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## Local Partnership Keeps Bi-State Sage Grouse Off Endangered Species List

After years of work to help keep the Eastern Sierra's Bi-State sage grouse off the list of nationally-protected endangered species, a verdict has been reached. On Tuesday, April 21, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has determined that the Bi-State population of Greater sage grouse will not be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

This decision is largely thanks to the efforts of the Bi-State Local Area Working Group (LAWG), a dynamic partnership of ranchers, conservationists, agency and county representatives, and concerned citizens. The Bi-State LAWG created and implemented the Bi-State Action Plan, a long-term, collaborative conservation strategy that lays the groundwork to protect the sage grouse. The plan's goal is to help sage grouse populations rebound without enacting land use restrictions that an endangered species listing would impose. The, "collaborative, science-based efforts (of the Bi-State LAWG) are proof that we can conserve sagebrush habitat across the West while we encourage sustainable economic development," Secretary Jewell said in a statement.

The Greater sage grouse is an unusual, ground-nesting bird found in pockets throughout the American West; it depends primarily on sagebrush habitat for food and shelter. The Eastern Sierra's distinct population is often seen on rangeland where irrigation and sustainable grazing provide an ideal environment for nesting and raising their young. But these working pastures pose serious risks to the sage grouse, and the barbed wire fences that encircle them snare a large number of these birds every year.

With a plan in place that will provide, "the single largest sage grouse restoration commitment in history," according to the Sage Grouse Initiative, "focus is now shifting to accelerating conservation on the ground." Organizations such as Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) have been directing efforts to protect sage grouse habitat: by working to prevent development in high-priority areas, and by "tagging" fences to make them more visible to the birds. With partial funding assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), ESLT completed a conservation easement last fall at Sinnamon Meadows, a 1,240-acre ranch that contains critical sage grouse habitat. Since protecting the landscape against future development, ESLT and volunteers have tagged fences to make this property safer for sage grouse.

"The teamwork that went into the Bi-State Action Plan provided the proactive restoration of habitat that was needed to prevent the sage grouse from being listed," commented ESLT Executive Director, Kay Ogden. "These partnerships between members of the ranching community, Mono County, and local and state agencies



have provided a foundation on which the long-term protection of this unique species can be built.

“The Bi-State sage grouse is one of those iconic species that represents how unique – and fragile – our Eastern Sierra landscape truly is. ESLT is committed to working hand in hand with landowners to ensure that these unusual birds continue to have a home here long into the future.”

*For more information, an online version of the Bi-State Action Plan can be downloaded through the Nevada Department of Wildlife ([www.ndow.org](http://www.ndow.org)).*

*ESLT works with willing landowners to preserve vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical, and watershed values. ESLT’s goal is to preserve a healthy balance of land uses that can be sustained forever, ensuring both a strong local economy and environment. To learn more about ESLT’s ongoing efforts to permanently protect the Eastern Sierra’s wild and working lands, please visit [www.eslt.org](http://www.eslt.org).*

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Sample low-resolution photos shown below; high-resolution photos are attached to email. For additional pictures, please contact Marguerite at [marguerite@eslt.org](mailto:marguerite@eslt.org).



*The Bi-State Greater sage grouse was proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2013. Extensive collaborative conservation efforts between private landowners and local and state agencies has laid the groundwork for the long-term protection of this unique bird. Photo courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management.*



*On Tuesday, this dedicated group of Eastern Sierra leaders and sage grouse advocates traveled to Reno to be a part of the conversation regarding the pivotal decision not to list the Bi-State Greater sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. Those pictured here include: Mono County Supervisor Fred Stump, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, and BLM-California State Director Jim Kenna.*