



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Intermountain Region
324 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401

Pacific Southwest Region
1323 Club Drive
Vallejo, CA 94592-1110

File Code: 2600

Date:

DEC 11 2018

United States Fish & Wildlife Service
Main Interior Building
1849 C Street NW, Room 3331
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Acting Director, Margaret Everson:

The purpose of this letter is to reaffirm the USDA Forest Service's commitment to aggressively implement conservation actions in support of maintaining and improving habitat and species viability for the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment of the Greater Sage Grouse. As stated in the enclosed June 10, 2014, letter to the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service continues to be highly engaged in the Bi-State Local Area Working Group (LAWG), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) and remains firmly committed to completing its share of the Bi-State Action Plan.

Since our 2014 commitment letter, the Forest Service has directed \$4.8 million and improved over 23,000 acres of Bi-State Sage-grouse habitat through the removal of encroaching conifers, meadow restoration, and invasive weed eradication. This work comprises approximately 35 percent of the total conservation work on National Forest System lands identified in the Bi-State Action Plan. The Forest Service has also provided over \$700,000 to the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct population monitoring and evaluate the effectiveness of habitat treatments.

To ensure consistency across jurisdictional boundaries the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest worked collaboratively with the BLM in Nevada, completing Land and Resource Management Plan amendments in 2015, specifically focused on conservation and enhancement of important habitat. The Inyo National Forest also revised its Forest Plan. As required by the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), the revised plans include direction to provide the ecological conditions necessary to support the persistence of the Bi-State Sage-grouse in the plan area. Species-specific plan components, including standards or guidelines, are included in the revised plans and have already facilitated several land use decisions that avoided or minimized and fully mitigated environmental effects to Bi-State habitat.

Please see the enclosed revised Forest Service Bi-State Restoration Work Plan, which outlines how the agency plans to complete its share of Bi-State Action Plan conservation projects. We remain firmly committed to directing the estimated \$8.8 million required to implement this work on the Inyo and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests and completing it over the next 5-6 years.

The Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) for the Bi-State LAWG has submitted a summary of its conservation accomplishments to date under separate cover to your agency. We hope you will consider our significant accomplishments to date along with this Forest Service commitment



as you evaluate development of either a final rule to list the species, or a finding that listing is no longer warranted.

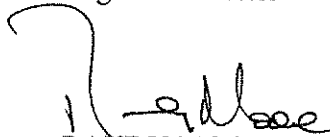
With this letter we wish to clearly indicate our commitment to conservation of the species and its habitats. We will continue to maintain close relationships with your staff and our partners to prioritize funding where biological benefits are maximized.

If you have any questions, please contact either Kathryn Conant, Acting Director of Natural Resources, Intermountain Region at kconant@fs.fed.us or 801-625-5669 or John Exline, Director of Ecosystem Management, Pacific Southwest Region at 707-562-8689.

Sincerely,



NORA B. RASURE
Regional Forester



RANDY MOORE
Pacific Southwest Regional Forester

Enclosures:

1. Bi-State Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration Work Plan: 2019 update, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
2. Bi-State Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration Work Plan: 2019 Update, Inyo National Forest
3. Bi-State Sage-grouse Habitat Restoration Summary of 2014-2018 Accomplishments
4. June 10, 2014, USDA Letter of Commitment to the US Fish & Wildlife Service

cc: Bill Dunkelberger, Kathryn Conant, Diana Craig, Tamara Randall-Parker