

Transmission and Streaming Issues

New research is investigating how hunting sage grouse impacts their populations

Wyoming Public Radio | By [Cooper McKim](#)

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Jeannie Stafford / USFWS /

It's no secret that sage grouse numbers have been declining in the West for decades. Once numbering in the millions, the ecologically critical species has faltered due to

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There's not much research. though. into the role of hunting creater and Gunnison saae



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With the help of Jonathan Dinkins, a former UW postdoctoral researcher and current assistant professor at Oregon State University, that research has resulted in [two papers](#) published in PLOS ONE, a journal out of the Public Library of Science.

"We really saw an opportunity to kind of pull all these data together across states and ask a bunch of other questions that hadn't been asked with hunting and sage grouse," said Beck.

The goal was to better understand the management practices of hunting grouse, while also comparing hunting with other forms of human disturbance to see how it influenced population trends amongst sage grouse. Beck and Dinkins examined sage grouse hunting regulations in 11 western states and two Canadian provinces.

The two found that sage grouse hunting is, mostly, not a major factor in the species' population decline thanks to proper management practices through state agencies.

"Most of those states have been really conservative and the regulations recently changing season dates and structures and all kinds of things to reduce the impacts on sage grouse," said Beck. "Trimming back to the boundaries of hunting units, reducing the season length, allowing fewer birds to be harvested both daily and in possession by hunters. Sometimes closing hunting seasons down if populations get too low."

Beck explained hunting is basically set up to be compensatory, or compensating for other forms of mortality. That's different from additive hunting, which would hurt population numbers over time.

The research was funded completely by Anadarko Petroleum, an oil and gas exploration company now owned by Occidental Petroleum.

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Cooper McKim

Before Wyoming, Cooper McKim has reported for NPR stations in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and South Carolina. He's reported breaking news segments and features for several national NPR news programs. Cooper is the host of the limited podcast series Carbon Valley. Cooper studied Environmental Policy and Music. He's an avid jazz piano player, backpacker, and podcast listener.


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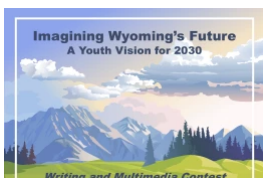
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