

A circular photograph showing two Gunnison Sage-grouse in a field of tall grass. The bird on the left is displaying its tail feathers, which are fan-shaped and have a purple and white striped pattern. The bird on the right is facing right. The background is a clear blue sky. The text "Gunnison Sage-grouse" is overlaid in the center of the image.

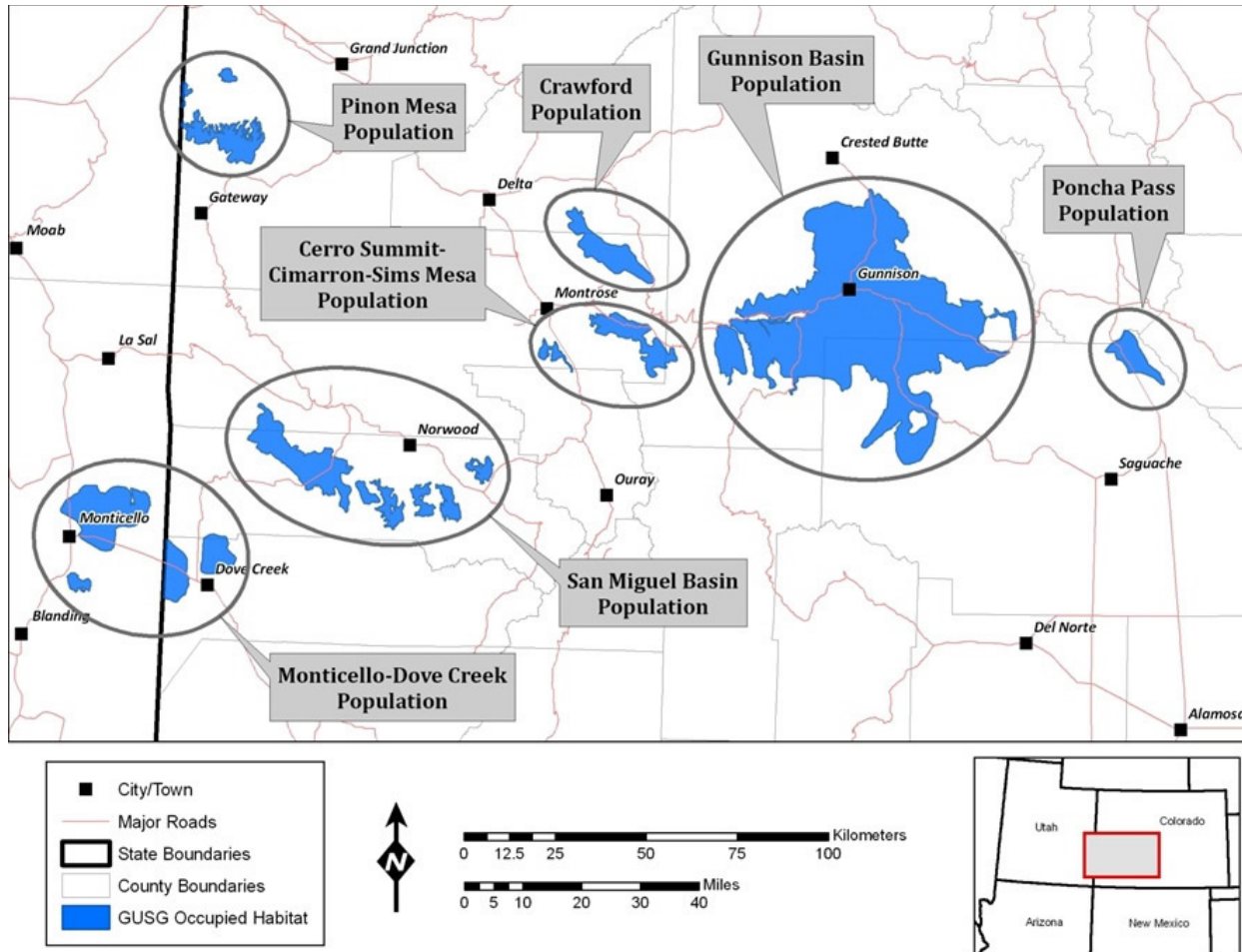
Gunnison Sage-grouse

Centrocercus minimus

Distribution of the Species

Seven populations in Southwest Colorado/Eastern Utah

Largest population is in the Upper Gunnison River Basin (Saguache and Gunnison Counties)



