Fiscal Year 2026 Report



Utah Greater Sage-grouse Lek Count Report

LEK COUNTS

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT TRIGGERS

AERIAL SEARCH

Wildlife Resources

Prepared by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

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Abstract

Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) lek counts are conducted annually within Utah with a goal of counting the peak number of males on all known leks in the state. Statewide lek counts within Sage-grouse Management Areas (SGMAs) were down 18% from 2025 counts, with 4,536 male sage-grouse counted on 233 leks within SGMAs. An additional 180 male sage-grouse were counted outside of SGMAs for total of 4,716 male sage-grouse counted statewide. Statewide 398 leks were counted at least once with males observed on 247 leks. Counts relative to the previous year are mostly negative across the state, with all SGMA counts declining while non-SGMA counts increased.

The Utah Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service resource management plans contain a set of adaptive management triggers developed and evaluated in conjunction with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. In 2026 the Hamlin Valley Trigger Population Area had negative population growth despite the significant increase in 2024. The preceding several years of negative population growth maintained the result of a Hard Trigger.

Systematic greater sage-grouse aerial lek searches are scheduled annually to document new or previously unknown leks. Surveys are conducted by a contractor using infrared (IR) imaging from a fixed wing aircraft. Surveys were conducted within and near the Carbon SGMA in 2026.

Background

Sage-grouse life history is tightly woven around leks and leks are a visible center of important sage-grouse habitats. Leks are associated with critical nesting and early brood-rearing habitats. Generally, leks are located within nesting habitat used by nesting sage-grouse hens, with the majority nesting within 3.1 miles of a lek. Annual counts of male sage-grouse on leks have been shown to accurately reflect population changes (Dahlgren et al. 2016). The effectiveness of lek counts as a population index and the relative ease of data collection leads to lek counts forming the basis of most sage-grouse management and population monitoring.

Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) leks have been counted in Utah for over half a century. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) maintains lek records extending back to 1959. The DWR focused tremendous energy and resources into locating sage-grouse leks and defining populations during the 1960s and 1970s. Records of lek locations and counts form one of the most extensive and continuous monitoring systems for this species across its range. While ground searching for new leks continues, the majority of work is directed toward monitoring known leks.

Over the time period for which data is available, there is consistent cyclic behavior with a peak and trough every eight to 10 years. Since 1959 we have seen an increase in the number of sage-grouse counted in Utah; however, the raw counts are confounded by increasing levels of effort to count known leks and search for unknown leks. To compensate for additional effort increasing total male counts, average males per lek is also calculated to provide an index of population change less impacted by counting effort. However, the males per lek index also has potential bias as increased search effort is likely to document smaller leks and decrease the average numbers of males per lek. Despite some bias in metrics, the overall trend in lek counts is closely correlated with trends in populations. Lek counts accurately represent changes in sage-grouse populations over time.

Range wide loss of sagebrush habitat and concomitant decreases in populations have led to a number of petitions for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Greater sage-grouse were found warranted but precluded from listing in March of 2010, then in October of 2015 were found not warranted for listing. However, they are still vulnerable to habitat loss and other factors and remain a species of greatest conservation need (SGCN; Utah Wildlife Action Plan). As a SGCN, considerable management time, effort, and funding is dedicated to the conservation of greater sage-grouse.

Although tremendous effort has been invested in lek searches, many areas of the state are relatively poorly surveyed for the existence of sage-grouse leks. Leks also have the potential to shift locations over time in response to habitat and population changes, making continued lek searches necessary for ongoing monitoring of sage-grouse populations. Ground-based searches are conducted by Division employees, researchers, agency partners, private landowners, and others. New leks found via ground-based searches are incorporated into the state lek database as an occupied lek once reported and verified in a second year.

In addition to ground-based searches, aerial lek searches have enabled a more systematic search for leks in remote and poorly accessible areas throughout the state. Aerial searches allow leks to be found in remote areas, areas with impassable roads, or areas that are otherwise inaccessible. Aerial searches also allow a large area to be surveyed more thoroughly than is possible via ground-based

searches. Aerial surveys also eliminate the time necessary to obtain permission to access private lands or other limited access areas.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to maintain monitoring continuity of sage-grouse leks in Utah, and to inventory sage-grouse habitat in the state to expand the lek database and mapping record.

The 2009 Utah Greater Sage-grouse Management Plan states the following as one of its objectives with related strategies, which is directly applicable to this work:

Objective A-1: Monitor, protect, and maintain current population numbers

A-1.1 Population Monitoring

A. Lek Surveys
    1. Annual lek surveys will form the base metric to determine and assess both annual and long-term population status and trend.
    2. Strive to survey all known, occupied, and active leks annually utilizing standard UDWR protocol.
    3. Conduct planned and systematic surveys and searches for new and unidentified leks in all potential habitats. Document, map, and file all search areas with GPS tracks.

Methods

Greater Sage-grouse Lek Counts

Greater sage-grouse lek counts are conducted in accordance with the protocol outlined in the 2009 Management Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah and the 2022 WAFWA Sage-grouse Monitoring Guidelines. The methods specify that a minimum of three counts at approximately weekly intervals be conducted at each known lek between early March and mid-May. First counts are typically conducted in March or early April, depending on conditions, to capture maximum male attendance, which generally occurs mid-April; however, the date of maximum counts varies throughout the state. Counts are conducted from half an hour before sunrise up to one and a half hours after sunrise. Sage-grouse are counted from a vehicle or on foot at a sufficient distance to not disturb lekking activity. At each visit, the lek is counted a minimum of three times in succession using binoculars or a spotting scope. For each count, the time and number of male, female, and unknown sex sage-grouse are recorded. Additional data on weather conditions and count location are recorded for each visit. Data is recorded digitally using an ArcGIS Survey123 app on a smartphone or tablet. At the close of the lek counting season, data is compiled at the DWR state office where the counts are incorporated into the long-term sage-grouse database. See the 2009 Management Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah for detailed protocols.

Leks can be classified as undetermined, which means they have had displaying males observed but they were either discovered this year, seen in previous years without males being documented in subsequent years, or had only one male observed. Undetermined leks are included in summary statistics.

The 2019 Utah Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah specifies that population areas are evaluated using the slope of a linear regression line fitted to the most recent 20 years of data. The slope of the regression line represents the number of male sage-grouse added or lost from counts per year over the 20-year period. Results in this report are also presented as an annual percentage population change over the 20-year evaluation period. Percent change is calculated as the slope of the regression line divided by the average number of male sage-grouse counted over the same 20-year period, multiplied by 100.

Fixed Wing Infrared Lek Search

Flight areas are prioritized based on known populations, past flight paths, state and regional priorities, data needs for state sage-grouse conservation efforts, and flight cost.

Transects were flown by Owyhee Air Research using a cryogenically cooled thermal imager mounted in stabilized gimbal mounts on fixed wing aircraft. Flights are conducted during morning periods from half an hour before sunrise to one and a half hours past sunrise with weather conditions as specified in the Utah Lek Count Protocol. Polygons of the search area were provided to Owyhee Air Research who develops the flight plan and aircraft path within the specified polygons. Transects are flown at approximately 450 meters above ground level with the camera angle set to a predetermined tilt and zoom allowing for an approximately 500 meters swath of video coverage per pass. The pilot is responsible for flying pre-determined transects with a separate thermography specialist responsible for analyzing the video feed and operating the camera. Once detected along the transect, the aircraft orbits the grouse to view the potential lek from all angles, identify grouse to species, count number of birds, identify sex, and record the potential lek location. Flight data is entered into an excel spreadsheet and probable leks are added to the internal DWR sage-grouse databases.

Results: Greater Sage-grouse Lek Counts

Statewide a total of 398 greater sage-grouse leks were visited (this includes non-SGMA leks). Of the leks visited, 247 had at least one male counted. Across all counted leks where sage-grouse were detected there was a high count of 4,716 males, for an average of 19.09 males per lek.

In Utah's Sage-grouse Management Areas, 368 greater sage-grouse leks were visited and 233 of those leks had at least one male counted. Across all leks counted within SGMAs there was a high count of 4,536 males, for an average of 19.47 males per lek (Figure 1).

Within SGMAs, 21 leks counted were classified as undetermined. These undetermined leks contributed 124 males to the total count. There were no male sage-grouse counted on undetermined leks outside of SGMAs.

Overall counts on SGMAs were down 18.3% from 2025. In 2025, due to drought conditions, most anecdotal observations noted fewer broods and smaller brood sizes. Due to the dry winter conditions in 2025 and the delayed occurrence of summer monsoons in many areas throughout the state, 2026 broods have followed suit. Two consecutive years of dry conditions and lower recruitment have resulted in the aforementioned decline. Counts relative to the previous year are negative across the state with all eleven SGMAs having decreased counts, although the counts outside of SGMAs were positive.

The peaks and lows continue to decrease with each cycle of the populations – the low years are lower, and the high years do not reach the previous peaks. Previous low years in 2002, 2011 and 2019 had 3,034, 2,710 and 2,094 males counted respectively. Utah increased counting efforts at the same time, visiting 192 leks in 2002, 266 leks in 2011, and 305 in 2019. Effort is increasing over time with accompanying decrease in males per lek and total males (Figure 2). With equal effort across years, we would likely see a steeper decline in long-term sage-grouse counts.

Individual SGMA populations are more variable than the statewide aggregation of counts (Table 1). Population trajectories for individual SGMAs are described below. Though each SGMA is nuanced, most SGMAs have observed declines in lek counts due to dry conditions for the past two winters, reducing mesic habitats (and coinciding insects for chicks to survive), thereby producing fewer chicks that live to recruitment age. This year, many SGMAs were not counted during the peak of lekking season, as mild winter conditions initiated lekking prior to the established survey period, and therefore the high male count was impacted for those SGMAs. The survey period will be advanced by one week next spring, to avoid this occurrence, should conditions be mild again in 2027.

