



# North American Grouse Partnership

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## *FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE NOTES CRITICAL SAGE GROUSE CONSERVATION NEEDS*

Williamsport, Md. – In a decision announced today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service set a course for conserving an icon of the western sagebrush community. Sage Grouse now occupy a much reduced portion of their historic range. Expansion of development into sagebrush habitat, conversion to agricultural uses and past grazing practices among other factors have combined to significantly reduce and fragment suitable habitat. Now, impacts associated with oil and gas exploration, potential wind energy development and disease, such as West Nile Virus, threaten further reductions.

In its decision today, the Fish and Wildlife Service begins a process during which decisions will be made that can profoundly affect the future of sage grouse and the sage community that in so many ways characterizes the western landscape. Loss of sage grouse and the habitat it depends on would signal the collapse of an entire natural community. “The North American Grouse Partnership is determined to work with the Service and other conservation partners to assure a viable future for sage grouse” affirmed Jim Mosher, executive director of the Partnership. “Its loss is unacceptable and would signify the demise of an entire ecosystem unprecedented in recent times.”

Failure to stem the loss of sage grouse would signal associated losses of many other species that share the same habitat. This doesn't have to be the outcome. Considerable science exists describing the fundamental needs of the species and effective management that can be undertaken. Success in avoiding the profound consequences that could follow a decision to list the sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act can be achieved through the collective action of all stakeholders including the energy industry, ranchers, federal and state agencies and conservationists. It will take that level of cooperation and determination by all interests to assure that sage grouse remain an important feature of the western landscape for future generations to enjoy.

**James A. Mosher, Exec. Dir.**

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*Our mission is to promote the conservation of grouse  
and the habitats necessary for their survival and reproduction*

