

STATE OF NEVADA

KENNY GUINN
GOVERNOR



DELOYD SATTERTHWAITE, CHAIRMAN
BENNY ROMERO, VICE-CHAIRMAN

NEVADA RANGELAND RESOURCES COMMISSION

350 Capitol Hill Avenue
Reno, Nevada 89502-2923
Telephone: 775-688-1180 ~ Fax 775-688-1178

*Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission
Position Paper*

RE: Petition Requesting Listing of Greater Sage-grouse as an Endangered Species

Background

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is in receipt of Petitions requesting the listing of the Greater Sage-grouse as an endangered Species. A response to the petition is expected from the USFWS late in 2004.

Under the direction of Governor Kenny Guinn, the state of Nevada began in 2000 to formulate a Nevada and Eastern California Sage-grouse Conservation Plan, with the goal of identifying a planning strategy that would help conserve Sage-grouse and its habitat. Nevada's strategy is to prove to the USFWS that local and state groups can work together on the Sage-grouse issue without the vast economic impacts of an endangered species listing.

Approximately 44% of Nevada is listed as Sage-grouse habitat. An endangered species listing could halt, or severely restrict, land development, land use, water use and recreation in these areas. A key area that would likely be affected is public and private land livestock grazing.

Position Statement

While Sage-grouse numbers have declined from historic levels, but now appear to be stable, the Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission agrees with the State of Nevada and believes that current populations do not justify a listing as endangered at this time.

There is an opportunity to better manage the Sage-grouse habitat, and responsible grazing plays a vital role in that management. The NRRC believes that managed livestock grazing provides habitat attractive to Sage-grouse in the following ways:

- Grazing helps reduce fuel loads that can lead to destructive wildfires. Intensively managed grazing, mostly by sheep or goats, has been shown to substantially reduce fire fuels and can be used to create fuel breaks around communities and important resources.
- Grazing can improve meadow desirability by reducing cover for predators
- Grazing can prolong the availability and green growth of preferred plants
- Irrigated meadows associated with livestock production provide much needed water and green plants for Sage-Grouse, and increase Sage-Grouse habitat
- Grazing is compatible with vegetation management that creates a mosaic of successional stages on the landscape to benefit sage-grouse

The NRRC also encourages better land management by private landowners that will result in a habitat suitable for Sage-Grouse.

Scientific Support

Many scientific studies and papers support grazing as a method of managing the Sage-Grouse habitat and the NRRC's position. Some of these can be found in their entirety on the NRRC website, www.nevadarangelands.org:

- Back, G.N. An Industry Response to The Petition to List Sage-Grouse as Threatened or Endangered Under the Endangered Species Act and Public Comment
- Back, G.N., M.R. Barrington and J.K. McAdoo. 1987. Sage grouse use of snow burrows in northeastern Nevada. *Wilson Bulletin*. 99:488-490.
- Klebenow, D. A. 1970. Sage grouse versus sagebrush control in Idaho. *J. Range Manage.* 33:605-609.
- Klebenow, D.A. 1972. The habitat requirements of sage grouse and the role of fire in management. *Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference* 12:305-315.
- Klebenow, D.A. 1985. Habitat management for sage grouse in Nevada. *World Pheasant Association Journal* X:34-46.
- Klebenow, D.A., and G. M. Gray. 1968. Food habits of juvenile sage grouse. *Journal of Range Management* 21:80-83.
- Klebenow, D.A. 1982. Livestock grazing interactions with sage grouse. *Proc. Wildlife-Livestock Relationships Symp., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Univ. Idaho, Moscow.* pp. 113-123.