

80 Heilman Road
Montoursville PA 17754

November 7, 2013

Erin Jones
Bureau of Land Management
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, CO 81506

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GRAND JCT., CO
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Dear Ms. Jones:

My wife and I recently returned from a western bird watching / bird hunting trip. The primary reason for the trip was to hunt Greater Sage-Grouse in good quality habitat. The hunt was conducted almost entirely on BLM land. We spent 19 days on the road and about \$4,000 stimulating various local economies. I tell you this so you will know that I am not just another effete eastern tree-hugger, and to underscore the economic value of healthy populations of Greater Sage-Grouse in wide open, good quality habitat.

I am pleased that BLM is leading the effort to conserve the Greater Sage-Grouse. However, I am concerned that BLM's preferred alternative does not comply with the best available science or with standards necessary to stabilize and recover grouse populations. I encourage BLM to adopt the conservation measures in Alternative C to ensure sustainable management and to conserve the species. These include recommendations to limit future development and to create protected areas.

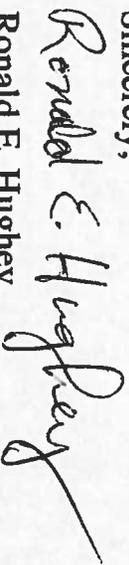
A report by the U.S. Geological Survey and other peer-reviewed research indicate that conserving the Greater Sage-Grouse will require both protecting large areas of habitat and making significant changes in land management to reverse population declines of this wide-ranging species. The Survey found that most priority sage-grouse habitat is already heavily degraded and that grouse are only persisting in large, relatively undisturbed blocks of habitat. I personally have observed the effects of over-grazing and the scarcity of sage grouse in more than one western state.

For years, fossil fuels production and other commercial uses have dominated public land management across sagebrush habitats, resulting in significant impacts to wildlife, public recreation, and air and water quality. Protecting large expanses of important sage-grouse habitat—as outlined in Alternative C—will help stem the decline of many species of wildlife across the American West. This alternative will also begin restoring balance to an over-utilized and degraded landscape, while at the same time identifying areas most appropriate for development and those that need to be avoided.

One last thing. I have followed birds, either to shoot or to see, across BLM and other public lands in numerous western states. I have seen the true cost of beef every where I've walked. Even though I was raised on a small beef operation in Oklahoma and love the taste of beef, I haven't eaten beef for years and don't intend to ever again. It's the strongest statement I can make. I wish your agency had the political will to get those damned cows off our public land!

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,


Ronald E. Hughey

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