

## United States Senate

January 24, 2017

Mr. Clay Nichols  
Arlington Ecological Service Field Office  
Southwest Region  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Re: Request for Extension of Comment Period on Status Review for Lesser Prairie Chicken, FWS-R2-ES-2016-0133

Dear Mr. Nichols:

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) 90-day petition finding and status review for the Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC)(81 Fed. Reg. 86,315 (Nov. 30, 2016)). The listing determination of a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) ought to be based on fact, sound science and the most up-to-date information available.

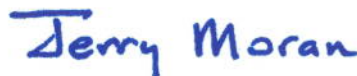
I understand that the FWS has indicated that extending the comment period deadline is unnecessary. The FWS has further signified a willingness to accept relevant information on the status of the LPC after January 30, 2017. While that ability to incorporate additional information is appreciated, it implies that the comment period deadline currently published in the *Federal Register* is arbitrary in nature. If the deadline of January 30, 2017 is not, in fact, a closing date for the public to submit relevant information on the status of the species, it would be prudent for the FWS to formally extend the deadline to erase any ambiguity in that opportunity for stakeholders.

The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' (WAFWA) is currently compiling its 2016 LPC Range-wide Conservation Plan (RWP) Annual Progress Report. The report will provide pertinent information regarding LPC conservation activities related to the RWP. It is important that the FWS consider the report – and the public have an opportunity to comment on the report – before taking any further action toward a final determination on the listing of the species. Allowing Kansans and other interested stakeholders ample opportunity to review this upcoming information on efforts to conserve the LPC will enhance both the quality of the comments submitted and the information and data the FWS bases future determinations on.

I encourage you to reconsider the decision to not formally extend the deadline for comments and information relevant to the 90-day petition finding and status review of the LPC. Kansas stakeholders are interested in submitting well-informed, meaningful comments on the 90-day petition finding and status of the species. Providing a seemingly arbitrary deadline for public comments to be submitted before all relevant information is available undercuts that opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours truly,



Jerry Moran