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Statement by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell on the Sage-Grouse Rider in the FY15 Omnibus Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell issued a statement regarding a rider in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 affecting potential Endangered Species Act listing decisions for sage-grouse.

The rider prohibits the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from writing and issuing rules related to sage-grouse. For example, the language impedes the Fish and Wildlife Service's ability to finalize a 4(d) rule related to the Gunnison Sage-Grouse in Colorado, which was listed as threatened earlier this year. The consequence of this rider is that it prevents the Service from finalizing a rule that would provide certainty to landowners, giving them assurance that they can continue economic activities compatible with the conservation of the species, such as properly managed livestock and ranching activities.

It has no effect on ongoing efforts to develop and implement federal and state plans that conserve sagebrush habitat or to completing the requisite analysis for potential rulemaking.

Statement from Secretary Jewell:

“The Obama Administration is still moving full steam ahead, and will continue to work with urgency alongside our federal, state and local partners to put conservation measures in place to protect important sagebrush habitat and avert the need to list the greater sage-grouse. The rider has no effect on our efforts to develop and implement state and federal plans and to build partnerships to incentivize conservation.

“The Omnibus continues funding for Interior and USDA to conserve sagebrush habitat and to advance the unprecedented collaboration happening across 11 Western states. The Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to collect data and conduct analysis, and the agency will reach a decision as to whether listing is warranted or not.

“It's disappointing that some Members of Congress are more interested in political posturing than finding solutions to conserve the sagebrush landscape and the Western way of life.

Rather than helping the communities they profess to benefit, these members will only create uncertainty, encourage conflict and undermine the unprecedented progress that is happening throughout the West.

“We are more determined than ever to work with the states, ranchers, energy developers and other stakeholders who are putting effective conservation measures in place with the shared goal of reaching a ‘not warranted’ determination by the end of the fiscal year.”

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