



Invasive Species and Wildfire: A FWS Perspective



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Greater Sage-Grouse

Not our first ESA status review:

- 2010 Finding: **Candidate**
- Determination by **September 30, 2015**

Seeking new information



The Sagebrush Ecosystem



Photo credit: Rich Keen



Primary Threats in the Great Basin

- Invasive plants: cheatgrass; Piñon-Juniper
- Fire cycle amplified by cheatgrass –
“catastrophic regime shift” (Reisner et al. 2013)



Not All Wildfire is Harmful

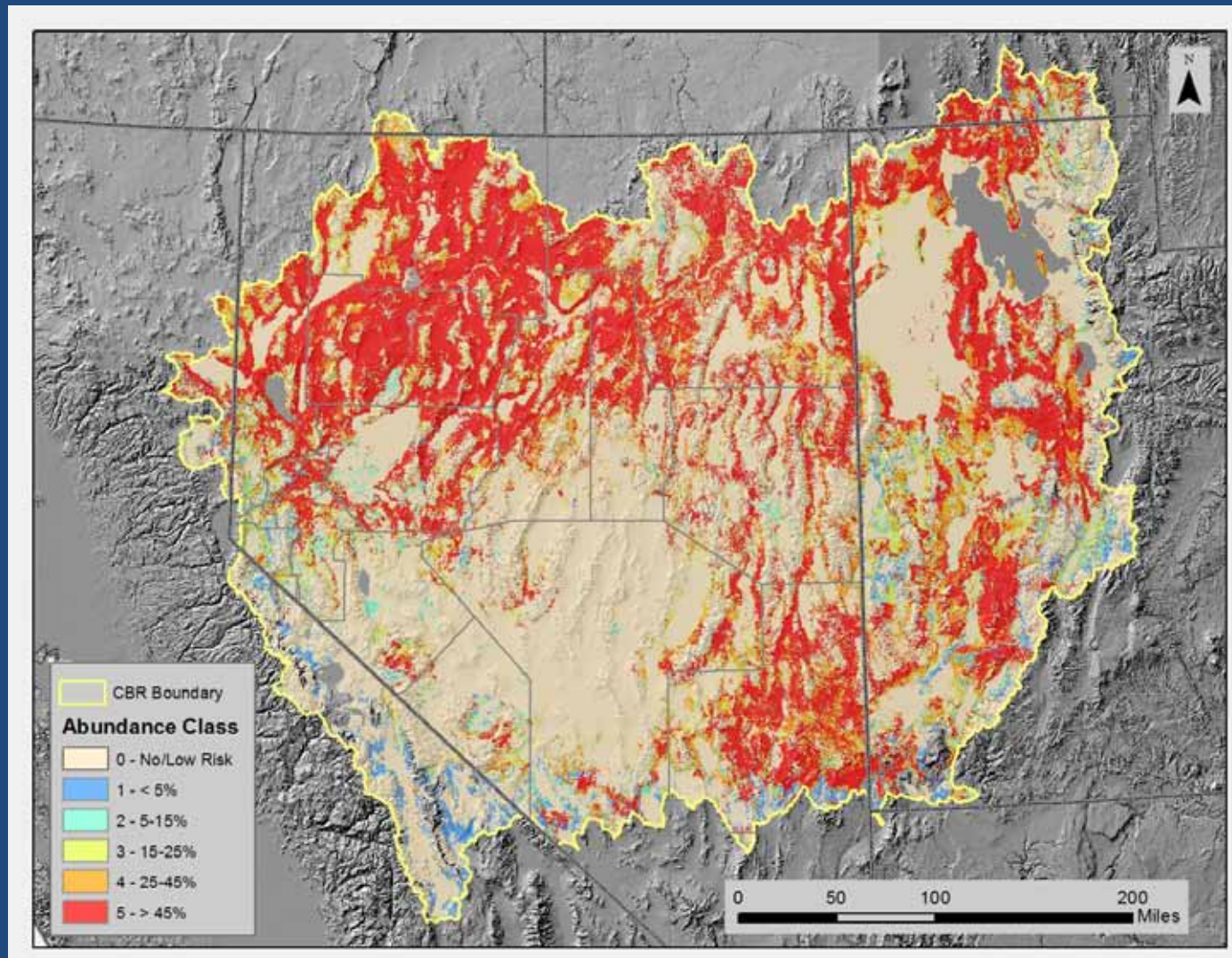
- Fire is a natural part of sagebrush ecosystems