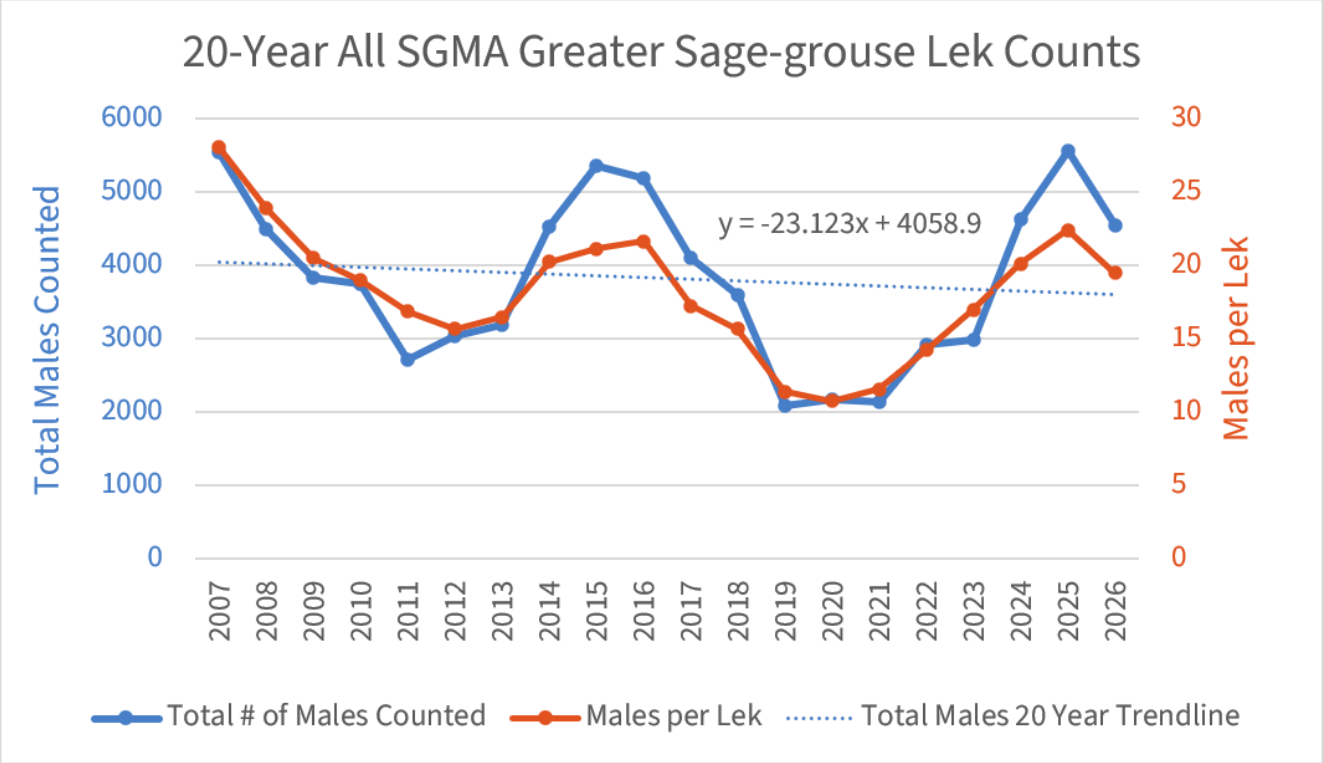


Figure 1. *Total male high count for all Sage-grouse Management Areas within Utah and males counted per lek, for leks with males present, over the past 20 years. The trend line is fitted to total males counted and represents an overall annual change across 20 years to approximate two population cycles.*

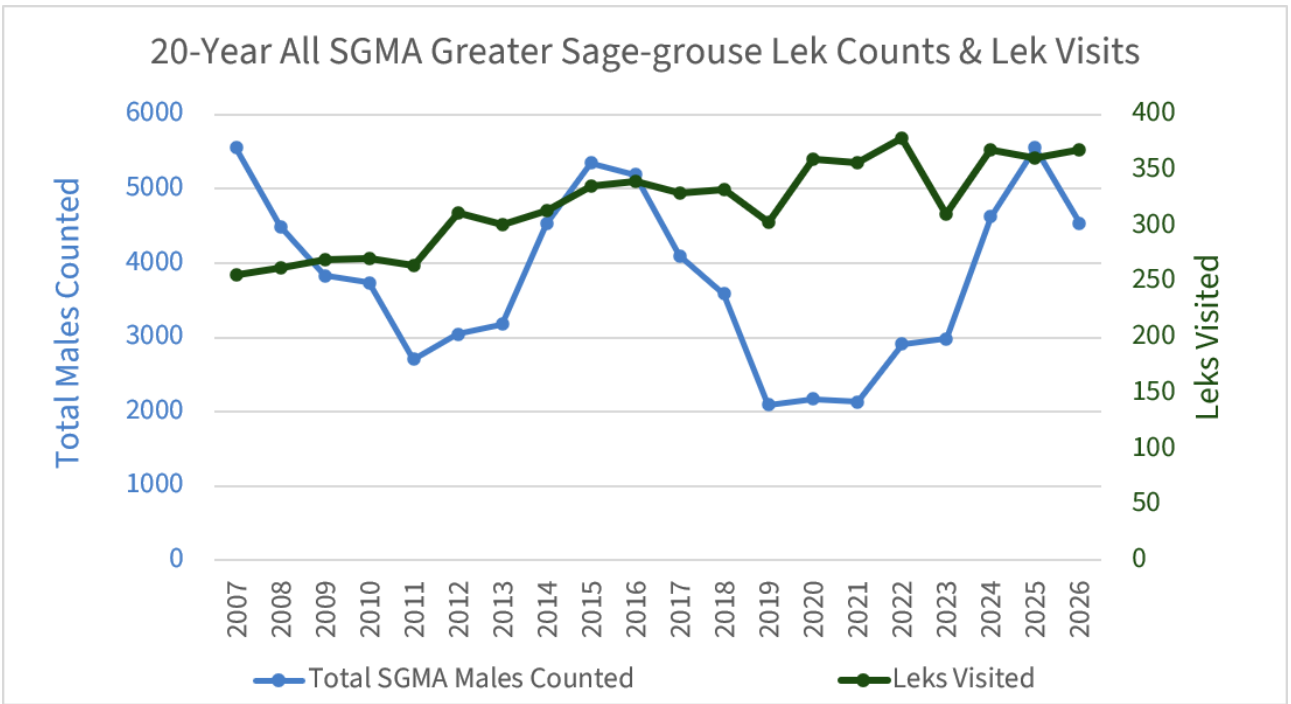


Figure 2. *Number of leks visited each lekking season in Utah relative to the total number of males counted. More leks are counted over time to maintain the same overall total male counts.*

Table 1: Greater Sage-grouse High Count Summary

2026	Bald Hills	Box Elder	Carbon	Hamlin Valley	Ibapah	Panguitch	Parker Mountain- Emery	Rich-Morgan-Summit	Sheeprock Mountains	Strawberry Valley	Uintah	Non-SGMA	All SGMA	All Leks
Leks with Males	12	53	8	8	1	11	53	40	6	4	37	14	233	247
Total Leks Visited	19	85	14	12	3	25	74	56	10	8	62	30	368	398
Total Males Counted	75	777	136	55	34	304	1196	1122	54	69	714	180	4536	4716
Average Males per Lek (leks > 0)	6.3	14.7	17.0	6.9	34.0	27.6	22.6	28.1	9.0	17.3	19.3	12.9	19.5	19.1
Percent Change 2025-2026	-44%	-16%	-4%	-8%	-23%	-31%	-24%	-7%	-18%	-38%	-16%	7%	-18%	-18%
20 Year Regression Slope	1.07	2.66	-1.59	-2.53	0.16	-6.69	0.05	-28.05	-1.25	-0.18	13.22	-6.64	-23.12	-29.76
20 Year Average Count	113.5	600.8	138.6	72.1	38.4	317.1	870.0	935.4	52.5	100.0	577.9	245.4	3816.2	4061.6
Percent Change Per Year Over 20 Years	0.9%	0.4%	-1.1%	-3.5%	0.4%	-2.1%	0.0%	-3.0%	-2.4%	-0.2%	2.3%	-2.7%	-0.6%	-0.7%
Undetermined Leks Found	1	8	0	0	0	1	8	2	1	0	0	0	21	21
Percent of UT Population	2%	16%	3%	1%	1%	6%	25%	24%	1%	1%	15%	4%	96%	100%

Table 1. *Summary data for male greater sage-grouse high counts within each of Utah's Sage-grouse Management Areas and statewide for the 2026 lek counting season. See methods for definitions of fields.*

Bald Hills

In the Bald Hills SGMA 19 leks were visited, and of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 12. A total of 75 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 6.25 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Bald Hills SGMA counts decreased by 44%. The continued drought in southern Utah likely contributed to lower counts this year.

Overall, counts in the Bald Hills SMGA have been relatively stable over the past 20 years when fitted to a 20-year trend line, increasing at an average rate of 0.9% per year. However, that growth rate is based on counting 19 leks per year in 2026, relative to only 9 leks per year at the beginning of the evaluation period.

No new leks were found.

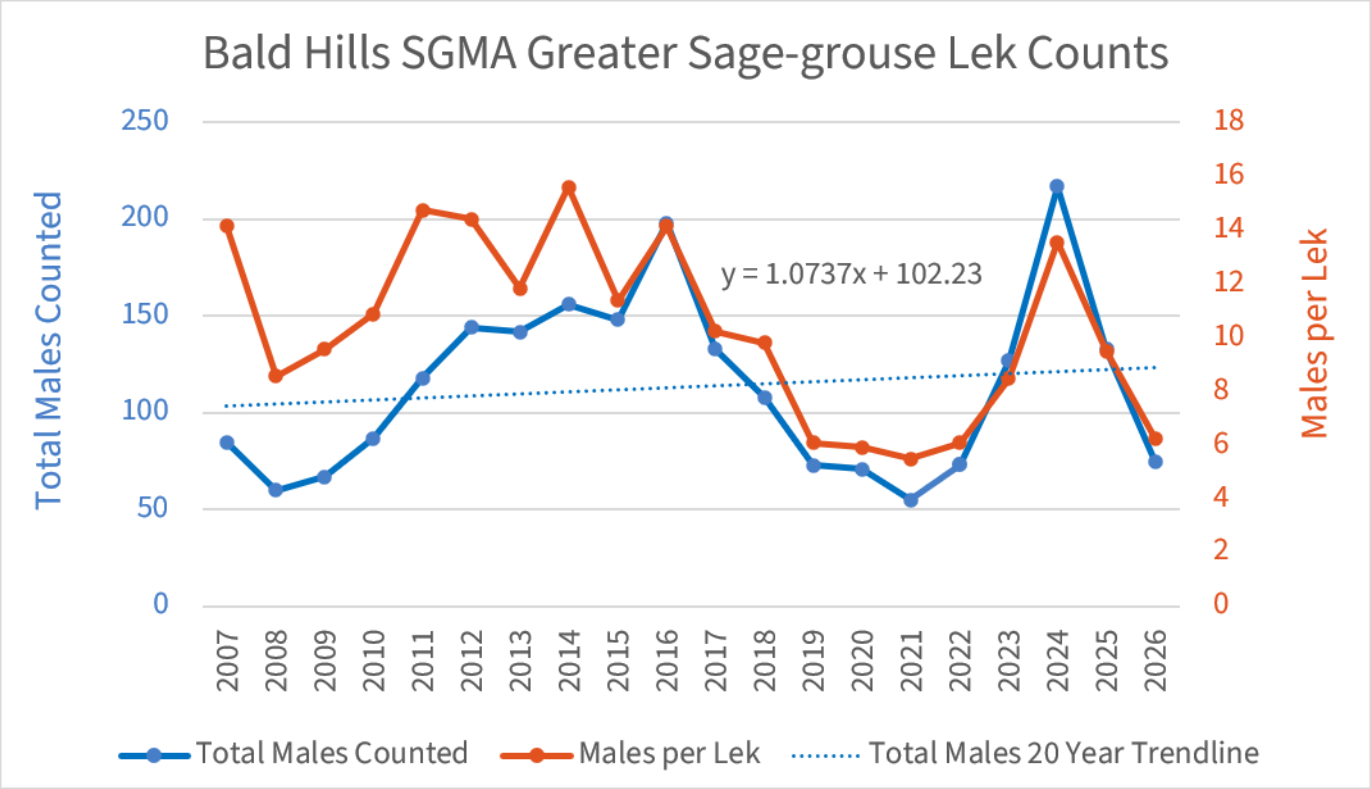


Figure 3. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Bald Hills Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Box Elder

In the Box Elder SGMA 85 leks were visited. Of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 53. A total of 777 male sage-grouse were counted, for an average of 14.7 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Box Elder SGMA counts decreased by 15.9%. Counts have had a stable trendline over the past 20 years, with an average annual rate of increase of 0.4% per year.

