

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

April 13, 2016

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of the undersigned sportsmen, conservation, and resource professional organizations, we would like to respectfully communicate our opposition to HR 4739, the Greater Sage Grouse Protection and Recovery Act of 2016. This legislation undermines existing conservation plans that were developed explicitly to keep the sage-grouse off of the endangered species list. Indeed, that goal was achieved in September 2015 when the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the greater sage-grouse was “not-warranted” for listing.

The successful not-warranted decision came after years of coordination with the states; but that decision was fundamentally predicated on the strength of the federal conservation plans. Those plans do include mineral withdrawal in the best priority habitat, withdrawals that are essential to the not-warranted decision, and essential to the long-term viability of the greater sage-grouse.

HR 4739 would represent an unprecedented shift in the management authority of federal public lands. Across the 11 western states that comprise the greater sage-grouse range, the quality of state conservation plans varies widely, and most by themselves do not adequately address threats to the species. If based only on state conservation plans, the undersigned organizations are confident that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service would have been compelled to reach a different decision in September. This legislation would inappropriately force state management of the federal conservation plans, a recipe for potential range-wide failure and an Endangered Species Act listing. Also, state plans were not developed under the auspices of federal land management laws like FLPMA and NEPA and, thus, are unacceptable for broad application on public lands.

Success for the greater sage-grouse is defined as its continued management by the states. Because of the combination of strong conservation plans on federal public lands, coupled with state conservation plans and voluntary efforts from private landowners, states continue to manage sage grouse. Future management by the states depends heavily on immediate and consistent implementation of all these combined efforts. It is also important to note that more is at stake than the sage-grouse. The sagebrush ecosystem is home to more than 350 different species of plants and animals, including such iconic species as mule deer, pronghorn and elk. If we can continue to successfully conserve sage-grouse and sagebrush, we will help prevent a cascade of future listings that could seriously impact the western economy.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue, and we look forward to working with you moving forward.

With regards,

Archery Trade Association

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Dallas Safari Club

Land Trust Alliance

Pheasants Forever

Pope and Young Club

Public Lands Foundation

Quail Forever

Quality Deer Management Association

Snook and Gamefish Foundation

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Wildlife Management Institute

Wildlife Mississippi

Cc: House Committee on Armed Services

Cc: House Committee on Appropriations