C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR

August 17, 2012

Steve Ellis, State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Idaho State Office
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709-1657

Dear Steve,

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 goal 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.

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 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. As the State continues working with stakeholders to refine my proposal, I request feedback on the following questions prior to submitting a revised version of the State's Alternative:

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

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- Whether my Draft Alternative is consistent with the agency's multiple-use mandate as well as the National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy.

It is essential that I receive answers to these questions to ensure all stakeholders are striving to achieve the mutual objectives outlined by the Secretary and my Executive Order (2012-02). One near-term objective, as noted in my Executive Order, is to have the "opportunity to be exempted from the applicability of these Instruction Memoranda guiding interim management of public lands within Idaho." This aim was recently affirmed in a Nevada BLM Instruction Memo (NV 2012-058) stating, "Nevada BLM may adopt the Governor's strategy through a subsequent Instruction Memorandum and upon concurrence by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service…."

As you are aware, I sent a similar letter to Brian Kelly, state director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), requesting his agency's perspective on my draft plan. As the agency charged with implementing the ESA, the Service opined:

> The Service believes the management framework that you have developed provides a sound policy outline from which to build upon to meet the long-term conservation goals of greater sage-grouse in Idaho. The thematic approach based on conservation objectives that are monitored in an adaptive construct that your framework incorporates, are fundamental attributes of the *Service's own approach to strategic conservation* (USFWS and USGS 2006).

(emphasis added).

Thus, from your answers to these two questions the State can discern whether the agencies are moving in the same direction with regard to my plan, ultimately affording Idaho the opportunity for a state-specific Instruction Memorandum. Thank you for your consideration and support on this issue.

As Always—Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

Cc: U.S. Secretary of the Interior, The Honorable Ken Salazar
Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks (M. Bean)
Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Director (V. Moore)
Governor's Office of Species Conservation, Administrator (D. Miller)
USFWS, State Director (B. Kelly)
U.S. Forest Service, Regional Forester (H. Forsgren)
Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force