

# Agenda Item 7



## Periodic Status Review: Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse

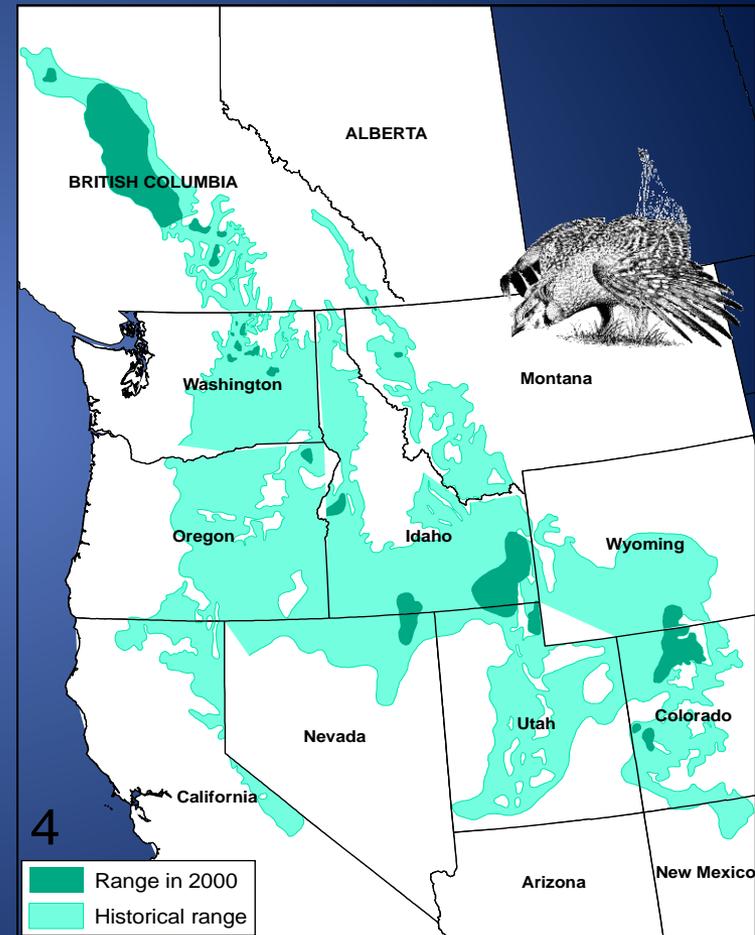


Washington Department of  
**FISH and WILDLIFE**

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Wildlife Program

# Legal Status and Distribution

- Rarest of 6 subspecies
- State-threatened, 1998
- Recovery plan completed 2012
- Currently occupy ~8% of historical range
- Not federally listed, subspecies petitioned twice (1995, 2004)



# Natural History

## Habitat:

- **Summer:** grassland, steppe
- **Winter:** riparian trees/shrubs

## Diet:

- **Spring/Summer:** forbs, grass, insects, berries
- **Winter:** buds and fruits (water birch, willow, serviceberry, hawthorn, rose, snowberry)



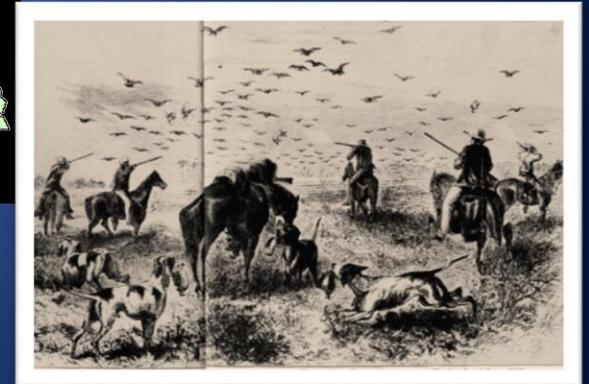
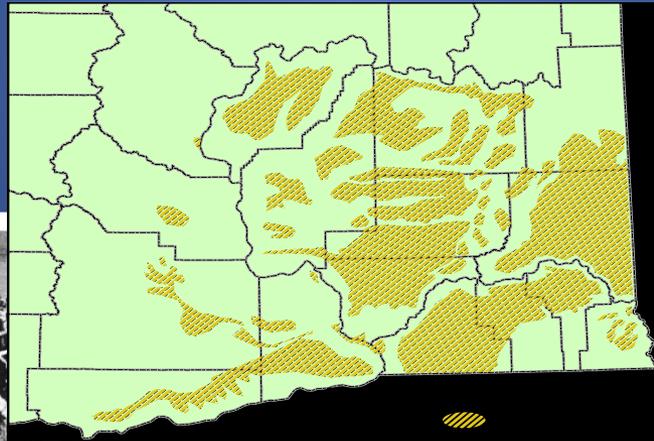
# Natural History

