

Report: Saving sage grouse habitat smart conservation, economic policy

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Hunting, fishing and hiking on federal land in Northern Nevada where the sage grouse roams is a multi-million-dollar industry that could suffer if the bird becomes an endangered species.

That's according to a report released Tuesday that studied the economic impact of recreation in greater sage grouse habitat managed by the Bureau of Land Management across 11 western states, including Nevada. The study was funded by the [Pew Charitable Trusts](#) and [Western Values Project](#), two nonprofits focused on public lands conservation.

The study used BLM data and estimated 13.8 million people visited BLM lands on sage grouse habitat in 2013, spending \$623 million. In Nevada, recreationalists spent about \$88 million.

"Protecting greater sage grouse habitat is not just wise conservation policy, but also sound economic policy for the West," said Ken Rait, director of Pew's U.S. public lands project, in a statement.

Due to wildfires and other environmental factors, the sage grouse population is declining so much that the federal government will decide next year whether to list the bird as an endangered species.

That listing would put a dent in Nevada's economy by limiting recreational, ranching, mining and environmental activities in the bird's habitat.

Nevada's congressional delegation and the Obama administration [are working](#) to put in place environmental protections to keep the bird off the threatened list.