



May 26, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 5665
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us and Governor Brian Sandoval last month to discuss important sage-grouse issues. We wanted to follow up on that discussion to reiterate the need for coordination between the Department of the Interior and the sage-grouse states through the Sage Grouse Task Force.

We understand that you are considering changing the Department's approach to sage-grouse, moving from a habitat management model to one that sets population objectives for the states. We are concerned that this is not the right decision. Our state agencies have decades of experience managing the species and we are willing to work with you to develop the best approach for managing the species on federal lands.

We also understand that you are considering directing the Bureau of Land Management to change the land use plans that were amended to address sage-grouse. The Task Force as a group and the sage-grouse states individually were directly involved in the development of those plan amendments. The states understand the provisions that need improvement and can help the Department develop ways to target those problematic provisions. Wholesale changes to the land use plans are likely not necessary at this time.

The problems we face in dealing with the Greater sage-grouse are not exclusive to the states or the federal government. State and federal partnerships such as the Task Force are important for identifying those problems and developing solutions. We hope that you will engage the Task Force before committing to making any changes.

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Matthew H. Mead.

Matthew H. Mead
Governor
State of Wyoming
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force

A blue ink signature of John Hickenlooper.

John Hickenlooper
Governor
State of Colorado
Co-Chairman, Sage Grouse Task Force