- Males display on leks to attract females
- Mean clutch of ~10 eggs
- Generally nest within 1.2 mi of lek
- Winter within 8.5 mi of lek

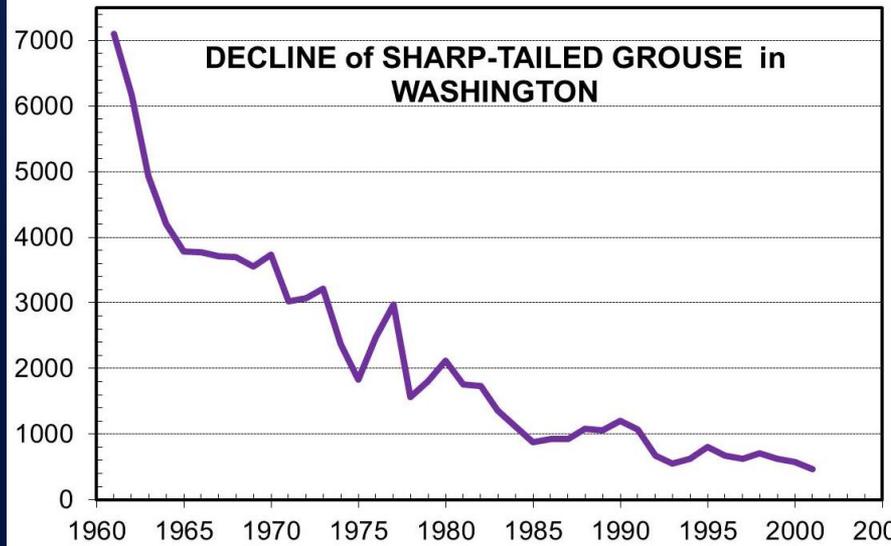
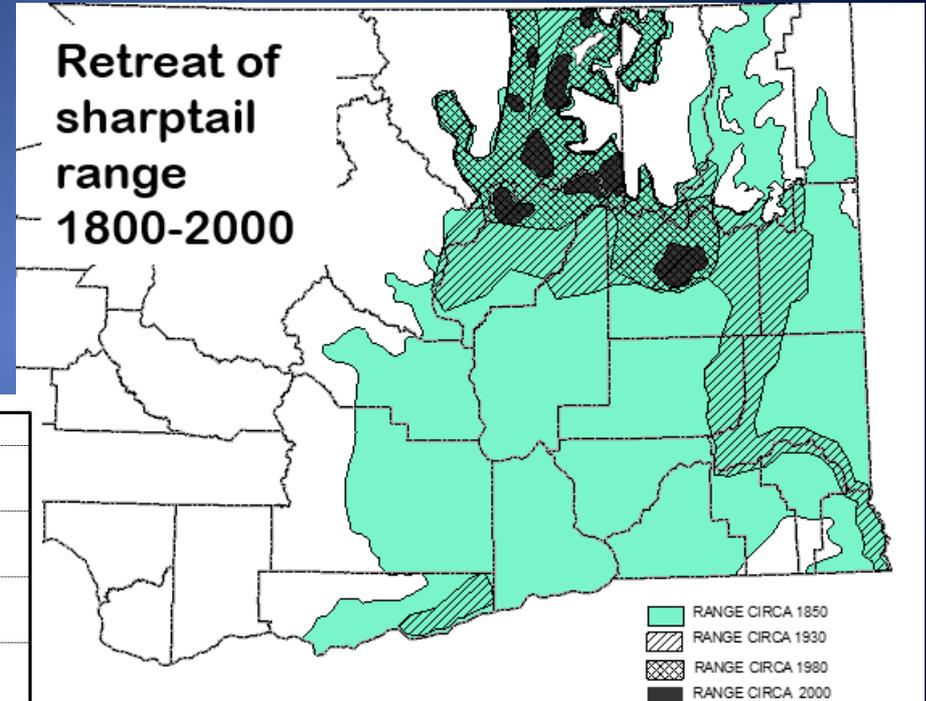


