



College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Impact Statement 2011

## **Assessing the Economic and Ecological Tradeoffs between Energy Development and Habitat Conservation**

### **Situation:**

The ongoing debate over energy production and wildlife habitat conservation in the Rocky Mountain West has created two seemingly conflicting goals for public and private land managers. On the one hand, society's preference for energy independence has created incentives to increase domestic energy production. On the other hand, society has also indicated, through policies such as the Endangered Species Act, that achieving energy goals should not come at the expense of wildlife and sensitive ecosystems. Land managers and policy-makers therefore need sound research examining the economic and ecological tradeoffs between energy development, agricultural land uses and habitat conservation.

We have completed a research project examining the economic and ecological tradeoffs between utility-scale wind energy development and sage-grouse conservation. Together with Federal, State, and University partners, a policy paper was developed on the relationship between livestock grazing and Greater sage-grouse.

### **Impact:**

Results of this research project suggest that the State of Wyoming can protect sage-grouse habitat without substantial economic impacts to the wind energy sector. Furthermore, our policy paper on grazing and sage-grouse contributed to the development of state and federal (e.g., BLM) sage-grouse conservation policies. These policies likely contributed to keeping the Greater sage-grouse off the official endangered species list.

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