From: Skora, Genevieve
To: Davis, Dawn
Subject: Re: FW: Article of Interest: ENDANGERED SPECIES: Mining group faults "horribly flawed" federal restoration of grouse habitat
Date: Thursday, March 19, 2015 2:11:22 PM

Thanks for forwarding, I'll check it out.

- Gen

On Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 1:53 PM, Davis, Dawn <dawn_davis@fws.gov> wrote:

> FYI - in case you have not seen. I haven't had an opportunity to read but it may have implications for the fire chapter.
>
> ---------- Forwarded message ----------
> From: **Chambers, Jeanne -FS** <jchambers@fs.fed.us>
> Date: Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 1:14 PM
> Subject: FW: Article of Interest: ENDANGERED SPECIES: Mining group faults 'horribly flawed' federal restoration of grouse habitat
> To: Tom Christiansen <tom.christiansen@wyo.gov>, Dawn M Davis <dawn_davis@fws.gov>, Brian Mealor <bamealor@uwyo.edu>, Chad Boyd <chad.boyd@oregonstate.edu>, "david_a_pyke@usgs.gov" <david_a_pyke@usgs.gov>, Doug Havlina <dhavlina@blm.gov>, Don Kemner <don.kemner@idfg.idaho.gov>, "jasonvernon@utah.gov" <jasonvernon@utah.gov>, "Chambers, Jeanne -FS" <jchambers@fs.fed.us>, "Maestas, Jeremy - NRCS, Redmond, OR" <Jeremy.Maestas@or.usda.gov>, "Kurth, Laurie -FS" <lkurth@fs.fed.us>, "Ielmini, Michael -FS" <mielmini@fs.fed.us>, "Tague, Melvin (Joe)" <jtague@blm.gov>, Steve Lewis <lewiss@unce.unr.edu>, lara Niell <lniell@sagebrusheco.nv.gov>, "Hopkins, Todd" <todd_hopkins@fws.gov>, "Shawn P. Espinosa" <sespinosa@ndow.org>, "mpellant@blm.gov" <mpellant@blm.gov>, Pete Anderson <pete@basin-range.com>, "Mike_Pellant@blm.gov" <Mike_Pellant@blm.gov>
>
> FYI
>
> **From:** Tomosy, Monica S -FS
> **Sent:** Wednesday, March 18, 2015 7:15 AM
> **To:** Finch, Deborah M -FS
> **Subject:** Fw: Article of Interest: ENDANGERED SPECIES: Mining group faults 'horribly flawed' federal restoration of grouse habitat
>
> ---
>
> **From**: Wiley, Christine [mailto:christine_wiley@ios.doi.gov]
> **Sent**: Wednesday, March 18, 2015 09:03 AM
> **To**: christine_wiley@ios.doi.gov; Edwin Roberson <eroberso@blm.gov>; Helen Riggs

<helen.riggs@bia.gov>; Jacquelynn Hanley (Kallie) <Kallie.Hanley@bia.gov>; James Douglas <James_Douglas@ios.doi.gov>; James Lyons <james_lyons@ios.doi.gov>; Jerold Gidner <jerold_gidner@ios.doi.gov>; Jolie Pollet <jpollet@blm.gov>; Kimberly A Thorsen <Kim_Thorsen@ios.doi.gov>; Kinsinger Anne <akinsinger@usgs.gov>; Lauren Bogard <Lauren_Bogard@ios.doi.gov>; Lawrence Roberts <lawrence_roberts@ios.doi.gov>; Lori Caramanian <lori_caramanian@ios.doi.gov>; Michael Black <mike.black@bia.gov>; Rodina Cave <rodina_cave@ios.doi.gov>; Ronald Dunton <rdunton@blm.gov>; Sarah Greenberger <sarah.greenberger@sol.doi.gov>; Sarah Peterson <sarah_e_peterson@ios.doi.gov>; Stephen Small <ssmall@blm.gov>; Theresa Rabot <theresa_rabot@fws.gov>; William Kaage <William_Kaage@nps.gov>; Aaron Baldwin <aaron.baldwin@bia.gov>; Boozer, Astor - NRCS, Washington, DC; Carol Schuler <cschuler@usgs.gov>; Madrid, Colleen -FS; Flynn, Danielle - NRCS, Washington, DC; David Repass <drepass@blm.gov>; Dawn Davis <dawn_davis@fws.gov>; Hall, Galon - NRCS, Washington, DC; Hilary Smith <hilary_smith@ios.doi.gov>; Jeff_Rupert@fws.gov; Maestas, Jeremy - NRCS, Redmond, OR; Jerry Cordova <jjcordov@blm.gov>; Joe N Freeland <jfreeland@blm.gov>; Burns, Joseph A -FS; Karen Prentice <kprentic@blm.gov>; Kurth, Laurie -FS; Melvin (Joe) Tague <jtague@blm.gov>; Tomosy, Monica S -FS; Myron.Hotinger@bia.gov; Patricia Blankenship <patricia.blankenship@fema.dhs.gov>; Rex McKnight <rmcknigh@blm.gov>; Shelley Smith <ssmith@blm.gov>; sue_phillips@usgs.gov; Tomer Hasson <tomer_hasson@ios.doi.gov>; Vicki Herren <vherren@blm.gov>; Emily Beyer <emily_beyer@ios.doi.gov>; Blake Androff <blake_androff@ios.doi.gov>; Katherine Kelly <kate_kelly@ios.doi.gov>

