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# Conservation groups sue feds to protect bistate sage grouse

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CARSON CITY — A coalition of conservation groups filed a lawsuit Wednesday in federal court challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's failure to protect the imperiled bistate sage grouse in California and Nevada under the Endangered Species Act.

The genetically unique and isolated [sage grouse face multiple survival threats](#), the groups said in the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

The bistate sage grouse is a distinct population with a habitat from just south of Carson City in the Pine Nut Range to the White Mountains straddling the California-Nevada state line in Esmeralda County.

In 2013, the Fish and Wildlife Service [proposed listing the bistate sage grouse](#) Distinct Population Segment as a "threatened species" under the Endangered Species Act. The service cited multiple threats to the [grouse and their habitats](#), including infrastructure, livestock grazing, the spread of invasive species, range fires, urban sprawl, mining, energy development, recreation and climate change.

But the agency reversed course in 2015 and [found that the bird does not warrant federal protection](#).

The service said it based its reversal on voluntary conservation measures restricted to private lands in the Bi-state Action Plan, which the conservation groups said has been in place for more than a decade as the sage grouse continued to decline.

"This is an example of politics trumping science while the extinction of a unique population of sage grouse hangs in the balance," said Ileene Anderson, senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "As we have seen for more than a decade, these voluntary measures are not enough; without the legal protections of the Endangered Species Act, the sage grouse in Mono Basin have continued to decline, sliding toward extinction."