



**Western
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Working to protect and restore Western Watersheds and Wildlife

For immediate release - April 14, 2011

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Western Watersheds Project Wins Court Ordered Deadline For Removal of Livestock From 450,000 Acres of Sage-Grouse Habitat On Public Lands in Southwest Idaho.

Greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits and Slickspot peppergrass have won a reprieve from livestock grazing which has decimated their populations and destroyed their habitat in the Jarbidge Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management southwest of Twin Falls, Idaho.

On Wednesday April 13, 2011 Chief Judge B. Lynn Winmill of the United States District Court for Idaho agreed with Western Watersheds Project and denied a motion filed by a small number of corporate ranching entities to stay the courts previous decision enjoining livestock grazing on 17 grazing allotments covering 450,000 acres of public land. The District court further ordered that cattle be removed from the allotments by May 3, 2011.

"This is a welcome decision that will free hundreds of thousands of acres of critical sage-grouse habitat from the negative impacts of livestock," said Jon Marvel, Executive Director of Western Watersheds Project.

"Closing these allotments to livestock grazing makes sense in light of the collapse of the sage-grouse populations across the Jarbidge, " said Todd C. Tucci, senior attorney with Advocates for the West who represented Western Watersheds Project in this litigation. "BLM now has a choice either support this closure and modify grazing in the remaining sage-grouse habitat in the Jarbidge Field Office to reflect the best available scientific information on sage-grouse, or not. We are committed to working with BLM to find solutions if they choose to work collaboratively, and we are equally committed to protecting the remaining sage grouse populations and habitat if they don't" said Tucci.

The February 28, 2011 decision that reimposed a 2005 federal court injunction of livestock grazing on 28 grazing allotments in the Jarbidge Field Office Bureau of Land Management (BLM) found that BLM managers violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act. In September 2005 Western Watersheds Project, ranchers and the BLM had entered into an agreement allowing some ongoing grazing and requiring the BLM to develop a new Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Jarbidge Field Office and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for that plan. In the interim five years, BLM has failed to issue the required EIS and RMP.

"For years the most basic needs of wildlife in the Jarbidge have been ignored at the behest of a few politically privileged corporate ranchers." said Katie Fite, Biodiversity Director for Western Watersheds Project. "It's high time the BLM confront the damage it has created," said Fite.

Recent data from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game shows that sage-grouse populations in the Jarbidge Field Office are in a free fall, with declines of over 90% since 2006 alone. For example, in the Browns Bench area of the Field Office, total male sage-grouse lek counts are down from 185 in 2006 to 29 in 2010, and some areas are in an even steeper decline.

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