From:	Fierce, Sarah
To:	Thabault, Michael
Subject:	Re: Greater sage-grouse letter
Date:	Tuesday, November 27, 2012 3:36:37 PM
Attachments:	DRAFT cover letter_CNOR_4pm on 11_14_12.docx DRAFT sample email data call_4pm on 11_14_2012.doc 2012 DRAFT SG data request for CNOR 11_13_12 .docx

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Here they are.

Sarah Fierce
Listing Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
134 Union Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80228
303-236-4388
sarah_fierce@fws.gov

On Tue, Nov 27, 2012 at 3:32 PM, Thabault, Michael <michael_thabault@fws.gov> wrote:

> Can you resend me the two attachments? Sorry.
>
> Michael Thabault
> Assistant Regional Director
> Ecological Services
> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
> Mountain Prairie Region
> 303-236-4210
> michael_thabault@fws.gov
>
> On Tue, Nov 27, 2012 at 3:22 PM, Fierce, Sarah <sarah_fierce@fws.gov> wrote:
>
> > Hi Mike,
> >
> > Have you had a chance to follow up with Noreen about the CNOR information request letter for greater sage-grouse? I keep getting inquiries from the Field Office about this - they want to get the letter sent out asap so people have enough time to respond, and are wondering whether the RO has any further feedback before they send it.
> >
> > Thanks,
> >
> > Sarah Fierce
> > Listing Biologist
> > U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6
> > 134 Union Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80228
> > 303-236-4388
> > sarah_fierce@fws.gov

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009

Lyle Saigeon, Executive Director
Fish and Wildlife Branch
Saskatchewan Environment
3211 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada S4S 5W6

Dear Mr. Saigeon:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is initiating our annual review of the Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), which was designated as a candidate species in March 2010 under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). The Service reviews the status of candidate species annually to determine if any further listing action should be taken based on scientific data. Potential actions include one of the following: an immediate proposal to list; taking the species off the candidate list entirely (if it no longer warrants listing); no change in the species status (it remains a candidate with its current listing priority number); or the species remains a candidate but there is a change in the listing priority number.

As part of this annual review of the Greater sage-grouse, the Service is soliciting new information regarding changes in the status of the bird, its habitats, or scientific understanding of the species and its habitats, and any conservation efforts. The March 2010 finding for the Greater sage-grouse identified habitat loss and fragmentation and insufficient regulatory mechanisms as the primary factors for designating the species as warranted for listing. Therefore, our annual review will primarily focus on any changes in these two factors. However, since many other factors interact with habitat condition and regulatory mechanisms, as discussed in our 2010 status review of the species, we would appreciate receiving any new information regarding sage-grouse and sagebrush status.

Attached is a list of information/data we are collecting for this annual review. To the extent possible, please provide the requested information, including spatial data when appropriate and available. More details of the types of data requested are included in the attached sheet. We have not specified a format for receiving the information requested and leave that to your discretion. However, please do not send raw data unless specifically requested on the attached sheet. All information should be submitted to our office no later than **February 1, 2013**.

We appreciate your efforts in providing the Service the best scientific data regarding the Greater sage-grouse. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lynn Gemlo at 307-772-2374, ext. 228, or by e-mail at lynn_gemlo@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

R. Mark Sattelberg
Field Supervisor
Wyoming Field Office

Enclosure

Hi all-

Attached you will find the data call request for our annual Candidate Notice of Review (CNOR) of the Greater sage-grouse. All information should be submitted to our office no later than **February 1, 2013**. Remember, this review will occur every year while the Greater sage-grouse is on the candidate list. The purpose of the annual review is to determine if the status of the species and/or its habitat(s) have changed to the point that we need to change our determination on the species based on scientific data. Changes could include ONE of the following: an immediate proposal to list; taking the species off the candidate list entirely (if it no longer warrants listing); no change in the species status (it remains a candidate with its current listing priority number); or the species remains a candidate but there is a change in the listing priority number.