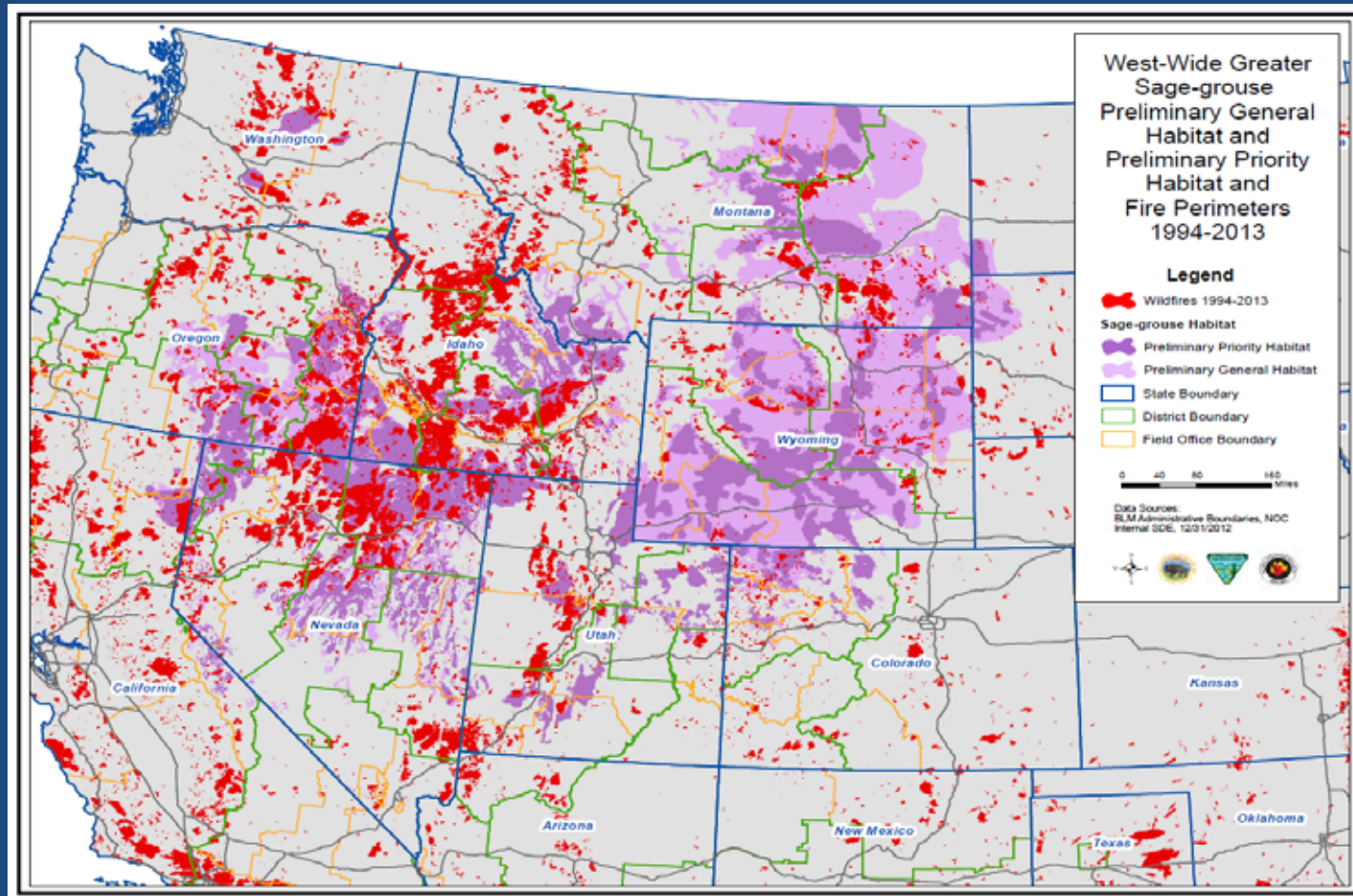
Cheatgrass and the “catastrophic regime shift” is unnatural, irreversible



