

STATE OF NEVADA

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NEVADA RANGELAND RESOURCES COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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*****MEDIA ADVISORY—PHOTO OPPORTUNITY*****

**NEVADA RANCHERS WORKING TO
CONSERVE SAGE-GROUSE**

WHO: Duane Combs, manager of the Smith Creek Ranch outside of Austin
Matt McKinney, manager of Bentley Agrowdynamics Cattle Operation in Gardnerville

WHAT: Duane Combs and Matt McKinney are two Nevada ranchers who began implementing activities directed at preserving sage-grouse habitat and increasing population before the State of Nevada's Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan was finalized. The methods they are using are examples of what the State proposes to help increase sage-grouse numbers and keep the species from an endangered species listing.

Duane Combs has brought five state agencies together to institute a pilot program in Porter Canyon, outside Austin. The project involves managing grazing, restoring watershed, removal of pinyon/juniper and overmature sage to attract sage-grouse. Through careful measurement and study, it's the project's goal to show that improvements and land management techniques can help restore habitat.

Matt McKinney has served on the several sage-grouse committees, and is actively implementing grazing practices that can increase sage-grouse numbers on the approximately 55,000 acres he grazes. From timing the grazing of cattle to avoid nesting sites to intensely grazing overmature sage brush, Matt and the agencies he works with are working together to conserve the sage-grouse.

Both these ranchers are available and eager to tell their stories to the press.

WHERE: Duane Combs, Smith Creek Ranch
smithcreekcowboy@hotmail.com
775-428-2910

Matt McKinney
matt.mckinney@bpb-co.com
775-783-8927

Please call either rancher to schedule an appointment, or call Suellen Knopick, 775-686-7432 for more information.

WHY: 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 the following ways;

- 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

BACKGROUND ON THE NRRC:

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.

For interview opportunities, please contact Suellen Knopick at KPS3, 775.686.7432 or suellen@kps3.com.

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