

NEPA Coordinator

BLM, NW Colorado District

2815 H Road

Grand Junction, Co 81506

To Whom It May Concern,

I respectfully submit the following comments on the NW Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Draft Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS. I support the comments being submitted by the Colorado Cattleman's Association and the Colorado Public Lands Council. I am a member of both organizations and feel they have represented the concerns of the Draft Land Use Plan and EIS.

My family ranches in the Middle Park area and graze cattle on BLM, Forest Service and State Lands. We work closely with these agencies to maintain a healthy grazing program to protect the ecosystem for all species using the lands. The GRSG population numbers in Middle Park have been consistent for many years, with some ups and downs, according to local CPAW employees. Most the ups and downs relate to the severity of the weather. Cattle and the GRSG have been on the same land for years, showing minimal population change. The potential elimination of grazing from public lands would be unfounded based off of CPAW numbers. Timing and duration of grazing can be done during time of least impact to the GRSG. Management of grazing lands for one species would make it difficult for all other species using the land.

Public lands are multiple-use areas. The economic impact to communities and the region need to be considered when potentially limiting access to the public lands for a single species. Our community relies on grazing, off-road use, hunting and the general public out sight-seeing to keep the town viable.

The potential loss of multiple-use of public lands would put greater pressure on private lands to offset the lack of access. The shifting of use from public to private would create a different set of problems for the land and species using them.

No one wants to see a species become endangered. Common sense and practical application of conservation measures for all using and sharing the land needs to be the ruling factor. Controls of predator species to the GRSG need to be considered as their numbers continue to increase, helping to keep GRSG at lower population levels.

Respectfully,



Mike Ritschard

General Manager, Ritschard Cattle Co.