

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Submitted via regulations.gov

July 28, 2021

Public Comments Processing

Attn: FWS-R2-2021-0015

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: PRB/3W

5275 Leesburg Pike

Falls Church, VA 22041-3803

Re: Request for Extension of the Comment Period on Proposed Rule for Lesser Prairie Chicken, FWS-R2-ES-2021-0015

To Whom It May Concern:

As federal legislators representing a wide-array of constituents impacted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (the Service) proposed rule seeking to list two distinct population segments (DPSs) of the lesser prairie-chicken (LPC) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), we urge the Service to implement an at least six-months extension of the public comment period for the proposed rule that currently ends on August 2, 2021. We believe an extension would be in the best interest of all parties involved and impacted by this significant proposal to have additional time to consider the scientific data, public comments and potential impacts of listing the LPC under the ESA.

The Service's proposed rule currently provides interested parties only sixty days to submit comments or other information concerning the proposal in the Federal Register. We share the concern of others that this timeframe is far too short in providing the necessary time to consider all of the relevant data, scientific analysis and potential impacts this proposal would have on our diverse states and constituencies.

There are numerous reasons a six-month extension of the public comment period is necessary and prudent. For example, there remain legitimate questions regarding the species status assessment (SSA) report for the LPC published earlier this year – particularly what science and data the Service relied upon in developing and justifying that report. Moreover, there remain questions as to what ultimately led the Service to propose two DPSs for the LPC. It is also unknown as to the specific and comprehensive list of farming and ranching activities that would and would not require FWS permits under the proposed rule. Additionally, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is preparing its annual population survey of the LPC which would provide critical data that will inform the listing proposal. It would benefit all parties, but particularly the Service, to evaluate the results of WAFWA's survey prior to the conclusion of the public comment period. While this is not a comprehensive list of all the considerations and questions regarding the proposal, it provides ample justification for an extension of the public comment period for a minimum of six months.

We urge the Service to act swiftly to extend the public comment period for at least six months. Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator

Jerry Moran

Jerry Moran
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Frank D. Lucas
Member of Congress



Stephanie Bice
Member of Congress



Tracey Mann
Member of Congress



Kevin Hern
Member of Congress



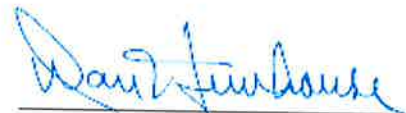
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