Subject: Article of Interest: ENDANGERED SPECIES: Mining group faults 'horribly flawed' federal restoration of grouse habitat

Sharing . . .

Christie S. Wiley

Communication Program Lead

Office of Wildland Fire

U. S. Department of the Interior

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Personal message: Good afternoon, this article is another example of our challenges.

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ENDANGERED SPECIES:

Mining group faults 'horribly flawed' federal restoration of grouse habitat

Scott Streater, E&E reporter

Published: Tuesday, March 17, 2015

A national mining group is blasting federal efforts to protect and restore sagebrush ecosystems that are critical to the survival of the greater sage grouse and other species in the Great Basin from threats posed by wildfires and invasive plant species.

The American Exploration & Mining Association (AEMA) today released a **report** conducted on its behalf by a consulting biologist that analyzed efforts by the Interior Department to protect low-elevation sagebrush from rangeland fires and invasive species, and to restore these areas after wildfires have scorched them.

Rangeland wildfires and invasive plant species like cheatgrass destroy sagebrush steppe and are considered two of the major threats to the survival of the greater sage grouse, which the Fish and Wildlife Service is currently evaluating for possible protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The 18-page "white paper" authored for AEMA by Megan Maxwell, a Broomfield, Colo.-based consulting biologist, is very critical of the federal restoration and protection efforts, mainly the Bureau of Land Management's Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Program, which the report calls "horribly flawed."

Among other things, the report says that policies for restoring sagebrush scorched by fires at low elevations are inadequate, requiring more time and more active restoration techniques than at higher elevations. For example, a "three-year, post-burn funding limit" in the BLM rehabilitation program "creates an unrealistic deadline for achieving successful restoration of low-elevation sagebrush sites, which take longer than three years."

The report calls this a "built-in bias" against funding restoration work in low-elevation areas.

"This study makes it clear that current DOI policies are at the heart of the problem because they guarantee restoration efforts in low-elevation sagebrush areas will fail due to improper management and inadequate funding," Laura Skaer, AEMA's executive director, said in a statement.

Skaer added, "The primary threats to sage grouse have been identified as invasive plants, change in fire regime and inadequate regulatory mechanisms. The ES&R Program is the primary mechanism for rehabilitating and restoring degraded sites. However, as Ms. Maxwell found, that program is horribly flawed."

The report, however, concluded that a **secretarial order** issued in January by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, which calls for a more unified and sophisticated approach to

preventing and suppressing rangeland fires and for restoring landscapes that do burn, "could provide a mechanism for revising the ES&R Program" to be more effective.

But the report says there will not be enough time to revise the BLM restoration program and collect "on-the-ground data" to demonstrate whether Secretarial Order 3336 is effective and working before FWS must decide by Sept. 30 whether to propose listing the greater sage grouse for ESA protection.

The Fish and Wildlife Service "cannot base its 2015 determination purely on prospective measures designed to ameliorate threats. As a result, the ES&R Program will be evaluated based on existing data," which are inadequate, according to the report.

The report, echoing other industry groups and Republican leaders in Congress, criticizes the "arbitrary" Sept. 30 deadline to propose a sage grouse listing that FWS agreed to in a 2011 legal settlement with environmental groups.

The AEMA is part of a coalition of mining and ranching groups and Nevada counties that last year filed a federal lawsuit challenging the 2011 legal settlements (***Greenwire***, Dec. 5, 2014).

Emily Beyer, an Interior spokeswoman, said that because of the pending litigation with AEMA and others over the legal settlements, the department cannot comment on the mining association's latest report.

GOP leaders in Congress last year successfully attached a legislative rider to the $1.1 trillion fiscal 2015 spending bill that includes language forbidding Fish and Wildlife from using money to "write or issue" listing rules for the greater sage grouse and three other grouse species.

Jewell has said the rider won't prevent the service from proposing whether to list the bird for federal protection by the deadline, noting that the spending bill with the rider also provides $15 million to BLM for greater sage grouse conservation efforts.

But the white paper for the AEMA suggests more time is needed before a final decision on the status of the grouse is made, in part so that federal or state departments and agencies have time to revise flawed programs, such as the ES&R Program.

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