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March 15, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

As you know, the recent determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that the greater sage-grouse is "warranted but precluded" from the protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act (ESA) directly impacts the State of Idaho. While we are concerned about the long-term implications of a warranted determination, we are encouraged that the "warranted but precluded" determination will continue to allow the Department of the Interior to work closely with states, private landowners, and other partners on collaborative solutions for conserving the species and its habitat so that there is no need to list the species in the future. We believe these partnerships are key to any effort to protect species, and we strongly encourage you to stand behind the FWS decision and fully defend it against any attempt to frustrate these voluntary efforts.

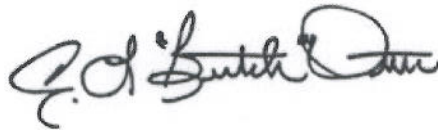
The State of Idaho has been a leader in developing and implementing collaborative solutions to conserve this iconic species and maintain predictable levels of land use. In 1996, the State of Idaho became one of the first states in the country to develop a comprehensive plan for conserving the species and its habitat. It amended the plan in 2006, and that has led to the prioritization and implementation of numerous conservation actions for the benefit of the species. Moreover, the State recently completed the nation's first Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances ("CCAA") for the species and plans to complete two additional CCAA/CCAs in the coming months.

While the "warranted but precluded" status will provide more time for Idaho and other states to make further advances in sage-grouse conservation, we need to ensure that our collective attention to this important issue does not wane or is overshadowed by inaction in the coming months.

Unfortunately, the same environmental group who challenged the Service's 2005 decision to not list the species is seeking to amend its original Complaint to challenge the "precluded" portion of the Service's decision. Plaintiff's request, if granted, would flout the important procedural requirements necessary for prosecuting claims against the Federal government. The State of Idaho and its congressional delegation strongly urges you to instruct the Department of Justice to oppose plaintiff's request, as an adverse decision would place much of this important conservation work in jeopardy.

In closing, there is reason to hope that Federal and State partnerships can maintain and improve viable populations of this iconic species while also maintaining predictable levels of land use. We believe that only through close coordination on the matters discussed above can we collectively achieve these important objectives.

Sincerely,



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor



MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator



JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator



MIKE SIMPSON
Member of Congress



WALT MINNICK
Member of Congress