

Info Alert

National Conference of State Legislatures Office of State-Federal Relations

Sept. 22, 2015

Department of Interior Announces it Will Not List Sage Grouse as Endangered Species

The sage grouse, a type of bird found in the western United States, will not be listed as “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act, Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Sally Jewell announced Sept. 22.

DOI found that conservation efforts across the west have reduced threats to 90 percent of the species’ breeding habitats.

In 2011, DOI was court-mandated to further study the sage grouse population and determine by Sept. 30, 2015 whether to label it as an endangered species. The endangered classification comes with a host of mandatory protections for any area in which the species’ habitat lies, including robust federal oversight into land management of the areas.

Along with the announcement, DOI also finalized its [federal land management plans](#) for the 10 states with public lands that are home to sage grouse habitats. The plans were originally proposed at the end of May 2015 and include strategies related to improving habitat conditions, fighting rangeland fires and minimizing new or additional surface disturbances.

DOI had been collaborating with state governments, western land owners, energy developers, and environmentalists over the past few years to protect the sage grouse through conservation efforts, in hopes that the agency would not have to list the sage grouse on the endangered species list. These groups’ reactions to the announcement and land management plans varied from positive to negative. Lawsuits challenging the decision are likely to be filed.

For more information on the sage grouse population and the land management plans see our [blog](#).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the announcement, please do not hesitate to contact NCSL staff [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779) or [Melanie Condon](#) (202-624-3597).