

Montana Wildlife Federation ♦ Wyoming Wildlife Federation ♦ Colorado Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation ♦ Idaho Wildlife Federation ♦ Nevada Wildlife Federation
New Mexico Wildlife Federation ♦ Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)
Conservation Northwest (WA) ♦ Arizona Wildlife Federation ♦ North Dakota Wildlife Federation

October 13, 2016

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman and Ranking Members:

Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of hunters and other wildlife conservationists across the West. We strongly support multiple-use public land management, on-the-ground wildlife conservation, and national defense readiness.

We are writing to urge you not to include any provisions in the conference report on the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 2943/H.R. 4909) that limit conservation actions to protect the greater sage-grouse. Specifically, we oppose the language in the House bill that blocks the Interior Department from making an Endangered Species Act determination on the greater sage-grouse and prevents the implementation of the 2015 sage-grouse conservation resource management plans adopted by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service (USFS).

As you know, the Defense Department has clearly stated that the sage-grouse conservation plans adopted by the BLM, USFS, and states will not impact military training, operations, or readiness. Military installations within sage-grouse range have also included sage-grouse conservation in their own Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans, with no impact on military mission responsibilities.

The sage-grouse conservation plans have proven crucial to preventing the greater sage-grouse from needing to be listed under the Endangered Species Act, keeping the species under state management and avoiding the need for ESA-related regulations on land use and other activities in sage-grouse habitat. However, it is worth noting that the Defense Department has stated that even if the species were listed, there would be no significant impact to training, operations, or readiness.

Public lands across the West belong to all Americans, and the sage-grouse conservation plans reflect the great complexity of managing millions of acres for multiple uses, for the most people, across the spectrum of time. The sage-grouse plans were developed in good faith, based on the best scientific data, and in consultation with local stakeholders.

We thank you for your leadership on behalf of America's national security, and we urge you to resist pressure to use the National Defense Authorization Act as a platform for a political fight that is so clearly unrelated to national security.

Respectfully,

Dave Chadwick
Executive Director
Montana Wildlife Federation

Chamois Anderson
Executive Director
Wyoming Wildlife Federation

Robert Gaudet
President
Nevada Wildlife Federation

Mitch Friedman
Executive Director
Conservation Northwest

Brian Brooks
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Garrett VeneKlassen
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Suzanne O'Neill
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Bob Rees
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Chris Hesla
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Brad Powell
President
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Mike McEnroe
President
North Dakota Wildlife Federation