

News Release



Reno Fish and Wildlife Office

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August 12, 2015
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Public Input Sought For Proposed Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Agreement

Reno — A commercial cattle ranch stretching across portions of Churchill and Lander counties in central Nevada is proposing to enter into an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help conserve vital rangeland it shares with the greater sage-grouse.

Smith Creek Ranch LTD, located 40 miles west of Austin and 90 miles east of Fallon, plans to enroll approximately 2,200 acres of its private grazing and hay-producing land in the Service's Candidate Conservation Agreement With Assurances (CCAA) program. This federal conservation program provides landowners who voluntarily agree to manage their lands to remove or reduce threats to candidate species assurance that they will not face additional regulatory requirements should the species ever be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

A determination on whether or not the greater sage-grouse warrants federal protection will be made by the Service by September 30 of this year.

If finalized, the Smith Creek Ranch agreement will be the first CCAA adopted in Nevada specifically for greater sage-grouse. There are currently nearly 6.2 million acres of public and private lands enrolled or planned for enrollment in CCAs across portions of the greater sage-grouse's range in Nevada, Oregon, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah and Colorado.

The major threat to greater sage-grouse and its sagebrush habitat in Nevada is the encroachment of invasive annual grasses that out-compete sagebrush and other native plant species and promote more destructive wildland fires. Therefore as part of the agreement, Smith Creek Ranch managers will agree to practice proper brush and livestock grazing management techniques, avoid further commercial development and adopt a wide range of other positive conservation measures that reduce fragmentation and degradation of the bird's habitat.

Public comments on the Smith Creek Ranch CCAA will be accepted through September 8, 2015. The document may be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/nevada>. To submit written comments, please use one of the following methods and refer to "Smith Creek Ranch CCAA" in the comments.

- Email: Marcy_haworth@fws.gov.
- U.S. Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234, Reno, Nevada 89502
- Fax: 775-861-6301

For more information about greater sage-grouse, visit www.fws.gov/greatersagegrouse.

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