# Historically...

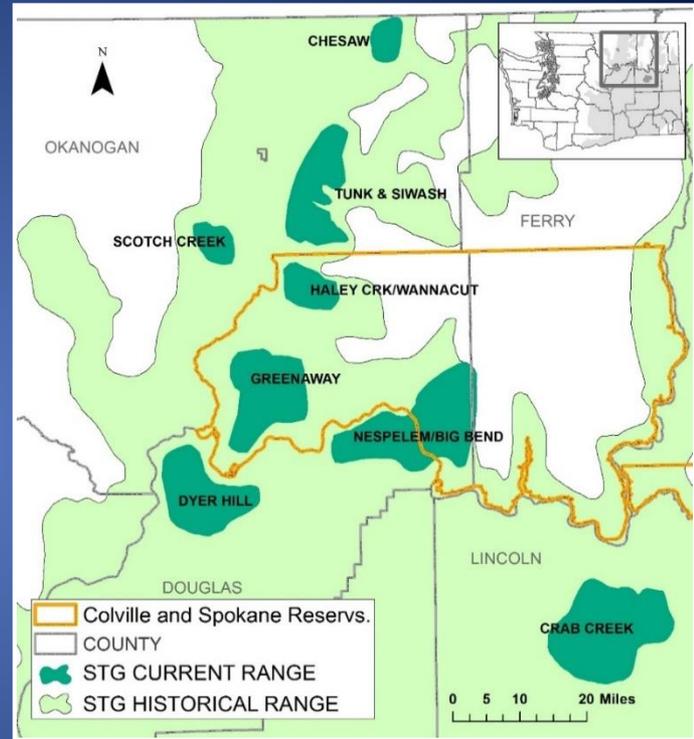
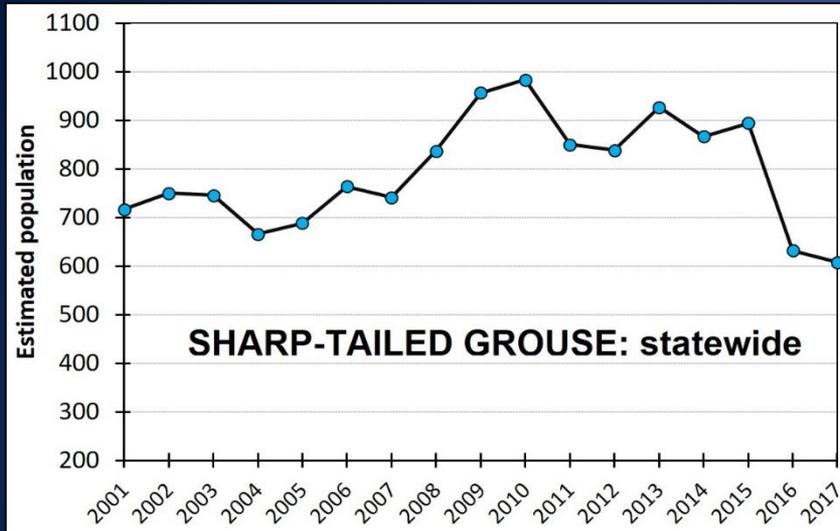
- The most abundant game bird in Washington-may have been >100,000 in Washington.
- Spread/intensification of agriculture: loss of nesting, riparian habitat (winter); tillage destroyed seasonal creeks.



