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Remarks for the Bi-State meeting at Smith Valley Library on March 18th, 2013

Listing the sage hen would threaten our homes and our ranches and it would not save the bird. First we must improve sage hen habitat by controlling the predators that destroy the sage hens, their nests, and their chicks. Refer to enclosed article on Ravens. The birds right after hatching are very vulnerable to everything. Some reports say that we are losing 50% of our nests today and 70% of that loss is from ravens. (Mark Jensen, Supervisor, Wildlife Services, Reno Nevada).

Wildlife Services is in charge of predator control and they have lost 45% of their work force. At one time we had three trappers here – one in Smith Valley, one in Mason Valley, and one in Carson Valley. Today we have one trapper that has to cover all three valleys plus Fallon and Austin. We also don't have a lion hunter anymore.

THINGS WE NEED TO DO IMMEDIATELY TO SAVE THE SAGE HEN:

No 1. We must have more trappers to control ravens, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, and other predators.

No 2. We need to protect the grazing of livestock to control fires and enhance the sage hen. Refer to enclosed article on fires.

No 3. Where open grazing is allowed it accomplishes more than just providing feed for livestock

1. Livestock consumes the fuel that wildfires need to grow.
2. Livestock owners improve the water resource and create new water sites
3. Livestock grazing helps in the natural re-seeding, fertilizing, and cultivating of the grasses, forbs, and brush. This is necessary for the production of the sage hen and other wildlife. Sage grouse follow in the livestock footprints and into the bed grounds (especially sheep). These sage grouse feed on insects and other sources of nutrients left by the animals. It is common to see sage grouse chicks eating the pellets from the lambs which are highly nutritious because it is partially digested milk.

No 4. The livestock generally feed off the tall meadow grasses and forbs in the spring and then as the uplands dry the sage hen come down to the new growth of forbs and short green grasses in early summer. The livestock have to graze the meadows before the sage hen broods arrive to provide this benefit. The meadows that have been grazed are preferred by the sage hens.

No 5. You must remember that sage hen get much of their nutrients from the flies and insects which are abundant around livestock. This is not factored into the habitat plan.

No 6. Livestock on the range offers relief from predation because the predators prey on livestock. When livestock owners kill the predators the wildlife benefit along with the sheep and cattle.

NOW TO KIND OF SUM THINGS UP

Livestock grazing and predator control are the two most important tools we have to save and enhance the sage hen.

During those years from about 1955 to 1980 we had thousands of sage hen in Smith Valley, the Pine Nut Range, and Bodie Hills. Also during those years we had many trappers and the use of toxicants and we controlled the numbers of predators very well. During those years we had ten or more times the numbers of gazing animals on the Federal ranges than we now have and we had thousands of sage hen on the same areas. At the time from 1950 to 1980, when we had thousands of sage hen on the ranges, there were plenty of nutriments on the ranges to sustain the many birds so that proves the nutriments are there and the habitat was sufficient. As soon as the grazing permits were cut by the agencies the trappers and toxicant use was cut down and the sage hens started to disappear.

If you want to save the sage hen then contact the Wildlife Services in Reno. They are probably the most important government service to call in order to manage the sage hen.

We must not let this bird be listed under ESA. Our whole area would come under the control of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and those agency people would write an ESA recovery plan with no regard to local needs. The listing and regulations that follow would be a disaster economically and environmentally to our communities. Everyone would be hurt including livestock production, mining, housing control, recreation such as hunting and fishing, and just about every other aspect of our custom and culture and there is very little possibility of all those regulations resulting in more sage grouse.

The big problem is that the USFWS uses false science to get what they want and conspire with like-minded groups to do that.

For a very good example of how the ESA works, look at what happened in Klamath Falls area after the USFWS listed a sucker fish. This allowed the USFWS to implement their recovery plan and to give all the water in the Klamath Lake to the endangered species. That meant the farmers got no water for their crops even though they and the community businesses faced immediate economic destruction and citizens were forced into personal bankruptcy.

The USFWS was doing everything backwards. After the USFWS took over, about 80% of the sucker fish died.

What is the worse part? The National Academy of Science would later rule that the USFWS recovery plan was based on false science.

Without irrigation water 200,000 acres of farm land and 50,000 acres of wildlife refuge habitat dried up. This destruction was the result of the science used to list the sucker fish was corrupt.

Conclusion

Sagebrush is not a problem, we have plenty of it. Nevada is the sagebrush state. To increase the sage hen numbers and save our rural communities, we must perform the following:

1. Don't list the sage hen
2. Control predators
3. Control fires
4. Improve water supplies
5. Increase our grazing area
6. Get DNA of Bi-State Sage Grouse and compare to others so we know what we are doing. We need responsible action.

Submitted by Fred Fulstone

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For F.I.M. Corporation

Smith, Nevada