

The Ultimate Subsidized Predator

In the ongoing sage grouse controversy, it is crucial to understand that by agency count there are 535,000 birds. The minimum viable population for genetic survivability – the Endangered Species Act listing criteria, is 5,000 birds. We have over 100 times the number of sage grouse required for an effective population. Yet federal agencies threaten they will list the bird unless citizens and local government acquiesce to oppressive agency habitat management plans. Apparently we have over 100 times the number of bureaucrats required for an effective population.

Further to this, consider the eleven-state and two-province range of the bird. Encompassing over 159,000 square miles, only 3.9 percent of the range supports twenty five percent of the birds. This indicates that to protect the listing limit of 5,000 birds, a mere 421 square miles of choice ground will suffice. By agency maps, there already are more than ten areas of prime habitat each of which support genetic survivability. The low population-density expanses apparently are due substantially to predators.

Predation control studies indicate territorial ravens, knowing their normal hunting range, are three times as effective at nest depredation as transitory birds. When territorials are removed by predation control, the transitory ravens, no longer harassed out, may replace the territorial birds at twice the density. The two replacement birds thus hunt at a combined two-thirds the effectiveness of the removed raven. There is an immediate benefit in using predator control, despite government scientist and bureaucrat declarations otherwise.

Similar to their ineffective but onerous spotted owl restrictions, the agencies are persecuting producers and recreational land users with high-cost habitat management while not admitting the essence of that approach is to actually manage predator habitat. Since predators are the greatest problem and always have been, why not deal with them quickly and effectively? Because bureaucrats thrive on delay and inefficiency. Listing will require significant increases in budgets and staff.

The agencies claim regulatory mechanisms are needed. They are, and I suggest here an equitable mechanism based on well understood metrics. While range-wide sage grouse population exceeds 100,000 or the habitable range exceeds that necessary to support 100,000, for every dollar of costs the agencies inflict on counties and states in the sage grouse matter, the agencies should lose an equal amount of actual funds. Those county and state losses will be remunerated from general funds out of the U.S. Treasury. Furthermore, the agencies cannot incorporate

expected county and state costs into their own budgets, because doing so simply perpetuates their proclivity to profit from their political science.

The general fund aspect provides a critical oversight of the sage grouse program since other offices and agencies will not only be aware of the disbursement, they will see how it affects their portion or potential from general funds. The loss of inflicted costs will remove the existing incentive to maximize the budget by maximizing the alarm. Without these mechanisms, the enduring subsidized predator in the sage grouse debacle is the bureaucracy which preys on the American taxpayer.

Respectfully,

Ralph R. Sacrison

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Sage Grouse Counts, Areal Extents, and Breeding Densities

Population		Areal Extent					Breeding Density				
pct	count	pct	ha	ac	km ²	mi ²	ha/n	ac/n	n/km ²	n/mi ²	
25	133,750	3.9	2.92E+06	7.21E+06	29,192	11,271	21.8	53.9	4.6	11.9	a
50	267,500	10.0	7.58E+06	1.87E+07	75,782	29,259	28.3	70.0	3.5	9.1	a
75	401,250	27.0	2.04E+07	5.03E+07	203,633	78,621	50.7	125.4	2.0	5.1	a
100	535,000	54.5	4.12E+07	1.02E+08	411,810	158,997	77.0	190.2	1.3	3.4	a
83	294,423	30.0	2.27E+07	5.60E+07	226,629	87,500	77.0	190.2	1.3	3.4	b
0.9	5,000	0.1	1.09E+05	2.70E+05	1,091	421	21.8	53.9	4.6	11.9	c
183	980,966	100.0	7.55E+07	1.87E+08	755,088	291,535	77.0	190.2	1.3	3.4	d

Ralph R. Sacrison, June 4, 2012, *after*

- a Doherty et al. (2010) Mapping breeding densities of greater sage-grouse: A tool for range-wide conservatin planning, Prepared for the Bureau of Land Management, BLM Completion Report: Interagency Agreement #L10PG00911, Sept. 24, 2010, Figure 1.
- b USFS & BLM controlled lands; population density from nearest quartile density.
- c Areas deduced from prime breeding ground density, using listing limit population.
- d Population deduced from Schroeder et al. (2004, *in* Doherty, 2010) estimate of range extent.

Agency declarations of historical sage grouse populations on the order of 1-2 M do not correlate with written history, bone fragments, predator residue nor the statistical distribution across existing range.

It does appear that the agencies seek effective control of land well beyond their existing mandate. The agencies state they must control habitat across their estimate of historic sage grouse range. They state this is to comply with the Endangered Species Act and deny the US Fish & Wildlife Service a reason to list the bird. Their estimated historic range is shown in the final row of the table.

It does appear that the agencies seek effective control of land well beyond their existing mandate. The agencies state they must control habitat across their estimate of historic sage grouse range. This is to comply with the Endangered Species Act and avoid listing the bird. In doing so, they will effectively triple the land they manage without requiring any administrative or legislative permission.

Using existing range-wide breeding densities, fully populating the estimated historic range will nearly double the existing population. The existing population already is more than 100 times the requirement for genetic survivability.

The listing population of 5,000 requires 421 square miles, and there currently are more than ten such areas of prime habitat each of which will support the listing population.

While range-wide sage grouse population exceeds 100,000 or the habitable range exceeds that necessary to support 100,000, for every dollar of costs the agencies inflict on counties and states in the sage grouse matter, the agencies should lose an equal amount of actual funds. Those county and state losses will be remunerated from general funds out of the US Treasury. Furthermore, the agencies cannot incorporate expected county and state reimbursements into their own agency budgets.