

Erin Jones

From: National Wildlife Federation on behalf of Margaret Wood
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 9:57 AM
To: blm_co_nw_sage_grouse@blm.gov
Subject: Alternatives B and C --- Greater Sage-Grouse Draft RMP& EIS

Dec 2, 2013

Grand Junction BLM Field Office
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, CO 81506

I am writing to urge you to adopt a new plan for managing the federal public lands in northwest Colorado that will protect greater sage-grouse and their habitat.

The greater sage-grouse is an iconic species of the Intermountain West and northern Great Plains. Over the last 100 years, both the population and range of the species have declined significantly. The greater sage-grouse has now been found warranted for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. The disappearance of greater sage-grouse habitat and the decline of greater sage-grouse populations indicate the need for more effective conservation immediately. Because the majority of remaining greater sage-grouse habitat overlaps with land managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service, the long-term survival of the species rests largely on management prescriptions established by these agencies. Development pressure is expected to increase on these lands.

For that reason, I am disappointed to see the agencies put forth as their "Preferred Alternative" (Alternative D) in the draft environmental impact statement for amending their land use management plans in northwest Colorado a strategy that continues to rely on measures that have proven ineffective in preventing the decline of greater sage-grouse. The continued reliance on some management "prescriptions" that are not supported by current science such as the .25-mile buffer for leks and the ability to waive protections and allow development in sage-grouse habitat will not be sufficient to ensure that sage-grouse are recovered and need not be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The agencies need to develop a more protective plan that incorporates elements of Alternatives B and C. The final plan must require that oil and gas drilling as well as roads, transmission lines, wind turbines and over-grazing are restricted in priority sage-grouse habitat, that migration corridors are protected, and that damaged habitat is reclaimed.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood
1081 Zion Church Rd
Augusta, WV 26704-2588

Erin Jones

From: Emily Orbanek
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 1:37 PM
To: blm_co_nw_sage_grouse@blm.gov
Subject: BLM - Greater Sage Grouse EIS

BLM

Protecting the Greater Sage Grouse is not just about protecting a species, it's about thoughtful land management that results in cleaner air and cleaner water for Colorado's communities. Protecting the Greater Sage Grouse would benefit the ranching families of Colorado by protecting important ranch lands that double as grouse habitat.

The most sensitive habitat should be managed as ACECs, which would allow the BLM to be more strategic with oil and gas leasing. NSO is not strong enough protection as waivers and modification to the rules are easily attainable. Please consider mineral withdrawal from the most sensitive habitat.

This is a unique opportunity for CO BLM to make some progressive decision that not only benefit the Greater Sage Grouse, but the larger Colorado landscape for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Warmly,
Emily Orbanek

Emily Orbanek
725 East College Drive #1
Durango , CO 81301-5570

Erin Jones

From: Joan Northrup
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 3:45 PM
To: blm_co_nw_sage_grouse@blm.gov
Subject: Draft LUPA/EIS Opinion

To the BLM,

Dec. 2 2013

The author of this letter is a 74 year old Colorado native, who has enjoyed the Northwest area of Colorado. I have hunted antelope, sage grouse, doves and rabbits in that area,

It is my opinion the most conservative plan for the protection of the sage grouse habitat be put in place. If the sage grouse thrives you can modify the plan in the future. If a less restrictive plan is put in place and the sage grouse does not thrive it will be very late to correct the error.

The public lands, I might remind you, are the property of all the citizens of the United States, who in fact benefit very little from cattle and sheep grazing, as well as lumber and mineral extractions on public lands. These same citizens include our future generations who will need materials and energy until the end of time.

The attempt by local governments, the agricultural and mineral lobbies to reduce protection of our native wildlife is selfish and very short term thinking.

Gregory Durrett
926 Blake Ave
Glenwood Springs CO 81601

Joan Northrup
Keane Podbevsek
Devin Podbevsek

Erin Jones

From: Bob Millette
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 6:16 PM
To: blm_co_nw_sage_grouse@blm.gov
Subject: Northwest Colorado Greater Sage Grouse EIS

Dear Bureau of Land Management:

We thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Bureau of Land Management's Northwest Colorado Greater Sage Grouse EIS. We are deeply concerned about the future of greater sage grouse in Colorado, and urge you to provide adequate protection for their Priority, General, and especially for their Linkage/Connectivity Habitats.

The greater sage grouse is one of the West's most iconic species. It used to number in thousands whose flocks blackened the skies. However, in recent years their numbers have dramatically declined due to habitat loss and fragmentation caused by oil and gas development, agricultural land conversion, housing development, poor grazing practices, and wildfire. The BLM is doing the right thing by taking the initiative to improve conservation of the greater sage grouse, but, if this bird does not receive better protection, it will surely end up on the Endangered Species List.

In reviewing the four alternatives presented in the Northwestern Colorado Greater Sage Grouse EIS, we are very disappointed to see Alternative D put forth as the "Preferred Alternative". This alternative is inadequate in that it fails to provide sufficient caps for critical grouse habitat and continues to rely on management 'prescriptions' that are not supported by good wildlife science (e.g. the 0.25 mile buffer for leks). The BLM should not rely on management provisions such as "No Surface Occupancy" since these can be waived. Instead, the BLM should permanently withdraw mineral leases in the highest quality sage-grouse areas. The BLM should also consider using buy-backs and amending or canceling leases in these areas, and use management tools and practices that will serve to protect the most important sage grouse habitat.

The BLM should in no way consider using aspects of the Garfield County plan. This plan, constructed, in part, by hired 'biologists', flies in the face of good wildlife science. It consists of a pattern of land fragments that have little connectivity and severely restrict sage grouse habitat. It is clear to us, as biologists, that **no species can survive such habitat fragmentation. Garfield County's plan is clearly designed to benefit the extractive industries and not the greater sage grouse!**

We therefore urge the BLM and the Forest Service to **adopt a more protective plan that incorporates elements of Alternatives B and C**—i.e. focusing on the Priority Habitat areas outlined under Alternative B, while including certain aspects of Alternative C that protect Primary General Habitat and provide Linkage/Connectivity Habitat. We further urge that the final plan i) restrict oil and gas drilling, roads, transmission lines, wind turbines, and grazing in priority sage grouse habitat, ii) protect sage grouse migration corridors, and iii) reclaim damaged sage grouse habitat.

By adopting adequate habitat protection for greater sage grouse survival, you will also ensure protection of valuable big game habitat as well. This is essential for furthering BLM's multi-use concept and promoting Colorado's multi-million dollar outdoor-recreational economy.

Sincerely,

Robert Millette and Margaret Pedersen
0116 Deer Park Ct.
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

Erin Jones

From: Rebecca Frank
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 6:35 PM
To: blm_co_nw_sage_grouse@blm.gov
Subject: Comments

As someone who has spent a number of years involved with Gunnison and Greater sage grouse, I'm hopeful the BLM will look at all the work individual states and individual counties in those states have done. If ever there was a "one size" does not fit "all" this is it! Much work and planning has been done in Western states both with wildlife agencies and/or private landowners.

Please, through BLMs planning process, take into account ALL that has been done on the ground for "mother" grouse! In Colorado, we (state wildlife agency and Great Outdoors Colorado) have spent much time and many dollars to protect both Gunnison and Greater sage grouse.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Rebecca Frank

Former member Colorado Wildlife Commission (13 years) and founding member of Great Outdoors Colorado

Sent from my iPad