

December 10, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President, United States of America

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

Dear President Obama, Senator McConnell, Senator Reid, Representative Ryan, and Representative Pelosi:

As you work to write legislation that will fund the Federal government in 2016, we urge you to refrain from including extraneous provisions – riders – that would undermine important public health, environmental, and conservation statutes, as well as recent progress the Administration has made in these areas.

Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that a handful of Republicans in Congress are attempting to thwart westerners' hard work and collaborative efforts to preserve the sage-grouse and public land habitat. As we understand it, there are efforts to place a rider in the year-end spending bill that would bar the implementation of the Bureau of Land Management's and the U.S. Forest Service's 15 sage-grouse conservation plans. This would ignore the will of western stakeholders who came together and will result in new litigation and could easily result in the bird being listed under the ESA, an outcome that many of the same members have previously opposed.

As westerners who want to protect our outdoor economies and way of life, including the over \$1 billion in economic output through the outdoor recreation industry that sagebrush ecosystems support every year, we are asking you to reject any effort that undermines the implementation of these common sense plans.

These plans were crafted through the collaboration and hard work of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, western states and their governors, local communities and many other stakeholders— including hunters, fishermen, ranchers, business owners, conservationists, and energy companies.

Moreover, these plans were specifically designed to conserve areas with minimal potential for energy development and allow businesses to develop other areas where there is an economically-viable potential for energy development. The plans provide energy developers with the certainty to plan for future development. They reflect a conscious effort by the BLM and Forest Service to manage lands that belong to all Americans in a manner that leaves them in better shape than they are today, all while strengthening our western economy and outdoor way of life.

It is clear that some officials who are attempting to bar the implementation of these plans are simply unwilling to take “yes” for an answer. They are out of touch with the solid, bipartisan majority of westerners who support the plans. Those of us who live in the West have been working diligently with various stakeholders to find common ground to better manage public lands owned by all Americans, while maintaining the multiple use philosophy set forward by visionaries like Gifford Pinchot and

Theodore Roosevelt. Simply put, westerners' years-long investment of time and resources deserves to be respected, and the plans must be given a chance to work.

Throughout the multiyear process that brought us to this point, westerners were able to check their politics at the door and roll up their sleeves when it came to doing the hard work to save the sage-grouse. It's time those in Congress acknowledge that and take a lesson from westerners by allowing the plans to move forward.

Sincerely,

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