There has been significant expansion of conifer cover into sagebrush habitat within the Box Elder SGMA; however, large areas of habitat restoration in the SGMA in recent years have contributed to sage-grouse population increases. As restoration projects are completed in the area we hope to see continued increases in the population and a shift to a positive long-term trend.

The winter of 2025 was extremely mild, and summer monsoons have not been frequent enough to counteract the lack of snow. Mesic area productivity and recruitment was curtailed because of these dry conditions, which has negatively impacted the population.

Four potential new leks were found this year.

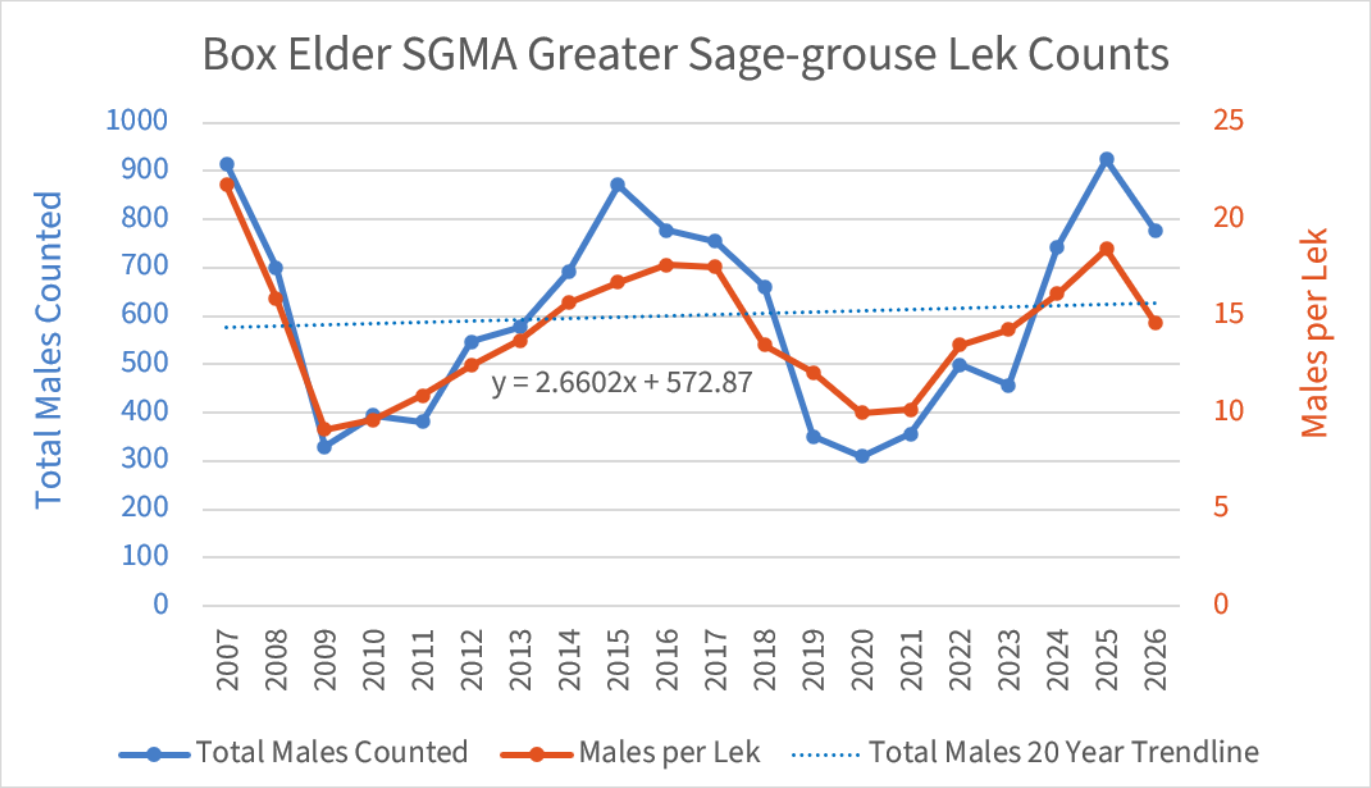


Figure 4. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Box Elder Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Carbon

In the Carbon SGMA 14 leks were visited, and of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 8. A total of 136 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 17.0 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Carbon SGMA counts decreased by 4.2%, which is not the expected population cycle, but dry conditions have impacted production and recruitment. The peak lek attendance may have occurred before the survey period began, which may have also contributed to lower counts this year. Counts in the SMGA have been slowly declining over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 1.1% per year.

No new leks were found.

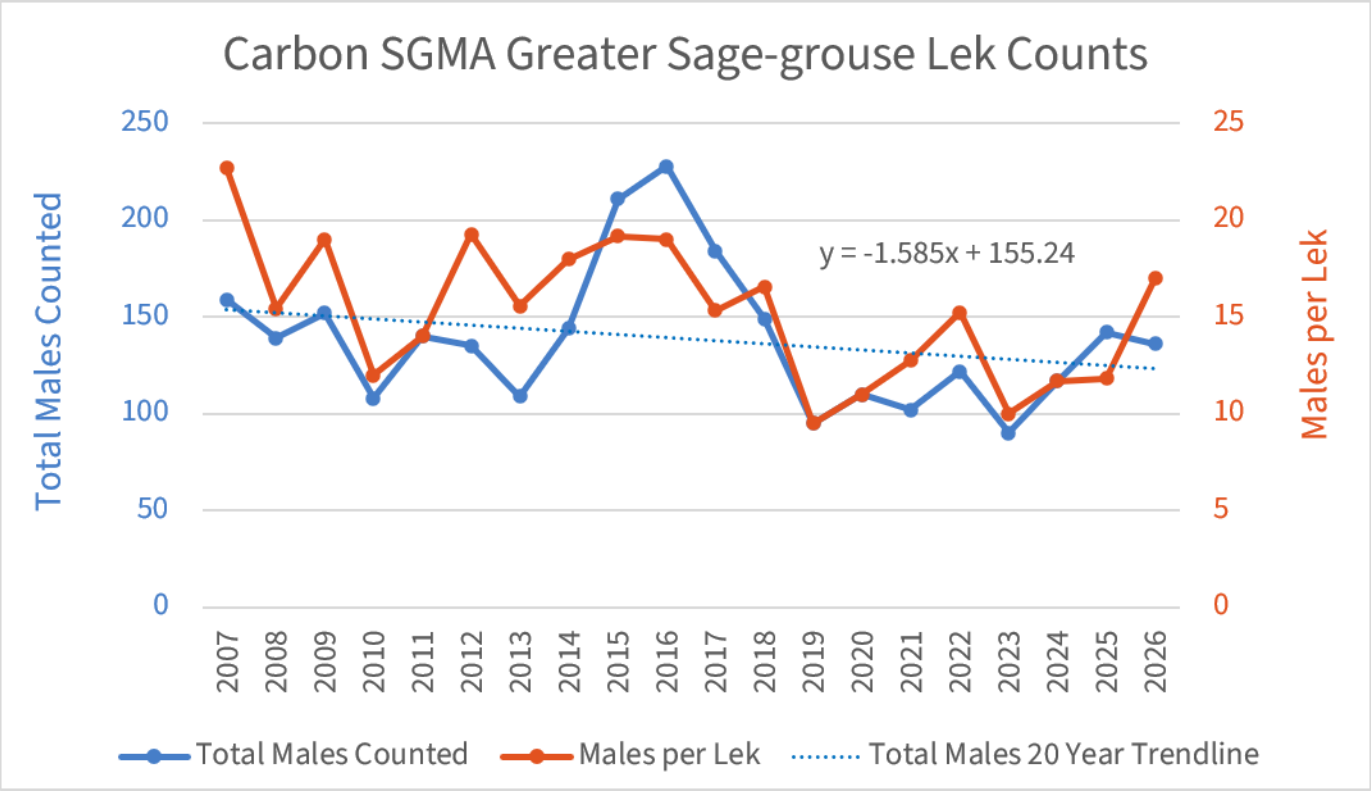


Figure 5. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Carbon Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Hamlin Valley

In the Hamlin Valley SGMA 12 leks were visited. Of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 8. A total of 55 male sage-grouse were counted, for an average of 6.9 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Hamlin Valley SGMA counts decreased by 8.3%, which can be attributed to droughts and movement of leks in this SGMA. Counts in the SGMA have trended down over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 3.5% per year.

No new leks were found.

The Hamlin Valley population area met criteria for a hard federal adaptive management trigger by having a lambda of less than one in 8 of 10 years for all PHMA leks (Table 2). This was the fifth consecutive year of reaching a hard trigger in the area (Table 3). Contact the BLM or consult the BLM's causal factor analysis for more information on federal management plan triggers.

