



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

July 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: *Colombian Sharp-tailed Grouse and CRP in Eastern Idaho*

Presented by: *Houston Kimes*

Position/Title: *Regional Wildlife Biologist, Farm Bill Coordinator*

Agenda Item No.: 10
Supervisor Approval: SR

Background:

The Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse (CSTG) is one of six subspecies of sharp-tailed grouse in North America. Once considered one of the most abundant upland game birds in the Pacific Northwest, they now occupy less than 10% of their historical range. Degradation and elimination of habitat through conversion of shrub-steppe grasslands to human development and agriculture, altered fire regimes, and invasion of non-native plants have contributed to their population declines. However, Idaho supports an estimated 60-65% of the remaining CSTG in the United States.

Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse were petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 1995 and 2004; however, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded they were not warranted for listing. IDFG classifies CSTG as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the current Idaho State Wildlife Action Plan.

In Idaho, approximately 70% of CSTG habitat occurs on privately-owned land. Through continued collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency, IDFG assists with implementing voluntary private lands conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (CRP-SAFE), to restore and maintain upland game bird habitat in Idaho. With the potential loss of CRP habitat as one of the most immediate threats to CSTG in Idaho, the ongoing effort to promote and implement the program is crucial.

The goal of this presentation is to provide the Commission with an overview of CSTG in Idaho, factors influencing their distribution and abundance, and the work conducted by IDFG and partners through the CRP program to enhance CSTG habitat and populations in Eastern Idaho.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

The Department is charged with preserving, protecting, perpetuating and managing the state's wildlife (Idaho Code § 36-103). Idaho Code 36-104(2) grants authority to the Commission to determine when an open season may be declared for the taking of wildlife. IDAPA 13.01.09 establishes rules regarding the take of game birds.

Public Involvement Process:

N/A.



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Justification:

Information presented will aid Commissioners as they respond to requests, recommendations, or other input from the public regarding population dynamics and habitat of Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse in Idaho.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A. Presentation is for Commission information only.