



November 24, 2010

Dear President Obama,

As part of our nation's Thanksgiving tradition, you will save the life of two turkeys today with a ceremonial Presidential Pardon. This year, we ask that you also pardon imperiled grouse species of the American West by granting them protection under the Endangered Species Act. Like the American turkey, native grouse are majestic, powerful, beautiful birds. Your pardon is necessary to prevent western grouse from suffering the same cruel fates as the Heath Hen, which became extinct in 1932 due to catastrophic events and belated protection, and the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken, whose population may have slipped beyond recovery with fewer than 100 birds.

Just as the 46-year tradition of a Presidential Pardon for the Thanksgiving turkey will save from certain death the pardoned turkey, the 36-year tradition of the Endangered Species Act is a vital safety net for fish and wildlife and could save sensitive grouse species from extinction. Please protect the Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Columbian Sharp-Tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-Grouse, and Mono Basin Sage-Grouse under the ESA.

Saving grouse will require protecting their habitat from further loss and degradation. Gas and oil development, livestock grazing, road construction, off-road vehicle use, mining, unnatural fire, and invasive species have damaged millions of acres of grouse habitat on public lands. Like the Thanksgiving turkey you pardon, who will be allowed to live out its life at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, we request you mandate improved conservation of federal public lands in the West where native grouse live.

You have an important opportunity to protect native grouse under the ESA, and there are many important reasons for you to do so:

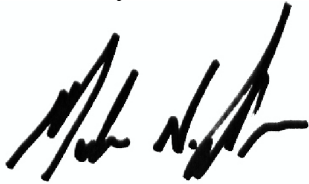
- ∞ Imperiled grouse should be protected out of the same spirit of compassion that marks the Presidential Pardon of the Thanksgiving turkey.
- ∞ The natural environment would be truly bereft without grouse on the landscape. Aldo Leopold, the great American conservationist, wrote,

*The physics of beauty is one department of natural science still in the Dark Ages. Not even the manipulators of bent space have tried to solve its equations. Everybody knows, for example, that the autumn landscape in the north woods is the land, plus a red maple, plus a ruffed grouse. In terms of conventional physics, the grouse represents only a millionth of either the mass or the energy of an acre. Yet subtract the grouse and the whole thing is dead.*

- ∞ The vast majority of Americans – some 86 percent – support the goals of the Endangered Species Act. In 2010, your Administration determined that Greater Sage-Grouse, Mono Basin Sage-Grouse, and Gunnison Sage-Grouse need protection under the ESA, and would be listed if not for other priorities. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken is also a candidate for listing, and the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse should be. Listing can prevent these grouse from becoming extinct, and the American people would support such action.
- ∞ Smart resource planning goes hand-in-hand with endangered species protection. Preserving intact ecosystems for imperiled grouse will help conserve natural landscapes and ecosystem services, which benefit our communities in a multitude of ways, including the provision of clean air and water, opportunities for recreation, and genetic stocks for food and medicine.

Imperiled grouse in western North America need your pardon. Please expedite federal protection for these birds and order protection for their habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark N. Salvo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark N. Salvo  
Coordinator  
Western Grouse Project  
WildEarth Guardians