From:	Alt, Nicole
To:	Kate Norman
Cc:	Matt Kales; Michael Thabault; Drue DeBerry
Subject:	Fwd: QFRs from the Director"s Budget Hearing
Date:	Monday, March 30, 2015 10:49:51 AM
Attachments:	Calvert Q15 Simpson Q1-6 Amodei Q1-16 Sage Grouse w ES Assignments to HQ and RO.docx

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Kate can you lead pulling the responses together? Many of these questions were answered for the Secretary's QFRs. These should be on sharepoint and I can send you the most recent versions from DOI. Keep it simple and responsive. Use the 2010 finding and the COT for science questions. Feel free to task Drue, Craig and Angela if you need help. Thanks. I'll let you know if the due date changes.

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **NimsElliott, Robin** <robin_nimselliott@fws.gov>
Date: Mon, Mar 30, 2015 at 9:25 AM
Subject: QFRs from the Director's Budget Hearing
To: Michael Thabault <michael_thabault@fws.gov>, Nicole Alt <Nicole_Alt@fws.gov>, Matt Kales <matt_kales@fws.gov>
Cc: Martha BalisLarsen <martha_balislarsen@fws.gov>, Jeanette Green <jeanette_green@fws.gov>

Good Morning -

We have received a series of QFRs from Dan's hearing before the Appropriations committee. The Division of Budget has requested our cleared responses by this Wednesday, however I am seeking an extension until Friday.

Attached are the questions for your Region. Please review and prepared your draft responses and provide as soon as possible. I spoke with Katy Hopper about the extension and she said the Budget Office is negotiating a deadline with the Department - will keep you posted on the extension request.

Thanks in advance,

Robin

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We've moved! As of 7/28/2014 our new address is:

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS
MS: ES
5275 LEESBURG PIKE
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041-3803

"We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." - Mother Teresa

ESA: Sage-Grouse

Calvert Q15: Please provide the legal argument and the exact language of the 2011 court settlement agreements that led the Service to conclude that, notwithstanding the general provision in the fiscal year 2015 appropriation, the Service is mandated to announce a determination by September 30, 2015.

Comment [RNE1]: Assigned to HQ (Krofta/Speights for response)

Questions from Mr. Simpson

Sage-Grouse

Simpson Q1: In terms of differences between State sage-grouse plans, Secretary Jewell told this subcommittee that if a sage-grouse listing happens, it would be a one-fall, all-fall scenario in terms of State to State differences. Do you agree, or is there still some wiggle room for States with sage-grouse plans that the Service agrees with?

Simpson Q2: It is my understanding that Idaho has a good plan that has been commended by both BLM and your agency. Have you been communicating with BLM about the Idaho plan, and what you would like to see to avoid a listing?

Comment [RNE2]: Assigned to Region 1 for response.

Simpson Q3: It is my understanding that the sage-grouse determination will still be made - regardless of the FY15 language included in the so called "cromnibus" - and the rule cannot be written with the FY 15 language in place. Will the listing determination have any impact without the existence of a written rule?

Simpson Q4: If so, what are the impacts of a determination without a rule that lists the species?

Comment [RNE3]: Assigned to HQ (Krofta/Speights for response)

Simpson Q5: In the overall picture, what exactly has to happen at this point for you to decide that sage-grouse does NOT warrant a listing later this year? There are lots of players and lots of plans in the process. What needs to be done to prevent a listing?

Simpson Q6: Secretary Salazar once told this committee that he was the defendant in 3,000 lawsuits. Clearly either way the sage-grouse decision is decided, there will be lawsuits. Can you explain the steps USFWS is taking to prepare for this?

Questions from Mr. Amodei

Greater Sage-Grouse

Last year, the Secretary of Interior announced Secretarial Order 3336 to protect the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin area from wildland fire and invasive species. The Department also plans to implement a National Seed Strategy and Implementation Plan to

address invasive species, altered wildfire regimes, habitat fragmentation and ecological restoration in the West. Additionally, the Department of Agriculture recently announced a commitment to provide an additional $207 million to greater sage-grouse conservation bringing their total commitment under the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage-Grouse Initiative to $763 million.

