



## Conservation groups sue to list bistate sage grouse

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Staff Reports

An isolated species of sage grouse that lives from the east slope of the Pine Nut Mountains to the Mono Lake Basin is the topic of a lawsuit from conservation groups seeking to have it listed as endangered.

The bistate sage grouse was determined not to be endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015, after studies determined the bird was actually improving.

Information gathered by several agencies between 2002 and 2012, and compiled by the U.S. Geological Survey indicates that in many instances grouse populations are relatively stable.

The U.S. Geological Survey's Western Ecological Research Center compiled data from 2002 through 2012, collected by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the University of Nevada, Reno, the University of Idaho, and the Geological Survey.

The listing of the bistate distinct population of the sage grouse could result in the designation of 1.86 million acres as critical habitat stretching from the Pine Nut Mountains south to nearly Bishop.

After two years of public comment and various studies, the service determined that the grouse didn't require listing.

However, conservation groups claim that the change was the result of political pressure, not scientific study.

"This is an example of politics trumping science while the extinction of a unique population of sage grouse hangs in the balance," said Ileene Anderson, senior scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity. "As we have seen for more than a decade, these voluntary measures are not enough; without the legal protections of the Endangered Species Act, the sage grouse in Mono Basin have continued to decline, sliding toward extinction."

Conservationists cite the example of the Pine Nuts, claiming that the spring counts of strutting males ranged from zero to 38 birds between 2004 and 2014, yet the service claimed as many as 608 birds occur in this population.

Plaintiff groups include Desert Survivors, WildEarth Guardians, the Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds Project and are represented by attorneys from the Center for Biological Diversity and the Stanford Law Clinic.