

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 15–
Committee on Natural Resources

FILE NUMBER.....

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Commending the participants in the successful effort to improve the conservation of and assist in preventing the listing of the sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species and encouraging the continuation of conservation efforts.

WHEREAS, In recent years, concern has been expressed throughout the western United States, including the State of Nevada, that the quality and quantity of the populations and habitat of the sage grouse have been declining because of fires, invasion of nonnative plants, urban sprawl, encroachment of pinion juniper into sagebrush habitat, increased predation and other disturbances; and

WHEREAS, Between 1999 and 2004, eight petitions were filed with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service requesting that the sage grouse be listed as a threatened or endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, and as a result of the petitions, an in-depth review of the status of the species was initiated by the Service on April 15, 2004; and

WHEREAS, The listing of the sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species posed a devastatingly negative impact on Nevada's land development, land use, water use, mining, recreational activities and local economies; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the extent of the potential impact on Nevada and the need for action to prevent it, Governor Guinn appointed the Sage-Grouse Conservation Team in August 2000, composed of 25 members who represented industry, Native American tribal governments, conservation organizations, land-managing agencies, Legislators and the field of biology, to address concerns about the declining population of sage grouse in our State and to create a proactive strategy of conservation that would lay the framework for local groups to follow when establishing conservation plans for their respective areas; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in the spring of 2002, six regional planning teams, which eventually became seven, consisting of experts from various backgrounds at the federal and local levels and volunteers whose donation of nearly 9,300 hours is estimated at more than \$300,000, began extensive monitoring efforts and initiated regular meetings to develop local plans to improve conservation of sage grouse populations before the species reached a threshold of vulnerability from which recovery might be difficult; and

WHEREAS, As the result of the coordinated efforts of the Sage-Grouse Conservation Team and the regional planning teams, the

Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for Nevada and Eastern California was released in June 2004, containing an assessment of sage grouse populations in Nevada, risk factors facing those populations, strategies to reduce the risk factors, methods for implementation of the strategies and monitoring mechanisms for the effectiveness of the strategies; and

WHEREAS, The unprecedented and unique partnership established to solve this critical problem of such local and statewide significance serves as a model for future initiatives relating to conservation issues that concern western states and sets a precedent for accomplishing the resolution of such issues through regional resource planning efforts and proactive steps instead of by regulation; and

WHEREAS, The sage grouse population is not only of concern to the State of Nevada and eastern California, but is also an issue for 10 other western states and for areas in two Canadian provinces, which have published *Conserving the Greater Sage Grouse*, a compilation of the state and local conservation efforts across the entire sage grouse range; and

WHEREAS, On January 7, 2005, commending the "Federal and state agencies as well as the local working groups for their current efforts to maintain or improve sagebrush habitat" and encouraging them to "continue to move forward with the new plans to develop and implement conservation strategies throughout the grouse's range," the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service announced the final determination that the sage grouse would not be placed on the list of threatened or endangered species; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY CONCURRING, That the members of the 73rd Session of the Nevada Legislature hereby recognize and commend the Governor's Sage-Grouse Conservation Team, the federal, state and local agencies, and the volunteers who collaborated on this project for their successful effort in contributing to the prevention of the listing of the sage grouse as a threatened or endangered species; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Legislators of the State of Nevada hereby acknowledge and express pride in the leadership that the State of Nevada has exhibited in this matter in emphasizing negotiations over the regulatory process and involving residents, governmental agencies and resource specialists as decision-makers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Legislature encourages all those involved to contribute their efforts to implement and maintain the strategies developed so that sage grouse populations and habitat can be restored and an ecological crisis averted; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and transmit a copy of this resolution to Governor Kenny Guinn, the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Wildlife for distribution to the seven regional planning teams.

