

From: [Bush, Jodi](#)
To: [George Jordan](#)
Subject: Fwd: GrSG: current communications items
Date: Thursday, April 30, 2015 1:21:31 PM

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From: **Noreen Walsh** <noreen_walsh@fws.gov>
Date: Thu, Apr 30, 2015 at 7:53 AM
Subject: RE: GrSG: current communications items
To: Matt Kales <matt_kales@fws.gov>, FW6 Sage-grouse FMT <fw6_sage-grouse_fmt@fws.gov>
Cc: Theodore Stein <theodore_stein@fws.gov>, Anna Harris <anna_harris@fws.gov>, Daniel Hottle <daniel_hottle@fws.gov>, Marla Trollan <marla_trollan@fws.gov>, Jason Holm <jason_holm@fws.gov>, Miel Corbett <miel_corbett@fws.gov>, Scott Flaherty <scott_flaherty@fws.gov>, Matt Hogan <matt_hogan@fws.gov>

Let me add my appreciation to Matt's for the efforts of all who have been providing information regarding sage-grouse on installations in your areas. I can't thank you enough for your responsiveness; the information you have been providing is very important to the current discussion playing out in real time. A big thanks to Matt as well for his leadership and skill in coordinating this effort. It takes a team – thank you ALL.

Noreen

Noreen Walsh

Regional Director

Mountain-Prairie Region

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Matt Kales [mailto:matt_kales@fws.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2015 4:48 PM
To: FW6 Sage-grouse FMT
Cc: Theodore Stein; Anna Harris; Daniel Hottle; Marla Trollan; Jason Holm; Miel Corbett; Scott Flaherty; Matt Hogan
Subject: GrSG: current communications items
Importance: High

Folks,

First, my apologies for yet another e-mail message, and a lengthy one at that. We've sent many your way lately and appreciate everyone's responsiveness and patience. We are particularly grateful to those of you who have developed information these past days re: GrSG conservation activities on DoD lands. (Please see below for more on this item.)

Second, many of you are aware BLM and FS are sharing their current draft plans with cooperators today and that action may generate some media inquiries. Included below for your awareness are text of joint BLM-FS "If-asked" statements and the companion FWS statement we developed. **These are internal documents only. Please refer any/all media inquiries you or your staff receive to me until further notice and I will refer them as appropriate to DOI's Office of Communications.** It is very important we don't offer public comments on the plans at this time since (a) they are still technically in draft form and available only to cooperators for review and (b) we are still in the process of analyzing the plans and their conservation impacts as part of our ongoing ESA status review.

Also attached is the final **BLM-FS fact sheet re: the plans**. This will be up on our federal partners' sites at 1000 EDT tomorrow and fit for public consumption at that time.

FWS If-Asked Statement on Federal Conservation Plans

Overview

We commend the BLM and USFS for sharing their current draft sage-grouse conservation plans with cooperators and for advancing the federal planning process, which the Service considers an essential component of the rangewide conservation

partnership to conserve the species.

For more than two years, the Service has worked closely with the BLM and the Forest Service, and our state partners, to help develop strong federal plans that arrest the loss and fragmentation of sagebrush habitat, which is the primary reason the we determined in 2010 that the greater sage-grouse warranted protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Absent strong federal land management plans, it is unlikely the Service will be unable to determine that threats to the greater sage-grouse have been adequately addressed and the species no longer warrants federal protection.

Individual Plans

We don't have public comment at this time on individual BLM and USFS plans that are being shared with cooperators this week, since we are currently in the process of evaluating those plans and their net effect on sage-grouse conservation as part of our ESA status review.

Our status review will evaluate how the federal management plans fit together and how they work in concert with state plans and private lands conservation efforts to address threats to the species across the range.

We look forward to seeing final, effective and durable plans from our federal – and state – partners and to maintaining the partnership-driven efforts to conserve greater sage-grouse and the larger landscape on which the species depends.

BLM/USFS Sage Grouse Conservation Plans If-Asked Statement

The BLM and USFS plans are going through cooperating agency review, and we expect the final plans to be released by early June. When final, the plans will be science-based and reflect years of collaboration among federal, state and local partners.

We have confidence that these plans will not only benefit the greater sage-grouse,

but will also sustain the West's sagebrush habitat that supports ranching, hunting, outdoor recreation and hundreds of other wildlife species such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn.

