

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK**  
**STATE OF MONTANA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Bullock Welcomes U.S. House Natural Resources Committee's Interest in  
Greater Sage-grouse**

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock today submitted testimony to the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee, welcoming them to the State of Montana and detailing the state's efforts to protect the Greater Sage-grouse.

"Montanans work best when we work together to solve problems," Bullock said in his letter to the Committee. "As Westerners, we've always had to rely on each other, regardless of our political views. That's especially the case now with the serious gridlock and partisanship that continues to plague Washington D.C."

In February of this year, Bullock established the Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory council, to gather information, furnish advice, and provide recommendations on policies and actions for a state-wide strategy to protect sage grouse and keep its management in state hands. This committee represents a broad cross-section of Montanans, including citizens representing such interests as energy, mining, transmission, conservation, sportsmen, legislature, agriculture and ranching, and local and tribal governments.

"The sage-grouse is currently state managed and not under the authority of the federal government," Bullock said in his letter. "It is my goal to keep management of the bird under state leadership, despite the litigation brought against the federal government seeking to end state control."

Bullock's letter to the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee can be found at:  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/165232482/Bullock-Writes-U-S-House-on-Greater-Sage-grouse>

*Text of the letter is below.*

September 3, 2013

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Natural  
Resources

Re: Oversight Field Hearing in Billings, Montana, September 4, 2013

**Statement of Montana Governor Steve Bullock**

I welcome members of the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee to the State of Montana. Thank you for coming to our state to learn about the State's efforts to protect the Greater Sage-grouse.

We Montanans work best when we work together to solve problems. As Westerners, we've always had to rely on each other, regardless of our political views. That's especially the case now with the serious gridlock and partisanship that continues to plague Washington D.C.

Shortly after taking the oath of office, Montanans of many different stripes asked me to take action -from energy industry executives to conservation leaders and local government officials -all were concerned that Montana was not doing enough to address protections for the sage grouse.

Protecting this species is about protecting jobs and our economy, and state leadership over our wildlife. We can protect this iconic bird while promoting continued economic development and the protection of private property rights.

This past February, I established the Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Advisory Council, "to gather information, furnish advice, and provide ... recommendations on policies and actions for a state-wide strategy" to protect the sage grouse and keep its management in state hands.

I put a broad cross-section of Montanans on the Council --citizens representing such interests as energy, mining, transmission, conservation, sportsmen and women, legislature, agriculture and ranching, and local and tribal governments. I made the Council's work a clear priority of the Director of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

The Advisory Council has been following a very aggressive meeting schedule to craft a Montana solution. The process has been in-depth and transparent, and will lead to a draft strategy recommendation that will undergo extensive public review and comment.

There has been considerable support and involvement from industry, private citizens, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Council has received input from leading scientists, specialists, citizen experts such as ranchers working in sage grouse country, and other western states with valuable experience.

While you are conducting your hearing, the Council will be in a previously-scheduled meeting to continue its work, its 7th meeting since May. It is regrettable that the Council members will not be able to attend in person to share with you the fruits of their work. Information regarding the Council's work can be found at:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/sageGrouse/habitatConservation>

The sage-grouse is currently state managed and not under the authority of the federal government. It is my goal to keep management of the bird under state leadership, despite the litigation brought against the federal government seeking to end state control. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have asked Montana to share its updated management strategy for sage grouse, and I plan on submitting our Montana-led solution early next year.

Here on the ground in Montana, the solutions will come from Montanans, who will roll up their sleeves, set aside political differences and posturing, and work to find creative ways to protect our economy and the sage grouse for our future generations.

Again, thank you for your interest in this important issue and welcome to the last, best place.

Sincerely,

STEVE BULLOCK Governor