

Operating Protocols for the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative (NWCC) Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species Subgroup- Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative (GS3-SGC)

Objectives and operating protocols for the GS3-SGC are outlined below. Participants are expected to adhere to these protocols.

I. Purpose of the Collaborative

To coordinate studies examining the potential impacts of wind development on sage-grouse across their range with the goal of informing wind development and sage-grouse management strategies.

II. Objectives of the Collaborative

1. Convene federal, regional, state, industry and NGO representatives in support of focused research to increase efficiencies and leverage funding to maximize research conducted to better understand the potential impacts of wind development on sage-grouse across their range.
 - A. The Oversight Committee will attempt to raise funds from diverse sources to support independent investigators in conducting research.¹
 - B. The Oversight Committee will engage a pool of technical experts to provide advice in development of research questions and protocols, evaluation of research proposals and on-going monitoring of research.
2. Informed by advice from technical experts:
 - A. Develop coordinated research questions and protocols and monitor implementation of replicated studies across the sage-grouse range to better understand the impacts from wind development on sage-grouse.
 - i. For the foreseeable future, the collaborative will primarily address research gaps regarding the impacts of wind turbines and associated infrastructure² on sage-grouse.
 - B. Summarize study results and coordinate a comprehensive analysis of impacts across sage-grouse range, ensure completion of peer-reviews for studies, and conduct outreach to disseminate results.
3. Support development of the science needed to inform wind developers, federal and state agency wind development stipulations and mitigation strategies while accommodating the need for adaptive management as new science findings occur.

III. Coordination with Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

The Oversight Committee will coordinate with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

¹ Additional information on the Oversight Committee can be found in Section V.

² Including turbines, meteorological towers, guyed wires and short haul transmission within the annual home range of sage-grouse being studied.

(WAFWA), in an effort to:

1. Ensure WAFWA is updated on GS3–SGC activities and seek WAFWA’s input.
2. Ensure that research priorities are consistent with current sage-grouse management needs.
3. Offer suggestions for consistency in regulation and best management practices.

IV. Coordination with Other Groups

Individual Oversight Committee members will coordinate with other sage-grouse- and wind energy-related groups and resource management agencies as appropriate to:

1. Provide input on GS3–SGC activities, as needed.
2. Ensure that research priorities are consistent with current sage-grouse management needs.
3. Provide information prepared by the GS3-SGC to inform consistency in regulations and best management practices.

V. Role of the Oversight Committee

1. The Oversight Committee will be responsible for the governance of the GS3-SGC and assuring the purpose of the GS3-SGC is achieved including:
 - A. Informed by advice from technical experts, develop research questions and protocols, support independent investigators in conducting research, and monitor progress/results.
 - B. Review and approve communications to the public.
 - C. Contribute strategic direction, provide advice on raising funds, and approve annual work plan and products of GS3-SGC as well as any other activities supported by the GS3-SGC as appropriate.
2. The Oversight Committee, informed by advice from technical experts, will support research in the following ways:
 - A. For research that is funded by GS3-SGC:
 - i. Develop and approve research questions and protocols.
 - ii. Establish site selection criteria.
 - iii. Select research proposals (linked to qualified study sites) through a competitive selection process, including technical expert review and evaluation.
 - iv. Monitor research implementation.
 - v. Provide long-term support for the research that is conducted (e.g., fundraising, communications etc.)
 - vi. Coordinate the integration of the various individual study results into a comprehensive analysis that will undergo expert peer review.
 - B. For research projects funded by other entities but proposed to be conducted under the umbrella of the GS3-SGC:
 - i. The Oversight Committee will review and provide feedback on proposed research questions and protocols and evaluate whether or not the study sites and research

proposals meet established criteria.

- ii. If final studies and sites achieve the necessary level of consistency with GS3-SGC objectives, protocols and criteria the Oversight Committee will:
 - a. Approve the inclusion of those studies in the GS3-SGC overarching research effort.
 - b. Monitor the implementation of research via quarterly reporting mechanisms.
 - c. Develop an agreement with sponsors and researchers of selected studies.
- C. All researchers and sponsors for studies implemented under the GS3-SGC umbrella will be subject to the terms of these operating protocols.

VI. Oversight Committee Membership

1. The Oversight Committee will include representatives from the following organizations.
 - A. Wind Industry [3-5 members]
 - B. Federal Agency – management/research [3-4 members]
 - C. State Agency – management/research [3-5 members]
 - D. Scientific Academic [2-3 members]
 - E. NGO [2-3 members]

The initial number of members will be approximately 13-20 in number. The number may be increased or decreased by the Oversight Committee. Membership requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, keeping in mind the committee's size, diversity, and overall balance of representation.

