C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

July 13, 2012

Brian Kelly, State Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Idaho State Office
1387 South Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709-1657

RE: Governor's Draft Alternative for Sage-Grouse Management

Dear Brian,

I appreciate your attendance and participation on my annual trail ride to discuss the State of Idaho's effort to conserve the sage-grouse and its habitat while maintaining predictable levels of land use across all ownerships. As I stated during our discussion, Idaho's sage-grouse plan must work for the State and preclude the need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We can only achieve this meaningful objective and solve this complex natural resource issue if the State, federal government and other important stakeholders truly view this as an opportunity to form a partnership. I believe this was Secretary Salazar's intent when he invited the affected states to craft state-specific plans for the species.

To this end, and as you are fully aware, my Sage-Grouse Task Force (Task Force) was assigned to provide recommendations and policies to serve as a foundation for a successful management strategy. I'm confident you would agree the Task Force made significant inroads in developing such a strategy within a very aggressive timeframe. Based largely on these recommendations, I recently released a draft plan for the species and requested public input.

I believe the draft plan provides a solid framework and moves us one step closer to completing this difficult and important task. Recognizing that further detail and refinement need to take place based on continued stakeholder input, I request feedback on the following questions:

- Whether the management framework – based on a thematic habitat continuum and population metrics – outlined in my Draft Alternative represents a sound policy that should move forward; and

- Whether or not the habitat zones, especially the Core Habitat Zone and Important Habitat Zone, are consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's understanding of the most important sage-grouse habitats in the State.

I look forward to continuing our dialogue and discussion of this important issue. It is essential that we keep the lines of communication open to ensure we achieve our mutual objectives.

As Always—Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

Cc: Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Director (V. Moore)
Governor's Office of Species Conservation, Acting Administrator (D. Miller)
BLM, State Director (S. Ellis)
U.S. Forest Service, Regional Forester (H. Forsgren)
Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force