

SAGE GROUSE

The first modern sage grouse hunting season was held in 1955. Between 1955 and 1980, the season was open only about half the years, primarily during the 1970s, and seasons were restrictive. Length of season ranged from 2 to 7 days, with many seasons held during the week with daily bag limits of 1 or 2 birds. In 1980, the population was declining and continued to decline until the mid-1980s. It then stabilized with some fluctuations from year to year. Currently, the population is considered low compared to historical levels, but stable. The sage grouse hunting season was re-opened in 2000.

The 2009 sage grouse season was held on 30 September and 1 October 2009 on public lands including those owned or managed by US Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, State School and Public Lands Office, and Walk-In Areas in all of Harding County and west of US 85 in Butte County. The daily and season limit was 1 bird.

Hunters were not statistically surveyed about their sage grouse harvest, however GFP and U.S. Bureau of Land Management employees interviewed what is believed to be the majority of hunters. Beginning in 2008, all hunters were asked to provide post hunt interviews and to submit harvested sage grouse for examination at one of three check stations. Prior to 2008, personnel actively sought out hunters and interviewed them in the field.

Approximately 20 individual hunters participated in the season. Total recorded harvest was 7 grouse, of which 3 birds were taken in Butte County and 4 in Harding County. Of the 7 birds checked, 2 were males and 5 were females. Two of the females and none of the males were adults. In comparison to the 2008 season, there was a decrease in the number of birds taken and the ratio of males to females in the bag decreased from 1.1:1 to 0.40:1. The ratio of juvenile to adult birds taken in 2009 increased from 0.89:1 in 2008 to 2.50:1.

Comparison of the 2000-2009 Sage Grouse harvests

Year	# of Hunters (est. % of total)	Total Harvest	Harvest by County		Harvest by Age & Sex			
			Butte	Harding	Juv/Yr Male	Juv/Yr Female	Adult Male	Adult Female
2000	28 (UN%)	24	2	24	10	7	6	1
2001	27 (77%)	12	4	8	2	3	5	2
2002*	32 (88%)	16	4	12	5	3	1	3
2003	36 (95%)	12	4	8	1	4	6	1
2004	53(95%)	25	8	17	5	12	8	0
2005	40 (95%)	26	9	17	6	10	8	2
2006	46 (95%)	15	0	15	7	4	2	2
2007	25	10	2	8	5	2	3	0
2008	24	17	5	12	3	5	6	3
2009	20	7	3	4	2	3	0	2

*In 2002, only 12 of the 16 sage grouse harvested were checked in with GFP personnel, therefore, harvest by age and sex totals do not add up to the total harvest.