

United States Senate

June 4, 2024

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1894 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Stone-Manning:

On March 15, 2024, the Bureau of Land Management published the Greater Sage-Grouse Rangewide Planning Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft RMPA/EIS). I have many concerns with this Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment, especially with the limited time given for public comment. Given that the current 90-day comment period closes on June 13, 2024, I request that the Bureau of Land Management extend the comment period to a minimum of 180 days. Local stakeholders need more time to review the over 660-page document to give their accurate assessments.

The published management document would amend 77 separate land use plans across Western States, and affect up to 69 million acres across ten different Western states. This one-size-fits-all approach to land management is a disaster for local experts and officials and will create even more strife for stakeholders with vested interests in these acres that are de-facto withdrawn from development.

Additionally, the proposed plans prescribe unequal consideration between the impact of energy development and transmission, and the consequences of wildfire events and drought on sage-grouse habitat. We believe that this stems from a prejudice against oil and gas development, and neglects truly dangerous threats to species conservation. We request the Bureau incorporate more proactive management practices regarding ecological damage to habitat as the planning and public engagement process continues.

The Endangered Species Act listing prohibition for sage-grouse has been approved in every annual appropriation package since 2015 and was approved with the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 on March 9, 2024. This provision states that none of the funds made available under the current spending bill may be used by the Secretary of the Interior to propose greater sage-grouse for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). For years, communities and individuals across 10 Western states have worked together to conserve greater sage-grouse and ensure the species does not require listing.

The Bureau of Land Management has not shown that irreparable harm is occurring to Greater Sage Grouse or its habitat in Wyoming. Each Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) proposed is completely within Priority Habitat Management Areas. Core area, as defined by the state of Wyoming, already includes "special management attention" in the form of disturbance

caps, avoidance criteria, mitigation, timing stipulations and more. Layering leasing closures and no surface occupancy on top of the provisions included in Wyoming's executive order are not needed for the sustainability of the species or its habitat. In fact, the provisions in Wyoming's framework are based on the best available science and are proving effective. Wyoming Greater Sage Grouse populations are stable, the Wyoming executive order is working, reclamation practices are creating better habitat and the current and future operational impact of this industry is more compatible with healthy wildlife populations. The Bureau of Land Management's ultimate decision that the resources under consideration for Area of Critical Environmental Concern designation do not merit additional special management attention.

We remind the Bureau and other federal agencies that land management planning is supported by state and local community efforts, and that much of the progress made in conserving sage-grouse and their habitat has been a result of voluntary agreements and solutions from stakeholders. BLM must continue the good-faith understanding between state and local governments and impacted communities, and preserve flexible management practices.

We will continue to closely monitor the BLM review process for these management plans and expect to see our requests taken into consideration.

Sincerely,



John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator