

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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August 23, 2012

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### **FWS Releases Draft Report to Help Guide Sage-Grouse Conservation Objectives**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is making available a draft report that is designed to help guide the efforts of the States and other partners to conserve the greater sage-grouse with a landscape level strategy that will benefit the species while maintaining a robust economy in the West. The report, prepared by state and federal scientists and sage-grouse experts, identifies the conservation status of the sage-grouse, the nature of the threats facing the species, and objectives to ensure its long-term conservation.

The draft report is a collaborative state and federal effort to evaluate species conservation before the Service is required to make a decision in 2015 on whether to propose protecting the species under the Endangered Species Act. The draft report has been submitted for scientific peer review, the results of which are due to the Service in the fall.

“This report represents an unprecedented joint effort with the states, and we commend them for helping to outline conditions that will ensure the viability of the species,” said the Service’s Director Dan Ashe. “The challenges facing the greater sage-grouse and the conservation of its sagebrush habitat are at a scale that cannot be addressed by any one federal or state agency, non-governmental organization, or Tribe. This draft report is an important step in our collective efforts to protect, manage, and restore sagebrush habitat for the benefit of sage-grouse and the health of this important landscape.”

In April of 2012, Director Ashe convened a team of Service and state experts to provide advice on conservation objectives for the greater sage-grouse. The resulting draft report is based on scientific principles of conservation biology and uses information and conservation strategies provided by the States to identify key areas of habitat across the species’ range, as well as the threats operating within each population that need to be mitigated to conserve the species over the long term. Given the differences across the sage-grouse range, the report allows flexibility for States or other agencies to determine and develop the measures that will best achieve conservation success.

The Service has asked the Greater Sage-grouse Task Force to provide their comments on the draft report, which will be evaluated together with the scientific peer review comments. Co-chaired by Gov. John Hickenlooper of Colorado, Gov. Matt Mead of Wyoming and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the task force was created in December of 2011 after Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Gov. Matt Mead

met with officials from states that contain greater sage-grouse habitat agreed to collaboratively identify actions that could avoid the need to list the sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

Greater sage-grouse are found in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, eastern California, Nevada, Utah, western Colorado, South Dakota and Wyoming and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. A large ground-dwelling bird, the decline of the sage-grouse population has been a result of primary threats such as habitat loss and fragmentation due to wildfire, energy development and invasive plant species. The birds currently occupy approximately 56 percent of their historical range. Based on a 12-month status review pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service determined that the listing of the species was warranted but precluded by higher priorities.

To view the draft report, please click [HERE](#).

For a FWS fact sheet of frequently asked questions regarding the draft report, please click [HERE](#).

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