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NWCC Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative Awards \$715,537 in Funding for Research in 2011

WASHINGTON, DC - The Sage-Grouse Research Collaborative (SGC), supported by the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative (NWCC) Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species (GS3) Subgroup, has awarded a total of \$715,537 to three sage-grouse research projects to examine the potential impacts of wind energy development on sage-grouse. The Collaborative will oversee these studies and a combined analysis of data from all three studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of wind power on sage-grouse across their range. The ultimate goal of the Collaborative's efforts in sponsoring studies and a combined analysis is to inform wind power development and sage-grouse management strategies.

"SGC projects were selected through a rigorous peer review process," said Jim Sedinger, press spokesperson for the Collaborative and professor at the University of Nevada. "The Collaborative believes these projects provide an important opportunity to understand and minimize potential conflicts between sage-grouse and wind energy development. We are very much looking forward to these projects moving forward."

Project proposals were submitted in response to the Request for Proposals, "Protocols for Assessing Impacts of Wind Energy Development on Greater Sage-Grouse." The Collaborative used four main criteria to select the research proposals: research approach, confirmation of a partnership with a developer of a qualified study site, strong credibility of the research team, and project cost. All projects funded by the Collaborative met these criteria. It should be noted that funding of research projects tied to proposed wind energy projects does not imply any position on the proposed projects by the Collaborative or the researchers involved.

The funded projects are:

- "Response of Greater Sage-Grouse to wind power development," led by David Musil, Idaho Department of Fish and Game;
- "Ecology of male Greater Sage-Grouse in relation to wind energy development in Wyoming," led by Joshua Millspaugh, professor of wildlife conservation at the University of Missouri; and
- "A study of the impacts of a wind energy development on Greater Sage-Grouse populations in southeastern Wyoming," led by Matt Holloran, Wyoming Wildlife Consultants LLC.

"This will be a unique endeavor to combine research across state boundaries into one analysis to gain reliable knowledge on the effects of wind energy on Greater Sage-Grouse. In Idaho, we'll be monitoring the response of the Brown's Bench Greater Sage-Grouse population to the proposed China Mountain

Wind Project southwest of Twin Falls, which also crosses into Elko County, Nevada. The most important aspects will be monitoring the long-term effect on annual movements, survival, habitat use, and production,” said David Musil, lead researcher for the IDFG project and senior wildlife research biologist at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

“Our work to better understand behaviors and habitat use of male sage-grouse represents a unique opportunity and one that will complement studies on hens already under way at the site of the proposed Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project. We appreciate the Collaborative’s support of this new research effort,” said Joshua Millsbaugh, lead researcher for the project and professor of wildlife conservation at the University of Missouri.

“The research on wind energy development impacts on sage-grouse habitat selection and demographics being conducted by our team of scientists in south central Wyoming is a continuation of research initiated in 2009. The primary advantage of this study is it represents one of the only studies where preliminary reactions of sage-grouse populations to the infrastructure associated with wind energy development can be effectively investigated in the relative short-term. We are honored to be working in concert with such a well respected group of researchers as those funded by the NWCC,” said Matt Holloran, lead researcher and senior ecologist at Wyoming Wildlife Consultants LLC.

The Collaborative is committed to raising additional funds to support these multi-year research projects in future years, but the initial funding awards were made for research to be conducted in 2011. To date, the SGC has raised \$1,001,000 in funds to support the research from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), and grant funds from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). These funds will be administered by NREL, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).

The research teams have also raised funds to support the research from: the Agricultural Experiment Station and Wyoming Reclamation and Restoration Center at the University of Wyoming, Bates Hole/Shirley Basin Local Sage-grouse Working Group, enXco (an EDF Energies Nouvelles Company), Iberdrola Renewables, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Nevada Department of Wildlife, PacifiCorp, Power Company of Wyoming LLC, RES Americas, University of Missouri, U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

The research teams will build on existing sage-grouse research conducted at the research sites, which has benefited from the support of the Bates Hole/Shirley Basin Local Sage-grouse Working Group, Horizon Wind Energy, Iberdrola Renewables, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Pathfinder Renewable Wind Energy, Power Company of Wyoming LLC, RES Americas, School of Energy Resources at the University of Wyoming, and U.S. Department of Energy.

Background on the Sage-grouse Research Collaborative

The SGC was formed in 2010 under the NWCC's Wildlife Workgroup's Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species Subgroup to conduct research on potential wind energy impacts to sage-grouse. The SGC is working in coordination with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. For complete information on the SGC, please visit <http://www.nationalwind.org/sagegrouse.aspx>.

Horizon Wind Energy provided seed funding to convene the collaborative. Additional funding for facilitation support has been provided by Iberdrola Renewables, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Power Company of Wyoming LLC, RES Americas, Ridgeline Energy LLC, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Current facilitation funding support is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

Background on the NWCC

The National Wind Coordinating Collaborative provides a neutral forum so a wide range of stakeholders can pursue the shared objective of developing environmentally, economically, and politically sustainable commercial markets for wind power in the United States. The Grassland and Shrub Steppe Species subgroup of the NWCC's Wildlife Workgroup brings together representatives from state and federal agencies, private industry, academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations in a collaborative effort to identify critical research questions; secure and administer cooperative funding to conduct research; encourage peer-reviewed collaborative research; and identify both potential impacts and mitigation strategies to address any impacts. More information on the National Wind Coordinating Collaborative is available at <http://www.nationalwind.org>.