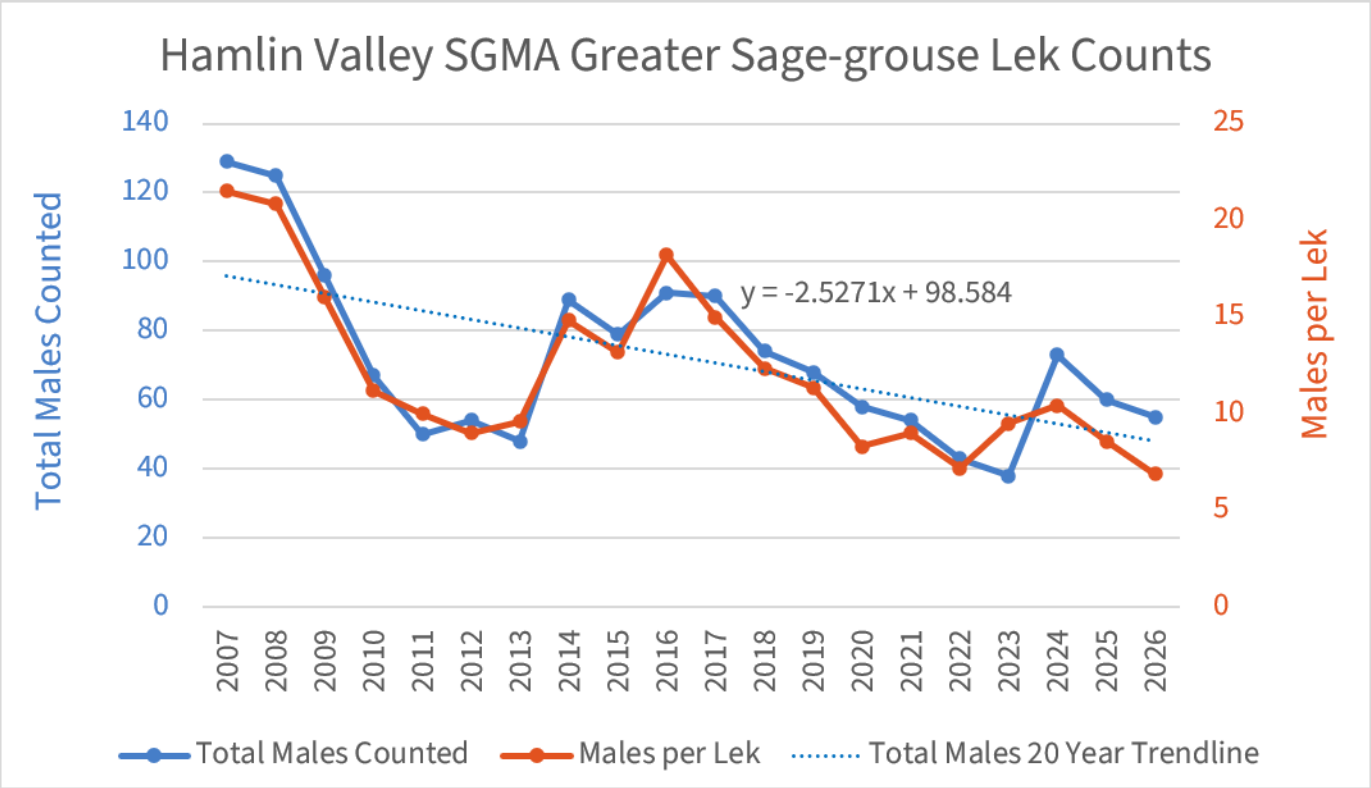


Figure 6. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Hamlin Valley Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Ibapah

In the Ibapah SGMA three leks were visited and male sage-grouse were detected on one. A total of 34 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 34.0 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Ibapah SGMA counts decreased by 22.7%. Annual counts in this area are variable due to the limited number of leks that create a small sample size. This year's numbers declined due to dry conditions and limited recruitment last year, and the peak lekking period may have been undocumented due to an early onset of lekking as winter conditions were so mild. Counts have remained relatively flat over the last 20 years with an average annual increase of 0.4% per year.

No new leks were found.

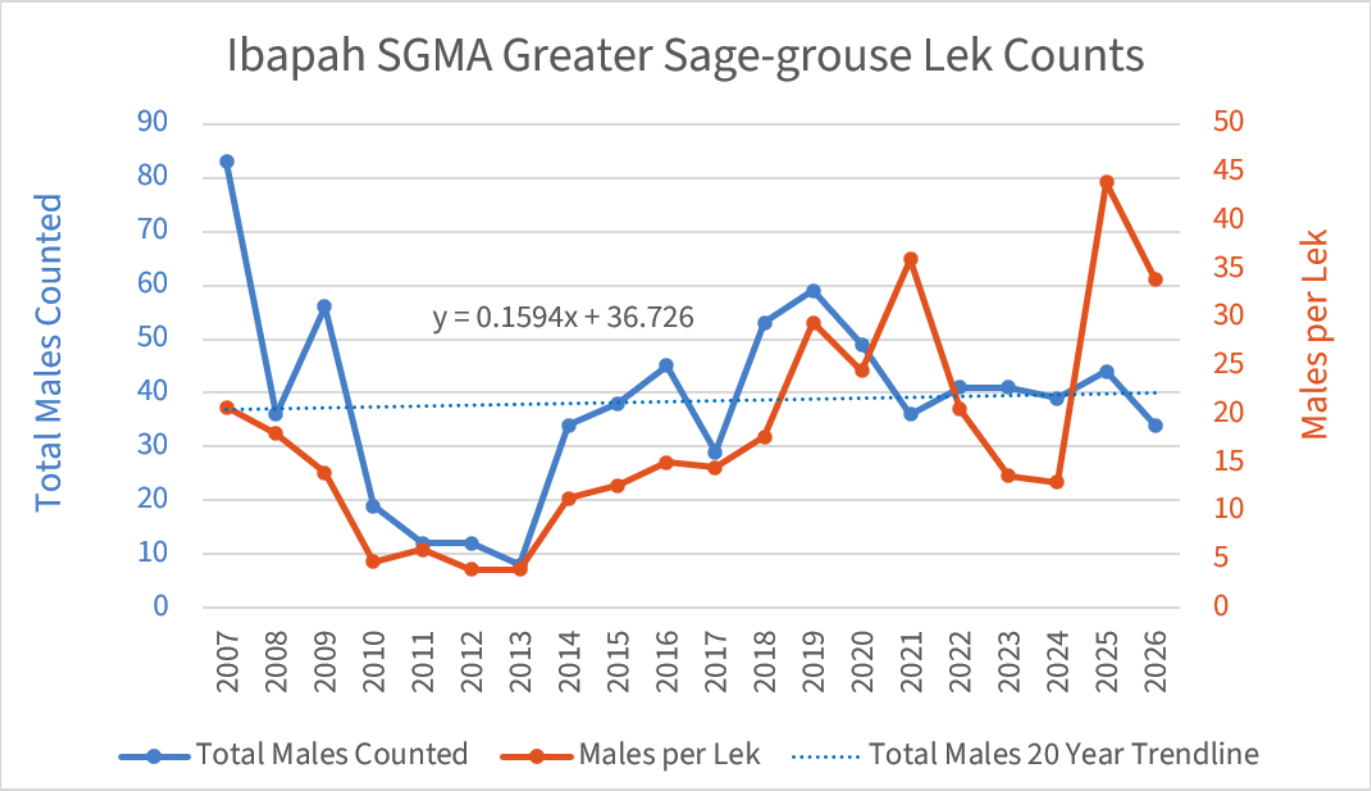


Figure 7. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Ibapah Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Panguitch

In the Panguitch SGMA 25 leks were visited. Of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 11. A total of 304 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 27.6 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Panguitch SGMA counts decreased by 31.1%, which is a decline outside of the usual population cycle due to dry conditions and limited recruitment last year. Counts declined on average over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 2.1% per year.

No new leks were found.

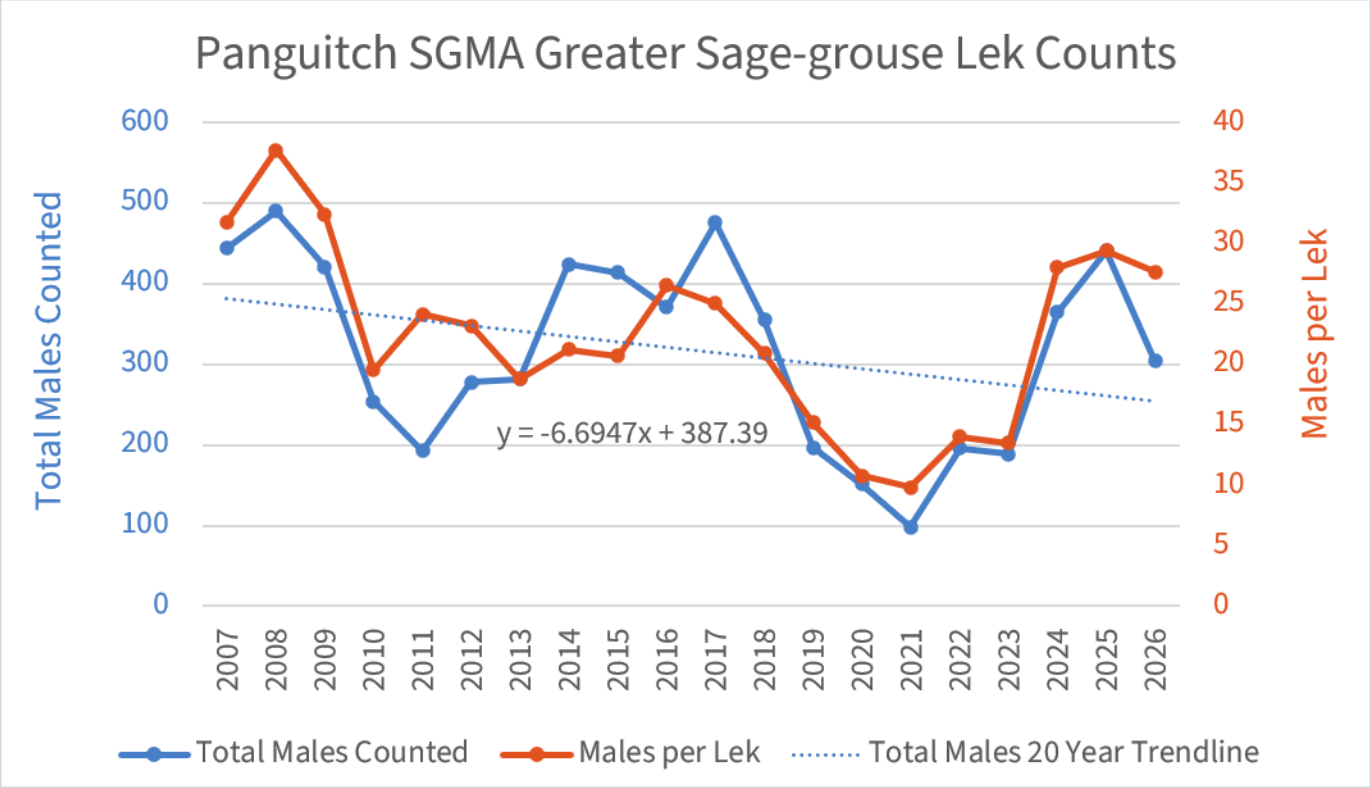


Figure 8. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Panguitch Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Parker Mountain-Emery

In the Parker Mountain-Emery SGMA 74 leks were visited, and of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 53. A total of 1,196 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 22.6 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Parker Mountain-Emery SGMA counts decreased by 24.3%. Due to precipitation patterns in the last two years, this decrease occurred outside of the usual population cycle. Additionally, some late storms interrupted lekking, and females didn't attend leks in high numbers after some of the intermittent storms. The SGMA exhibited a flat trend over the past 20 years, with an average rate of 0.0% per year.

