

SAGEBRUSH SEA CAMPAIGN

2224 W. PALOMINO DRIVE
CHANDLER, ARIZONA 85224
WWW.SAGEBRUSHSEA.ORG

For Immediate Release
August 23, 2007

Contact: Chris Kassar, Wildlife Biologist, Center for Biological Diversity • (520) 609-7685
Mark Salvo, Director, Sagebrush Sea Campaign • (503) 757-4221

Conservation Groups Sue Federal Government for Failure to Protect Imperiled Sage Grouse

SAN FRANCISCO— The Center for Biological Diversity, Sagebrush Sea Campaign, Western Watersheds Project, and Desert Survivors filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in federal court today challenging the agency's failure to consider listing the Mono Basin area sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

Conservation organizations petitioned the Service to recognize the Mono Basin area sage grouse as a distinct population segment and list the population as "endangered" or "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act in 2005. The Service acknowledged that Mono Basin area sage grouse are genetically distinct from other greater sage-grouse, but determined that the petition did not sufficiently demonstrate that the species was at risk of extinction. Conservation groups contend that the Service ignored or dismissed significant evidence of threats to Mono Basin area sage grouse from habitat loss and fragmentation from development, livestock grazing, off-road vehicle use, increased fire frequency and intensity, the spread of invasive nonnative plants, and drought.

"This is one of the most ecologically significant creatures in the West, and it faces some very real threats," explains Chris Kassar, wildlife biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "We are asking the Service to fulfill its duty and to do what is right and ethical by protecting these unique creatures and the places they live. Immediate action is needed to put the species on the road to recovery and ensure that this significant population survives."

Greater sage grouse range and distribution have been reduced by 56 percent and populations have declined by as much as 93 percent from presumed historic levels. "The Service ignored the best available science and relied on some fallacious arguments to cast aside our listing petition and avoid conducting a status review of the Mono Basin grouse," said Mark Salvo, director of the Sagebrush Sea Campaign. "Mono Basin area sage grouse are unique, isolated, and experiencing a long-term decline. The population deserves every protection the law can provide."

###