We are already making significant progress to conserve sagebrush habitat with a proactive strategy to reduce the risk of rangeland fires, and additional conservation actions from states and private landowners. We will continue to work with our state and local partners with the shared goal of establishing strong science-based management and conservation commitments across the range of the bird that allow the Fish and Wildlife Service to conclude the protections of the Endangered Species Act are not needed for the greater sage-grouse.

Back Pocket Q&A:

Is this version real? Is it true that...?

- Can't comment on specifics until plans are final.
- The drafts are going through cooperating agency review, and we expect the final plans to be released by early June.

When will the final plans be released? What are the next steps?

- The Final EIS's will be released by early June.
- The final EISs will be subject to governors' consistency reviews (conducted to see whether federal and states' plans are consistent) and public protest periods.
- The BLM will formally note any differences that may emerge in this process.
- The Records of Decisions will be signed in late summer.

How will the plans deal with [existing rights, grazing, oil and gas, renewable, transmission]?

- *Refer to public-facing fact sheet.*

Why can't we have a review extension?

- The BLM and USGS are working hard to release the final plans in advance of a determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding whether the plans and other actions are adequate to conserve the species and avoid a listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Why didn't you follow the state plan?

- The planning involves coordination between the BLM and the USFS which, together, manage nearly two-thirds of the remaining sage grouse habitat; relevant state agencies in 11 states, which make decisions affecting state and private lands and currently manage the sage-grouse; the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which provides technical assistance and financial support for conservation on private lands; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which has guided habitat protection and conservation efforts to conserve the species and will determine whether the cumulative conservation efforts of all these partners are sufficient to conserve the bird and its habitat such that federal protection is not warranted. We are working hard to release the final plans in advance of a determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding whether the plans and other actions are adequate to conserve the species and avoid a listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Lastly, Members of Congress have recently introduced several GrSG-related legislative proposals. The most immediate item is a **rider**, sponsored by Rep. Bishop (UT-1) to the National Defense Authorization Act, which was marked up by the House Armed Services Committee today. The rider, which has potentially sweeping effects on current GrSG conservation efforts, survived the HASC markup process today. Assuming the NDAA itself passes out of the full committee later today/tonight, the next opportunity for Members to strike the rider will be on the House floor. The text of that rider is attached, and below is a URL for a **video** of the debate over the rider (start watching at 25 minutes for the full debate). Our national leadership, DOI, and the Administration, as well as many external partners, are working to address the rider using the content that many of you provided about your work with DoD on local installations. The current **Statement of Administration Position**, which reflects the position of the White House on this matter, is pasted below. Also below is a URL for this morning's **E&E story** on this issue. There's lots to this issue so please feel free to ask your ARD, friendly neighborhood public affairs officer, or me if you need more information.

Please don't hesitate to hold with any questions on the above and thanks for all you do.

Matt

NDAA materials:

Markup video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1BZMC9NFWo>

4/29 E&E piece: <http://www.eenews.net/eedaily/stories/1060017632>

SAP:

The Administration strongly objects to provisions in the Chairman's mark of H.R. 1735, the FY16 National Defense Authorization Bill (NDAA). The President has been very clear about the core principle that he will not support a budget that locks in sequestration, and he will not fix defense without adjusting non-defense spending. Unfortunately, H.R. 1735 fails to sufficiently fund our military's priorities, instead using Overseas Contingency Operation (OCO) funding that leaders of both parties have made clear is a gimmick; at the same time, it fails to reverse sequestration for non-defense. Further, H.R. 1735 fails to adopt many of the needed force structure and weapons system reforms called for by our military leadership and **includes non-germane provisions, such as those undermining the Endangered Species Act, that have nothing to do with national defense.**

The Chairman's mark also contains language pertaining to the ongoing P5+1 nuclear negotiations with Iran that will likely undermine our negotiating team as they work with our international partners to achieve a long-term, comprehensive deal that prevents Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

In addition, as we have said previously, the continued operation of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay undermines our national security. This Administration has repeatedly objected to statutory restrictions that impede our ability to responsibly close the detention facility and pursue appropriate options for the remaining detainees. The President has called upon the Congress to work with the Administration to close the facility. But instead of removing unwarranted and burdensome restrictions, H.R. 1735, as drafted, would extend current restrictions and impose onerous additional ones. Nearly a half billion dollars per year is an

unacceptable price to pay for a facility that wastes our resources, creates friction with our allies, and undermines our standing in the world.

Tomorrow's markup is an early step in the NDAA process, and the Administration urges the Committee to work in a bipartisan fashion to make necessary changes to the bill so that the President is able to sign it.

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Matt Kales, Senior Advisor for Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation

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