

DENVER POST

December 4, 2007

denver and the west

Interior to reopen probe of decisions on species

The Department of Interior will reopen its investigation into disputed decisions on endangered species made by a Bush administration political appointee accused of improper meddling in eight other cases.

Inspector General Earl Devaney has promised U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., that his office will look into 13 decisions on endangered-species protections overseen by ousted official Julie MacDonald.

Among the Colorado species affected are the greater sage grouse, the Gunnison sage grouse and Gunnison's prairie dog.

Over the summer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledged that MacDonald wrongly overturned eight decisions on protections for endangered species, but Wyden's request expands the inquiry.

Many of the decisions encompassed by the new investigation already have been contested in court by environmental organizations. *Steve Lipsher, The Denver Post*