

Wally Erickson
Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety
691 CR 233 Suite A - 2
Durango, CO 81301
Re: M2013007

RECEIVED
JUN 26 2013
Durango Field Office
Division of Reclamation,
Mining and Safety

May 23, 2013

Dear Mr. Erickson,

There has been a concerted effort on the part of the applicant for the Uncompahgre Special Use permit to maintain that there are no Gunnison Sage Grouse in the vicinity, and that the permit area can therefore not be considered as critical habitat for a bird that is likely to be listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. However, having personally seen two Gunnison Sage Grouse hens on Sims Mesa in 2012 (much to my surprise), I can state with confidence that Gunnison Sage Grouse are indeed in the vicinity and that the area of the proposed gravel operation, with its sagebrush dominant vegetation, is indeed critical to their survival.

It has come to my attention that my sightings have been publicly discredited by the applicant, at a meeting with the Montrose Chamber of Commerce on 5/13/13. What the applicant does not know (understandably, since we do not know each other), and I would like for the DRMS to know, is that I have hunted Gunnison Sage Grouse prior to 2000, at which point hunting for them was no longer permitted due to concern about their declining numbers, so I definitely know what they look like. There is no other bird that looks like a Sage Grouse that can be expected to be observed in the Sage Brush plant community of our region.

I would hazard a guess that the use of ATV's and high-caliber firearms atop the mesa of the proposed gravel pit are the likely reasons that the former owners and managers of the property have stated that they have not seen Gunnison Sage Grouse on the property. Living across the small valley to the west of the mesa, I have often heard the large caliber rifles being shot on the mesa and found them to be unbelievably loud, so much so that I thought someone was shooting mortars.

Sincerely,



Barbara Bernhardt
20409 Solitude Road
Montrose, CO 81403