Gunnison Sage-grouse ESA History

Determined to be a separate species in 2000

Listed as a candidate species (**warranted but precluded**) under the Endangered Species Act in 2000

Stipulated settlement in 2005 – USFWS would make a listing determination by
March 31, 2006

April, 2006 Gunnison Sage-grouse found **not-warranted** for protection under the Endangered Species Act

Immediately challenged in court

2009 – another stipulated settlement

2010 – Status Review - Found warranted but precluded

January 11, 2013 Gunnison Sage-grouse proposed for listing as **Endangered**

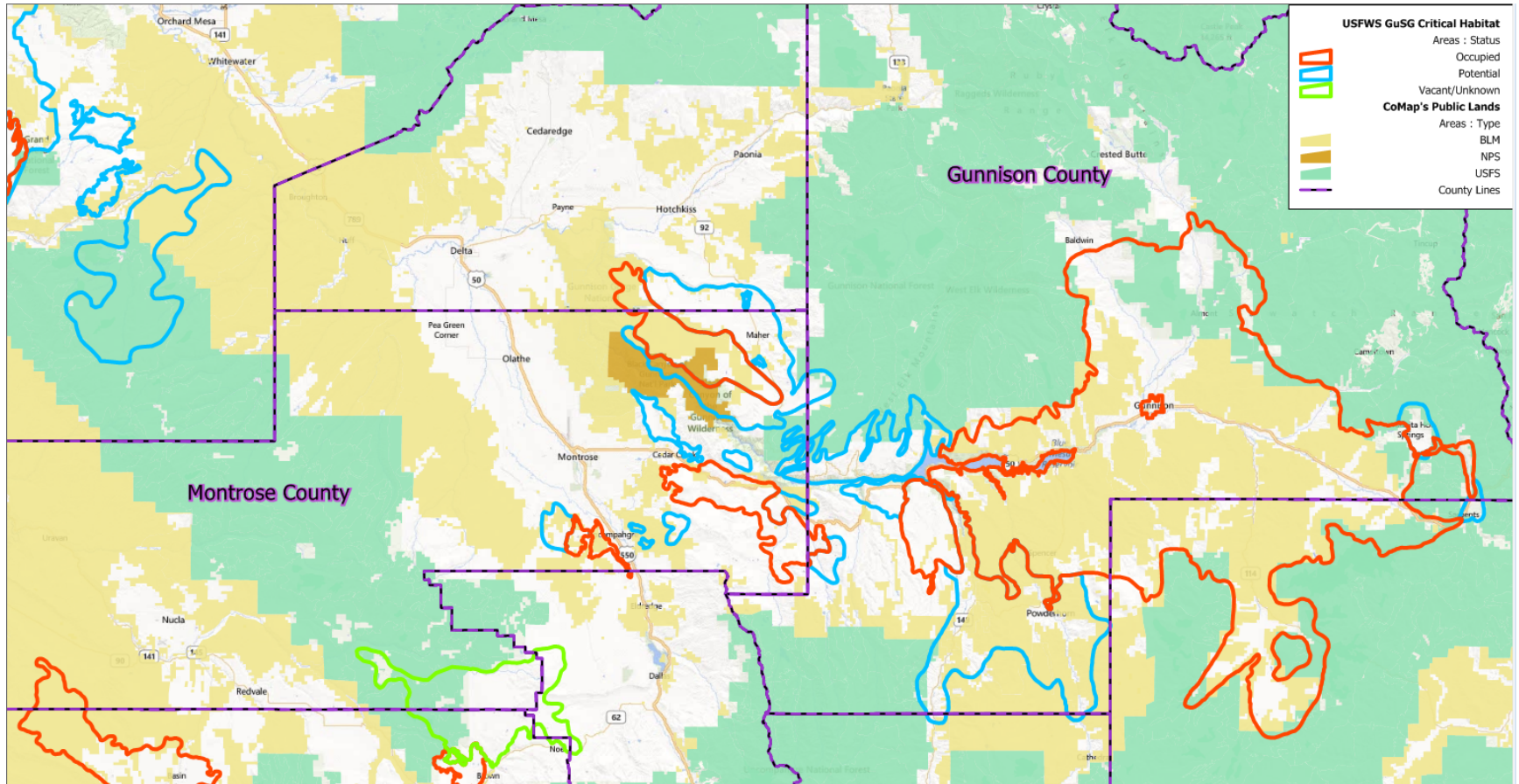
December 22, 2014, Gunnison sage-grouse listed a **Threatened** with 1.4 million acres of SW Colorado and SE Utah designated as critical habitat

