

Letter to Accompany Version 1

Well, we're in it. Early in the opening quarter of the "Super Bowl of Sage Grouse", an overriding gargantuan effort that ignores previous efforts, but will now define how sage grouse is to be managed on federal lands. If implemented and found sufficient by inevitable court rulings, it will arguably prevent the listing of the bird as "threatened" or "endangered". Betcha didn't see that coming, but, if not, you're in good company. It's totally new, the product of these recent developments:

- A plea for help from the Western state wildlife agencies, arguing their inability to cope with sage grouse as a listed species and urging collective actions to prevent that,
- A clear warning from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that in the absence of an adequate regulatory environment, particularly on BLM lands, sage grouse would almost certainly be listed by 2015, and,
- General agreement that the "Wyoming approach" of identifying the most important areas of sage grouse habitat and use—the "core" areas—coupled with strict management requirements for activities within those areas is perhaps the most effective and expedient way to provide for regulatory adequacy on federal lands.

So, here we go. BLM has rolled out their strategy for managing the unprecedented zoning of over ____ million acres of lands and defining how grazing, mining, energy production and power transmission will proceed within the zones most important to the life cycle of sage grouse. All will be effected, perhaps drastically, for implicit in the definition of "how" land uses proceed is question of "if" they will proceed at all.

This process will be complex and messy, as you can see from the attached "volume I" of what we propose as a regular chronology of what happens from here on out. Frankly, we doubt that any single company or even trade association can afford the time necessary to monitor the interactions of two federal agencies, at least 10 state agencies, the West's political establishment, the courts and the various interest groups in their efforts to implement and influence this massive strategy.

That's where our firm can provide some assistance. We'll do the legwork for you, attending meetings, talking with agency officials, ferreting out the back-channel discussions and reporting it to all who desire. We'll do the travel and do the writing, so you can use accurate, objective information to chart your own course through what most would view as a legal, technical and bureaucratic morass. We'll also be available to meet with your own constituencies for in-depth discussions and suggestions for constructive involvement.

Who are "we?" Good question. We are a group of seasoned natural resource professionals, all of whom have been major players on the national and state levels through any number of equally complex issues. Our group includes:

- Joe Hinson, founder of Northwest Natural Resource Group, LLC., and architect of a number of conservation agreements for various “at risk” species, including sage grouse. He is also a veteran lobbyist, formerly representing the forest products industry at state and national levels.
- Jim Caswell, former national director of the BLM after retiring from the Forest Service and serving as Administrator of Idaho’s Office of Species Conservation. No one knows the ESA and the inner workings of the federal bureaucracy as Jim does.
- Winston Wiggings, former Director, Idaho Department of Lands, with years of experience in working with state agencies and legislatures, and,
- Bruce Smith, former Forest Service wildlife biologist and now a practicing environmental attorney, specializing in ESA and water issues.

Our plan is simple—become, hopefully with the full support of the involved agencies, an integral part of this effort, sharing information and insights with a group of subscribers who share the costs. We won’t presume to represent the views of any single subscriber, but we will provide objective information so each can decide actions that might be appropriate. In this case, we will be reporters, not advocates.

At least once each month, we’ll send an electronic newsletter, describing recent events, offering expert insights and letting you know of “red flags” and opportunities where our supporters may want to interact with the process directly. We’ll also keep an eye on related court cases and decisions, as well as relevant political developments. Finally, the price you pay will allow us to meet personally with each subscriber at least once in 12 month period for personal briefings and off-the-record suggestions for possible courses of action.

The costs? We’ll at first blush, it will appear pretty expensive for a monthly newsletter. However, perhaps a better way to view it is a your retainer with us that will allow us to do the travel and spend the time necessary for the job at hand. This is all new to us, too, and accurate estimates of time and travel won’t be possible for a while. So, what we’re suggesting is a six month trial for all of us so that we can better understand our time commitments as well as the market. Obviously, the more subscribers, the lower the cost for any single one. Our objective is to cover our costs and be compensated for our time at reasonable rates. We’re happy to adjust the subscription costs by the level of participation.

Right now, we’re anticipating that a six month trial will cost in the range of \$3-5,000 for individual companies, \$6-10,000 for state level associations and \$10-20,000 for regional or national associations. We fully anticipate that associations will distribute our information within their own organizations and share the costs internally. That’s fine with us, but each issue will be copyrighted and will not be shared beyond the subscribers, which is only fair to those who are paying.

That's our pitch. This is going to be a wild ride and we can only offer to help people understand why they're in it and what might happen. So, at this point, we need to know if we have a viable product and hope you'll give us a call or an email to discuss and let us know your level of interest in being an initial subscriber. If we get enough support, we'll launch in time for the projected release of "interim management measures" by the BLM in late September.

Thanks and we'll look forward to hearing from you.