

Feds reject endangered status for sage grouse

By Rich Landers, Spokesman-Review

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined after a four year-study that the greater sage-grouse does not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act as long as states and ranchers work to improve the plight of the bird on 60 million acres of sagebrush lands across 11 western states.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to give state and federal conservation efforts an opportunity to save the sage grouse and its habitat offers a reprieve from stifling restrictions that could have been inflicted on ranchers and local economies that depend on this Western landscape.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell made the announcement today backed by state governors at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge near Denver. Federal officials say the greater sage grouse won't need the protections of the Endangered Species Act because of the safeguards in state and federal conservation plans and work by private landowners.

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