Birds were counted on three potential new leks this year.

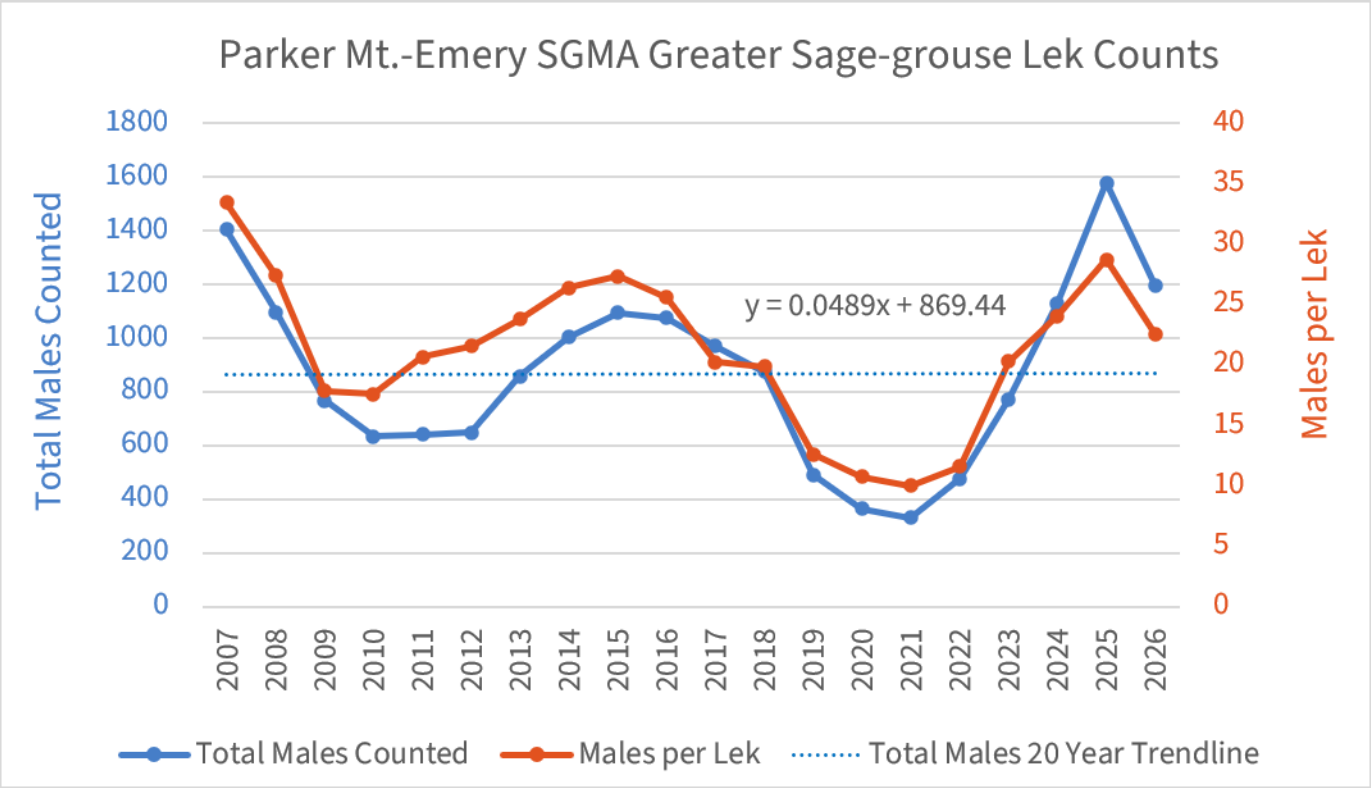


Figure 9. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Parker Mountain-Emery Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Rich-Morgan-Summit

In the Rich-Morgan-Summit SGMA 56 leks were visited and male sage-grouse were detected on 40. A total of 1,122 male sage-grouse were counted, for an average of 28.1 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Rich-Morgan-Summit SGMA counts decreased by 7.0%, due to dry conditions and limited recruitment last year. The SGMA trended down over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average rate of 3.0% per year.

No new leks were found.

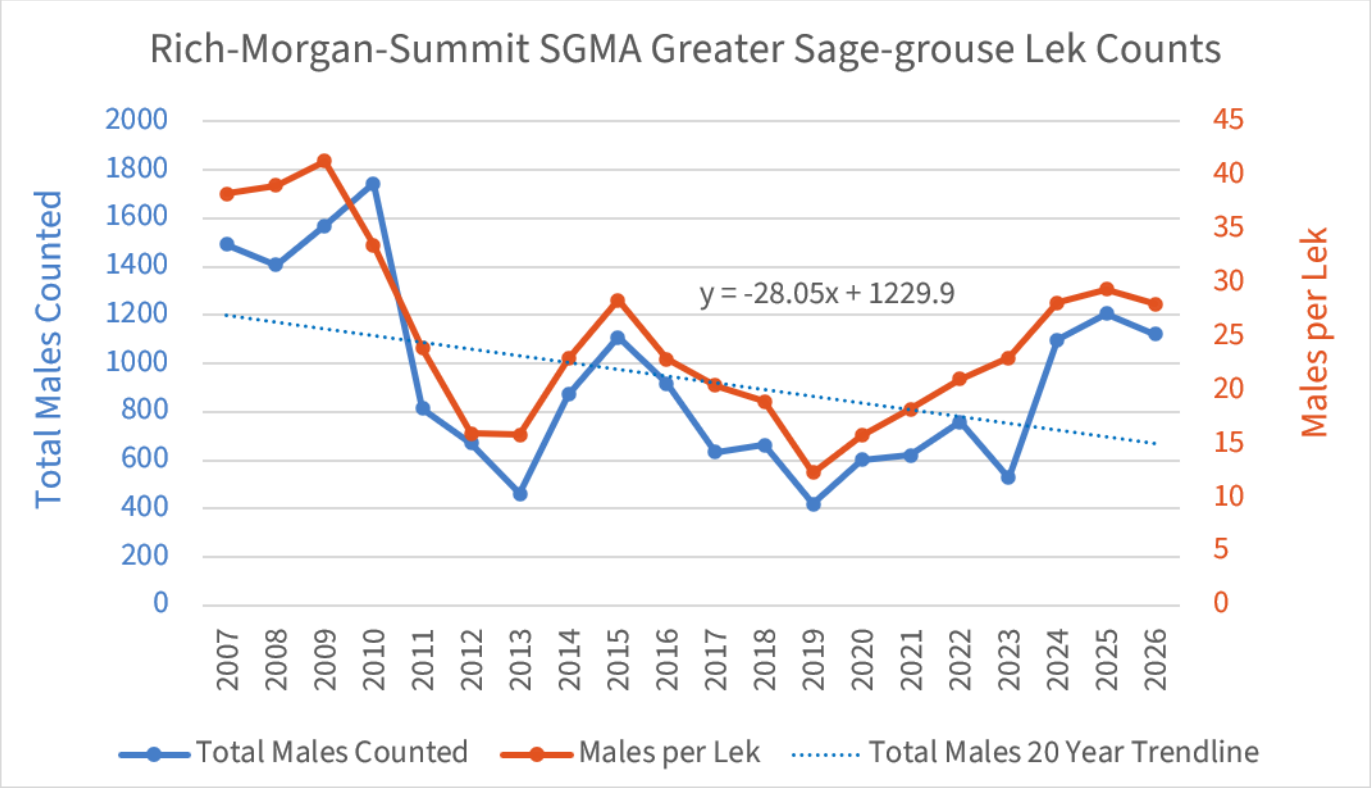


Figure 10. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Rich-Morgan-Summit Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Sheeprock Mountains

In the Sheeprock Mountains SGMA ten leks were visited. Of those, male sage-grouse were detected on six. A total of 54 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 9.0 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Sheeprock Mountains SGMA counts decreased by 18.2%, which does not fall within the expected population cycle. The reason for this decline is likely due to reduced recruitment from dry conditions, and earlier lekking may have caused peak attendance to occur before the survey period.

The Sheeprock Mountains SGMA has had long term declines in population and counts are down over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 2.4% per year.

No new leks were found.