2. Selection Criteria

A. General Criteria for Participation

Members must:

- i. Be senior researchers, managers and/or policy representatives of their respective constituent groups.
- ii. Be able to represent the varied interests associated with wind energy development and its potential impacts to sage-grouse and its habitats.
- iii. Have demonstrated experience/knowledge of (all or some of) the following fields:
 - a. wind energy facility location, design, operation, and transmission requirements;
 - b. sage-grouse and the potential positive and negative impacts of wind development;
 - c. wildlife survey techniques and research protocols (from statistical design to landscape scale analyses);
 - d. applicable laws and regulations; and
 - e. current research on wind/sage-grouse interactions.

- iv. Have demonstrated success in working collaboratively with diverse interests.
- v. Have a willingness to contribute to efforts to raise funds for research (e.g., contribute funds and/or in-kind donations, develop fundraising strategies, conduct outreach to potential funders etc.)
- vi. Have a willingness to make a long-term commitment (i.e., 3 years minimum) to serve on the Oversight Committee given the long-term nature of research to be conducted.

B. Criteria Specific to Each Sector

i. Wind Industry

- a. Have experience working on wind energy projects with sage-grouse concerns.
- b. Make a commitment to raise money and invest time to engage in this collaborative.
- c. Be in a position to express their company's and caucus' interests.

ii. Federal Agency

- a. Some combination of management and research experience.
- b. Some combination of wildlife management and land management (i.e., BLM, USFS, USFWS, USGS, DOE).
- c. Representative should be familiar with sage-grouse ecology and issues associated with wind power development.

iii. State Agency

- a. Some combination of management and research experience.
- b. Must be affiliated with Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and or the (WAFWA) sage-grouse conservation strategy's Research Advisory Board.

iv. NGOs

- a. Need a balance of national and regional groups.
- b. Experience in sage-grouse issues.
- c. Organizations and individuals that are highly regarded within the conservation community.
- d. Proven track record of successful communication/collaboration and problem solving with primarily non-litigious tools.

v. Scientific Academic

- a. Doctoral degree in science field related to wildlife management/conservation.
- b. Record of publications in recognized peer-reviewed journals.
- c. Ability to interpret and communicate complex technical science for scholarly

and lay audiences.

d. Demonstrated experience in the following areas:

- Assessing impacts of anthropogenic change to sensitive wildlife species, in particular greater sage-grouse;
- Wildlife survey techniques and research protocols (from statistical design to landscape scale analyses).

3. Members will represent their individual views, and also are expected to articulate the views of their organization or area of expertise. A neutral facilitator will facilitate all Oversight Committee meetings and conference calls, unless requested by the full committee not to do so. The facilitator's role in the GS3-SGC is to help ensure all parties remain involved, encourage openness and transparency, and assist in fundraising efforts.

4. Attendance at Meetings and Alternates

As the Oversight Committee serves an important role in the on-going operation of the GS3-SGC, each member is expected and committed to personally attend each meeting. If an individual's attendance is not possible, a member may designate an alternate who can participate in a meeting in his or her absence. An alternate must be knowledgeable about the work of the Oversight Committee and the topics on the agenda for the meeting. A member should make every effort to designate the same person as the alternate each time. If a member or his or her alternate is consistently absent from meetings, the facilitator may request the resignation of the member. As possible, business will be conducted by phone and meetings will be held on a quarterly basis, unless there is a special situation that dictates otherwise.

5. Withdrawal from the Oversight Committee

A member may withdraw from the Oversight Committee at any time by giving written notice of his or her withdrawal to the facilitator.

6. Vacancies and Additional Members

In considering the appointment and reappointment of members, the sector will nominate a replacement for their designated slot using the general and sector-specific criteria noted above in Section VI.2. There is no guaranteed seat on the Committee for any organization, even if a representative from an organization has served on the committee.

VII. Decision Making

1. Operate Using Consensus

- A. The Oversight Committee and any subcommittees will operate by consensus (i.e., all can live with a decision). Consensus will be considered achieved when all members present at a meeting can accept or support a particular agreement or decision, even though it may not be their preferred choice.
- B. If consensus is not possible, the Oversight Committee will make every effort to articulate the areas of agreement and disagreement, and the reasons why the differences continue to exist, and how the Oversight Committee or any subcommittees formed will continue to move forward regardless of the differences.
- C. If consensus is not achieved, each member agrees they will not characterize the

disagreement to the press, but will ask the facilitator or spokesperson designated by the Oversight Committee to speak on their behalf, using a written statement drafted by the Oversight Committee (see Section VII.5 below) outlining the nature of the issues. This written statement will act as the only communication to the public and press.

