



Honorable Eric Garcetti
Mayor, City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, Ca

Mel Levine, President
Board of Commissioners
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Room 555-H 15th Floor
111 N. Hope Street
Los Angeles, Ca 90012

May 31, 2018

Re: LADWP Ranch Leases/Sage Grouse

Dear Mayor Garcetti and Board President Levine:

Audubon California and the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society are joining together to express to you our concern over issues relating to allocation of water to grazing lands in the Eastern Sierra. Our specific focus is on the need to protect viable and sustaining habitat for Bi-State Sage-Grouse in these areas. As you know, some of the lands covered by Los Angeles Department of Water and Power grazing leases provide homes to this species. We note that this species did not receive federal listing pursuant to the Endangered Species Act due to a concerted effort of a broad network of stakeholders who combined to develop a conservation plan as an alternative to such a listing. This effort was spearheaded by individuals, agencies, landowners and organizations in both California and Nevada who gathered together to form a working group and identify management measures short of listing, which would sustain the species.

Land managed by the City of Los Angeles is crucial to sage-grouse conservation in the Long Valley. While sage-grouse adults are famous for being the only creatures that can subsist wholly on sagebrush leaves during the winter, the baby birds need the insects found amongst the forbs and grasses in wet meadows and irrigated pastures found in the spring and summer in Long Valley on Los Angeles lands. Even if the working group could protect and restore all of the sagebrush habitat in Mono County, without the irrigated meadows on Los Angeles properties sage-grouse populations would be placed in jeopardy.

We applaud and appreciate the participation and involvement of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in this working group. It is our impression that this involvement demonstrates a commitment to the long-term protection of the Bi-state Sage-Grouse. Audubon California and Eastern Sierra Audubon are committed to the realization of the vision of the Bi-State Working Group. It is our sincere hope that the other members of the group share this commitment. The last thing we would want to see would be an unravelling of the listing alternative due to a failure to implement management policies which assure the protection of the species. It is our intention that all sage-grouse habitat will be managed in accord with science based policies and plans.

We recognize that the concerns of land owners, managers and lessees are not limited to the grouse. However, we believe that a way forward can be developed which will speak to those issues as well as the needs of the birds. To that end, we would like to invite the City of Los Angeles to engage with other stakeholders in the development of a management plan which contains provisions including appropriately timed and quantified water resources in support of these bird populations. Hopefully there are ways in which this objective can be met while meeting other objectives of involved parties at the same time. We want to move away from an adversarial environment toward a collaboration similar to that which has proven effective at Owens Lake. We very much hope that you would be willing to engage in a meaningful way in such a process. We believe that other involved stakeholders would welcome such an effort and be willing to participate in searching for a long term resolution of issues related to sage grouse protection across the Bi-State.

We would be more than happy to whatever we could to initiate and undertake such a process and look forward to discussing this with you in the near future.

Thank you for your courtesy and cooperation.

Very truly yours

Peter Pumphrey
Eastern Sierra Audubon Society

Mike Lynes, Director of Public Policy
Audubon California

cc: Andrea Jones, Audubon California