Cheatgrass Risk Map



Wildfires from 1994-2013 in Sage-Grouse Habitat

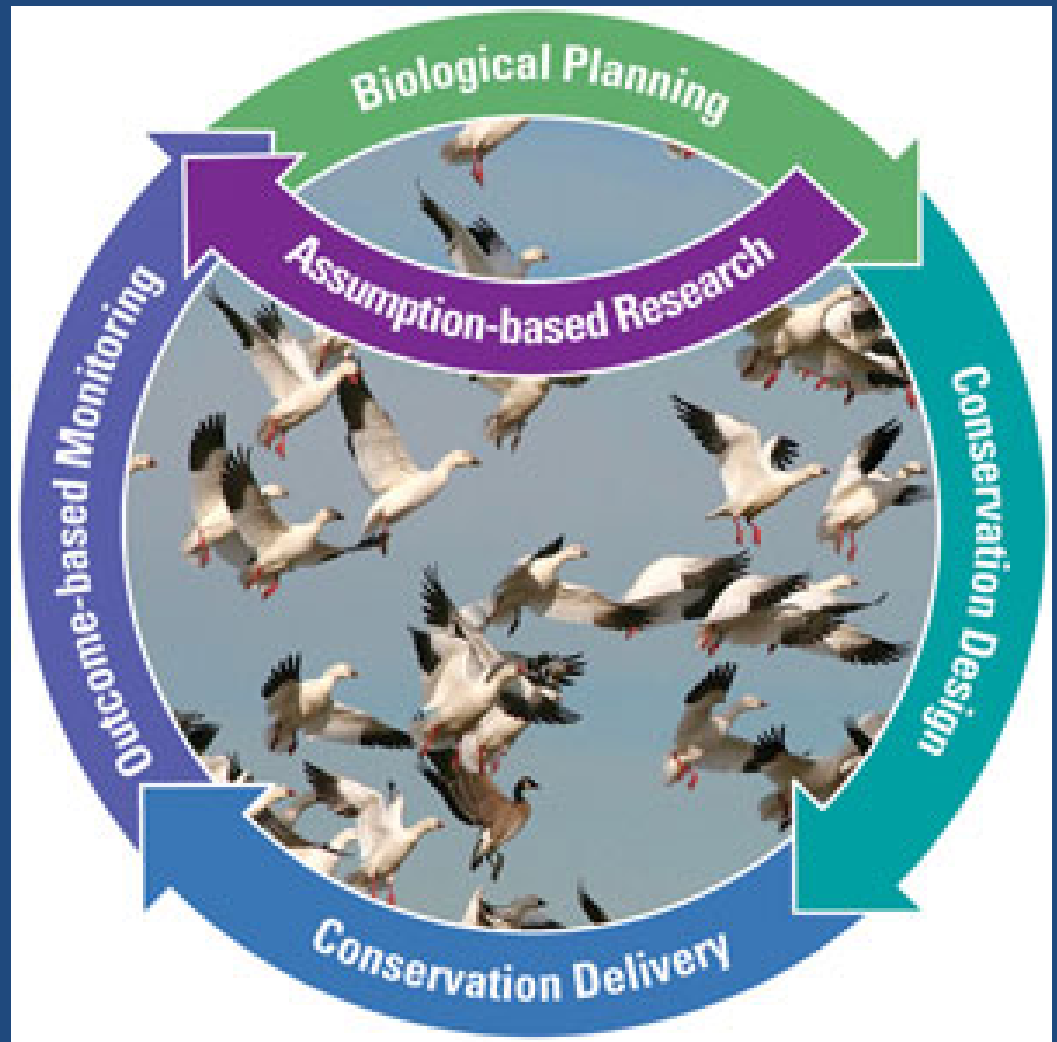


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Principles:

- Plan, design, deliver strategically
- Greater transparency
- Increase accountability
- Coordinate, share outcomes.

