

State Representative  
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House District 60

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## Rep. Bentz Joins Landowners and Government Officials to Discuss Sage Grouse Issues

SALEM –On Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, Representative Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario) joined nearly fifty members of the Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership in Burns, Oregon, to listen to and discuss the proposed statewide sage grouse conservation and management plan.

In attendance were representatives of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Governor Kitzhaber’s Natural Resource Office, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Oregon counties, private landowners, and numerous state and federal conservation organizations.

The Greater Sage Grouse was listed as a “candidate species” in 2010, a clear indication that federal agencies believed federal protection of the grouse was warranted but precluded by higher priority species and limited federal resources. Since that time, the State of Oregon has worked in partnership with federal, regional, and private interests to create a plan that provides species protection while continuing to protect other “beneficial uses” of land in Eastern Oregon. The key date is 2015, when U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is required to either list the species as endangered or remove it from candidate species status.

“An endangered species listing of the grouse could have serious negative consequences for Eastern Oregon,” Rep. Bentz remarked. “A listing could effectively ‘lock down’ vast portions of land in Baker, Harney, Lake, and Malheur counties. The initial mapping and data collection of bird counts, “lek” (Sage Grouse mating grounds) counts, and habitat quality are critical components of this process. Basing restoration efforts, mitigation systems, and habitat policies on inadequate or incomplete evidence must not be allowed to happen because the impact of such imprecise regulation could severely damage our State’s economic future.”

“It is important that we all understand the consequences of an “endangered” listing. For counties in Eastern Oregon, where nearly 90% of Oregon Sage Grouse habitat exists, actions affecting land by any person could be subject to regulation or legal sanction. All current and future use of Sage Grouse habitat could be limited by a listing. To safeguard the interests of District 60, we must work diligently to preserve our economic present and future.”

Rep. Bentz encourages all who rely on the use of land in Eastern Oregon to stay informed on this issue and to stand ready to help with the political efforts that may be necessary to protect the economy of Eastern Oregon.

For more information about the species and the listing process:  
<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/>

For more information about Oregon's Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership:  
<http://orsolutions.org/osproject/sagecon>

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