# Previous Population Status



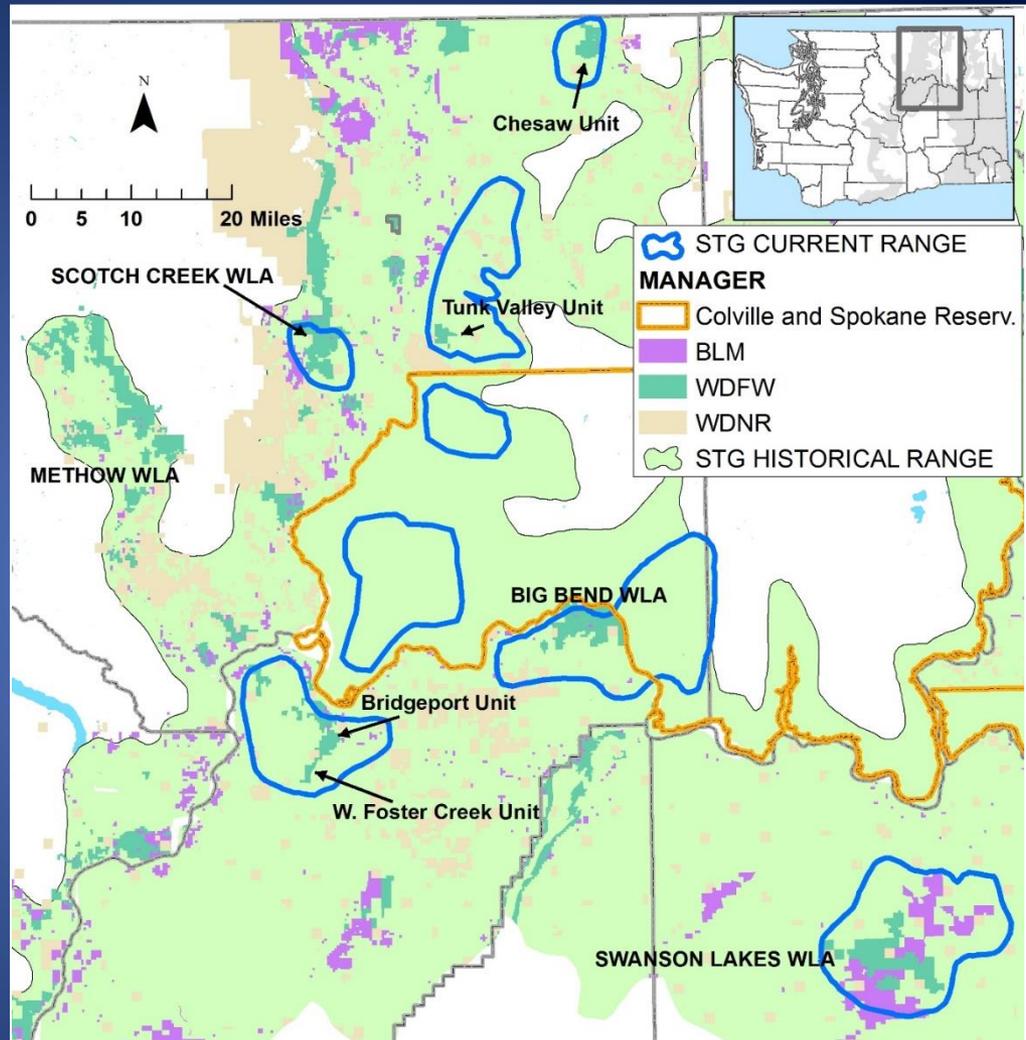
# Recent Population Status



2017 estimates for local populations, based on annual lek counts:

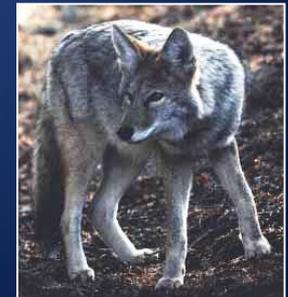
| Total | Scotch Creek | Tunk & Siwash | Chesaw | Dyer Hill | Greenaway & Haley Crk | Big Bend | Nespelem | Crab Creek |
|-------|--------------|---------------|--------|-----------|-----------------------|----------|----------|------------|
| 608   | 78           | 14            | 34     | 122       | 52                    | 64       | 112      | 132        |

- WDFW lands in Lincoln, Douglas, Okanogan counties important for persistence.
- Past acquisitions, restoration protected several populations.