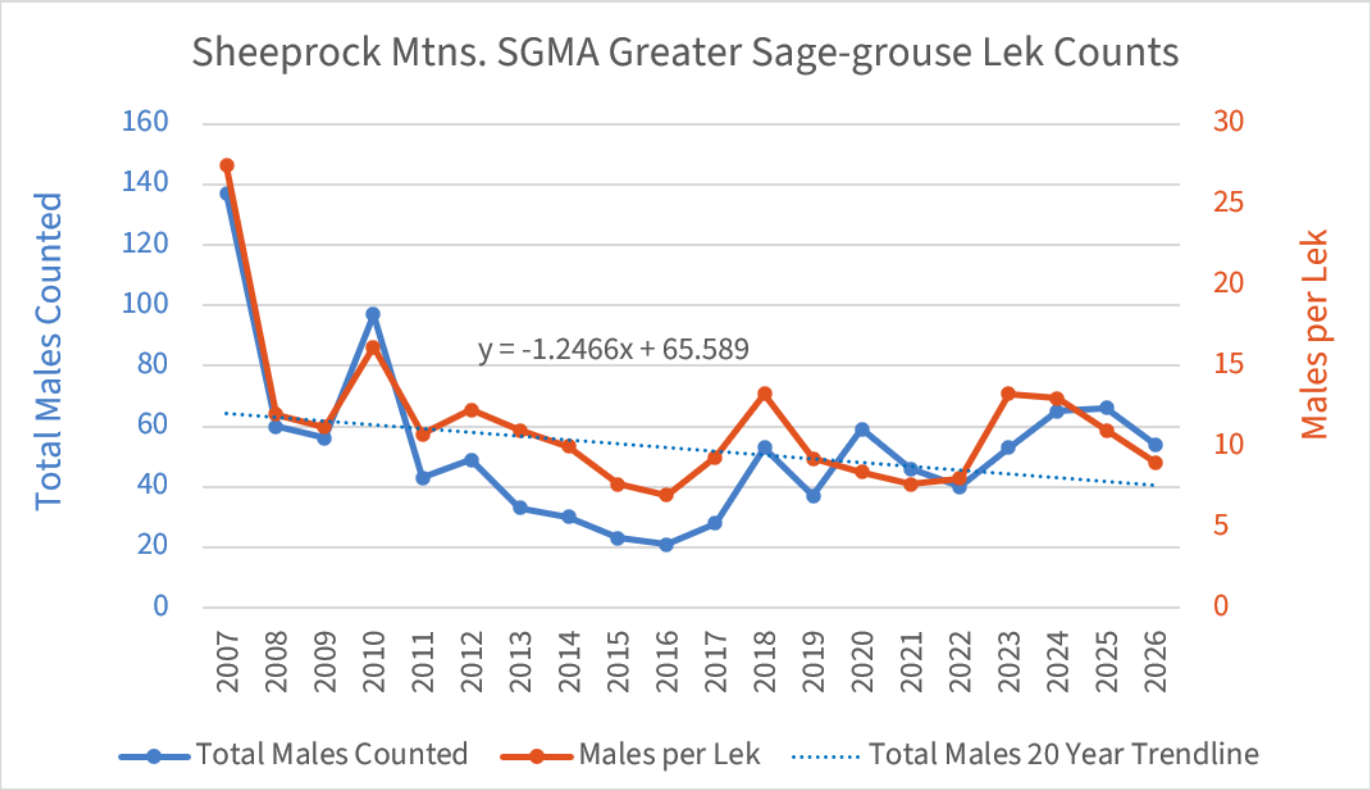


Figure 11. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Sheeprock Mountains Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Strawberry Valley

In the Strawberry Valley SGMA eight leks were visited and male sage-grouse were detected on four. A total of 69 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 17.3 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Strawberry Valley SGMA counts decreased by 38.4%. This year, a longer lekking season caused a lack of a discernable peak; males attended leks earlier and stayed on leks longer. This likely impacted the high male count, as less grouse congregated simultaneously. Generally, counts were flat over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 0.2% per year.

No new leks were found.

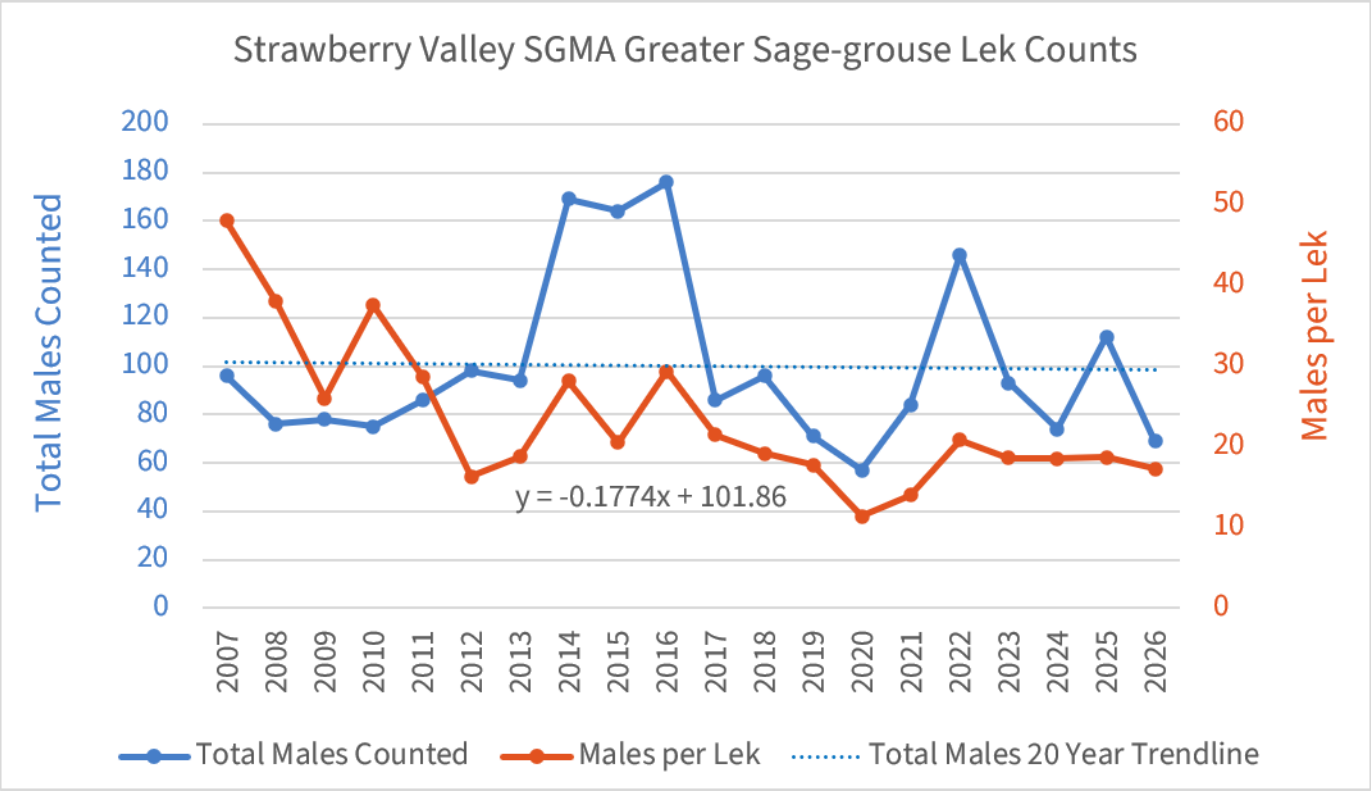


Figure 12. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Strawberry Valley Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Uintah

In the Uintah SGMA 62 leks were visited. Of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 37. A total of 714 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 19.3 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the Uintah SGMA counts decreased by 15.8%, though increases should have continued for at least another two years. Recruitment was decent and overwinter survival was excellent with mild winter conditions. Counts were extended with an earlier start and later end of lekking in this SGMA, but there wasn't a distinguishable peak in lekking with the longer season. This may have influenced peak counts with grouse being more spread out over a longer time frame. Overall counts are trending up over the past 20 years, increasing at an annual rate of 2.3% per year.

No potential new leks were found.

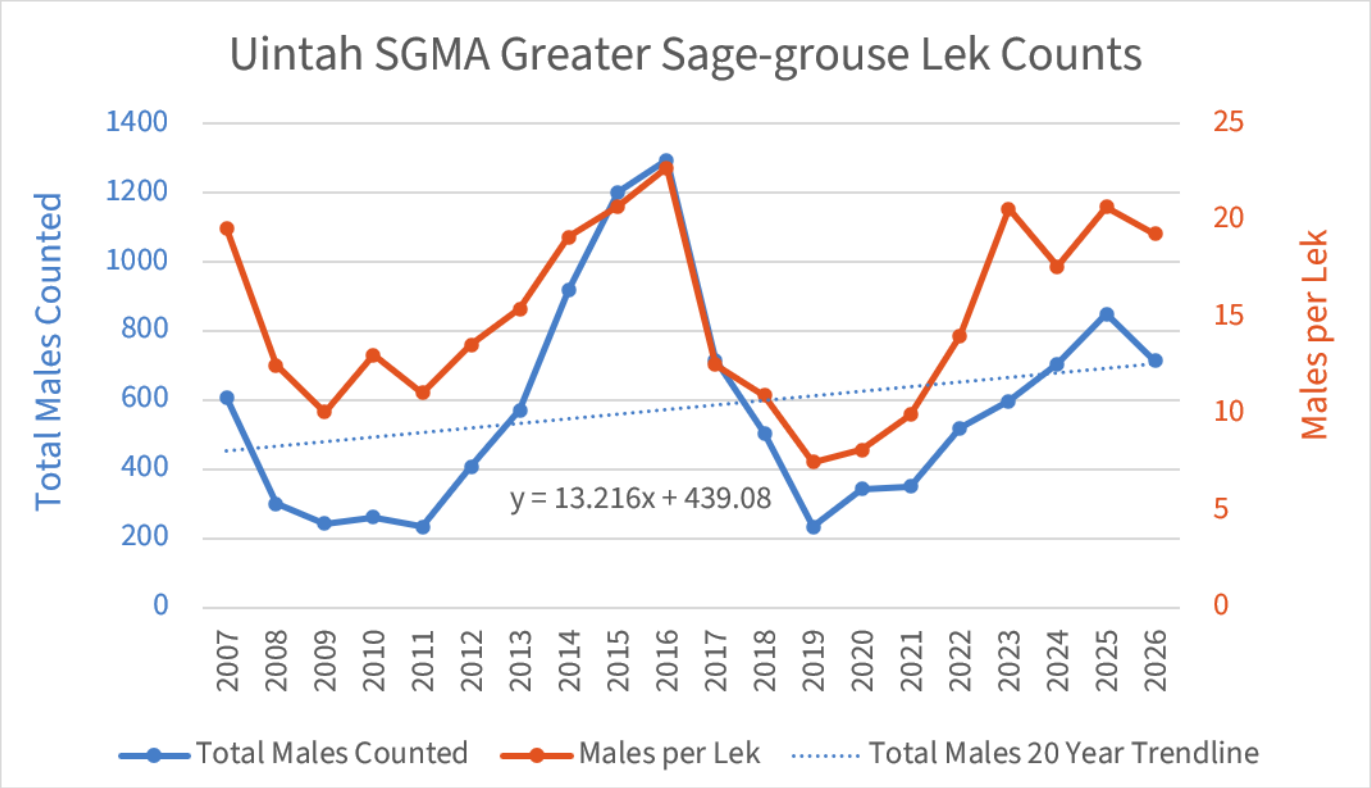


Figure 13. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted within the Uintah Sage-grouse Management Area. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

Non-SGMA

Outside of designated SGMAs 30 leks were visited, and of those, male sage-grouse were detected on 14. A total of 180 male sage-grouse were counted for an average of 12.9 males per lek. From 2025 to 2026 the non-SGMA counts increased by 7.1%. Many of these leks occur on private land or higher elevation forest service lands, where they likely had more access to water and mesic habitat. Total males counted were down over the past 20 years, decreasing at an average annual rate of 2.7% per year. Peaks and troughs continue to trend lower due to overall declines.

No new leks were found.

