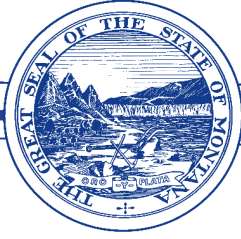


MONTANA SAGE GROUSE HABITAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM



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Sage Grouse Stewardship Report - 2021 Program Activity Summary

Program Overview

- The Program is now fully staffed with a Program Manager, three GIS Specialist and three Reviewers.
- The Program web application has seen significant upgrades making the web application far more user friendly.
- The web application now includes a new conservation side.
- The web application upgrades also provide the Program with improved database management and analysis options.
- The compensatory mitigation reduction waiver for county, city and town gravel pits (Senate Bill 284, 67th legislature) has been integrated into the program's workflow.

Stewardship Account Grants

In November 2020 seven conservation projects were approved by MSGOT. Of these, five conservation easements closed in 2021 and two are expected to close by the end of 2022.

To date MSGOT has approved funding for 14 conservation easement projects and one conservation lease. These projects have provided over 1.7 million credits for mitigation and conserved nearly 100,000 acres of sage grouse designated habitat.

The Program is currently in the fourth grant cycle. It is reviewing nine applications for conservation easements, lease easements and habitat enhancements. MSGOT will be selecting successful projects from this pool of applications in October.

Summary of Development projects reviewed

- Program completed review of 301 projects in 2021.
- 29.5% of the projects were in Core Area Habitat.
- 70.5% of the projects were in General Habitat or Connectivity Area.
- 53 projects resulted in a mitigation obligation.
 - 50 contributed to the Stewardship Account
 - 3 met their obligation through permittee responsible mitigation
- A total of 899,430.9 debits were created by project development in 2021.
 - 839,528.25 debits from one wind power project (Clearwater)
 - 59,903.07 debits from all other sources
- Project review Time 2021: Project reviews were completed on average in 6.3 days.
- Project review time in 2022: Project reviews were completed on average in 4.3 days.



MSGOT Meetings

- February 2021: Clearwater Energy LLC presented overview of their new wind power project spanning Custer, Garfield and Rosebud counties.
- March 2021: Clearwater Energy LLC presented a request for a mitigation waiver.
- September 2021: The Program provided a Habitat Quantification Tool Webinar to provide users with a demonstration about how the HQT model works.
- October 2021: MSGOT held a Listening Session seeking feedback from stakeholders about their experiences with the Program and ways to improve the Program.
- February 2022: Met to review grant cycle process and conservation lease discussion
- May 2022: HC Resources presented a request for a mitigation waiver
- June 2022: Presentation by Common Ground Capital for potential third-party mitigation and status of credit debit registry

Other News

The Bureau of Land Management is currently amending all of their Land Use Plans for Greater Sage Grouse. The state offered comments during the scoping period on February 2, 2021, and will be participating in the analysis of alternatives through cooperator status. Draft plans are anticipated by early 2023.