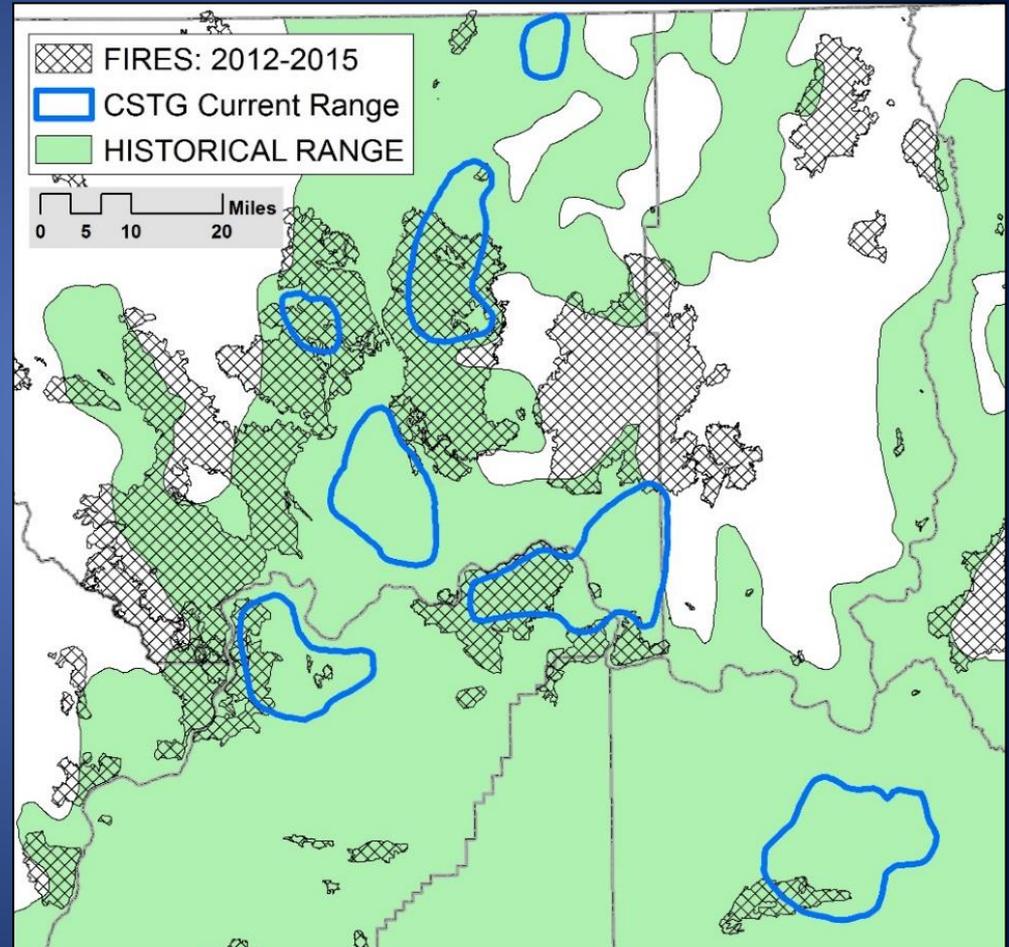
# Factors Affecting Sharp-tailed Grouse

- Habitat loss, fragmentation, degradation (fences, roads, excessive grazing, tree invasion)
- Small population size
- Generalist predators



# Factors Affecting Sharptails: Wildfires

- Displacement, population decline
- Shift from shrub to grass-dominant may **improve** habitat
- Some loss of winter deciduous cover

