

News Release

Nevada Department of Wildlife
For Immediate Release
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Wildlife Commission Approves Emergency Fire Closure: Hunt Units 051 and 066 Closed to Sage-Grouse Hunting

On Friday, August 10, 2018 the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners approved CR18-12 Amendment #1 for an emergency fire closure of hunt units 051 and 066 in Humboldt and Elko Counties to sage-grouse hunting. The decision was made following extensive fire damage to high quality, priority sage-grouse habitat resulting from the 2018 Martin Fire and last year's Snowstorm Fire.

The Martin Fire started on Thursday July 5, 2018 near Paradise Valley and burned 441,000 acres, making it the largest fire recorded in Nevada state history. During the Martin Fire, priority sage-grouse habitat and at least 39 known breeding sites, called leks, were destroyed. Preceding the fire, the leks were observed to have a combined total of 756 male sage-grouse on them. In addition to this year's Martin Fire, last year's Snowstorm Fire located 50 miles north of Battle Mountain, burned 171,000 acres, also impacting the decision to close the two units to sage-grouse hunting. The two fires have not only burned lek sites, but also destroyed associated nesting, brood rearing, and winter habitat which will likely affect both the sage-grouse annual production and survival rates.

"This fire negatively affected one of the few remaining stronghold habitats for Greater sage-grouse and a myriad of other sagebrush obligate species in Nevada," said NDOW Upland Game Staff Specialist Shawn Espinosa. "Although we have hopes that restoration efforts can be successful, there will be some areas that will likely convert to cheatgrass which will further reduce available habitat for sage-grouse into the future."

Currently, the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) is working with federal land management agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations on restoration plans for the Martin Fire, and procurement of seed from several sources. Seeding will occur during the fall and winter months.

"Another concern of ours is sage grouse population connectivity between Humboldt County and Elko County populations," said Espinosa. "The Martin Fire will likely inhibit the interchange of individual birds between these two very important sage-grouse populations. Continual loss of sagebrush habitats with the occurrence of these

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megafires places more than just sage-grouse in jeopardy. Mule deer, pronghorn, pygmy rabbit and many songbirds and small mammals depending on healthy connected sagebrush habitats will be jeopardized as well.”

The Nevada Department of Wildlife suggest that if at all possible to please avoid driving off existing roads in the areas impacted by the fire to help ensure a successful restoration process and to prevent the spread of non-native species.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) protects, restores and manages fish and wildlife, and promotes fishing, hunting, and boating safety. NDOW’s wildlife and habitat conservation efforts are primarily funded by sportsmen’s license and conservation fees and a federal surcharge on hunting and fishing gear. Support wildlife and habitat conservation in Nevada by purchasing a hunting, fishing, or combination license. Find us on Facebook, Twitter or visit us at www.ndow.org.

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