



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

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The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 26, 2016

Dear Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of our more than six million members and supporters, the National Wildlife Federation and the undersigned affiliate organizations are writing to convey our strong opposition to H.R. 4739, the Greater Sage Grouse Protection and Recovery Act of 2016. We are asking you to ensure that similar harmful language will not be included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

By preventing the implementation of the conservation plans that have been developed by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, and blocking the listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse under the Endangered Species Act for the next decade, H.R. 4739 would only make the species' situation more dire, while stripping away the policy measures in place to ensure its survival. The Greater Sage-grouse population has been declining for decades, and the current population is estimated to be only 200,000 to 500,000 birds. Biologists estimate that the species used to number more than 16 million. The Greater Sage-grouse is also an indicator for the health of the sagebrush ecosystem, which provides habitat for over 350 other species, from little-known insects to mule deer. If we conserve the Sage-grouse and its habitat, we will also protect a wide range of other wildlife species, including pronghorn and Golden eagles, and ensure the continuation of our hunting, fishing, and conservation traditions.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision last September not to list Greater Sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act was based upon the collaborative efforts to protect the Sage-grouse, which were the foundation of federal and state conservation plans. The state management plans all differ - some include enforceable measures to conserve the bird, while others promote consultation with the appropriate state wildlife agency and provide conservation incentives. The federal plans provide a level of certainty for both the Sage-grouse and for the other wildlife that depend on the sagebrush landscape. It is crucial to recognize the importance of collaborative

management between the state and federal plans, and that blocking implementation of the federal land use plans also will undermine such collaboration to the detriment of all stakeholders.

H.R. 4739 would put the wildlife populations that rely on upon sagebrush habitat at risk. The federal and state plans need a chance to be effectively implemented and monitored. National Wildlife Federation and the undersigned affiliates urge you to avoid the inclusion of any language in the National Defense Authorization Act that would prevent these plans from moving forward and fulfilling their purpose of ensuring the long-term survival of the Greater Sage-grouse and the entire sagebrush ecosystem.

Sincerely,

National Wildlife Federation

Arizona Wildlife Federation

Colorado Wildlife Federation

Idaho Wildlife Federation

Montana Wildlife Federation

Nevada Wildlife Federation

South Dakota Wildlife Federation

Wyoming Wildlife Federation