



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Nevada Fish & Wildlife Office

Preserving The Biological Diversity Of The Great Basin, Eastern Sierra & Mojave Desert

Questions and Answers

90-Day Petition Finding for the Mono Basin Area of Sage-Grouse

Q. What is the sage-grouse?

A. The sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) is a large, ground-dwelling bird, measuring up to 30 inches in length and two feet tall and weighing between two to seven pounds. It has a long, pointed tail with legs feathered to the base of the toes and fleshy yellow combs over the eyes. In addition to the mottled brown, black and white plumage typical of the species, males sport a white ruff around their necks. The sage-grouse is found from 4,000 to over 9,000 feet in elevation. It is an omnivore, eating soft plants (primarily sagebrush) and insects.

Q. What is the range of the greater sage-grouse?

A. The historic range of the greater sage-grouse included Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, South Dakota, North Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, New Mexico, Arizona, and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Greater sage-grouse are no longer found in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, and British Columbia.

Q. What is being done to conserve greater sage-grouse?

A. Concern about long-term declines in greater sage-grouse populations has prompted western State wildlife agencies and Federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to engage in a variety of cooperative efforts aimed at conserving and managing sagebrush habitat for the benefit of greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush dependent species.

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) has completed of a range-wide conservation assessment of the greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat, with strong cooperation from the Federal agencies. The assessment is a valuable source of information regarding greater sage-grouse ecology. WAFWA is now coordinating and the development of a range-wide conservation strategy.

Western states within the current range of greater sage-grouse are developing and implementing conservation plans to address issues such as habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation, and to identify opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement. The intent of these plans is to find and implement local solutions to conserve the greater sage-grouse.

Q. Why did the Service prepare a 90-Day Finding?

A. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received a formal petition dated November 10, 2005, submitted by the Stanford Law School Environmental Law Clinic on behalf of The Sagebrush Sea Campaign, Western Watersheds Project, the Center for Biological Diversity, and Christians Caring for Conservations to list the Mono Basin area sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) as threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

A separate listing petition dated December 28, 2001, was submitted by the Institute for Wildlife Protection and requested that the Service emergency list greater sage-grouse in the Mono Basin area as endangered. This petition was the subject of a non-substantial 90-Day Finding published by the Service in the Federal Register on December 26, 2002.

In order to resolve existing litigation between the Service and the Institute for Wildlife Protection, regarding the December 26, 2002 negative 90-day finding by the Service, the Service agreed complete a 90-Day Finding based upon the November 2005 petition and the re-consider the December 2001 petition and supporting information.

Q. What information did the Service use to make a 90-day finding?

A. The Service reviewed petitions dated November 15, 2004, and December 28, 2001 to list the Mono Basin area sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act and has concluded the petitions did not contain substantial scientific data that the petitioned action might be warranted. The Service bases this finding on information provided in the petition and information available in our files at the time of petition review.

Q. What is the difference between the Mono Basin area sage-grouse and the greater sage-grouse and where does it occur?

A. The Petitioners have identified the Mono Basin area sage grouse as including those birds that are found in portions of Carson City, Lyon, Mineral, Esmeralda, and Douglas Counties in Nevada. It also includes portions of Alpine and Inyo Counties, and most of Mono County in California. The petitioner did provide substantial information that the Mono Basin area sage-grouse may be a Distinct Population Segment based on genetic evidence.

Q. How do I get more information?

A. Information regarding the petitions to list the Mono Basin area sage-grouse as well as the Service's 90-day finding is available on the Service's Web site at: <http://fws.gov/nevada> or by contacting Bob Williams, 1340 Financial Blvd., Suite 234, Reno, NV 89502, (775) 861-6300.