



Western Grouse Project

FOREST GUARDIANS

FACT SHEET



FOREST GUARDIANS is leading the fight to protect the **lesser prairie chicken**, once found across the southern Great Plains, with a historic range that included parts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and

Texas. The species' range has declined by over 90 percent due to hunting, oil and gas development, conversion of habitat to cropland, and livestock grazing. Leading a broad coalition, FOREST GUARDIANS submitted a proposal in 2002 to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to designate an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" to protect key public land habitat in New Mexico. We are filing suit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to gain Endangered Species Act protection for the bird, and we continue to monitor BLM practices.



FOREST GUARDIANS has also taken the lead in protecting the **Columbian sharp-tailed grouse**, once one of the most abundant birds in the West, ranging across nine states and British

Columbia. Today fewer than 60,000 birds remain, occupying less than 10 percent of their historic range. Conversion of its native habitat to agriculture, habitat degradation from livestock grazing, and hunting have reduced populations and range, and backward management by state and federal agencies has compounded these declines. FOREST GUARDIANS, leading a broad coalition, filed a petition in October 2004 to list the grouse under the Endangered Species Act and will be bringing suit against the FWS challenging its flawed 2000 decision not to list this majestic bird.

A coalition including FOREST GUARDIANS is working to protect the **greater sage grouse**. Once numbering millions of birds across eleven western states, today only 140,000 greater sage

grouse remain. The coalition is working to gain Endangered Species Act protection for this bird, which would be the last, best hope to saving it and the sagebrush ecosystem it depends upon. The grouse's future is bleak due to declining population numbers and because its wide open, starkly beautiful sagebrush habitat continues to be depleted by oil and gas development, livestock grazing, off-road vehicles, mining, fragmentation, and agency mismanagement. Listing the grouse would benefit a host of other imperiled sagebrush species.



The **Gunnison sage grouse**, officially recognized as a separate species in 2000, is smaller than the greater sage grouse and has distinct genetic, physical, and behavioral qualities. While its historic range likely included much of the South-west, Gunnisons currently exist in only six or seven counties in Colorado and one county in Utah where livestock grazing, motorized recreation and encroaching development threaten their existence. When proposed for Endangered Species Act listing in 2000, the total population numbered 3,500. Now only 2,700 birds exist, prompting a coalition of groups, including FOREST GUARDIANS, to file an emergency petition to protect this rare grouse. The coalition is seeking an emergency listing of the bird under the Endangered Species Act in 2005. FOREST GUARDIANS is also monitoring and challenging grazing and oil and gas development on public lands where the Gunnison sage grouse still exists.



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