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Dear Friends of the Western Governors' Association:

Here in the West we are witnessing an unprecedented conservation effort. Eleven states are working to protect the Greater Sage Grouse, a bird whose habitat covers most of the Western United States. Given the scope of this area, which stretches from Colorado to California and north from Utah to Montana, the conservation effort highlighted in the following pages is nothing short of remarkable.

Hundreds of stakeholders representing a cross section of Western interests—including ranchers, environmental organizations, industry groups and government agencies—have joined together to form sixty-four local working groups. These groups are busy collecting new scientific data about the grouse, identifying key conservation priorities and forging partnerships for conservation with local landowners.


The following pages chronicle just a few examples of how local leaders are taking the initiative to protect the grouse. Why is this effort so critical? First, it demonstrates that the West—the home of so many of our country's natural landscapes and native species—can mobilize its resources on a massive scale to preserve our natural environment without federal intervention.

A 1999 report by the House of Representatives Resources Committee pointed out that the five far Western states have 543 endangered species officially listed, whereas the entire American Northeast has only 39 species listed. Clearly, the West has the most to gain from cooperative conservation, and we are leading the way by charting a new course toward grassroots-driven species protection.

Most importantly, this effort is critical because it is good for the species. A climate of trust and cooperation where landowners work in good faith with government agencies is the only sure course toward long-term Greater Sage Grouse conservation. If the health and viability of the Greater Sage Grouse is a primary concern, then we should look first to local, cooperative measures like those detailed in the attached report to ensure our success.

Sincerely,


Bill Owens
Governor of Colorado


Kenny Guinn
Governor of Nevada