



## COMPILATION OF RECENT REPORTS & SURVEYS FOCUSED ON GREATER SAGE-GROUSE

### Voter Polling Results on Greater Sage-Grouse – *Three Bipartisan Polls*

- I. Bipartisan poll, released in June 2015, conducted by Benson Strategy Group and Public Opinion Strategies, commissioned by The **Pew Charitable Trusts**. Respondents were registered voters who live in **counties with Greater Sage-grouse habitat** in CA, CO, ID, MT, ND, NV, OR, SD, UT, WA, and WY.
  - To find out more about the poll and associated [public memo](#), including [slide deck](#).
  - Poll focused on attitudes of voters in more rural counties towards BLM plans to address sage-grouse habitat - majority, bipartisan support amongst these westerners for conservation, even if it means restricting some energy development.
    - 3 in 4 voters (76%) believe it is important to take action to protect its habitat.
    - This includes 68% of Republicans, 78% of Independents and 95% of Democrats.
  - “The data is clear that voters in rural western counties where sage-grouse live believe it’s important to protect sage-grouse habitat. Support for the BLM/USFS sage-grouse plans is substantial across party lines, including a majority of Republicans, Independents and Democrats who support the plans,” says Danny Franklin, Benson Strategy Group.
  - Ken Rait, public lands director at The Pew Charitable Trusts, says, “The Bureau of Land Management has the backing it needs from residents of sage-grouse counties to finalize plans that balance conservation and development across the interior West. This support is substantial amongst Republicans, Independents, and Democrats alike across this mostly rural region. This bipartisan poll shows that the people most affected by these decisions favor the responsible protections that BLM is on the verge of finalizing. Local residents favor strengthening rather than weakening these plans in order to most effectively protect important publicly-owned natural areas and preserve the western way of life.”
- II. In February 2015, the **Colorado College’s Conservation in the West** poll results continue to show that **western voters**, by a wide margin (69%), support BLM establishing stronger protections for Greater Sage-grouse and its habitat. Read [memo](#) and see specific poll results on sage-grouse [here](#) (page 4), access to full voter survey results [here](#).
- III. Bipartisan poll, released in July 2014, was conducted by Benson Strategy Group and Public Opinion Strategies, commissioned by The **Pew Charitable Trusts**.
  - To find out more about the [poll](#) and associated [public memo](#).
  - Poll shows that well over 3/4 of **voters in the American West** say it is important to protect the sage-grouse habitat, and an overwhelming majority support stronger Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans to protect the bird and its habitat.
  - Support crossed party lines, with rural voters and outdoorsmen (defined as those who hunt, fish, or go off-roading) providing particularly strong backing of conservation efforts. Plus, 76% of OR voters, 71% of CO, 72% of NV, and 63% of MT voters responded in favor of stronger action by the BLM to protect sage-grouse and its habitat.
  - “These results demonstrate broad and durable backing for safeguarding the sage-grouse and its habitat,” said Danny Franklin, a partner at Benenson Strategy Group. “Voters believe this issue to be an important one, and they are in favor of strong plans to ensure the protection of the sage-grouse and other wildlife that live on these lands.”
  - “This poll shows support for the BLM to finalize scientifically based plans that strike a responsible balance between conservation and development,” said Ken Rait, a director of Pew’s U.S. public lands project. “The BLM has the public’s support to get this done and done right.”

### Western Sportsmen Poll on Greater Sage-Grouse

- Poll was released in Nov 2014. *The Greater Sage-Grouse: Hunter opinions regarding potential conservation strategies in eleven western states*, was conducted by Southwick Associates and was commissioned by The National Wildlife Federation.
- Read the poll results [here](#) and the press release [here](#).
- Results show that a majority of sportsmen surveyed in 11 Western states back restrictions in important habitat to save the greater sage-grouse and avoid its placement on the federal Endangered Species List.
  - 9 out of 10 hunters believe it is important to take action to protect sage-grouse habitat within their state. Moreover, 84 % of hunters support steps by the BLM to protect critical sage-grouse habitat even if it means limiting energy development, grazing rights or access for motorized recreation on those lands.
  - Hunters generally link protection of sage-grouse habitat with maintaining healthy populations of other wildlife species. About 81% of hunters are at least somewhat convinced that steps taken to protect the sage grouse, such as maintaining large tracts of undisturbed lands or limiting resource extraction activities, also benefits other game species

that share the same habitat (e.g., elk, mule deer, pronghorn) and preserves hunting traditions long associated with the American West.

