and suggestions on the amended Recovery Strategy and upcoming action plans.

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Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada

THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE

WHAT IS A GREATER SAGE-GROUSE?

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a large ground-dwelling bird that has finely marked brown, black, beige and white upper parts, a black belly, and a long pointed tail. It is the largest grouse species found in North America. Within the white breast feathers of the male Greater Sage-Grouse, there are two large air sacs that are inflated and deflated as part of a spectacular mating display.

Greater Sage-Grouse are found in Canada's southernmost native prairies where sagebrush grows. Specifically, they are found in southwestern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta. There are also populations found in the grasslands of the United States.



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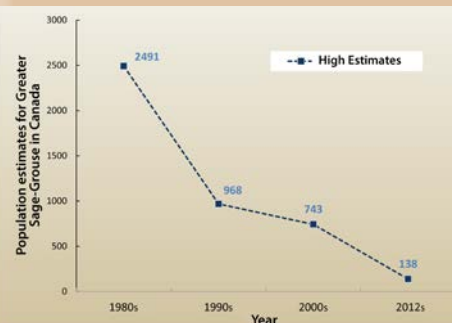


WHY ARE THEY AT RISK?

Greater Sage-Grouse are listed as endangered under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Sage grouse now occupy only about 7% of their historical range in Canada. The estimated number of Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada has fallen to an all-time low level. As of 2012, only 93–138 individuals are thought to remain in Canada.

Populations in Canada are currently threatened by a number of factors, such as habitat loss and degradation, extreme weather conditions, industrial disturbance, predation, and disease. Habitat changes that reduce or degrade the size and quality of sagebrush vegetation can have negative consequences for the Greater Sage-Grouse.

Population estimates for Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada



WHAT IS SARA?

The *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) is a federal act that takes a collaborative approach to working with landowners and provincial and territorial governments to protect species at risk and their habitats. The purposes of the Act are:

- 1) to prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct or extirpated (gone from the wild in Canada);
- 2) to help recover extirpated, endangered or threatened species; and
- 3) to ensure that species of special concern do not become endangered or threatened.

HOW DOES SARA PROTECT GREATER SAGE-GROUSE?

Greater Sage-Grouse are protected on federal lands from killing, harming, harassing, capturing, taking, possessing, collecting, buying, selling or trading of individuals of the species. The Act also protects their eggs and nests. The provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan have laws that protect sage grouse on provincial and private lands.

SARA also recognizes that protecting the habitat of species at risk is key to their conservation. Critical habitat is defined as the habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of a species at risk. Following the identification of critical habitat within a recovery strategy or action plan, the intent of SARA is to protect the critical habitat. Voluntary actions and stewardship measures are the preferred approaches to conserving habitat. The federal government has established the Habitat Stewardship Program to assist in such actions.

In the event that stewardship does not protect the critical habitat, prohibitions against destruction of critical habitat can come into play. When critical habitat is located on private or provincial lands and is not protected through stewardship arrangements, conservation agreements or provincial laws, the Government of Canada may make it an offence to destroy critical habitat. Under SARA, the Government of Canada is responsible for ensuring critical habitat is protected from destruction.

WHAT IS RECOVERY PLANNING?

For endangered species, such as the Greater Sage-Grouse, SARA requires that a Recovery Strategy be prepared. This strategy outlines the general approach for supporting the recovery of a species. It also provides background information on a species, and sets goals and objectives to guide recovery efforts. Following the Recovery Strategy, an Action Plan is developed, which outlines the specific actions needed to meet the recovery goals.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR RECOVERY PLANNING FOR GREATER SAGE-GROUSE?

As a first step in the recovery planning process under SARA, the Recovery Strategy for the Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada was completed in January 2008, with a replacement section published in October 2009 that partially identified critical habitat in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The Government of Canada has now amended the Recovery Strategy by completing the identification of the critical habitat needed for the recovery of the species, and providing additional information on examples of activities that might destroy it. The critical habitat identified within the amended Recovery Strategy includes active breeding habitat (known as leks or dancing grounds), as well as important nesting, brood-rearing and wintering habitat within the recent range of Greater

Sage-Grouse in Canada. In general, this critical habitat is characterized by areas with patches of sagebrush, relatively little bare ground and minimal human disturbance.

This is an important step towards the recovery of the Greater Sage-Grouse in Canada. In cooperation with provincial governments, and in consultation with landowners and other people who are directly affected, the Government of Canada will work to ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect critical habitat, including stewardship approaches. A multi-species action plan involving Greater Sage-Grouse in Saskatchewan is currently under way, and an action plan specific to Alberta will be developed in the future.

Endangered: a wildlife species that is facing imminent risk of extirpation (being lost from the wild) or extinction.



HOW MIGHT THE RECOVERY STRATEGY AFFECT ME?

If you are a landowner with Greater Sage-Grouse on your land, it means that the activities you are currently carrying out are generally compatible with the Greater Sage-Grouse's habitat needs. For example, Greater Sage-Grouse have demonstrated that they can survive and reproduce on native mixed grass prairie with livestock production and light to moderate grazing as a primary land use. In some cases current grazing management may not be optimal for Greater Sage-Grouse. In such instances advice, assistance or incentives may be available to assist you in adjusting stocking rates, timing or distribution of livestock.