



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

National Headquarters
Washington, DC 20240
<https://www.blm.gov>



August 1, 2024

Mr. John Devney
Chair, Hunting and Wildlife
Conservation Council
c/o Mr. Douglas Hobbs
Designated Federal Officer
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
5275 Leesburg Pike, MS:OC
Falls Church, Virginia 22041

Dear Mr. Devney:

Thank you for your June 5, 2024, recommendations to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Hunting and Wildlife Conservation Council (HWCC). Secretary Haaland has asked that I respond on her behalf.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) appreciates the HWCC's dedication to enhancing wildlife resources and encouraging partnerships that benefit recreational hunting and recreational shooting sports. We strive to provide opportunities to hunt, fish, and engage in shooting sports activities in a safe and environmentally sound manner that promote marksmanship, public safety, hunter education, and competition.

The BLM offers the following in response to the HWCC's recommendation that the BLM establish clear criteria for the closure of areas for recreational shooting in alignment with the intent of Sec. 4103 of the Dingell Act. Recreational target shooting is currently allowed on nearly 99 percent of the 245 million acres the BLM manages and is precluded under unique circumstances, such as protecting monument objects in national monuments (our recent action on the Sonoran Desert plan amendment was the result of losing two previous lawsuits on the topic).

The BLM issued [Instruction Memorandum No. 2021-010](#) following the passage of the Dingell Act, which provides guidance on considering recreational target shooting in land use planning decisions. The BLM considers recreational target shooting an important part of its land management mission under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). This specifically includes many lands under the National Conservation Lands umbrella, such as national monuments, national conservation areas and similar designations, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, and wilderness study areas. The BLM Division of Recreation and Visitor Services is in the process of hiring a project manager to support development of additional guidance for recreational target shooting on public lands, to include alignment with the Dingell Act. The BLM is committed to engaging with the Shooting Sports Roundtable while developing this guidance and would be happy to engage the HWCC.

The BLM offers the following in response to the HWCC's recommendation that the BLM establish land tenure teams in strategic locations to enhance access to public lands that are landlocked and those that currently have fragmented ownership patterns, the so-called "checkerboard" public lands in the Western United States. The BLM land tenure program consists of realty specialists throughout each of the twelve western states and the Eastern States Region and focuses on land acquisitions, disposals, exchanges, conservation and access easements, leases, and permits. Annually, through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other funding opportunities, the BLM completes an average of 10-15 acquisitions or exchanges to help improve recreational access and address the checkerboard ownership pattern created in part by FLPMA.

The BLM also appreciates your recommendation that modifications be made to the Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to exclude big game habitats as well as greater sage grouse priority habitat management areas from availability. We understand your concerns and will consider them as we complete the document. The BLM is evaluating the best ways to address protection of big game habitat, including through exclusions and design features that would require solar development applications to be evaluated for compatibility with the function of the big game corridor or crucial or severe winter range, in coordination with state wildlife agencies.

The PEIS will also incorporate management from updates to the BLM's greater sage-grouse planning effort. This planning incorporates new sage-grouse conservation science and lessons learned, considers changing resource conditions, and aims to balance consistent management across the range with the flexibility to address on-the-ground conditions and state-specific policies.

I hope this information is helpful and appreciate the HWCC's insightful recommendations. If you need further assistance, please feel free to contact Carrie Richardson, BLM National Advisory Committee Coordinator at crichardson@blm.gov or (202) 742-0625.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy Stone-Manning", written in a cursive style.

Tracy Stone-Manning
Director