Amodei Q1: Does the Service consider these combined efforts to be an unprecedented commitment by the Department of Interior towards protecting and conserving the Sage hen and its sagebrush steppe ecosystem?

Included in Secretarial Order 3336, the Task Force is required to "provide the Secretary two reports that outline actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2015 Western fire season, actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2016 Western fire season, and actions that will require a longer period for implementation." Such actions include "establishing protocols for monitoring the effectiveness of fuels management, post-fire, and long-term restoration treatments and a strategy for adaptive management to modify management practices or improve land treatments when necessary."

Amodei Q2: Is Service concerned about issuing a listing determination for the Sage hen before monitoring of the effectiveness of the fuels management and habitat restoration policies outlined in the Secretarial Order are conducted?

Amodei Q3: Would the Service prefer more time to monitor the results and effectiveness of these unprecedented rangeland management efforts and policies before issuing a listing determination?

Amodei Q4: To what extent will implementation of S.O. 3336 factor into the Fish and Wildlife Service's Sage hen listing determination?

Amodei Q5: Is the Service concerned that if the Sage hen is listed, voluntary conservation efforts and financial commitments—from state and private landowners—to protect the species will decline?

Amodei Q6: If the Sage hen listing determination will occur on or before September 30, 2015, why is the Service requesting $5 million for 20 new full-time employees for conservation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem for FY2016?

Amodei Q7: How does the Service's FY16 budget request address the reality that wildfires on the sagebrush-steppe lead to invasive species such as cheatgrass, and cheatgrass is one of the primary threats to sage hen habitat? (See USGS map of wildfire, cheatgrass and pinyon-juniper).

Grazing & Wild Horses

Included in the Department's FY2016 budget request is $8 million for a proposed Grazing Administration Management fee program. Of the estimated $16.5 million the BLM would collect in 2016 from this program, about half, or $8 million, would support a new permit processing and monitoring of livestock use in sage-grouse habitat. The increase in monitoring effort is expected to occur in the allotments currently monitored, which means there will be an increased number of compliance visits to each allotment.

Amodei Q8: What percentage of Sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem is cattle grazing responsible for?

Amodei Q9: How many acres in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem do wild horses and burros occupy?

Amodei Q10: What percentage of Sage hen habitat fragmentation in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem are wild horses and burros responsible for?

Rangeland Management

Under the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI), more than 3.8 million acres of sage-grouse habitat across the 11-state range have been conserved. Additionally, with NRCS's continued funding commitment of $207 million through 2018, the Department of Agriculture is projecting another 4 million acres will be conserved for the benefit of the sage-grouse bringing the NRCS' total commitment since 2010 to $763 million. Furthermore, your testimony points out the Service's need for a $4 million increase in 2016 to "achieve sustainable conservation success for the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem."

Amodei Q11: How much of the $4 million increase would be spent on the ground protecting and conserving the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem?

Listing Decision

Amodei Q12: Does the Service believe a "determination" (not a rule) of whether or not to list the Sage hen would be legally binding?

Amodei Q13: Does the Service believe it is precluded from issuing a finding that the Sage hen is *not* warranted for listing?

Amodei Q14: Will the Service take public comment on its "determination"?

Comment [RNE4]: Assigned to HQ (Krofta/Speights) for response

Honoring Secretary Salazar's Commitment to Work with the States

To honor this invitation, the State Plans need more time to be implemented and to document their effectiveness in protecting sage-grouse and its habitat. That is the only way to make sense of Secretary Salazar's invitation.

Amodei Q15: How does the Service intend to honor the invitation that then Secretary Ken Salazar issued in 2011 to the Western Governors inviting them to develop state-led sage-grouse conservation plans for the purpose of avoiding/minimizing the need to list the bird?

Amodei Q16: Why isn't the Service seeking more time by asking the judge in the settlement case to provide several more years for the State Plans to be implemented? Without this request, Secretary Salazar's invitation seems to be a hallow gesture and the states have spent millions in state taxpayers' dollars to develop plans that are rendered meaningless because of the arbitrary decision deadline in the settlement. The States' incurred this expense in response to and in reliance upon Secretary Salazar's invitation.