What Are The Possible Ramifications of Listing the Gunnison Sage-grouse?

- **“Take” of the species is a violation of Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act**
 - **Criminal and civil penalties**
 - **Agency enforcement**
 - **Citizen suit provision of the ESA (*16 U.S.C. § 1533. Id. at § 1540(g)(1)(C)*)**
- **Examples of “take” given in the final rule:**
 - **Direct take (killing, collecting, trampling, etc.)**
 - **Actions that would result in loss of sagebrush over-story plant cover or height**
 - **Actions that would result in the loss or reduction of native herbaceous understory plant cover or height and/or arthropod community**
 - **Grazing**
 - **Herbicides, insecticides**
 - **Burning and fire suppression activities**
 - **Seeding of non-native plant species**
 - **Actions that would result in sage-grouse avoiding of an area during one or more seasonal periods**
- **“Section 10” (incidental take) authorizations**
- **“Section 7” consultations for all projects with a federal nexus in Critical Habitat**

Public/Private Lands & Critical Habitat Rangewide

- ✓ 57.2% Public Lands
- ✓ 54.6% Federal
- ✓ 2.6% State
- ✓ 42.8% Private



Alleged Threats to Gunnison Sage-grouse

- Residential development
- Roads, powerlines, fences
- Grazing by deer, elk and livestock
- Predation
- Genetic risks
- Drought (indirectly)
- Inadequate regulatory mechanisms at local, state and federal levels



Change the things you can

County regulations can't address...

- Grazing by deer, elk and livestock
- Predation
- Genetic risks
- Drought

They are able to address...

- Residential development
- Roads, powerlines, fences
- “Inadequate” regulatory mechanisms at local level

Gunnison Sage-grouse History of Local Involvement

1995 – Local Working Groups Being Created

-State & Federal agencies, Counties, Stockgrowers', private individuals, environmental groups

1997 – 1st Local Conservation Plan completed and signed

**2005 - Gunnison Sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan
State and Federal agency driven**

**2005 – Gunnison County formed the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee
All involved agencies, Stockgrowers', HCCA, public, development, recreation, Saguache and
Gunnison Counties**

**2005- Gunnison County Sage-grouse Conservation Program
Professional staff, Action Plan and Goals**

2006, 2007 – Gunnison County adopted sage-grouse specific land use regulations

2012 – Strategic Committee completes Habitat Prioritization Tool

**2013 – Rangewide Gunnison sage-grouse Conservation Agreement
Nine counties with occupied habitat, States of Colorado and Utah**

