

November 13, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
H-307 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Leahy, Ranking Member Granger,

The undersigned sportsmen, conservation, and professional organizations are writing to urge that as the conference process for FY2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill moves forward, the rider prohibiting the Department of the Interior (DOI) from using any funds to make decisions regarding the potential listing of the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) be removed from the final funding agreement. This rider unnecessarily interferes with the science-based implementation of the ESA and unduly and unnecessarily prevents the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) from conducting its duties and responsibilities to ensure sage grouse and their habitat indeed are recovering, threats are being abated, and the species does not warrant protections under the ESA in the future.

The federal land-use plans must be expeditiously implemented, and the role of Congressional appropriators remains the continued investment in ongoing conservation efforts to preclude the need for listing under the ESA through successful on-the-ground work. The continued inclusion of this rider, which has been in place since FY2014, is a dangerous precedent for Congressional intervention in the USFWS' mission to assess the biological status of species and determine whether they warrant protections under the ESA. Efforts to influence the listing of species via the appropriations process are not conducive to science-based decision making, excluding wildlife biologists from the established procedures and benchmarks set forth by the ESA. Rather than top-down, Congressionally-mandated ESA actions, we believe these decisions should begin in the field – not the appropriations committee.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you and committee and subcommittee staff to continue the stewardship of our nation's wildlife and public lands.

Sincerely,

American Woodcock Society
Angler Action Foundation
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Izaak Walton League of America
National Deer Alliance
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association

North American Grouse Partnership
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Ruffed Grouse Society
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Western Landowner Alliance
Wildlife Management Institute