

November 17, 2020

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chair McCollum, Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Joyce, and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of hunters, anglers, conservationists and outdoor recreation enthusiasts represented by our organizations, we are writing to request your support for removing the greater sage-grouse funding rider in the FY2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which prohibits the Department of Interior from using any funds to make decisions regarding the listing of the greater sage-grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Included in annual appropriations since FY2014, the funding preclusion ignores the science-based conclusions of the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is an unnecessary interference by the Congress in science-based regulations set forth by the Endangered Species Act. The continued inclusion of this rider is a dangerous precedent for Congressional intervention in the Service's mission to assess the biological status of species and determine whether they warrant protections under the ESA. Efforts to influence the listing of species via the appropriations process are not conducive to science-based decision making, excluding wildlife biologists from the established procedures and benchmarks set forth by the ESA. Rather than top-down, Congressionally-mandated ESA actions, we believe these decisions should begin in the field – not the appropriations process.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback and look forward to working with you to ensure the ongoing success of efforts to conserve both the iconic sage landscape and the greater sage-grouse.

Sincerely,  
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
National Wildlife Federation  
North American Grouse Partnership  
Pope & Young Club  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wildlife Management Institute