- Nearly 79% of the respondents had fished or hunted on public land in their state in the past year.
- “A listing likely would lead to more stringent, long-term constraints that would affect such activities as hunting, fishing, recreation and grazing,” said John Gale, NWF’s national sportsmen’s campaign manager.
- Land Tawney, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers - “because the majority of greater sage-grouse habitat is on public lands, the Bureau of Land Management and states where the bird is found must step up now. It’s not just about the bird; it’s about the herds of mule deer and pronghorns, the hunting and other recreation made possible by healthy habitat.”

## **Recreation Spending & BLM Sagebrush Lands**

- The report, available [here](#), was released in September 2014.
- Peer-reviewed report commissioned by the Western Values Project and The Pew Charitable Trusts, is the first of its kind to look solely at the economic contributions of recreational spending across the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem on BLM lands in the western United States.
- The report, prepared by Eugene, Oregon firm ECONorthwest, finds that visits to BLM-managed lands in 11 western states resulted in an economic output of over \$1 billion in 2013 alone.
- According to data collected by the BLM, the study found that approximately 13.8 million recreational visits to BLM sagebrush occurred in 2013, which equals 22% of the 61.7 million recreational visits to all BLM lands that year.
- The Greater Sage-grouse is considered by biologists to be an indicator species, which means its population numbers signify the health of the entire sagebrush ecosystem. With more than 50% of the bird’s habitat on public, federally-managed lands, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management currently is in the midst of developing land-use plans to protect and conserve this habitat. Protecting the sage-grouse habitat would conserve open spaces and protect other wildlife so Americans can enjoy activities like hiking, camping, hunting and fishing.
- “We live, work and play in the outdoors,” said Ron Hunter, Patagonia Inc.’s environmental programs manager in Reno, Nevada. “Conserving lands in sagebrush country is critical to wildlife such as the sage-grouse and Americans’ ability to explore the West and enjoy our great outdoors.”
- “The lands where greater sage-grouse and other wildlife and plants thrive provide an economic stimulus to local communities,” said Kristin Lee of ECONorthwest. “The numbers show us that visitors engage in a wide range of recreational activities in sagebrush country, and they, in turn, make real contributions to the economies of all the states where greater sage-grouse live.”

## **Analysis of the Overlap between Priority Greater Sage-Grouse Habitats and Existing and Potential Energy Development Across the West**

- The report, available [here](#), was released in October 2014.
- Report commissioned by the Western Values Project concluded that overlap between the best acres for energy development and the Priority Areas for Conservation are minimal or, in some cases, nonexistent. The report found minimal overlap between important Greater Sage-grouse habitat and existing energy leases and rights of way and that 73 - 81 % of areas with medium to high potential for energy development are outside the bird’s most important habitat.
- A balanced approach to protecting the sage-grouse’s habitat—along with the hundreds of wildlife species and the numerous recreational uses that share the sagebrush ecosystem—is therefore compatible with continued energy development in the American West.
- “Put simply, robust energy development and sage-grouse habitat conservation can and do coexist,” said Ross Lane, Director of Western Values Project. “This report is just further proof that BLM and the states have the opportunity right now to conserve our western way of life—and they need to take that opportunity. The verdict is in: Greater sage-grouse conservation protects hundreds of millions of dollars for western economies without putting energy development at risk.”

## **Audubon Chapters From Across the Nation Come Together On Greater Sage-Grouse**

- Independent chapters of the National Audubon Society came together to urge the Department of Interior for the need for rapid, meaningful landscape scale conservation actions.
- A total of 160 Chapters from 37 states (including 9 in CO), representing over 140,000 members of diverse political backgrounds came together to speak on behalf of this iconic species. Read letter [here](#), dated December 5, 2014.
- Audubon believes threats to Greater Sage-grouse should be addressed through coordinated and consistent application of science to policy and management actions. While the challenge is great, success is possible and could be one of the defining conservation efforts of this federal administration.