



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 14, 2014

GUNNISON COUNTY AND PARTNERS WILL CONTINUE GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION EFFORTS County Maintains Bird Can Be Protected Without Being Listed as Endangered or Threatened

Gunnison County, Colorado – Gunnison County Commissioners and the Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association welcomed a United States District Court judge's decision on May 6, 2014 to grant the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a six-month extension of the decision deadline on the proposed Endangered Species Act listing of the Gunnison sage-grouse.

For almost 20 years, Gunnison County and the Stockgrowers have been leaders in providing protections for the Gunnison sage-grouse and its habitat in the Gunnison Basin, which is home to several sub-populations that add up to 88% of the birds' total population. Through wise land use regulations and best management practices, Gunnison County and the Stockgrowers have proven that locally orchestrated conservation efforts are both successful and long lasting.

Gunnison County and the Stockgrowers are original members of the Gunnison Basin Sage Grouse Local Working Group, established in 1995. Its successor, the Gunnison Basin Sage-grouse Strategic Committee, formed in 2005, is made up of appointed representatives from Federal agencies (BLM, USFWS, NPS, USFS, NRCS), Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Gunnison County Stockgrowers, Gunnison County and Saguache County as well as appointed representatives from local recreation, development and environmental groups. With its partners on the Strategic Committee, they have worked tirelessly on measures that will result in precluding the need to list the Gunnison sage-grouse as either endangered or threatened. These efforts are also designed to protect the bird and its habitat well into the future.

Additionally, through the formation and actions of the County Coalition for the Gunnison Sage-grouse, the County Commissioners of 11 counties in Southwest Colorado and Southeast Utah – together with the State of Colorado and the State of Utah – have provided leadership and support to our communities. Over 120 land use regulations, seasonal road closures and policy changes have been implemented by the 11 counties in Colorado and Utah to the benefit of the Gunnison sage-grouse over the last 18 months.

Gunnison County and the Gunnison County Stockgrowers, along with the County Coalition, look forward to using the extension to continue conservation efforts, across the entire range, with support from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and our federal partners to the benefit of the Gunnison sage-grouse. Through these commitments and the available scientific data, we are confident that this local grassroots conservation effort will provide all the assurances necessary to protect the bird without the need to list under the ESA as endangered or threatened with special rules.

Finally, following the 2006 decision to not list the Gunnison sage-grouse under provisions of the ESA, Gunnison County and the Gunnison County Stockgrowers voluntarily continued, and in some areas increased, protections for the bird further demonstrating a true local commitment to safeguarding the bird and its habitat.

For more information, please contact Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners Chairperson Paula Swenson at (970) 209-6920.

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