

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 27, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Zinke:

We write regarding the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Notice of Intent to Amend Land Use Plans Regarding Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Prepare Associated Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessment rule published in the Federal Register on October 11, 2017.

Westerners spent years working on state and federal plans to improve the management of public lands, to address the threat of wildland fire to sagebrush habitat, and to provide incentives for landowners and livestock producers to conserve sage grouse habitat. Together these collaborative efforts eliminated the need for Endangered Species Act protection for the Greater sage-grouse. These efforts also protected habitat for other species in decline – like mule deer, pronghorn, and elk – and created certainty for landowners and producers whose livelihood is tied to the landscape. Western governors continue to stress that a complete overhaul of the sage grouse conservation plans are not needed and have requested to be involved in any proposed changes.

The BLM's recent notice of intent to amend the land use plans will affect stakeholders across 11 western states. Given the importance and complexity of the proposed rule, and the intersection with BLM's resource management plans, it is essential that all stakeholders have sufficient opportunity to prepare and provide feedback. We are concerned that the current 45 day comment period is not sufficient and therefore request a comment period extension of at least 45 additional days. We understand that the Department has scheduled public meetings and we hope that it provides ample opportunity for public input on this important issue.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez-Masto
United States Senator