

From: [Bush, Jodi](#)
To: [Jeff Berglund](#); [Brent Esmoil](#)
Subject: Fwd: GRSG: Garton study
Date: Thursday, April 30, 2015 2:53:44 PM

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From: **Stein, Theodore** <theodore.stein@fws.gov>
Date: Mon, Apr 27, 2015 at 2:16 PM
Subject: GRSG: Garton study
To: FW6 Sage-grouse FMT <fw6_sage-grouse_fmt@fws.gov>

FMTers

You may have seen recent news coverage of an upcoming study of GRSG population trends by E.O Garton and funded by Pew Environmental Trust. Noreen asked that we share the response FWS is providing if asked.

We do not want to discuss the findings or methodology of the report, as it would risk sounding predecisional.

If you get questions about the study, please refer them to Gavin Shire or to me.

Thanks much.

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"If asked" statement:

"The Fish and Wildlife Service values all peer-reviewed scientific studies in helping us make the most transparent and defensible regulatory and policy decisions.

The Garton study is one of several that will help us assess the health of the greater sage-grouse and inform our status review of the species.

On background:

- Population numbers are not, by themselves, one of the five listing factors under ESA.
- Past research suggests sage grouse populations fluctuate on roughly decade-long cycles, and it is possible the bird is near the bottom of a population trough rangewide.
- Research indicates sage-grouse populations may fluctuate by 30 to 40%.
- The Garton study not yet peer-reviewed - it may take several weeks or months before it is published.
- Wyoming biologists are nearing the end of 2015 lek counts. Preliminary numbers indicate counts have increased strongly.
- Tom Christiansen, WY G&F has offered reporters the following:
 - Scientists should look at how past troughs and peaks compared to the most recent troughs and peaks.
 - There's no denying that there has been a long-term decline from the 1950s to the present. "But from the 1990s to present, that downward trend has not continued -- it has leveled off."
- Utah's Division of Natural Resources in spring 2014 [reported](#) finding 4,449 male grouse in the Beehive State, an increase of almost 40 percent over the previous year.