

Montana Wildlife Federation ♦ Nevada Wildlife Federation ♦ Idaho Wildlife Federation  
Conservation Northwest (WA) ♦ South Dakota Wildlife Federation ♦  
Arizona Wildlife Federation ♦ Colorado Wildlife Federation  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR) ♦ Wyoming Wildlife Federation

May 22, 2018

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
US Senate  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
US Senate  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed:

Our organizations collectively represent tens of thousands of hunters and other wildlife conservationists across the West. We strongly support multiple-use public land management, on-the-ground wildlife conservation, and national defense readiness.

We are writing to urge you not to include any provisions on the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act that limit conservation actions to protect the greater sage-grouse. Specifically, we oppose the language that blocks the Interior Department from making an Endangered Species Act determination on the greater sage-grouse for ten years. Such a provision would undermine cooperative federal and state agreements and prevent future options to protect the species' habitat. It would threaten implementation of sage-grouse conservation plans developed by states and the federal government in 2015 after years of extensive local collaboration with conservationists, ranchers, the energy industry, and other stakeholders.

As you know, the Defense Department has clearly stated that the 2015 sage-grouse conservation plans would not impact military training, operations, or readiness. Military installations within sage-grouse range have found that sage-grouse conservation would have no impact on military mission responsibilities.

The sage-grouse conservation plans are crucial to preventing the greater sage-grouse from needing to be listed under the Endangered Species Act. The plans could keep the species under state management and avoiding the need for ESA-related regulations on land use and other activities in sage-grouse habitat. However, it is worth noting that the Defense Department has stated that even if the species were listed, there would be no significant impact to training, operations, or readiness.

Public lands across the West belong to all Americans, and the sage-grouse conservation plans reflect the great complexity of managing millions of acres for multiple uses, for the most people, across the spectrum of time. The sage-grouse plans were developed in good faith, based on the best scientific data, and in consultation with local stakeholders.

A controversial provision about sage-grouse conservation which is unrelated to military readiness unnecessarily complicates your important work to set crucial policy for our Armed Services and veterans. We thank you for your leadership on behalf of America's national security, and we urge you to resist pressure to use the National Defense Authorization Act as a platform for a political fight that is so clearly unrelated to national security.

Respectfully,

Dave Chadwick  
Executive Director  
Montana Wildlife Federation

Brian Brooks  
Executive Director  
Idaho Wildlife Federation

Robert Gaudet  
President  
Nevada Wildlife Federation

Suzanne O'Neill  
Executive Director  
Colorado Wildlife Federation

Mitch Friedman  
Executive Director  
Conservation Northwest (WA)

Bob Rees  
Executive Director  
Association of Northwest Steelheaders (OR)

Brad Powell  
President  
Arizona Wildlife Federation

Chris Hesla  
Executive Director  
South Dakota Wildlife Federation