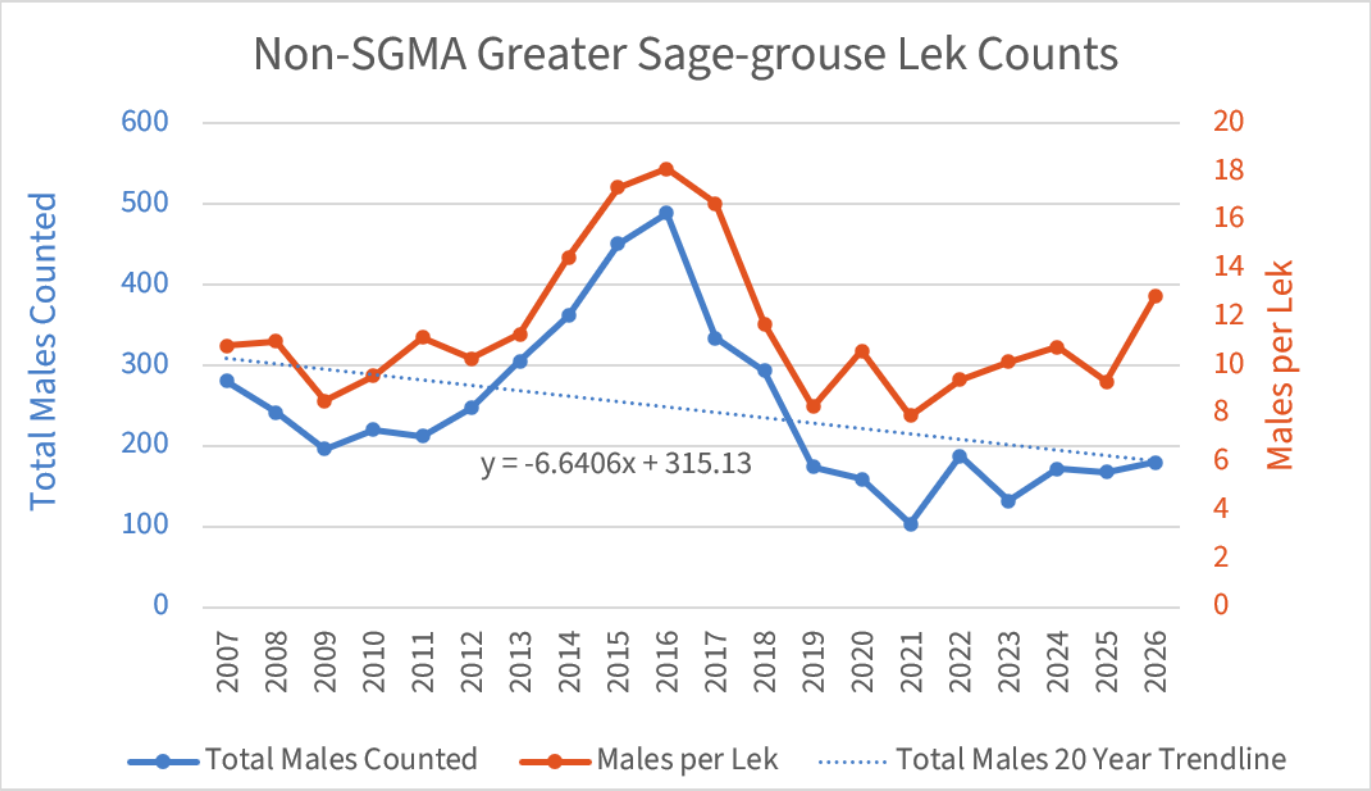


Figure 14. *Average males per lek for all leks with at least one male counted and total number of males counted outside of Sage-grouse Management Areas. Trend line represents a linear regression for total males counted over the last 20 year approximating two population cycles.*

BLM and USFS Adaptive Management Triggers

The Utah Bureau of Land Management and US Forest Service change management actions based on a set of adaptive management triggers developed in conjunction with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. These adaptive management triggers are based on metrics of males per lek on trend leks in each trigger population area and overall population change (lambda) for all leks within federal Priority Habitat Management Area in each federal population area. It is important to note that the trigger population areas are similar to DWR Sage-grouse Management Areas; however, there are differences in area and leks included. The federal plans containing the following adaptive management triggers are included here for informational purposes. The State of Utah continues to manage greater sage-grouse based on the Utah 2019 Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse and 2009 Greater Sage-grouse Management Plan.

Triggers are defined as follows.

Soft Triggers

1a) 4 consecutive years of 10% or greater annual decline in average males per lek in each year, based on "trend leks"

OR

1b) 6 consecutive years of declining average males per lek in each year, based on "trend leks"

OR

1c) 40% or greater decline in average males per lek in any single year, based on "trend leks" for the 4 years covered by lambda values in soft trigger question 2

OR

1d) 50% or greater decline in average males per lek in a 4 consecutive year period, based on "trend leks"

AND

2) Lambda of less than 1 in 4 consecutive years, based on all leks in the PHMA.

Hard Triggers

a) 4 consecutive years of 20% or greater annual decline in average males per lek in each year, based on "trend leks"

OR

b) Average males per lek, based on trend leks, drops 75% below the 10-year rolling average males per lek in any single year (not a 75% decrease, but a decline under 25% of the 10-year rolling average)

OR

c) Lambda of less than 1 in 6 consecutive years, based on all leks within the PHMA

OR

d) Lambda of less than 1 in 8 years of a 10-year window, based on all leks within the PHMA

Table 2: Trigger Population Areas and Trigger Status

TRIGGER POPULATION AREAS AND TRIGGER STATUS			
Trigger Population Area	**Soft Trigger**	**Hard Trigger**	**Note**
Bald Hills	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Box Elder	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Carbon	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Emery	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Hamlin Valley	No	**Yes**	Hard Trigger: Lambda of less than one in 8 of 10 years (H.d).
Ibapah	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Panguitch	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Parker	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Rich	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Sheeprock Mountains	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Strawberry Valley	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.
Uintah	No	No	Trigger criteria were not met.

Table 2. *Trigger population areas and trigger status for 2026 lek counts. Red text indicates trigger. Lambda is calculated on all leks in PHMA within each population area. The Hamlin Valley trigger was met in 2022, and the BLM has completed the Causal Factor Analysis. The trigger will be resolved when Lambda increases to one or greater in eight out of 10 years.*

Table 3: Trigger Status History

TRIGGER STATUS HISTORY									
Trigger Population Area	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**
Bald Hills	OK	OK (W)	OK (W)	S, H	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)
Box Elder	OK	OK (W)	OK (W)	H	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Carbon	OK	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK	OK	OK	OK
Emery	OK	OK (W)	S	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK	OK	OK	OK (W)
Hamlin Valley	OK	OK	OK (W)	S	S, H	H	H	H	H
Ibapah	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Panguitch	OK	OK (W)	OK (W)	S, H	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK	OK	OK
Parker	OK	S	S	H	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Rich	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Sheeprocks	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Strawberry	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)
Uintah	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK (W)	OK	OK	OK	OK

Table 3. *A history of adaptive management triggers in trigger population areas. Green (OK) indicates no triggers. Yellow (OK (W)) indicates one of two criteria needed for a soft trigger was met, but a trigger was not fully met. Orange (S) indicates a soft trigger. Red (H) indicates a hard trigger.*

