



MONTANA SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

MONTANA SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION STRATEGY GOALS:

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

MONTANA CONSERVATION STRATEGY HAS THREE PILLARS:

1. Private Land Stewardship
2. Executive Order 12-2015
3. Montana Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act
 - Stewardship Fund Grants
 - Mitigation Marketplace

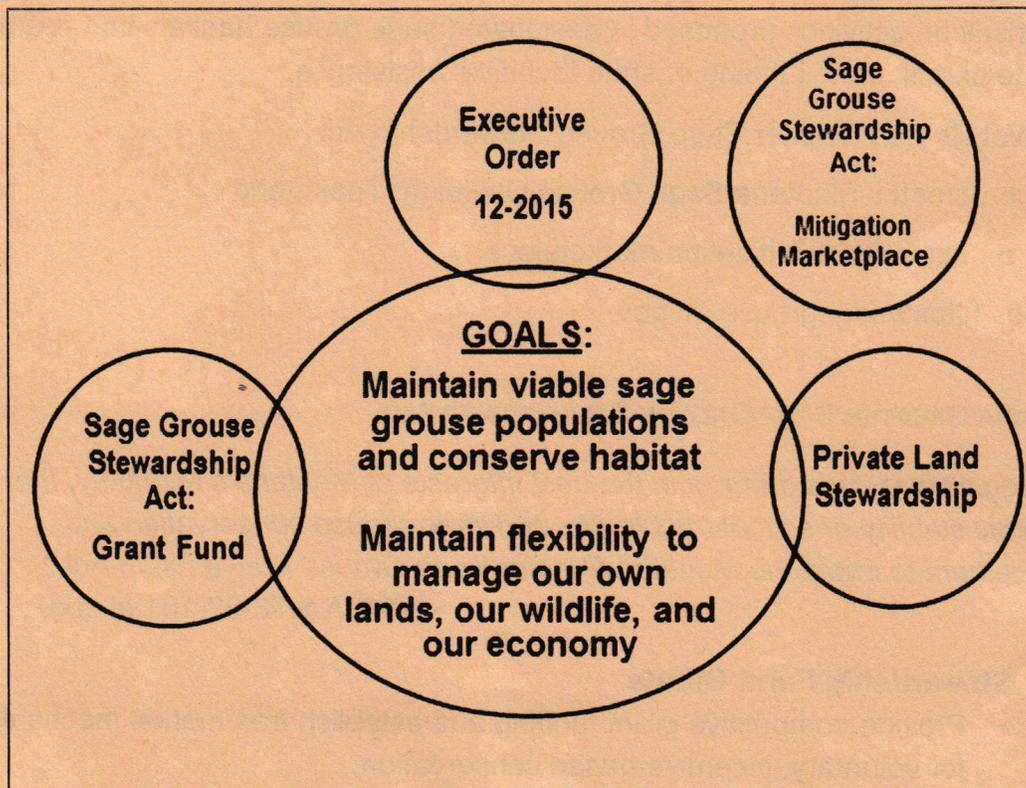


Figure 1. Components of Montana's Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy.

1. PRIVATE LAND STEWARDSHIP

- Private land stewardship was important to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decision that listing under the federal Endangered Species Act was not warranted in Fall, 2015.
- Montana habitats in good shape; grazing not a significant threat.
- Provide incentives for continuing good stewardship.
- Emphasize voluntary measures, for example: NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative.
- Private landowners can participate in mitigation marketplace directly by selling conservation credits. Generates revenue and keeps working landscapes working.

2. EXECUTIVE ORDER 12-2015

- Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.
- Mirrors Wyoming.
- "Core areas" strategy.
- "All hands, all lands, all threats."
- Respect private property and existing uses.
- Consult on activities proposed in designated sage grouse habitats that require a state permit, state funding or state technical assistance.
- Dovetails with Greater Sage Grouse Stewardship Act.
 - creates Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team; and
 - establishes mitigation marketplace.
- See: <https://sagegrouse.mt.gov>.

3. MONTANA GREATER SAGE GROUSE STEWARDSHIP ACT

"The Legislature finds that it is in the best interests of Montana's economy, the economic stability of school trust lands, and sage grouse conservation and management to enact the Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Stewardship Act."

MCA § 76-22-101 et seq.

A. Stewardship Fund Grants

- Provide competitive grant funding and establish free market mechanisms for voluntary, incentive-based conservation.
- Maintain, enhance, restore, expand, and benefit sage grouse habitat and populations on private lands [and public lands as needed].

- “Kick-starter” fund for a mitigation marketplace.
 - Fund conservation projects to create pool of credits.
- Conservation credits sold to developers to offset impacts of their activities.
- 2015 Legislature appropriated \$10 million for the biennium.

B. Mitigation Framework

- Hierarchy - how to approach development and impacts:
 - avoid, minimize, restore / reclaim, compensate (i.e. replace).
- Mitigation allows activities to move forward even if there are impacts.
- Developers whose activities impact habitat create debits.
- Offset debits with conservation credits.
- Transactional.

