

**Montana Wildlife Federation ▪ Idaho Wildlife Federation ▪ Colorado Wildlife Federation
Nevada Wildlife Federation ▪ Wyoming Wildlife Federation ▪ Conservation Northwest
South Dakota Wildlife Federation ▪ North Dakota Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation**

November 4, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
US Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairs 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 the protection of at-risk species. We are writing to urge you not to include any provision in the Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 3052/H.R. 3055/S. 2580) that aims to limit conservation actions to protect the greater sage-grouse.

The House-passed Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act does not include any provisions that adversely impact sage-grouse conservation. However, the Senate version of the bill does include a provision (Section 115) that would prohibit the Interior Department from moving forward with a listing determination for the species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The sage-grouse narrowly avoided an ESA listing in 2015 thanks to the development of sage-grouse conservation plans by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), and states across the West. The full implementation of these plans is crucial to preventing the greater sage-grouse from needing to be listed. The plans would keep the species under state management and avoid the need for ESA-related regulations on land use and other activities in sage-grouse habitat.

Unfortunately, the BLM and USFS have taken steps to repeal the 2015 sage-grouse conservation plans, placing the sage-grouse on the path to extinction. Rather than adopting provisions to tie

the hands of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and their responsibility to implement the ESA, Congress should focus on restoring the the 2015 sage-grouse conservation plans and funding robust sage-grouse conservation programs at every level.

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 information to date, and in consultation with local stakeholders. Congress should honor the promise of those plans.

Our organizations urge you to ensure the final Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act does not include a rider restricting protections of the greater sage-grouse. Thank you for your consideration of this request and we hope to see the efforts of various stakeholders from throughout the West honored and upheld.

Respectfully,

Dave Chadwick
Executive Director
Montana Wildlife Federation

Brian Brooks
Executive Director
Idaho Wildlife Federation

Robert Gaudet
President
Nevada Wildlife Federation

John Bradley
Executive Director
North Dakota Wildlife Federation

Suzanne O'Neill
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