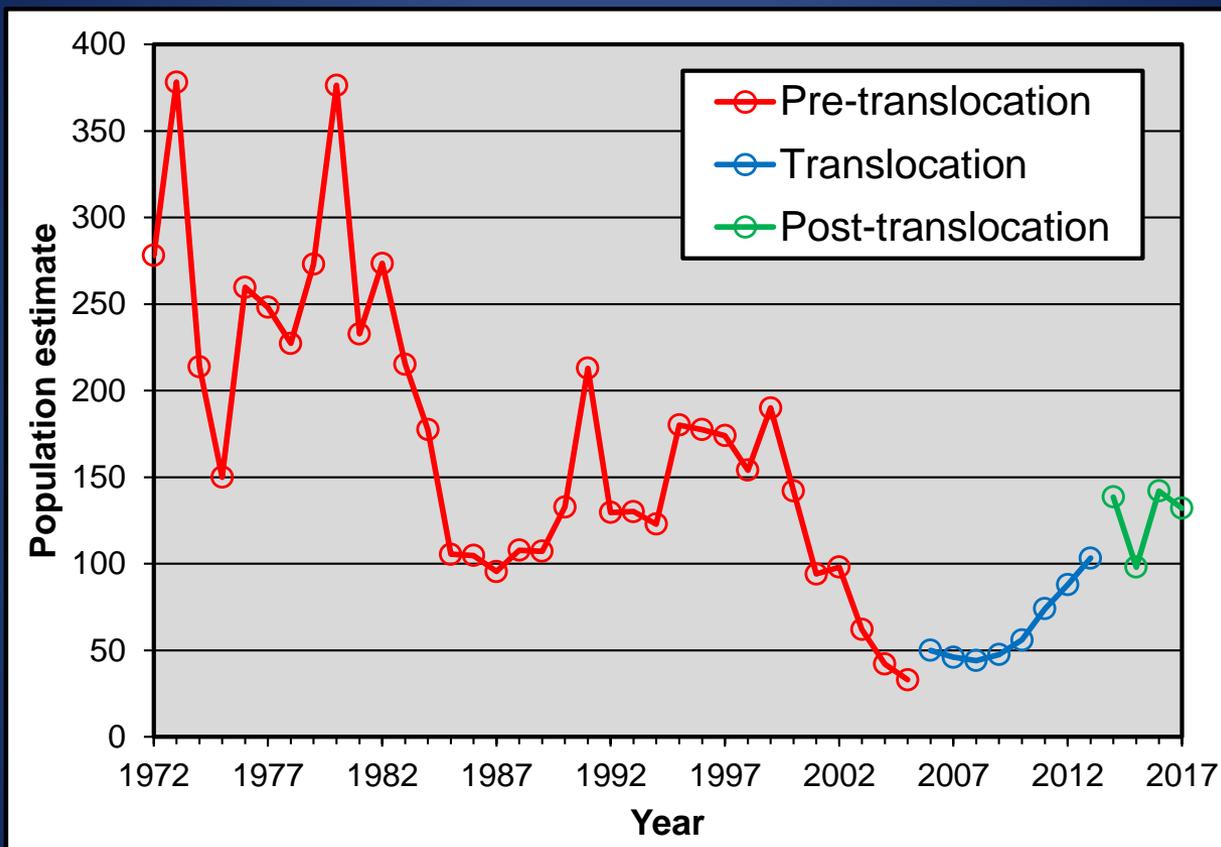


# Recovery Action: Population Augmentations

- Small populations at risk were augmented.
- 1998-2013, 430 birds from Idaho, Utah, BC released at:
  - Scotch Creek
  - W. Foster Creek
  - Colville Reservation
  - Lincoln County