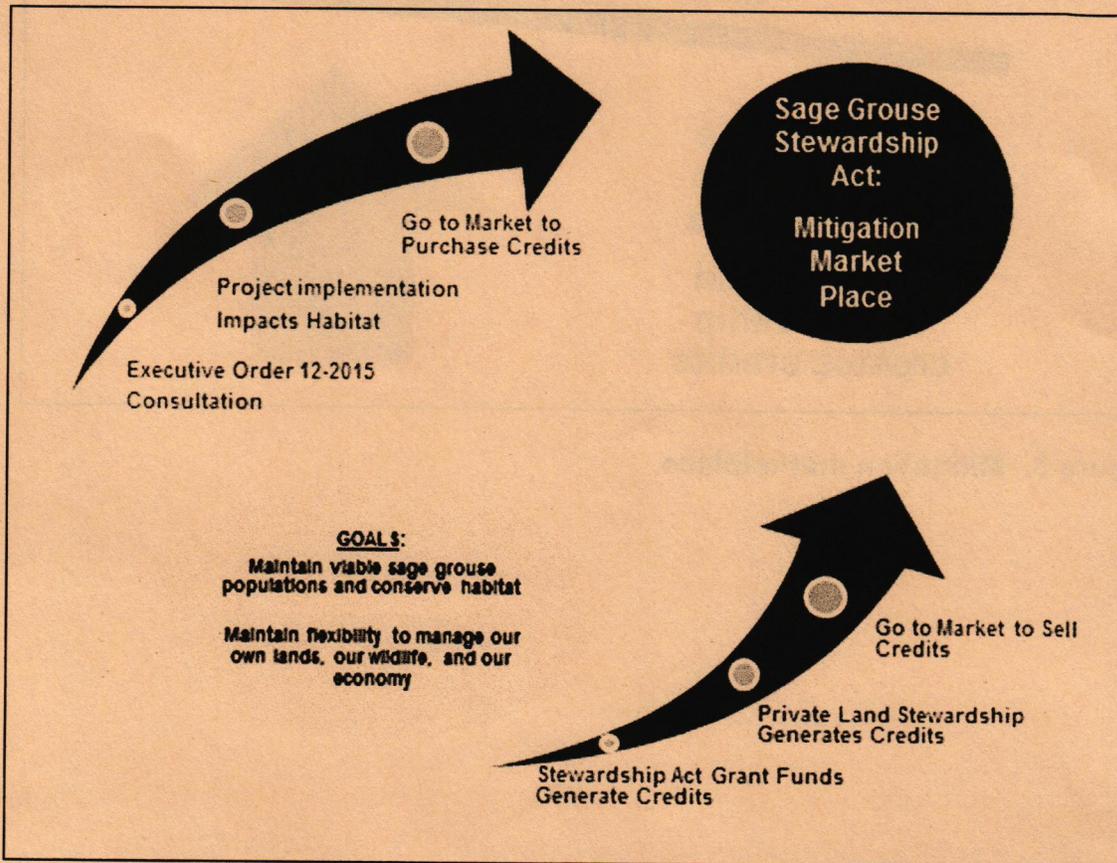


Figure 2. Relationship between Stewardship Fund Grants and Mitigation.

C. Mitigation Marketplace

- Conservation credits sold into the marketplace.
- Developers buy credits in the marketplace to offset debits.
- Habitat Quantification Tool: method of defining a credit or debit.
- Ratio of credits needed to offset debits is a policy decision.

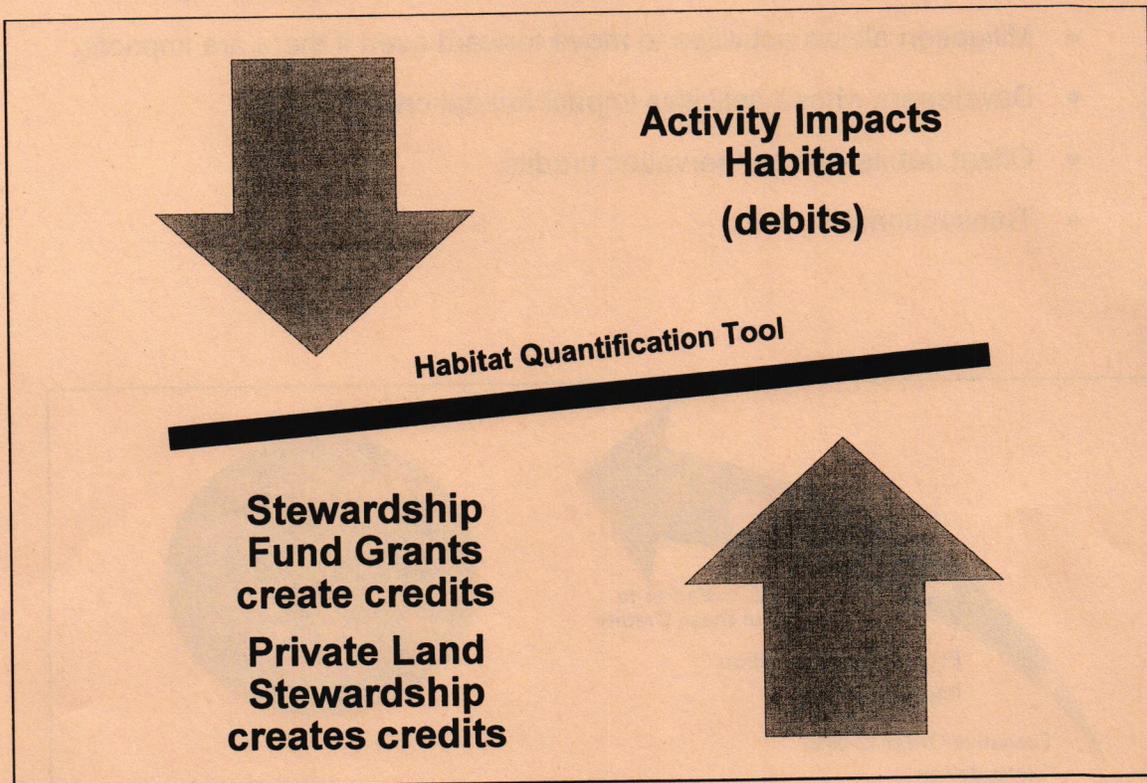


Figure 3. Mitigation marketplace.