GuSG Habitat Mapping

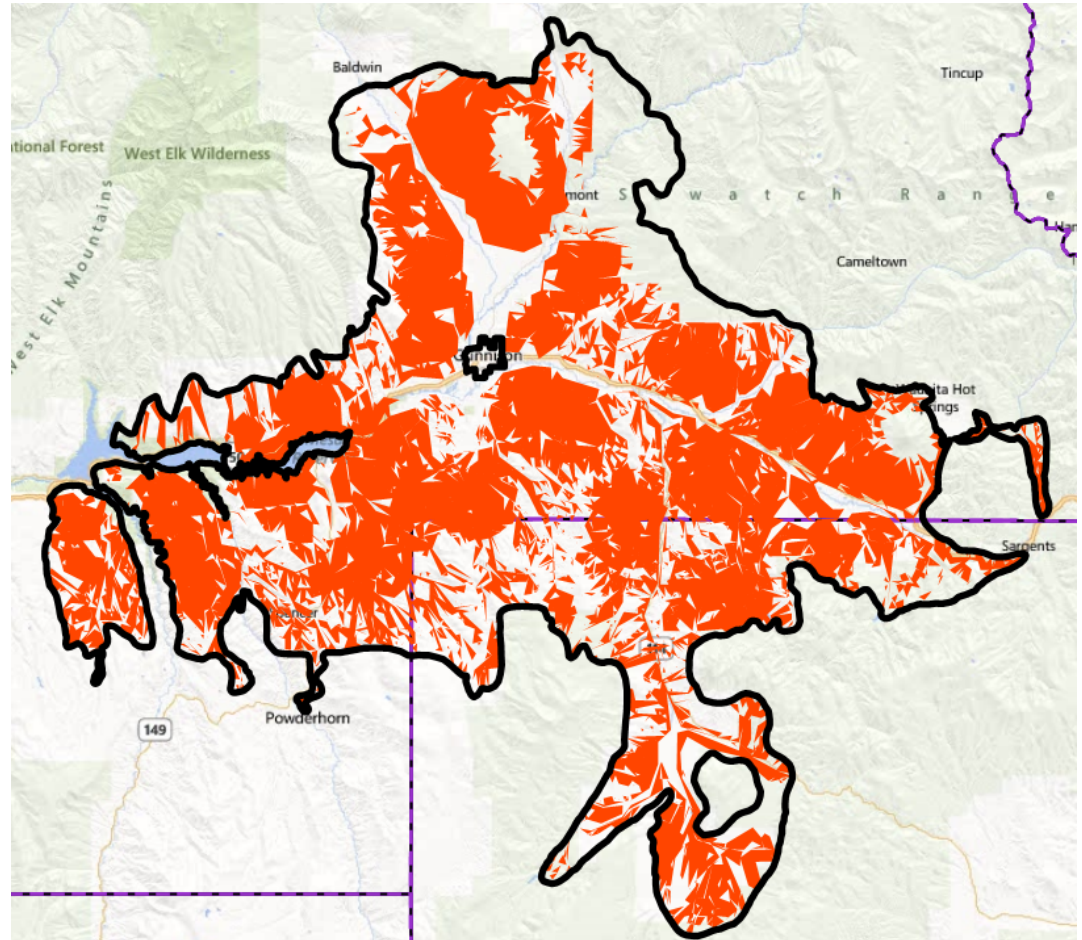
- Habitat mapping is a critical element because habitat loss and fragmentation is often the most significant threat to wildlife.
- Often habitat is mapped at landscape scale (i.e., 30 meter pixels), which generally isn't accurate enough for local land managers.
- Best available GuSG mapping was not accurate enough and included some poor assumptions.
- The Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee developed a Habitat Prioritization Tool (HPT) for the Gunnison Basin that addressed these issues at a precision useful to local governments for land use planning on the context of the grouse and its habitats.

Habitat Mapping Approach - HPT

- Used expert opinion approach (habitat suitability indices) to overcome scientific uncertainty
- Committee of experts (Strategic Committee) from CPW, BLM, FS, and NRCS (USFWS participated some) reached consensus on seasonal habitats and constraints to habitat
- Based on the NRCS soils mapping HPT maps habitat potential – what it should be without outside influences (erosion, etc., something not mapped)
- Used by Gunnison County for land use reviews in Gunnison sage-grouse habitat
- Used by the federal agencies (BLM, USFS, NPS) for their Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA)

