



Area News In Brief: Fish and Wildlife to reconsider Gunnison sage grouse listing

By Staff

March 25, 2009

TELLURIDE — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will reconsider its earlier decision to deny endangered species protection to the Gunnison sage grouse.

The Fish and Wildlife Service filed a notice in U.S. District Court recently, stating its intention. It cited the results of the latest investigative report on the Bush Administration's application of the Endangered Species Act.

The report, released last December, was the second by the Department of the Interior to find that Bush Administration officials interfered with federal biologists' decision-making for several endangered species, including the Gunnison sage grouse.

"We're eager to secure protection for the Gunnison sage grouse as soon as possible," San Miguel County Commissioner Joan May said in a news release. "Long term viability of the species is unquestionably at risk now, and every additional delay decreases the likelihood of full recovery."

San Miguel County led conservation and government-accountability organizations to sue the Fish and Wildlife Service of its denial of Endangered Species Act protection for the Gunnison sage grouse.

Other plaintiffs were: Audubon, Black Canyon Audubon Society, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Native Ecosystems, the Larch Company, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Sheep Mountain Alliance and WildEarth Guardians.

Audubon considers the Gunnison sage grouse one of the 10 most endangered birds in the United States, while the Endangered Species Coalition identified it as one of the most imperiled species in the country.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar issued a report last week, finding that the Gunnison sage grouse's habitat is among the most degraded habitats in the nation.

The Center for Native Ecosystems says only 4,000 breeding birds remain and that energy extraction, motorized recreation, urbanization and livestock grazing have contributed to the decline of the Gunnison sage grouse.