From: Leith Edgar
To: Noreen Walsh
Subject: RE: Media Inquiry: Montana sage grouse plan
Date: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 12:45:39 PM

Great, he's standing by & will appreciate you making his deadline.

Leith

From: Noreen Walsh [mailto:noreen_walsh@fws.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 12:43 PM
To: Leith Edgar
Cc: Marla Trollan; John Bryan
Subject: Re: Media Inquiry: Montana sage grouse plan

I will call ASAP

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 9, 2014, at 12:03 PM, Leith Edgar <leith_edgar@fws.gov> wrote:

> Noreen,
>
> Please give Scott Streater (EE News) a call at 719-264-0923 (p) as your schedule permits. His questions are also in his first email.
>
> I have not heard anything from Matt Brown yet via email or phone.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Leith
>
> ---
>
> **From:** Scott Streater [mailto:sstreater@eenews.net]
> **Sent:** Tuesday, September 09, 2014 12:00 PM
> **To:** Leith Edgar
> **Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry: Montana sage grouse plan
>
> Leith,
>
> Thanks, that's fine. My deadline to file is 1:15 p.m., MST. I won't take up much of her time. Thanks again.
>
> And yes, that's the best number. I'm here in the Springs.
>
> ---
>
> **From:** Leith Edgar [leith_edgar@fws.gov]
> **Sent:** Tuesday, September 09, 2014 11:48 AM
> **To:** Scott Streater
> **Subject:** RE: Media Inquiry: Montana sage grouse plan
>
> Scott,

Our spokesperson for this topic is our regional director, Noreen Walsh, who would like to contact you to talk about this directly. Could she please give you a ring during one of her breaks, hopefully within the next two hours? If so, is 719/264-0923 the best number at which you can be reached?

My apologies for the confusion with my email address.

Thanks,

Leith

Leith Edgar
Public Affairs Specialist
Mountain-Prairie Region
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
(303) 236-4588 – O; (303) 895-9143 – C
leith_edgar@fws.gov

From: Scott Streater [mailto:sstreater@eenews.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 11:41 AM
To: leith_edgar@fws.gov
Subject: Media Inquiry: Montana sage grouse plan

Leith,

This is the third time I've tried to send this email to you. I sent this email to Theo, who is apparently out of the office today and gives the wrong email address for you.

I need to see if the service has any comment about this Montana state greater sage grouse plan (posted below my contact). I also wanted to make sure that FWS must approve the state plan? And if it is approved, might it be the strategy to protect the grouse in that state, superseding any federal plan if the species is listed? I forgot how that works.

Have any other state plans been approved by FWS? And how many have been submitted to the service?

I need to file a story in about two hours. If you could respond quickly, I would really appreciate it.

Thanks as always for your help!

Scott Streater
Reporter
Colorado Springs, Colo.
sstreater@eenews.net
719-264-0923 (p)

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From: Aaron Wells [aaron@smoottewes.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 11:01 AM
Subject: ICYMI: Governor Bullock Signs Executive Order Establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Good Morning,

ICYMI, **Governor Bullock signed an executive order this morning establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program**. The order follows two years of work creating a plan with a broad based and diverse group of stakeholders that included hunters, conservationists, livestock producers and energy interests. The full text of the order is available here. The press release from Governor Bullock's office is available here and pasted below, along with stories from the Associated Press and Montana's KXLH.

Please reach out for background and on-the-record comments from subject matter experts and influencers, including spokespeople from the Audubon Society and the Montana Wildlife Federation.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE September 9, 2014
CONTACTS:
Dave Parker, Communications Director, 406.444.9844
Mike Wessler, Deputy Communications Director, 406.444.9725

Governor Bullock Signs Executive Order Establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Helena, Mont. – Today, Governor Steve Bullock was joined by representatives from natural resource industries, ranchers, wind power advocates, sportsmen, and conservationists, as he signed an executive order establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program. The Program, which was developed from the ground up, and has broad support from a diverse group of interests, seeks to maintain state management of the Sage Grouse by protecting its habitat, while respecting the private property rights of Montanans.
"Montanans recognize that it is in the best interest of our state, its economy, and our quality of life, to maintain state management of the Greater Sage-grouse," Bullock said of the executive order. "Through a public process, and the work of a diverse group of stakeholders, we've developed a dynamic, and science-based approach to ensure this bird remains under state management, and is not listed under the Endangered Species Act."
Once established, the Program will work to implement the requirements laid out in the executive order, including a review process for actions that might impact the

bird or its habitat, including industry-specific measures. In addition, the order addresses, among other topics:

· Adopts a comprehensive Program for keeping sage grouse management in the states hands;

· Recognizes the important role that Montana's private landowners play in sage grouse conservation and the need for voluntary incentives to help those landowners to stay on the land and preserve vital sage grouse habitat;

· Creates the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program and the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team, attached to the Governor's Office, to maintain state leadership, administer the program based on sound science, and continue to bring Montanans together to move sage grouse management forward;

· Strikes the appropriate balance to preserve the sage grouse and its habitat and protect valid rights and existing land uses and activities; and

· Ensures that Montana and Montanans will continue to manage this iconic species for the benefit of future generations – and continue to economically prosper from the industries that have existed in sage grouse country.