As part of this annual review, the Service is soliciting new information between January 2012 and December 2012 regarding changes in the status of the Greater sage-grouse, its habitats, or scientific understanding of the species and its habitats, and any conservation efforts for the species. The March 2010 finding for the Greater sage-grouse identified habitat loss and fragmentation and insufficient regulatory mechanisms as the primary factors for designating the species as warranted for listing. Therefore, our annual review will primarily focus on any changes in these two factors. However, since many other factors interact with habitat condition and regulatory mechanisms, as discussed on our 20120 status review of the species, we would appreciate receiving any new information regarding sage-grouse and sagebrush status.

Attached is a list of information/data we are collecting for this annual review. To the extent possible, please provide the requested information, including spatial data when appropriate and available. More details of the types of data requested are included in the attached sheet. We have not specified a format for receiving the information requested and leave that to your discretion. However, do not send raw data unless specifically requested on the attached sheet. All information should be submitted to our office no later than **February 1, 2013**.

A signed letter was mailed on (day), November xx, to all State Directors of State and Provincial wildlife agencies (British Columbia excepted), all BLM State Directors, all NRCS State Conservationists, Tribal contacts, and all Regional Foresters within the range of the Greater sage-grouse with an attached data call request (which is the same request I have included for you). However, as the task of collecting and submitting the data will likely fall to all of you, I wanted to make sure you had a copy as well.

Please forward this information on to all who need to see it. The list in the "to" box is the total of all contacts I've sent this to (with the exception of our FWS Tribal liaisons). I know there are folks I don't have the contact information on, and there may have been personnel changes over the past year. So if there is someone I've missed, share it with them (***and send me that contact information too***).

Data Request for the Annual Review of the Greater Sage-Grouse Candidate Status

The following is an outline of items for which we are requesting information. As part of this annual review, the Service is soliciting new information regarding changes in the status of the greater sage-grouse, its habitats, or scientific understanding of the species and its habitats, and any conservation efforts. ~~With regards to conservation efforts, please provide information on the known effectiveness of ongoing conservation efforts and known effectiveness of new conservation efforts. In addition, provide information on any conservation efforts previously reported that are discontinued and conservation efforts planned that have a high certainty of implementation.~~ This will greatly assist us in our analysis of how conservation efforts have removed or reduced threats to the species. Send any geospatial information you can share.

Your information sent in for this annual review will assist us in evaluating the species' status to determine if any further listing action should be taken based on scientific data.

We understand that not every responder will need to address every issue or have knowledge of some issues in their locale. Provide the information that is applicable to your area of jurisdiction. We are requesting information you may have collected between **January 2012** and **December 2012**. **Please submit all information by February 1, 2013, to the following address or by e-mail:**

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attention: Lynn Gemlo, Listing Coordinator
5353 Yellowstone Road, Suite 308A
Cheyenne, WY 82009
Phone Number: (307) 772-2374, Extension 228
E-Mail: lynn_gemlo@fws.gov

Data Request:

A. Population status, trends and numbers: This section is primarily directed towards State and Provincial agencies for response.

1. What are the population trends for your State or Province? If describing by population, use the population descriptions identified in the 2006 WAFWA Conservation Strategy.
    a. Is the trend expected given weather conditions and population cycling?
2. Has there been any significant change in the populations in your State or Province (more than normal annual fluctuations)?
    a. If yes, do you know the cause of the population change? Describe.

B. Habitat status and trends: To the extent possible, for each item listed below, identify occurrence in occupied (at least during one season) or unoccupied habitats, sagebrush habitats that are essential for long-term species persistence (e.g. connectivity corridors), provide locations, populations affected, acreage affected and geospatial data if available.