The Result

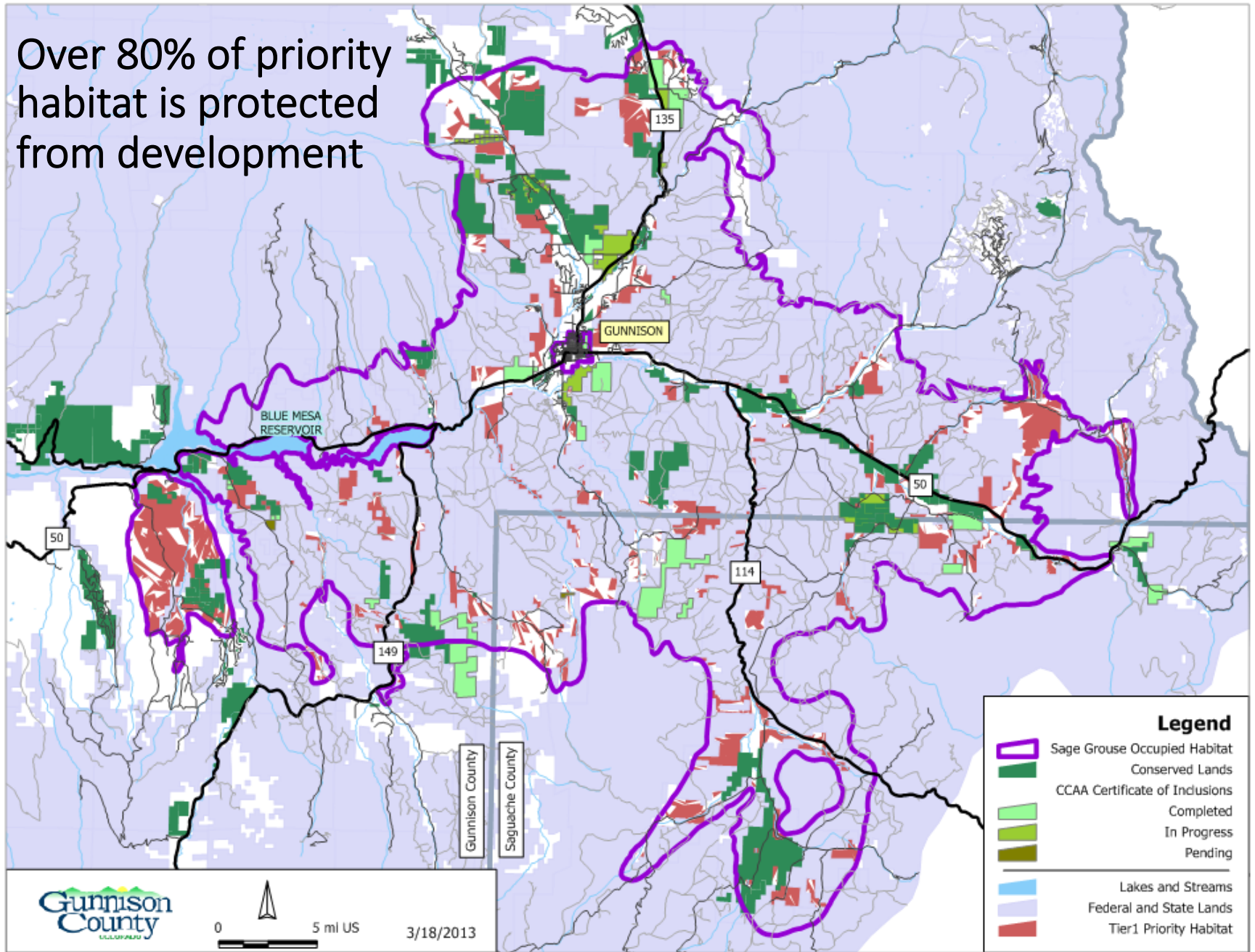
- 91% of CPW bird location data (8,000 points) lie within Tier1 habitat (scores 15+).
- HPT has been used for BLM's planning, County land use reviews, and the USFWS asked that it be replicated in GuSG satellite populations.



USFWS assumptions in proposed GuSG listing rule

- Using countywide data, USFWS calculated a total number of new homes within occupied habitat by 2050 would be 4,630.
- Using GIS/Assessor data trends since 1997 within occupied habitat, a more accurate prediction is 1,201 ($\frac{1}{4}$ compared to using countywide data).
- USFWS final rule revised their analysis. Development in the Gunnison basin is less of a concern than they previously thought, but still a concern.

Over 80% of priority habitat is protected from development



Trends

- Conservation easements are conserving land faster than the amount of land being lost to development.
- It will take 31 years to conserve required land to meet Rangewide Plan goal.
- In worst case scenario, it will take 178 years for development based on current trends to “use up” the priority habitat that is available beyond the goals set forth in Rangewide Plan.

Lessons Learned

- Conservation happens on the ground, not on paper.
- Conservation requires public AND private participation.
- Conservation is ongoing and time consuming.
 - Dedicate staff
 - Pool resources
 - Prepare for the long haul.



QUESTIONS?

