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In Reply Refer To:
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Memorandum

To: Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington D.C.

From: Joe Stout, Acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management, California
Brian Amme, Acting State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada 

Subject: Continued Commitments and Assurances to Implement Formalized Conservation Efforts for the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment of the Greater Sage-Grouse

This memorandum transmits and reaffirms our shared commitments and assurances that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will continue to implement formalized conservation efforts for the Bi-State distinct population segment (DPS) of the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*). We continue to be actively engaged in the highly effective collaborative conservation partnership embodied by the Bi-State Local Area Working Group (LAWG) and we remain firmly committed to working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and our other Federal, State, local and private partners, to cooperatively fund and implement the *Bi-State Action Plan*.

Our commitment to strategic implementation of the *Bi-State Action Plan* has been, and continues to be, a high priority for our field units in California and Nevada. Since 2014, we have directed over \$2.6 million (~ \$650,000 annually) to fund the implementation of "on-the-ground" habitat improvement projects and conservation actions for the Bi-State DPS. We have also leveraged funding opportunities in related program areas, such as our hazardous fuels, rangeland, recreation and riparian management programs, to further increase our overall implementation capabilities. The Bi-State LAWG is currently preparing a report that details the scope and scale of the conservation accomplishments that we, and our partners in this unprecedented collaborative conservation effort, have completed to date. The Bi-State Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) will be sending this report to your agency to consider during your on-going status review for the DPS.

In 2014, BLM field units in California and Nevada finalized a Service First Agreement with your Reno Fish and Wildlife Office and our Federal land management partners on the Humboldt-Toiyabe and Inyo National Forests. This agreement established an interagency framework for sharing field level staff, resources and programs across agency jurisdictional boundaries. This

agreement has provided, and will continue to provide, additional assurances for successful implementation of the *Bi-State Action Plan*. We have also established agreements with our partners at the U.S. Geological Survey, Nevada Department of Wildlife and Mono County that have substantially increased our collective capacity to implement the plan. In addition to increasing our capacity to implement habitat improvement projects, these agreements support the science, monitoring and analyses that inform our management decisions and site-specific project planning and prioritization. The science support we receive from these agreements provides increased assurances for project effectiveness.

In Nevada, we completed land use plan amendments for the Carson City and Tonopah Resource Management Plans (RMPs) in close coordination with the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. As a result, these RMPs now include updated land use plan guidance specifically focused on the conservation and enhancement of important habitats for the Bi-State DPS. They also ensure consistency across jurisdictional boundaries. The completion of these amendments in 2016 augments the regulatory soundness and proven effectiveness of the Bishop RMP in California. Together, these plans ensure that adequate regulatory mechanisms are now in place to conserve and restore habitat on public lands throughout the range of the DPS.

As members of the Bi-State EOC and signatories to the *Bi-State Action Plan*, we remain steadfast in our commitment to provide the annual funding (~ \$650,000 per year) needed to strategically implement the plan and ensure the long-term conservation of the Bi-State DPS. We also remain dedicated to our commitment to use a data-driven, science-based adaptive management approach to ensure that we continue to focus our conservation efforts on actions that will effectively ameliorate identified threats to the DPS. Consistent with your Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts, adaptive management continues to be a key component of the plan. To that end, we remain committed to refining our ten-year implementation strategy accordingly to ensure both “certainty of implementation” and “certainty of effectiveness” for the overall conservation effort.

We understand that the Service faces a complex and difficult decision as you complete the court mandated status review of the Bi-State DPS. However, we also remain confident that the demonstrated interagency coordination and commitment to implement the *Bi-State Action Plan*, combined with the high level of support from the Bi-State LAWG, provides a level of collaboration and conservation certainty that is difficult to achieve once a species is listed.

If we can provide any additional information that may be useful in your status review, please have your staff contact the appropriate field office. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding the commitments and assurances articulated above, please contact us.

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