



Sept. 22, 2017

Dear Secretary Zinke,

Two years ago today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determine that the Greater Sage-grouse – one of the most iconic species in the West and the largest grouse in North America – did not warrant listing under the Endangered Species Act. This decision was made because communities like ours came together and worked with a wide array of bipartisan stakeholders across 11 western states to finalize a series of plans that not only protects sage-grouse, but bolsters local economies and protects national heritage. We, as local, western officials, respectfully ask that you leave these plans intact.

The sage-grouse's habitat, which consists largely of public land, is the lifeblood and central economic driver of so many communities in the West. Ranchers and sportsmen rely on the land for their livelihood, while businesses depend on the revenue generated by outdoor recreation on our public lands. Across the West, these sagebrush landscapes generate \$1 billion in the sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism sectors each year.

On Aug. 7, you announced that you will be making changes to the sage-grouse plans, behind closed doors in Washington, D.C., and without public input. These changes and the top-down approach to land management throws decades of collaborative work – done by westerners who are closest to the issue – into question.

At the Western Governors' Association meeting in June, governors made clear that they want to move forward in this effort to save the sage-grouse and a vitally important western landscape. Some of them, including Governors Matt Mead and John Hickenlooper, specifically asked you not to make any "wholesale changes" to the plans. But the Interior's recommendation creates the very uncertainties for industries, livestock producers and communities that the sage-grouse plans are designed to avoid. Additionally, it completely shuts the public out of the process.

Diverse stakeholders took a local-control approach and worked together to find common sense solutions to a problem that threatens their livelihood and way of life as much as it threatens the species. They recognized the need to protect sage-grouse

Western Leaders Network

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habitat – while still providing for varied uses of the land – because what happens to the sage-grouse and sagebrush lands affects westerners everywhere.

As local, western officials, we urge you to listen to us, as well as the governors, ranchers, sportsmen, industry officials, conservationists and other stakeholders who invested years of work into these management plans – and allow those plans to stay intact.

Sincerely,

Colorado

Eva Henry
Adams County Commissioner

Ross Cunniff
Fort Collins City Councilor

Nancy Jackson
Arapahoe County Commissioner

Dave Munk
Holy Cross Energy Board Director

Michael Whiting
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Rachel Richards
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Tim Corrigan
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Kris Holstrom
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