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**NEVADA RANGELAND RESOURCES COMMISSION RELEASES
INFORMATION ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WILDFIRES,
GRAZING AND SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION**

RENO, NEV. – The Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission (NRRC) has released information regarding the role of livestock grazing in helping to preserve Sage-Grouse habitat. Studies have proven that well-managed grazing can help limit the fuels that lead to destructive wildfires, one of the top three threats faced by the Sage-Grouse, according to the State of Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Team's recently released plan.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is considering listing the Sage-Grouse as an endangered or threatened species, and will release a preliminary finding late this year. Approximately 44 percent of Nevada is listed as Sage-Grouse habitat. If the Sage-Grouse were put on the endangered or threatened list, land development, land use, water use and recreation in those areas would be halted. One of the key areas affected would be livestock grazing on public and private land.

In fall of this year the State of Nevada Sage-Grouse Conservation Team unveiled its plan for Sage-Grouse conservation, which lists wildfire as the greatest threat facing the species in Nevada. Destructive wildfires, in part caused by drought and the spread of cheat grass, have increased in recent years, contributing to the loss of Sage-Grouse habitat. In areas where fuel loads are managed by controlled grazing, such fires are less common.

While overgrazing can contribute to habitat loss, managed grazing can benefit Sage-Grouse populations in additional ways:

- Reduction of the fuel load that leads to destructive wildfires
- Improved meadow desirability by reducing cover for Sage-Grouse predators
- Prolonged availability and green growth of preferred plants
- Irrigated meadows provide much needed water and green plants for Sage-Grouse, and increase Sage-Grouse habitat
- Creation of a better managed sage brush environment, rather than the over-mature sage brush habitat that exists today

While studies are inconclusive about the Sage-Grouse population in Nevada, the NRRC believes that current populations do not justify listing the bird on the endangered or threatened list, and that the opportunity exists for better management of Sage-Grouse habitat in Nevada.

The Nevada Legislature created the Rangeland Resources Commission in 1999, in response to concern about the decreasing viability of Nevada ranching. The NRRC is funded by the livestock industry to promote the benefits of rangelands through information, education and collaboration.

The Commission's stated mission is to inform the public that Nevada's rangelands are a vital economic resource, protected and preserved for all citizens by a stable, sustainable livestock industry.

The Commission's goals are:

- To promote public support for Nevada's range livestock industry.
- To broaden NRRC services and efforts to include all citizens and users of public lands.
- To achieve and sustain a healthy rangeland resource and livestock industry through responsible, scientifically based management.
- To educate the public that Nevada's rangelands are a renewable source of important consumer products and environmental values.

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