



SAGE GROUSE

County, Sandoval want more communication on sage grouse issue



2 HOURS AGO • [MARIANNE KOBAK MCKOWN](#)
MKOBAK@ELKODAILY.COM

ELKO – The fight over land use rules concerning the sage grouse continues, but local and state leaders hope for more communication on ways to preserve the bird’s habitat without harming industry.

Elko County Commissioner Demar Dahl sent a letter to Gov. Brian Sandoval earlier in the week with his concerns.

Sandoval’s spokeswoman Mari N. St. Martin said Sandoval has received the letter and

the governor plans on replying.

Dahl wrote in the letter that Sandoval’s negotiations with Interior Secretary Sally Jewell did not “solve critical harms that the (sage-grouse Land Use Plan Amendment) has created in Elko County and in other rural counties.”

On Sept. 22, U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management filed their Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin Region concerning the bird’s habitat. Part of the plan included the withdrawal of 10 million acres of land from future mining claims, prohibition of oil and gas drilling near the bird’s breeding grounds, and imposing new reviews on livestock grazing permits.

“Elko County has taken the brunt of the LUPA that BLM has done,” Dahl told the Free Press. “We have over 70 percent of our county in priority or general habitat and 20 percent in focal areas. Everything is just shut down there.”

Dahl said the County appreciates Sandoval negotiating with Jewell, but the Secretary is “not addressing our issues.”

“I wrote the letter not to criticize the governor, but to point out we’re not getting any help to deal with those issues,” Dahl said.

He said he was glad the state and the Interior were able to solve problems concerning sage grouse habitat in other areas, such as Sparks, but “that doesn’t apply to us.”

One of Dahl’s bigger concerns was the reduction of wildfire risks – the No. 1 threat to sage grouse habitat.

“The Governor had good conversations with Secretary Jewell regarding wildfire, wild horses and the need to manage them since wildfire and wild horses have been responsible for so much of the degradation to the range,” said Martin. “He talked about the need to devote viable funding for both issues which will go a long way to help restore habitat and the range.”

Dahl also said the mining industry has been impacted by the land use restrictions. A representative from Quantum Minerals told the County that the company has been exploring in the Jarbidge area and agency personnel told them they could not use any data from drilling that was collected after Sept. 24.

“The Governor’s Office has engaged with representatives from Quantum minerals and we are working to obtain additional information to address their specific needs as well as continue to help other companies,” Martin said.

Dahl also was concerned about the maps being used to determine where sage grouse habitat was located and what would be closed off from public use.

He said the maps are topographical and don’t provide detailed information for on the ground use.

“It leaves so much latitude out there,” Dahl said.

The governor’s office said copies of the maps to be used will be available through the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical team Friday or online.

The County and the governor’s office both want continued communication between all interested parties concerning the sage grouse land use issue.

“The Governor will continue working with the Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service on the challenges facing Nevada and our stakeholders,” Martin said. “He has also engaged his Division of Minerals and the Nevada Mining Association to get more clarification of mineral potential and location of existing operations.”