2. Confidentiality

- A. No party will characterize the position of any other party in public statements or in discussions with the press, even if that party withdraws from the committee.
- B. No party shall forward internal draft documents to anyone who is not on the Oversight Committee, a technical expert, or on the research teams without consensus agreement of the Oversight Committee or as required by state or federal law.

3. Meetings and Conference Calls

- A. Meetings and conference calls of the GS3-SGC shall be limited to members of the Oversight Committee, technical experts, and research teams unless the Oversight Committee agrees to invite others to the call.
- B. Summaries will be prepared by the facilitator after each conference call, meeting, and/or workshop. The summaries will serve as a means of characterizing the business conducted at each meeting. Meeting participants will not attribute discussion to any one individual, organization, or sector.
- C. Updates will also be prepared by the facilitator after each conference call, meeting, and/or workshop. These updates will feature a short description of the call/meeting/workshop, including topics discussed and major decisions made. The updates will be shared with the research teams and Oversight Committee for review and approval. The final updates will be made available to the public via the NWCC website.

4. Unilateral Action

- A. Members will make a good-faith effort to keep other committee members informed in advance about major activities within their sector that may affect other sector interests or the Committee's actions.

5. Public Affairs and Media

- A. The Oversight Committee will agree on a spokesperson or spokespeople and only designated spokespeople will be empowered to speak about GS3-SGC planning and research activities.
- B. Parties participating in the GS3-SGC, including researchers under agreement with GS3-SGC, are asked to refer the press to the designated GS3-SGC spokespeople.
 - a. Some types of information may be delivered directly to press; this includes the following types of information about the research project:
 - i. Objectives of the research project
 - ii. Location of the research project
 - iii. Data on number and type of grouse being monitored and methods of monitoring

- iv. Descriptions of other types of data being gathered, such as vegetation sampling and methods being used to gather this data; updates on number of data points gathered
 - v. Collaborative funding sources – researchers should refer press to the NWCC GS3-SGC website-- <http://www.nationalwind.org/sagegrouse.aspx>-- for updated funding information)
 - vi. Project collaborators
 - b. The following types of information will not be shared with the press unless explicitly decided by the Oversight Committee and communicated through a consensus press release or the designated spokesperson(s):
 - i. Decisions made by or status of the Collaborative
 - ii. Anecdotal information (e.g., perceived increase in predators)
 - iii. Preliminary results (e.g., impacts, causality, conclusions)
 - iv. Other types of information not explicitly listed under Section a
 - C. Press releases written specific to the GS3-SGC efforts will be written jointly by the Oversight Committee, with the input of researchers, scientific advisors, and others (e.g., site company host as needed). Consensus must be reached on joint press releases or no communication to the press will be made. The facilitator will assist parties in reaching consensus on press releases. If called by the press prior to release of research or press releases, members of the Oversight Committee agree to refer press to the agreed upon fact sheet and/or designated spokesperson(s).
 - D. Oversight Committee members not abiding by these communication protocols may be asked to leave the group.
 - E. Research teams are also expected to abide by these communication protocols.
6. Research Reports
- A. Research teams will prepare brief quarterly and annual reports providing updates on the status of their research. Oversight Committee members may provide comments in response to these reports. The Research Teams will review the comments and are not expected to provide a written response.
 - B. The Oversight Committee understands that the research reports may be subject to open-records laws and therefore cannot be kept confidential if their release is requested through a formal process. However, because these reports may contain data and preliminary data analyses that could be taken out of context, Oversight Committee members and Research Teams shall not distribute these reports beyond the Oversight Committee, technical experts, funding entities, and research teams without consensus agreement of the Oversight Committee, or as required by state or federal law.
 - C. Research Teams shall label each page of all research reports with the following text to ensure that readers of these reports understand that they contain preliminary data:
 - i. “Information in this report is preliminary in nature and not for publication or citation without permission of the authors.”

