

American Bird Conservancy \* Californians for Western Wilderness  
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists  
Center for Biological Diversity \* Defenders of Wildlife \* Earthjustice  
Endangered Species Coalition \* Environmental Defense Fund  
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center \* Friends of the Earth \* Grand Canyon Trust  
IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas \* Klamath Forest Alliance, CA  
League of Conservation Voters \* National Audubon Society \* Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility \* Rocky Mountain Wild \* Sierra Club  
The Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative \* Western Nebraska Resources Council  
Western Watersheds Project \* WildEarth Guardians \* Wildlands Network  
Wild Utah Project \* The Wilderness Society \* World Wildlife Fund

## **Support Rep. Moran's Amendment to Strike the Sage Grouse Endangerment Rider**

July 14, 2014

Dear Appropriations Committee Member:

We are writing to urge you to support Rep. Moran's amendment to strike Section 117, the Sage-Grouse Endangerment Rider, from the FY 2015 appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related agencies at the full Committee markup on Tuesday. The rider would delay federal protection for all four species and populations of sage-grouse in the West, threatening imperiled grouse and hindering current efforts to protect the birds and their habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already proposed to list two grouse populations—the Gunnison sage-grouse and the bi-state sage-grouse—under the Endangered Species Act. That is, the agency responsible for protecting endangered species has already determined that these two grouse warrant federal protection. Populations for both of these grouse have declined to just 5,000 birds, reduced to fragments of their historic range. The Sage-Grouse Endangerment Rider would postpone final listing decisions for both of these birds for at least a year, potentially threatening their survival and delaying their recovery.

The same rider would also prevent the Fish and Wildlife Service from even considering greater sage-grouse and the Columbia Basin sage-grouse for possible listing under the ESA for at least another year. Both populations have waited more than decade for a listing decision. Additional delays would make conservation and recovery of these grouse more difficult, more expensive and more disruptive in the future.

All of these grouse are suffering from habitat loss and degradation. Most of the species range has been grazed, plowed, sprayed, burned, drilled, developed, driven over and mined, and remaining habitat has been fragmented and degraded by weeds, unnatural fire, conifer encroachment, utility corridors, roads and fences. Immediate conservation action is necessary to help stabilize and recover these imperiled birds.

The Sage-Grouse Endangerment Rider would not only delay long-overdue listing decisions for all four grouse populations, but it could also stall current conservation efforts for these birds with negative consequences for sage-grouse, public lands management, landowners, and other stakeholders. Planning efforts are presently underway to balance land uses with sage-grouse conservation on tens of millions of acres in the West. Resources, timelines, and the incentive for these processes are hinged on the listing timeline for each grouse population. These planning processes could unravel if sage-grouse listing decisions are delayed.

Any Congressional effort to delay the current timeframe would inappropriately politicize and subvert the established science-based administrative process the Fish and Wildlife Service uses for determining whether a species warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act. Delaying a federal listing decision does not make the problem go away. And in the case of sage-grouse, a delay could well make the problem far worse.

Our organizations urge you to support Rep. Moran's amendment to strike this damaging rider from the FY 2015 Interior Appropriations bill and ensure that work on sage-grouse listing decisions, as well as sage-grouse conservation efforts, is not derailed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Bird Conservancy  
Californians for Western Wilderness  
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Defenders of Wildlife  
EarthJustice  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Environmental Defense Fund  
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