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CONTACT:
[Spencer Pederson](#) or [Jill Strait](#)
202-226-9019

Chairman Hastings Joins Letter Urging Extended Comment Period for Locals on Lesser Prairie-Chicken ESA Designation

WASHINGTON D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04), joined House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas (OK-03), Rep. Randy Neubebauer (TX-19), and six other members of Congress in [sending a letter](#) to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) Director Dan Ashe calling on him to promptly approve state and local plans to protect the Lesser Prairie Chicken and requesting reasonable extensions of both the public comment period and the September 2013 final listing deadline under the Endangered Species Act. The current deadlines were arbitrarily set, behind closed doors in a 2011 settlement agreement between special interest groups and the U.S. Department of Interior. The FWS is scheduled to hold just four public meetings in the next week before it closes public comment.

The proposed listing of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken could have devastating impacts on five states and the small businesses, family farmers, ranchers and energy job creators who rely on the surrounding land for their livelihoods, job creation and economic growth. An extended comment period will allow stakeholders, state officials, and property owners who will be directly impacted by the proposed listing a greater opportunity to prove that they are well suited to participate in conservation activities.

“People in these five states facing the impacts of a federal Endangered Species Act listing should not be limited to short, arbitrary deadlines and a handful of public meetings set by unelected federal bureaucrats in DC. Thoughtful deliberation and close consultation with state and local entities must be exercised before the federal government moves forward with a listing decision of this magnitude,” said Chairman Hastings. “No one cares more about the health of the local environment than the farmers, ranchers, private property owners and job creators who rely on healthy habitat for their livelihoods. It’s common sense to allow those who will be directly impacted by an ESA listing, that could have far reaching consequences, more time for comment and consultation.”

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