7. Preliminary Findings

- A. Preliminary research results related to wind energy impacts to sage-grouse may be presented orally or in written form only if the disclaimer is made that “These findings are preliminary and may change upon full analysis and peer review.” At least two weeks before they are presented, preliminary findings shall be submitted in abstract or outline form to the Oversight Committee for input to ensure consistent messaging about the Collaborative’s overarching goals and communications.
- B. Final drafts of any graduate students’ theses or dissertations that are based on the ongoing research under the GS3-SGC umbrella and related directly to the impacts of wind development on sage-grouse will be provided to the Oversight Committee as a courtesy. The Oversight Committee may provide comment. The graduate student and advisors will review the comments and revise the thesis/dissertation as they see fit but are not expected to provide a written response to the Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee shall acknowledge any graduate student publications in GS3-SGC communications, where appropriate. Authors should inform the GS3-SGC about press inquiries that may result from academic submittals.

8. Findings and Scientific Publication

- A. The GS3-SGC acknowledges that they have no formal input into text presented in a manuscript submitted for publication. All evaluations of results and subsequent text in the discussion are to be made by Editors, Associate Editors and Academic Reviewers for peer reviewed scientific journals. Authors should inform the GS3-SGC about press that may result from publications upon acceptance to a peer-reviewed journal, but authors do not need to send press to a GS3-SGC spokesperson when referring to their published peer-reviewed work.

VIII. Other Committees

The Oversight Committee may form subcommittees as desired and will attempt to ensure a balance of representation on these subcommittees.

1. Technical Experts

The Oversight Committee will convene leading experts on sage-grouse and habitat needs to assist with the scientific-guidance needs of the GS3-SGC. The technical experts will provide advice to the Oversight Committee as it reviews monitoring methodologies, research protocols, reports, and manuscripts that are requested by or submitted to the Oversight Committee and as it evaluates researchers’ proposals to conduct studies.

A. Technical Expert Roles:

- i. Serve as individual experts, not as representatives of organizations or interest groups.
- ii. Make contributions on the basis of personal expertise and sound judgment.
- iii. Provide input to draft research questions, protocols and site selection criteria developed by the Oversight Committee.
- iv. As requested, review, evaluate and score research proposals for final Oversight Committee selection.

- a. Technical experts could submit a proposal for the RFP if desired, as studies will be replicated across sites and across states.
 - b. If technical experts to the Oversight Committee submit a research proposal, they will not be able to participate as a reviewer for that study.
 - c. The Oversight Committee will provide on-going review to ensure there is no potential for conflicts of interest throughout the duration of technical experts' proposal review service/function.
 - v. As requested, assist the Oversight Committee with monitoring of research implementation.
- B. Selection Criteria

The technical experts must:

 - i. Be recognized experts in their fields.
 - ii. Possess the experience needed to conduct thorough and credible evaluations of proposals.
 - iii. Be willing to commit the time needed to achieve established roles and responsibilities.
- C. Selection and Convening Process
 - i. Facilitators gather suggestions from as wide a range of sources as possible, including Oversight Committee members.
 - a. Nominees will not be restricted to only sage-grouse-specific expertise as proposal review can be conducted by any senior scientist with the right experience (i.e., applied senior ecologists and biostatisticians)
 - ii. Oversight Committee reviews nominees' expertise and qualifications and confirms a group of technical experts; target goal is 9-12 members.

IX. Background Information

The GS3-SGC is organized under the NWCC Wildlife Workgroup under the umbrella of the Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species Subgroup, which also supports a separate Grassland Community Collaborative Oversight Committee that is currently focusing on Greater Prairie Chicken research. Both of these groups function independently but have a commitment to keep the Wildlife Workgroup apprised of activities and progress. The GS3-SGC Oversight Committee began its work in October 2009 by focusing on sage-grouse research exclusively; other grouse may be addressed in the future.

Current Oversight Committee Members (as of April 17, 2012)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Zach	Bowen	U.S. Geological Survey
Christina	Calabrese	EDP Renewables
Karyn	Coppinger	Invenergy
Daly	Edmonds	Wyoming Audubon
John	Emmerich	Wyoming Game & Fish Department
Bradley	Fedy	Colorado State University
Scott	Gardner	California Department of Fish and Game
Patrick	Gilman	U.S. Department of Energy
Joe	Grennan	RES Americas
Kevin	Harper	Ridgeline Energy
Tom	Hemker	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Nicole	Hughes	Element Power
Christy	Johnson-Hughes	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Joe	Kiesecker	The Nature Conservancy - North America Region
Holly	Michael	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Sophie	Osborn	Wyoming Outdoor Council
Brian	Rutledge	Wyoming Audubon
Jim	Sedinger	University of Nevada
Robin	Sell	Bureau of Land Management - Colorado State Office
Karin	Sinclair	National Renewable Energy Lab