

Certified Return Receipt Requested

June 26, 2008

Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2008-002
Division of Policy and Directives Management; US Fish & Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222
Arlington VA 22203

RE: Initiation of Status Review for the Greater Sage-Grouse as Threatened or Endangered (FWS-R6-ES-2008-0022; 1111 FY07 MO-B2)

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of Wyoming's 34 local Conservation Districts, the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts (Association) requests that the following comments be included in the Service's analysis in the above referenced matter.

The local districts are charged by Wyoming State Statute 11-16-101 *et. seq.* with the conservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, the development and implementation of wildlife habitat protection, enhancement and establishment.

The Association would like to thank the Fish & Wildlife Service, Wyoming Office for including a Conservation District representative on the Wyoming Interagency Team. The specific project level information supplied by conservation districts will be entered into the Conservation Efforts Database by the conservation district team member.

Specifically the Association is providing the information below as per the Federal Register Notice item number 3 requesting "information on management programs for the conservation of the greater sage-grouse" (a summarization of specific project level information) for the record:

Conservation district and individual landowner-specific projects related to sage-grouse conservation efforts in Wyoming are summarized below (projects in partnership with other agencies serving as the primary project lead, are not included below):

1. The districts have facilitated 23 sage-grouse habitat projects throughout the state.
2. These projects affect a total of 2,080,725 acres with 122,380 acres directly impacted.

3. Of these projects, 19 have an associated conservation plan and 18 include long-term monitoring programs.
4. Seventeen of the projects are fully implemented and three additional projects are planned and pending implementation. These three additional projects are educational in nature.
5. The total cost of sage-grouse projects is \$6,450,054. This funding is a conglomeration of various funding sources.
6. The implemented projects represent conservation work on 74% private lands, 24.75% federal and 1.25 percent state trust lands.
7. In addition to the above, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has reported a total of 2,513,132 acres throughout the state have had sage-grouse conservation practices applied and an additional 3,074,451 acres are planned.

The projects summarized above represent just a fraction of the sage-grouse conservation efforts within the state. A number of other projects and efforts via the Local Sage-Grouse Working Groups, industry efforts and regulatory stipulations and a number of Sage-Grouse planning and educational efforts have also occurred. According to the Wyoming Game & Fish Department there is a generally increasing population of grouse in the state of Wyoming. ***(Brief State of Sage-grouse Population Trends and Conservation Efforts in Wyoming as of May 28, 2008, Tom Christiansen, Sage-Grouse Program Coordinator)***

Subsequently, the Association does not believe listing is warranted and would submit that the conservation efforts have been and will continue to be effective in conserving, protecting and providing habitat for the Sage-Grouse.

Sincerely,

Bobbie K. Frank
Executive Director

Cc: WACD Board of Directors
Conservation Districts
National Association of Conservation Districts