1. Identify areas of sagebrush lost due to permanent conversion (e.g. agricultural lands, subdivisions). In addition to the information requested above, identify the stage of loss (e.g. proposed, in NEPA review, completed).
    a. Identify proposed areas of conversions that have a high certainty of occurrence.
2. Identify areas that will be converted in association with Farm Bill Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP).
3. For areas where CRP has/is providing habitat for sage-grouse, have there been areas where the lands have been put back into production, resulting in a loss of habitat? If so, estimate the number of acres potentially lost.
4. Provide acres of occupied sagebrush habitats that were lost to fire (either wild or prescribed fires). ***2012 was a particularly bad wildfire year. Provide specifics as to the loss of suitable sagebrush habitats, where fires occurred and impacts to sage-grouse.***
5. Provide expansion information of conifers or cheatgrass into sagebrush.
6. Identify incursion of other invasive species that affects habitat quality and utility for sage-grouse. Identify the invasive species.
7. Provide information on proposed energy developments within occupied sagebrush habitats. In addition, identify the type (oil, gas, wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal, uranium, etc.) and stage of development, well/turbine/development density, and life of project.
8. Provide information regarding new, proposed, or expanded mining activities in sagebrush habitats.
9. Identify transmission corridors for energy transmission in sagebrush habitats. Include status (e.g. NEPA completed, under construction, proposed), and any efforts to minimize impacts to sage-grouse and sagebrush.
10. Grazing impacts – Any significant changes that affect habitat abundance and quality? We are particularly interested in sagebrush treatments that either remove sagebrush habitats or alter their ability to provide current seasonal habitats (e.g. converting winter habitat to more open canopies that may support brood-rearing).
    a. Include treatments conducted for the benefit of wild ungulates.
    b. Identify any changes in wild equid status.
11. Identify any known losses of habitat connectivity, both within and between populations.

C. Changes in Regulatory Mechanisms: Regulatory mechanisms are those that are enforceable by state or provincial statute, federal land management documents, etc. They do

not include voluntary efforts; however, provide information on any voluntary efforts that may be affecting sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. If these efforts have not yet been implemented, or not yet shown to be effective, identify those projects within the conservation efforts database.

1. Identify the status of BLM RMP revisions that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (either positive or negative), if any.
2. Identify any changes in the status of regulatory mechanisms that will affect sage-grouse or sagebrush (positive or negative) on other Federal lands (e.g. FS, NPS, military lands).
3. Identify any new regulatory mechanisms that minimize impacts from fire, invasives, energy development, etc. If new regulatory mechanisms are being considered, you should also identify those, along with the certainty of application.
4. Any new State, Provincial, or other local (e.g. county) efforts to address threats?

D. Conservation Actions: An aggregation of these assessments by industry, sector, or region is more useful than many individual comments (e.g. from individual companies). This will greatly assist us in our analysis of how conservation efforts have removed or reduced threats to the species.

1. Identify past, ongoing, and future conservation actions.
2. Provide an assessment of the known effectiveness and long-term sustainability of ongoing conservation efforts and of new conservation efforts.
3. Provide information on any conservation efforts previously reported that are discontinued and conservation efforts planned that have a high certainty of implementation.

~~D.~~**E.** **Hunting and other uses:** (Identify state or province)

1. Have there been any changes to hunting regulations for sage-grouse? If so, identify the reason behind the change, and if applicable, any results.
2. Have there been any changes in recreational impacts (positive or negative) or in religious use of sage-grouse?
3. Identify current research projects on sage-grouse in your State or Province, and whether or not the project includes bird capture or collaring.

~~E.~~**F.** **Disease and Predation**: (Provide locations where appropriate)

1. Report any West Nile virus outbreaks in 2012, where outbreaks occurred, and impacts to sage-grouse.
2. Are you aware of any new diseases/parasites that have population-level effects?

3. Do you have any data that suggests that predators may be limiting sage-grouse in any part of the range, independent of habitat conditions?
4. Do you have data that supports increases in predator populations that are affecting sage-grouse as the result of habitat alterations?

~~F.~~G. Other Factors:

1. Do you have any new information regarding negative effects of pesticides, contaminants, recreational activities or other human disturbance, drought and other climatic conditions on the greater sage-grouse?
2. Report any new information on the impacts of climate change on sage-grouse or their habitats.

~~G~~H. Literature:

1. Identify any pertinent literature you feel is important for our review. In addition to citations, if you have cited any literature above, provide the page numbers of the actual citation.

~~H~~I. Contact person(s):

Provide contact(s) information concerning data collection in case questions arise after the data has been reviewed.