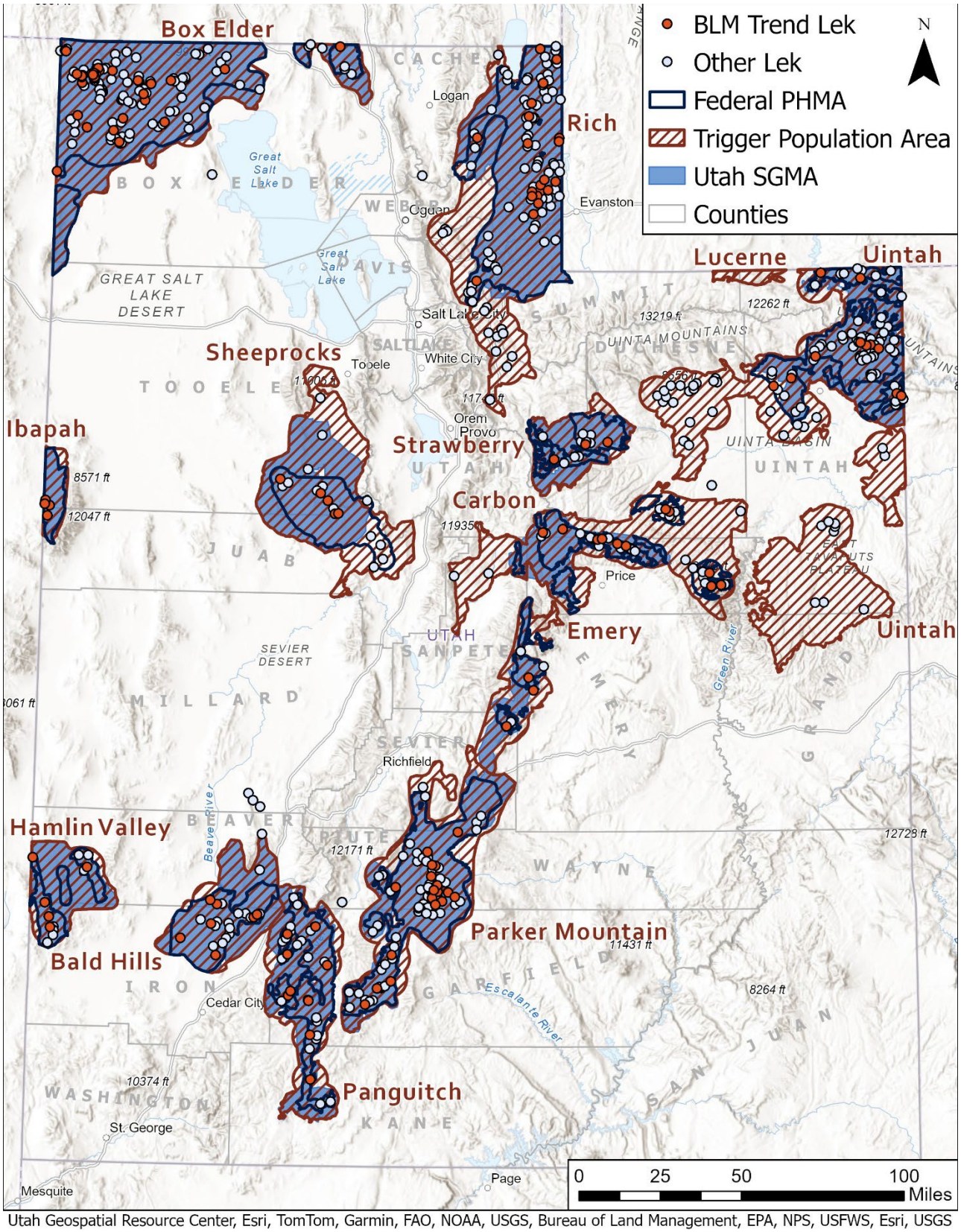
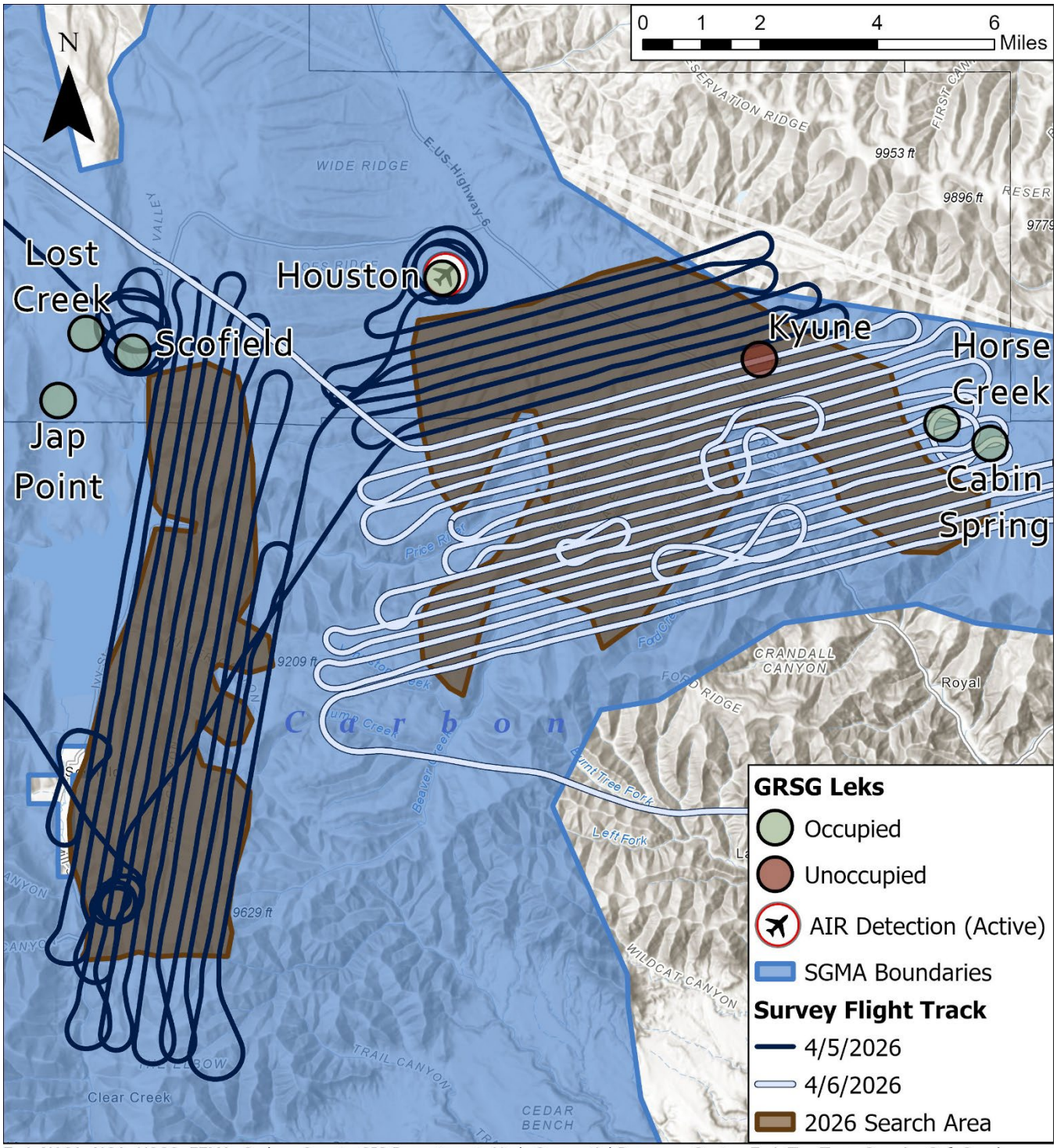


Figure 15. *State of Utah Sage-grouse Management Areas relative to Federal Priority Habitat Management Areas and Greater Sage-grouse Trigger Population Areas with federal trend leks and other leks.*

Results: Fixed Wing Infrared Lek Search

Fixed wing infrared lek searches were conducted on the mornings of April 5, 6, 7, and 8, 2026 by Owyhee Air Research in the Southeastern Region of the state. This year's survey was supported by the ongoing $25,000 in funding from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Lek searches covered approximately 59,887 acres made up of approximately 41,181 acres inside of the Carbon SGMA and 18,706 acres near the Carbon SGMA (Table 4). Previously known leks were detected, but no unknown leks were detected.

This was the ninth year the UDWR has utilized aerial infrared surveys to search for greater sage-grouse. Previous searches have been successful in detecting new leks that DWR staff, university researchers, and previous helicopter lek searches were not able to locate. Sage-grouse populations regularly fluctuate on an 8 to 10-year period, and the populations have started to decrease after a recent peak. Due to dry conditions in the winter of 2025 and in the subsequent spring, production and recruitment have declined. Some areas of the state, such as the Parker Mountain SGMA, did receive monsoons later in the summer, but this may have occurred too late to contribute to recruitment success. Aerial searches were conducted in some areas of low-density populations.



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, Carbon County GIS Department, Utah Geospatial Resource Center, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS

Figure 16. *Flight path of 2026 aerial infrared fixed wing lek searches in the Carbon SGMA. Sage-grouse were observed on an existing lek outside survey area. No new leks were detected.*

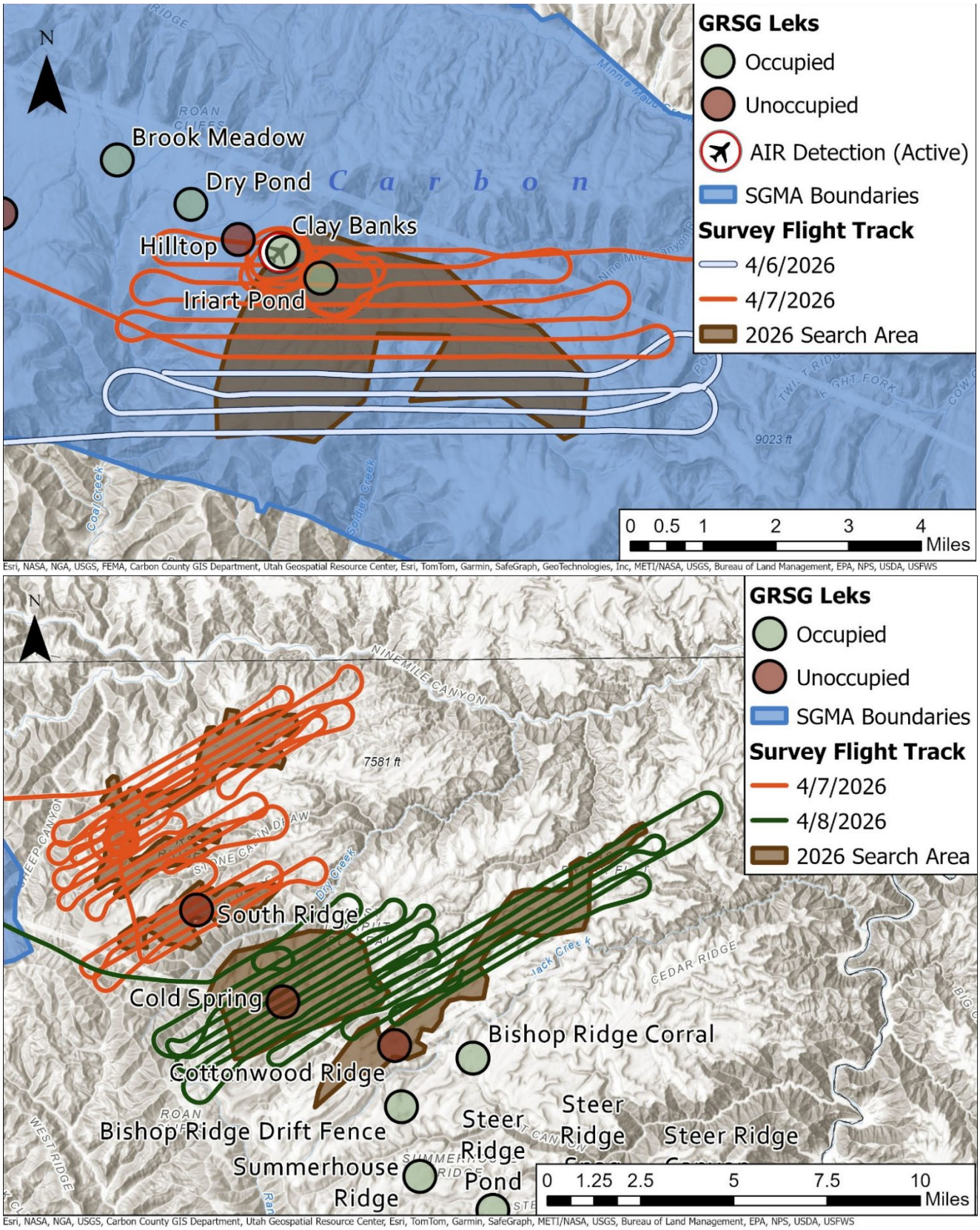


Figure 17. *Flight path of 2026 aerial infrared fixed wing lek searches within (top) and outside of (bottom) the Carbon SGMA. Sage-grouse were observed on a lek within the survey area. No new leks were detected.*

Table 4: Area Searched within Greater Sage-grouse Management Areas

AREA SEARCHED WITHIN SGMAs		
SGMA	**Area**	**Estimated Area Searched (Acres)**
Carbon	Scofield	13,988
Carbon	Kyune	21,744
Carbon	Whitmore Park	5,449
	Carbon SGMA total	**41,181**
None	Horse Ridge	4,638
None	South Ridge	2,116
None	Cold Spring	6,601
None	Cottonwood Ridge	5,351
	Outside of SGMA total	**18,706**
	Total Area Searched	**59,887**

Table 4. *Estimated area searched within each polygon in or near the Carbon Sage-grouse Management Area (SGMA) during 2026 Greater Sage-grouse aerial detection flights.*

Table 5: Aerial Detections of Greater-sage Grouse

AERIAL DETECTIONS OF GREATER SAGE-GROUSE						
Date	**Lek Name**	**Time**	**Males**	**Females**	**Latitude**	**Longitude**
4/5/2026	Houston	7:43	Y	N	39.84968	-111.03923
4/7/2026	Clay Banks	6:33	Y	N	39.75564	-110.63243

Table 5. *2026 aerial detections of greater sage-grouse. Count totals are redacted and replaced with yes/no due to data protection policies.*