From: Noreen Walsh
To: Matt Kales; Theodore Stein
Subject: take a look, final question still remaining
Date: Tuesday, March 31, 2015 7:51:27 AM

- How fair is it for westerners to regard GSG habitat under a GSG listing as somehow "locked up" precluding future energy, housing or commercial development?

- Greater sage-grouse require large landscapes to thrive and they are somewhat sensitive to loss and fragmentation of their habitat. Thus, while greater sage-grouse habitat will not be "locked up," a key component of a conservation strategy (whether the species is listed or not) is to site development away from the priority areas for conservation of the species. With careful planning and ever improving technology like directional drilling, energy and other development can be focused in areas less harmful to the species.

- This type of siting consideration is very important for grouse conservation on federal, state and private lands.

- The Service has been a committed partner in both the federal and state sage-grouse conservation planning efforts, providing real-time technical advice and promoting effective, certain measures aimed at conserving the species. Now is the time for all states, including Colorado, to enact meaningful protections on non-federal lands so that the bird and its habitat is secure, and hopefully an ESA listing would not be necessary.

- We've also been working closely with many private land partners, because sustainable and well managed grazing on private ranches can form a critical component of the habitat needed for sage-grouse to thrive. We would be happy to provide more details on these private land agreements (Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances) that provide landowners assurances that if they operate according to their agreement, and the species is later listed, no further restrictions or obligations would be required of them.

- If GSG protection begins after September 2015 under a listing, what will the protection consist of? If not certain, just give the range of regulations and consequences.

- Again, due to the 2015 Appropriations Law language, federal protection for the bird under the ESA would not be possible immediately after September 2015. Federal protection would not occur unless 1) we determine through our analysis that listing is still warranted and 2) the Appropriations Law language expires or is rescinded therefore allowing us to complete a federal rulemaking if warranted. Note however that the greater sage-grouse has already benefited from the significant conservation efforts that have been underway since the 2010 finding, due to efforts to revised federal land management plans (BLM and USFS) and due to development of some

state conservation plans and private lands efforts.

- What are the 3-5 best protective practices emerging as BLM hones land management plans for the eleven state region?

- A key component of these land management plans will be to carefully site any development or disturbance to avoid impacts to sage-grouse habitat in priority areas for conservation. This is a key recommendation of the State-FWS team that developed conservation objectives for the species in 2013. (The Conservation Objectives Team)
- This can be accomplished by prioritizing development outside of sage-grouse habitat, avoiding development in close proximity to leks (spring breeding grounds) and other crucial habitats, and fully mitigating for any disturbance that does occur.
- Also, a very important portion of BLM's land management plans is a commitment to robust monitoring plans tied to adaptive management strategies so managers can adjust actions based on species and habitat response to the plans.
- Lastly, BLM has been committed to identifying and implementing effective measures to combat invasive plant species and rangeland wildfire, both of which are a very significant threat in the Great Basin.

- Is FWS on course to announce a decision by September?

Yes, we are currently on course. Our objective is to work with partners to assist them in implementing conservation actions now that hopefully would make federal listing unnecessary.

Noreen Walsh
Regional Director
Mountain-Prairie Region
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
303 236 7920

From: Matt Kales [mailto:matt_kales@fws.gov]
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2015 8:58 PM
To: Theodore Stein; Noreen Walsh
Cc: Marla Trollan; Gavin Shire; Brian Hires; Nicole Alt; Michael Thabault
Subject: RE: GRSG Media Inquiry: Denver Post (2)

Here are some recommended revisions for your consideration. Happy to talk/write more on this. Thanks.

From: Stein, Theodore [mailto:theodore_stein@fws.gov]

Sent: Monday, March 30, 2015 5:53 PM
To: Noreen Walsh
Cc: Marla Trollan; Gavin Shire; Brian Hires
Subject: Re: GRSG Media Inquiry: Denver Post (2)

Noreen

Based on a call from Matt, I'm sharing proposed answers to Bruce's questions that I began drafting earlier this afternoon.
Concur w him that we answer the factual questions soon as we can to demonstrate responsiveness.

Theo

Theo Stein
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On Mon, Mar 30, 2015 at 5:05 PM, Noreen Walsh <noreen_walsh@fws.gov> wrote:

Let's discuss before any responses are provided to Bruce.

Noreen Walsh
Regional Director
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From: Stein, Theodore [mailto:theodore_stein@fws.gov]
Sent: Monday, March 30, 2015 4:56 PM
To: Marla Trollan; Noreen Walsh
Cc: Gavin Shire; Brian Hires
Subject: GRSG Media Inquiry: Denver Post (2)

Wanted to alter you to 2 independent queries received from The Denver Post.

1) Environment writer Bruce Finley submitted the list of questions below by email.

Some of Bruce's questions ask for responses that are predecisional.
Others are more straightforward.

2) Political reporter Mark Matthews in DC called with questions about SGI - and whether the

program really was as effective and successful as Chief Weller made it sound.

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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Bruce Finley** <bfinley@denverpost.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 30, 2015 at 4:10 PM
Subject: Re: questions for USFWS re Greater SG
To: "Stein, Theodore" <theodore_stein@fws.gov>

Sooner the better. These are what I would call starting point questions. I really do not want a bunch of crafted answers and references to links full of material from the web that I likely already have checked and other people. I just need to know this stuff - as if we were having a beer or a coffee together. You as the expert on this issue obviously know the answers as well as anybody and so I'm hoping you could just hit back a couple sentences on each. Time is shorter than ever in here and the best way to have influence is just to engage in the conversation without too much crafting...

On Mar 30, 2015, at 3:18 PM, Stein, Theodore <theodore_stein@fws.gov> wrote:

Hey Bruce
Good to hear from you

Some of these are going to take a little work to answer.
Some of them I may not be able to answer (for example, BLM plans have not been submitted)

What kind of a deadline were you looking at?

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On Mon, Mar 30, 2015 at 2:44 PM, Bruce Finley <bfinley@denverpost.com> wrote:

Theo - Here are a few questions on greater sage grouse - probably dumb and easy for you, but necessary for me quickly to get re-oriented. I just need the short, direct answers to these - please no links or lengthy material just the distilled, short answers.

- To what extent has Colorado's state-level work over the past 5 years been adequate to ensure long-term survival of greater sage grouse?

- If not adequate, what - in brief - does FWS want Colorado to do as a state (e.g. change of COGCC rules to require XXX, or mandate that county zoning require XXX, or grazing permits must require XXX) ?

- What is the total number of acres in the eleven states that would be involved if FWS this year takes action following its 2010 "warranted but precluded" decision? How many acres inside Colorado (looking at too many docs, it appears that Colorado has about 3.5 million acres of grouse habitat) ? We're talking about an overall area in the west that is roughly the size of.....Texas ??

- How fair is it for westerners to regard GSG habitat under a GSG listing as somehow "locked up" precluding future energy, housing or commercial development?

- What is the latest estimate of GSG population in Colorado? What are the numbers for each of the other ten states?

- If GSG protection begins after September 2015 under a listing, what will the protection consist of? If not certain, just give the range of regulations and consequences.

- What are the 3-5 best protective practices emerging as BLM hones land management plans for the eleven state region?

- FWS in 2010 decided listing for protection under ESA was waranted but precluded. Did that decision include some sort of out in writing that leaves open the possibility of a different decision by September 2015? I see language referring to FWS making a "final determination" on listing the GSG by September 2015 and am confused because I understood the warranted-but-precluded decision to be final. Was the 2010 decision somehow not final?

- Is FWS on course to announce a decision by September?

- Bruce