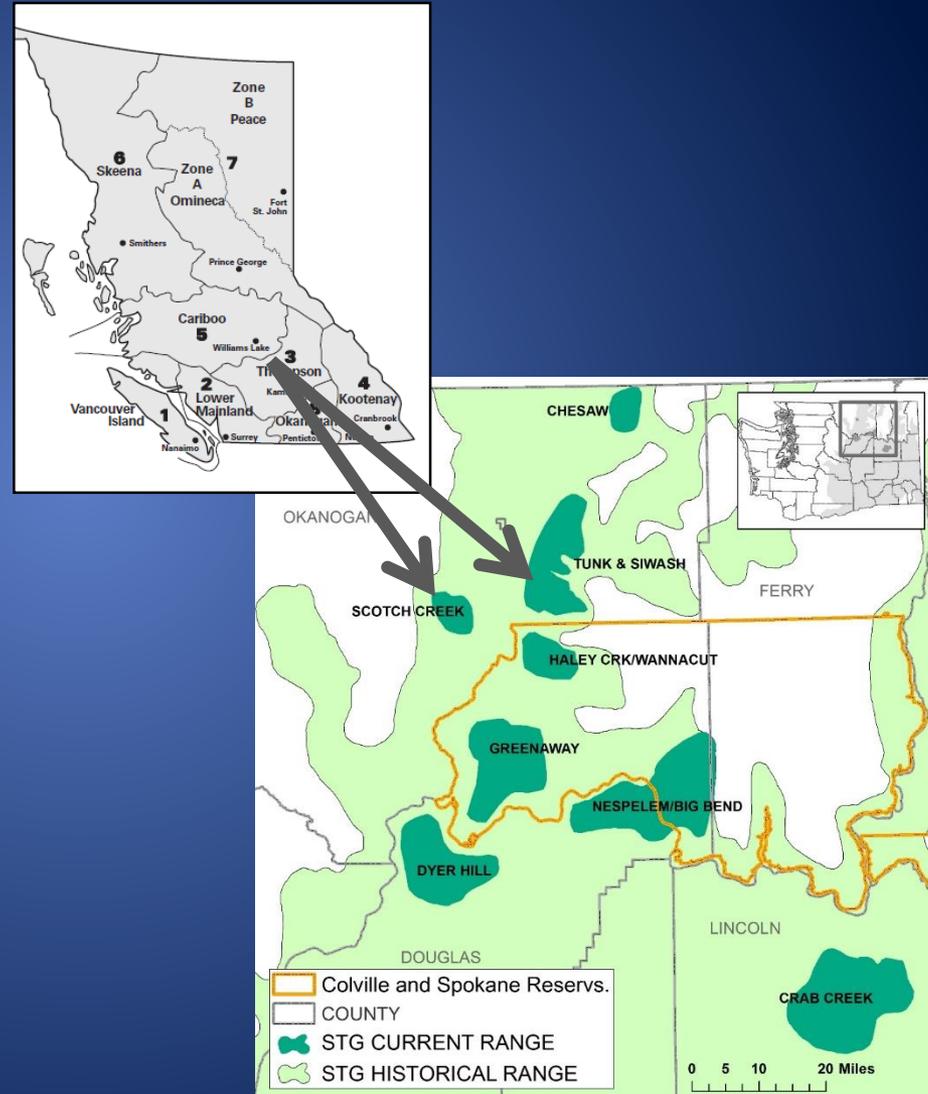
# Recovery Action: Augmentations



Population estimate for Lincoln County prior to, and after augmentations.

# Recovery Action: Planned Augmentations

- Tunk Valley/Scotch Crk 2018-2019
- Greenaway
- Douglas County
- Feasibility of reintroduction in Methow Valley?



# Recovery Action: Farm Bill – CRP/SAFE acres Douglas, Lincoln, and Grant Counties

- >73,000 ac enrolled in Sage & Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE
- >19,000 ac enrolled in Shrub-steppe SAFE
- **Uncertainties: current Farm Bill expires 9/30/18!**

# Recovery Action: Habitat Restoration

Planting riparian winter habitat  
Planted >100,000 trees & shrubs



Removal of unneeded fences  
>110 miles

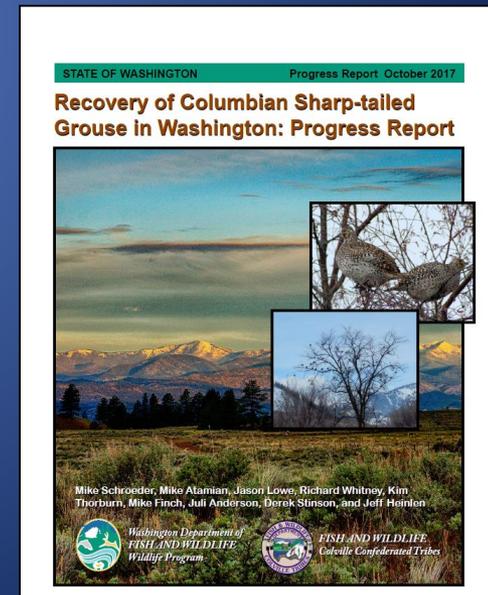


Restoring agricultural fields to native  
vegetation  
>3,000 ac



# Recovery Action: Coordination

- Active interagency/state-tribe/partner working group
- Partner organization assistance with volunteer engagement and monitoring activities



