



Governor Hickenlooper Signs Executive Order to Further Protect Greater Sage-Grouse

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On Friday, May 15, Governor John Hickenlooper issued an Executive Order directing Colorado's state agencies to take further conservation measures for the benefit of the greater sage-grouse (GrSG). Governor Hickenlooper's Executive Order is one of many issued by Western governors in an attempt to prevent the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) from issuing a proposed rule this September to list the species as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Colorado's Executive Order, available [here](#), identifies existing state and private measures implemented to protect the GrSG, including Colorado's existing emphasis on avoidance, minimization and mitigation, and calls on the Governor's Office to work with the Department of Natural Resources to evaluate the 1200-Series Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Rules to identify additional opportunities for GrSG protection.

The Executive Order also calls for the Colorado Habitat Exchange, which is currently in development by a team of stakeholders including the State, the oil and gas industry, and agriculture and environmental organizations, to be launched by the end of 2015.

The timing for the Executive Order is part of the State's strategy in working with the FWS to ensure that the species is not listed, as well as working with the Bureau of Land Management on last-minute changes to the final Northwest Colorado GrSG Resource Management Plan Amendment, which is expected to be released at the end of May or early June.

Other states that have issued GrSG-specific executive orders include Montana, available [here](#), Utah, available [here](#), and Wyoming, available [here](#). The Wyoming executive order is currently undergoing a revision process.

Pursuant to a court-ordered settlement, FWS is scheduled to issue a determination on whether listing the GrSG is warranted or not by September 30, 2015. Due to the 2015 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, FWS cannot write or issue a proposed rule to list the species during the 2015 fiscal year, which ends September 30. However, the Department of the Interior, which oversees FWS, has indicated that the Omnibus legislation will not slow down its decision-making efforts, and a listing determination is currently expected this calendar year.

For more information on the states' conservation efforts regarding the greater sage-grouse, or any other information regarding the species, please contact [Theresa Sauer](#) or [Bret Sumner](#).

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