

From: [Frazer, Gary](#)
To: [Dan ASHE](#); [Robert Dreher](#); [Betsy Hildebrandt](#); [Noreen Walsh](#); [Ren Lohoefer](#); [Richard Hannan](#); [Michael BEAN](#)
Subject: Fwd: Defense Bill Threatens Greater Sage Grouse With Free Pass for Livestock on Public Lands
Date: Thursday, December 04, 2014 9:59:27 AM

FYI, in case you didn't get this directly.

Just confirmed with Ed Roberson their view of the NDAA language. It is as I thought -- the bill would give them authority to extend leases, use cat ex for NEPA compliance, etc, but it would not constrain them from carrying out their commitments to prioritize range health assessments, modify lease conditions where needed to benefit GRSg, or otherwise carry out the commitments we have discussed with them.

Rocky Barber of the ID Statesman has already called BLM Public Affairs, and Celia referred him to the Department. Betsy, it's possible that we could get calls, too. -- GDF

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Steve Holmer** <sholmer@abcbirds.org>
Date: Thu, Dec 4, 2014 at 12:23 PM
Subject: Defense Bill Threatens Greater Sage Grouse With Free Pass for Livestock on Public Lands
To: Steve Holmer <sholmer@abcbirds.org>

For immediate release December 4, 2014

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Defense Bill Threatens Greater Sage Grouse With Free Pass for Livestock on Public Lands

WASHINGTON — The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) soon to be considered by the U.S. House of Representatives contains several provisions that would undermine current efforts to protect greater sage grouse on nearly 60 million acres of public lands, and would lead to listing greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. The livestock lobby managed to get their so-called Grazing Improvement Act in the NDAA (§ 3023), and this provision would automatically renew expiring grazing permits on public lands, even if these permits are causing the decline of greater sage grouse and other sensitive wildlife species.

“The proponents of the NDAA’s grazing provisions appear to be embracing a Wile E. Coyote philosophy of public lands management,” said Todd C. Tucci, an attorney with Idaho-based Advocates for the West. “Because the NDAA requires automatic renewal of all grazing within sage grouse habitat – even grazing that is known to harm sage grouse populations and habitat – the livestock lobby’s approach is going to backfire and result in either making the listing of greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act unavoidable, or a “not warranted” listing decision untenable. Either way, the livestock lobby and its allies are walking off the cliff. Beep, beep,” said Tucci.

“This giveaway to the livestock industry should be stripped from the bill,” said Travis Bruner, Executive Director with Western Watersheds Project in Hailey, Idaho. “It is long past time for the livestock lobby to begin making the changes necessary to bring grazing on public lands into compliance with cornerstone environmental laws and agency policy.”

“This is a terrible deal for the American public and a devastating blow to the sage grouse,” said Randi Spivak, public lands director with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Livestock grazing spreads invasive species, increases fire risk, and degrades rivers and streams. The solution is not to turn a blind eye to the harm caused to the greater sage grouse and hundreds of other species.”

Provisions to allow voluntary retirement of livestock grazing permits in Oregon and New Mexico, included in the original bipartisan compromise bill, were stripped away when the grazing legislation was incorporated into the NDAA.

“The only environmentally beneficial part of the Grazing Improvement Act– voluntary grazing permit retirement– was removed, making this bill a wholesale disaster,” said Erik Molvar, wildlife biologist with WildEarth Guardians. “This bill would make it harder for government agencies to manage livestock grazing on public lands, and creates new obstacles to restoring damaged habitats where livestock grazing is currently degrading the health of our public lands.”

“A recent government study by the U.S. Geological Survey found that over four million acres of grazing allotments in priority sage grouse habitat do not meet range health standards,” said Steve Holmer, senior policy advisor with American Bird Conservancy. “Under this bill, the permits could be renewed without any consideration for the harm they are causing to imperiled grouse, clean water, and the recreational use of public lands.”

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Advocates for the West uses law and science to restore streams and watersheds, protect public lands and wildlife, and ensure sustainable communities in Idaho and other Western states.

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to conserve native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. ABC acts by safeguarding the rarest species, conserving and restoring habitats, and reducing threats, while building capacity in the bird conservation movement.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 800,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

Western Watersheds Project is a nonprofit conservation organization with a mission to protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives and litigation.

WildEarth Guardians works to protect wildlife, wild places, wild rivers, and the health of the American West, with 65,000 members across the West and nationwide.

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