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Ex-wildlife official's interference cited

A former Fish and Wildlife Service official improperly scuttled efforts to list the Gunnison sage grouse as endangered, according to an internal agency document obtained by an environmental organization.

Julie MacDonald resigned her post in May after a critical report from the Government Accountability Office found that she meddled in several decisions under the Endangered Species Act.

The June 21 memo indicates that the agency's Washington and regional offices pressured field staff to alter their determination that the sage grouse was endangered, even though fewer than 5,000 breeding birds are believed to survive in southwestern Colorado and southeastern Utah.