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WASHINGTON

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Office of the Governor
Carson City, NV

The Honorable Brian Sandoval
Governor of Nevada
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sandoval:

Thank you for your letter dated November 18, 2013, regarding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) proposed rules to list the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of greater sage-grouse as threatened with critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act.

The FWS recognizes and values the long term efforts of the State of Nevada in monitoring sage-grouse populations within the Bi-State area. Historical and recent population data from multiple sources are being fully considered in the listing determination process. The FWS looks forward to further discussions with the State of Nevada on interpreting Nevada and California population data, as well as on the overall status of the Bi-State DPS.

The Bi-State Technical Advisory Committee's 2012 Bi-State Action Plan has been a tremendous resource for the FWS in identifying threats to the Bi-State DPS of greater sage-grouse and for identifying opportunities for conservation actions and partnership. The Bi-State DPS is fortunate to have had continued involvement of the Bi-State Local Area Working Group (LAWG) in implementing conservation actions under both the 2012 and 2004 versions of the Action Plan. As an active LAWG participant, the FWS is well positioned to appreciate the partnerships and associated support for Action Plan implementation. Such strong partnerships are vital for conservation of listed and non-listed species.

The FWS's listing and critical habitat proposals for the Bi-State DPS in Nevada and California should not be considered predictive of future listing actions for the greater sage-grouse ranging across 11 western States. As discussed in the FWS's status review of March 23, 2010 (75 FR 13910), the DPS and greater sage-grouse are being evaluated separately with the Bi-State DPS having a higher listing priority number.

On December 20, 2013, the FWS published a notice extending the comment period on the proposed listing and critical habitat rules to February 10, 2014. Further input from the State of Nevada during these comment periods is welcome.

I am encouraged that Nevada remains committed to the species and habitat conservation identified in the 2012 Action Plan. The FWS and other Department of the Interior agencies intend to continue to work with Nevada, as well as other State, local, private, tribal, and Federal partners to ensure the success of these efforts. Thank you for the conservation leadership and investments the State of Nevada has and continues to make on behalf of greater sage-grouse.

Sincerely,

Sally Jewell