From:	Matt Hogan
To:	Noreen_Walsh@fws.gov
Subject:	Re: From E&ENews PM -- ENDANGERED SPECIES: Prairie chicken conservation plan due in early 2013
Date:	Friday, January 04, 2013 9:08:59 PM

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From: noreen_walsh@fws.gov [mailto:noreen_walsh@fws.gov]
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2013 09:07 PM
To: matt_hogan@fws.gov <matt_hogan@fws.gov>
Subject: From E&ENews PM -- ENDANGERED SPECIES: Prairie chicken conservation plan due in early 2013

This E&ENews PM story was sent to you by: noreen_walsh@fws.gov

Personal message:

E&ENews PM

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ENDANGERED SPECIES: Prairie chicken conservation plan due in early 2013 *(Friday, January 4, 2013)*

Phil Taylor, E&E reporter

Governors from the southern Great Plains said they will soon release a five-state strategy to protect the lesser prairie chicken, a grayish-brown grouse that federal officials have proposed for Endangered Species Act protections.

The rangewide conservation strategy being developed by wildlife officials in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas should be available in the first quarter of 2013, governors of those states said yesterday.

The strategy, which stems in part from the states' efforts to map the bird's crucial habitat, is part of a broader partnership among states, landowners and energy developers that aims to prevent the bird from becoming listed, they said.

"We strongly believe that the collective efforts of our states, along with the commitments from industry and private landowners throughout the Southern Great Plains, to conserve the lesser prairie chicken will demonstrate the states' ability to effectively manage the species and support a 'not warranted' listing decision by the [Fish and Wildlife] Service in September 2013," the governors said in a joint statement released by the Western Governors' Association.

They included Govs. John Hickenlooper (D) of Colorado, Sam Brownback (R) of Kansas, Susana Martinez (R) of New Mexico, Mary Fallin (R) of Oklahoma and Rick Perry (R) of

Texas.

The governors said they were disappointed with FWS's decision in November to propose listing the bird as threatened -- a move many fear could slow the development of oil and gas, wind farms, and transmission lines in the energy-rich states -- but were encouraged that it was not proposed as endangered, a sign the agency has taken note of their conservation efforts.

The rangewide conservation plan is being led by a working group under the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, which is holding its winter meeting now in Tucson, Ariz.

The plan is designed to address the bird's habitat needs and research gaps; actions that would maintain or restore quality habitat; habitat improvement and conservation goals; ways to balance conservation with economic activity; and coordinated management strategies that will make conservation affordable for landowners.

The prairie chicken, known for its bright orange eye bands and intricate mating dance, is threatened by the widespread conversion of rangeland to crops as well as new wind farms, transmission towers, drilling pads, grazing and fences, according to FWS scientists (*Greenwire*, Nov. 30, 2012). About 90 percent of its historic range is no longer suitable.

The agency has until September to render a final decision on whether to list the bird.

Stakeholders are hopeful that the bird could follow the path of the dunes sagebrush lizard, which narrowly averted an endangered listing last June after scores of federal, state and private landowners agreed to voluntarily conserve and enhance its shinnery oak dune habitat.

Federal agencies and conservation groups in December announced creation of the first-ever "stronghold" for the bird in New Mexico, one of four such strongholds FWS believes will be needed to avert a listing (*Greenwire*, Dec. 7, 2012).

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