In addition, the executive order makes it clear that existing land uses and activites are not subject to the order, some uses and landowner activities are exempt from compliance with the strategy, including county road maintenance, and production and maintenance activities associated with existing oil, gas, communication tower, and power line facilities.

"We appreciate the efforts and leadership from Governor Bullock to ensure that management of the sage grouse remains in state hands," said Dave Galt, Executive Director of the Montana Petroleum Association. "By working together, we'll ensure that we can protect not only this bird, but also economic opportunity and quality of life for all Montanans."

"Continued state management of the sage grouse is important for all Montanans, especially for cattle ranchers," Errol Rice, Executive Vice President of the Montana Stockgrowers Association said.

"With an eye towards solutions, stakeholders with diverse viewpoints have come together to find science-based ways to ensure that we are protecting this bird, while respecting the needs of Montana ranching families."

"We applaud the Governor's willingness to step up to the plate to launch this important conservation program. Science shows that business-as-usual will have devastating effects on sage-grouse over the long-term. We all need to follow the emerging science and work closely together to conserve this iconic species. And what's good for sage-grouse and sagebrush is good for a whole host of at-risk wildlife species—making this an important conservation program for the state of Montana and our wildlife," said Janet Ellis, Program Director for Montana Audubon.

"We all have a role to play in ensuring the state retains management of the sage grouse for the benefit out our state's economy and quality of life," Glenn Marx, Executive Director of the Montana Association of Land Trusts said. "Through incentive-based conservation projects and actions, this plan recognizes that private land owners will play an important part in our success going forward."

The Program will be administratively attached the to the Governor's Office. When

fully implemented, the Program will have up to six full-time staff. The Governor's upcoming budget will include funding for the program, however until that budget is approved, the Governor intends to work with stakeholders to raise private funds help the Program get off the ground.

In addition, the Governor indicated that his upcoming executive budget will include a proposal for a Sage Grouse Stewardship and Conservation Fund, designed to, among other objectives, promote and fund voluntary incentive-based non-regulatory programs and practices on private land to conserve sage grouse habitat (if approved by the Legislature).

The executive order was based off of recommendations of the Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council, which Bullock established in 2013. The Advisory Council gathered information, and brought stakeholders and experts together in a public process to recommend conservation measures to address the primary and secondary threats to the Greater sage-grouse in Montana. These recommendations were presented to Bullock in January 2014.

The executive order is available online at:

http://governor.mt.gov/Portals/16/docs/2014EOs/EO_10_2014_SageGrouse.pdf

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Bullock signs order establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

8 minutes 2 seconds ago by **MTN News - Helena**

HELENA --Governor Steve Bullock (D) signed an executive order on Tuesday establishing the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.

The program aims to maintain state management of the sage grouse by protecting its habitat, while respecting the private property rights of Montanans, according to a press release from Bullock.

"Montanans recognize that it is in the best interest of our state, its economy, and our quality of life, to maintain state management of the Greater Sage-grouse," Bullock said of the executive order. "Through a public process, and the work of a diverse group of stakeholders, we've developed a dynamic, and science-based approach to ensure this bird remains under state management, and is not listed under the Endangered Species Act."

The program will implement the requirements laid out in the executive order, including a review process for actions that might impact the bird or its habitat,

including industry-specific measures. In addition, the order addresses, among other topics:

· Adopts a comprehensive Program for keeping sage grouse management in the states hands;

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· Creates the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program and the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team, attached to the Governor's Office, to maintain state leadership, administer the program based on sound science, and continue to bring Montanans together to move sage grouse management forward;

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The executive order states that existing land uses and activites are not subject to the order, and that some uses and landowner activities are exempt from compliance with the strategy, including county road maintenance, and production and maintenance activities associated with existing oil, gas, communication tower, and power line facilities.

Dave Galt of the Montana Petroleum Association said, "We appreciate the efforts and leadership from Governor Bullock to ensure that management of the sage grouse remains in state hands. By working together, we'll ensure that we can protect not only this bird, but also economic opportunity and quality of life for all Montanans."

When fully implemented, the program will have up to six full-time staff members, and the governor's upcoming budget will include funding for the program, but until that budget is approved, Bullock plans to work with stakeholders to raise private funds help the program get off the ground.

Montana offers sage grouse plan as deadline looms

By Matthew Brown, Associated Press September 9th, 2014 @ 9:32am

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Gov. Steve Bullock has ordered restrictions on future oil drilling and other activities blamed for driving down sage grouse populations, as Montana joins other Western states rushing to head off federal intervention with the birds.

Tuesday's order establishes no-occupancy zones to protect the birds that extend six-tenths of a mile around active sage grouse breeding grounds. That's smaller than the one-mile radius recommended by an advisory council in January.

Sage grouse are found in 11 Western states. They've lost more than half their historic habitat to agriculture, energy exploration and other types of development.

A settlement in a lawsuit with environmentalists gives the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service until September 2015 to make an initial determination on whether federal protections also are needed.

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