

**CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
CHRISTIANS CARING FOR CREATION
SAGEBRUSH SEA CAMPAIGN
WESTERN WATERSHEDS PROJECT**

**DIVERSE COALITION PRESENTS CASE FOR MONO BASIN SAGE
GROUSE PROTECTION**

**Unique bird in E. CA and W. NV threatened by livestock grazing, off-road vehicles,
and development**

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
November 10, 2005

Contact: Daniel R. Patterson, Desert Ecologist, Center 760.366.2232 x 306 or 520.906.2159 (cell)
Mark Salvo, Director, Sagebrush Sea Campaign 503.757.4221
Jon Marvel, Director, Western Watersheds Project 208.788.2290

BISHOP, CA – Conservation and faith organizations petitioned the United States Fish and Wildlife Service today to protect an endangered population of greater sage-grouse located in eastern California and western Nevada.



The petition was submitted on behalf of the Sagebrush Sea Campaign, Christians Caring for Creation, Western Watersheds Project, and the Center for Biological Diversity by the Stanford Law School Environmental Law Clinic, and stated that the once-populous Mono Basin area sage grouse will go extinct without immediate intervention. The organizations asked the Bush Administration to protect the Mono Basin area sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

Once abundant throughout the eastern Sierra Nevada, Mono Basin area sage grouse populations have plummeted over the past century. Only several small isolated populations remain. Recent genetic research shows that the Mono Basin area sage grouse is genetically distinct from other greater sage-grouse that inhabit other western states, their unique genetic traits having evolved in isolation from other greater sage-grouse over the past 10,000 years.

“This is one of the most majestic and ecologically significant species to inhabit the western United States,” said Mark Salvo, Director of the Sagebrush Sea Campaign. “We must not allow any population of sage grouse to be lost.”

The Endangered Species Act recognizes the importance of conserving genetically unique populations of native flora and fauna. The genetically distinct Mono Basin area sage grouse occur only in small populations stretching from the White Mountains to the region near Carson City, Nevada. The largest populations are centered around Long Valley, Mono Lake and the Bodie Hills in California.

“Our research and petition shows Mono Basin sage grouse need Endangered Species Act protection to survive and recover,” explains Daniel R. Patterson, Desert Ecologist with the Center for Biological Diversity. “Listing will bring more resources, focus, and incentives for conservation of Mono basin sage grouse and open space. Saving these unique birds and the places they live is the right and ethical thing to do, and we’re asking the Bush Interior Dept. to cooperate and help.”

Mono Basin area sage grouse require large areas of unbroken healthy sagebrush-steppe, wet meadows, desert springs and riparian areas. Sage grouse habitat in the region has been fragmented by roads, development, conversion, and other human activities. The limited grouse population faces numerous threats, including inappropriate livestock grazing, agricultural conversion, private land development, wildfire, mining, hunting, off-road vehicles, and construction of utility corridors, roads and fences.

“Throughout the Bible, the Lord tells us that He deeply loves the animals He has made and He mandates us to care for and protect His creatures and keep them from extinction,” said Connie Hanson, Director of Christians Caring for Creation. “As Christians we take the Bible and its directives seriously.”

The petition shows that current management is failing to conserve the Mono Basin area sage grouse. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that only one of 30 conservation efforts presented in a local management plan meets the agency’s minimum criteria for conserving sensitive species.

The Bush Administration has 90 days to determine whether the petition warrants further review, and one year to rule on its merits. Granting protection under the Endangered Species Act would require the Bush Administration to reconsider its federal land management practices throughout the range of the Mono Basin sage grouse.

Maps and more details at: www.sagebrushsea.org/sp_mono_grouse.htm

* * *