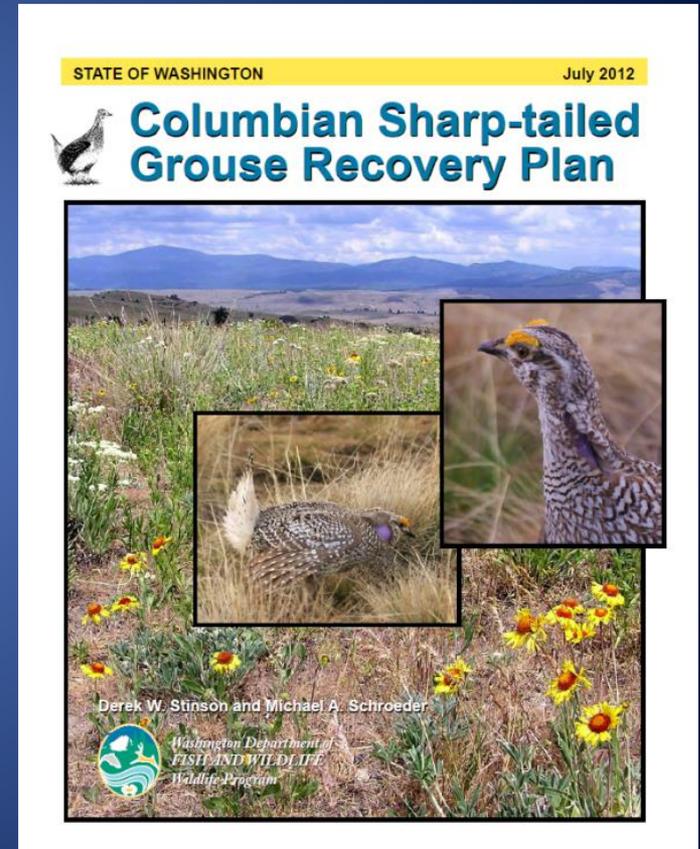
# Recovery Plan

Up-list from threatened to endangered if population drops to less than 450

- current estimate = 608

Recommendation:

- Sharp-tailed Grouse should remain on the list of threatened species

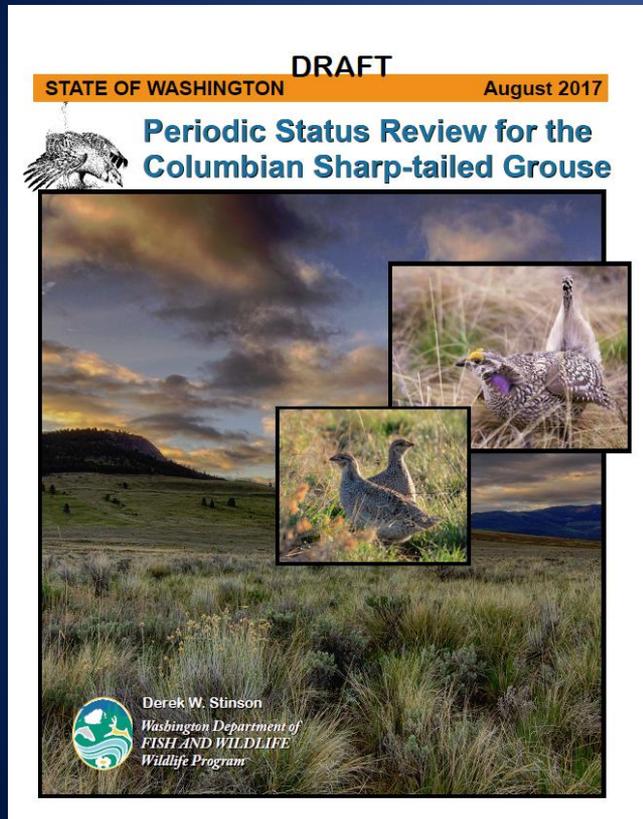


# Additional Considerations

- All local populations are now <200 birds, and may require augmentation
- Wildfires had short-term and unknown impact
- Habitat connectivity continues to diminish



# Summary of Comments



## Public Comments (4)

- 3 support keeping the Sharp-tailed Grouse listed
- 1 suggested de-listing

Wildlife Diversity Advisory  
Council Recommendation:  
Uplist to endangered

# Questions?