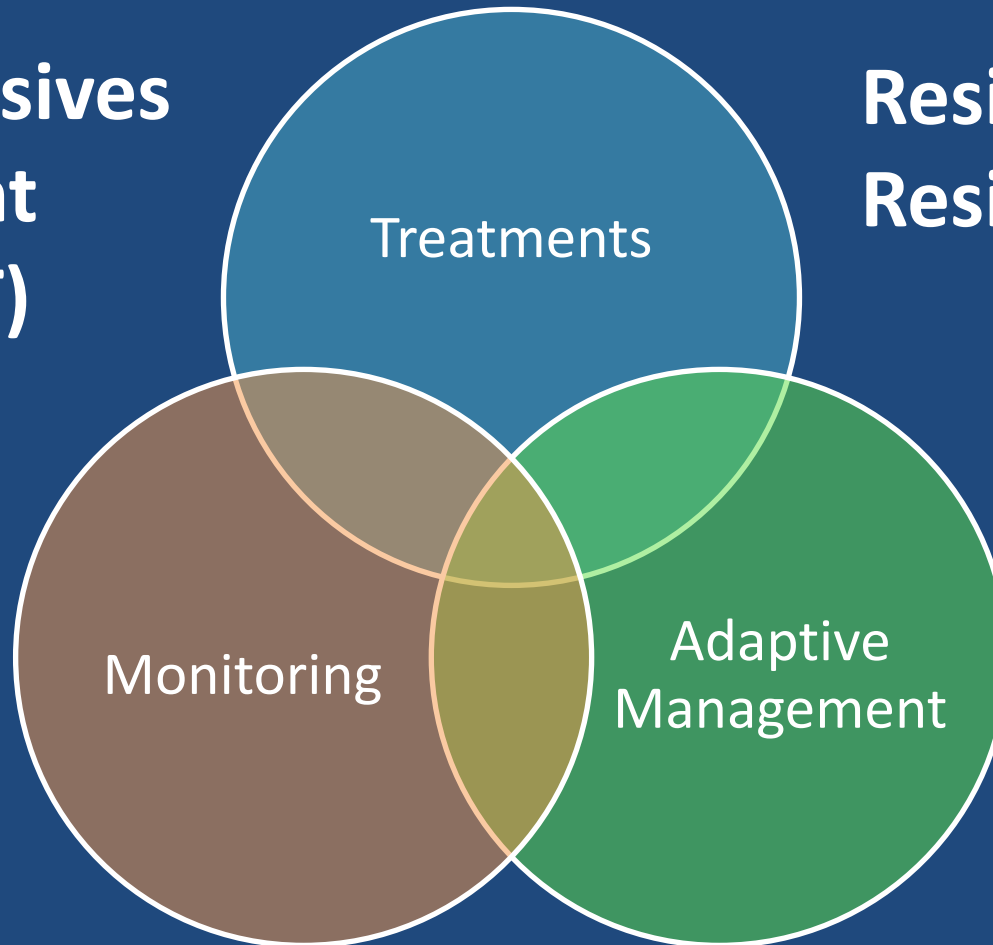
Strategic Habitat Conservation



Landscape-Scale Coordination

**Fire & Invasives
Assessment
Team (FIAT)**

**Resistance &
Resilience Tools**



Implementation Effort

- FIAT report, sub-regional teams
 - **Proactive:** Fuels Management, Habitat Restoration
 - **Reactive:** Fire Ops, Rehabilitation



Implementation Information

- WAFWA GAP Report
- WAFWA Fire Report
- USFS Resistance & Resilience Report
 - Low, Moderate, High cheatgrass risk
 - 15 actions to reduce risk
- WAFWA Invasive Species Report (pending)
- Interagency Seed Strategy (pending)



Moving Forward

1. Before- Adjust focus of Fuels Mgt. accomplishments before fire
2. During- Biologists on GMAC during fire
3. After- Adjust focus of Stabilization & Rehabilitation efforts after fire



Photo credit: James Yule



Take Home Messages

- Sage grouse and sagebrush ecosystems are declining
- Main threat in Great Basin is invasive species, wildfire
- Proactive, dedicated funds & effort to conserve ecosystem function
- Long-range planning to reduce the risk of “catastrophic regime shift”

