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Study suggests energy development stresses sage grouse

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NEWS RELEASE

Oct. 14, 2009

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STUDY SUGGESTS ENERGY DEVELOPMENT STRESSES SAGE GROUSE

MISSOULA –

A study released Oct. 14 sheds new light on oil and gas development potential in the Intermountain West. Maps accompanying the study suggest negative impacts to greater sage grouse populations in relation to potential energy development.

“The bottom line is that if business as usual continues, sage grouse populations will decline an additional 7 to 19 percent,” said study co-author David Naugle, a Wildlife Biology Program researcher at The University of Montana.

The study is published in the current issue of the peer-reviewed journal PLoS ONE, which is online at <http://www.plosone.org>. The direct link to the article is <http://tinyurl.com/yzm7xpv>.

Sage grouse populations are considered indicators of ecosystem health and have been closely monitored by state game and fish agencies over the past decade. The greater sage grouse is currently a candidate for Endangered Species Act listing.

“Sage grouse are useful in prioritizing conservation because their abundance is indicative of large and intact shrub-dominated grasslands, the most endangered ecosystem in North America,” Naugle said. “Challenges with sage grouse are a harsh reminder that the value

their declines, highlights the need for scientifically credible conservation planning tools to balance natural resource development with wildlife conservation.”

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