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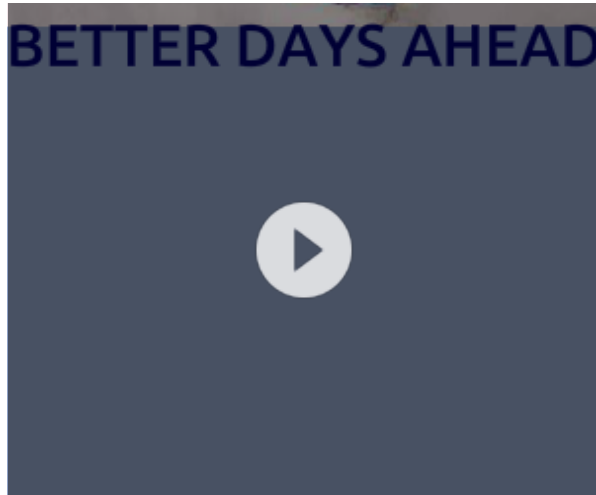
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County will join lawsuit against Fish & Wildlife sage grouse data

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By **RICK SHERMAN**
Sun Advocate Reporter

Carbon County will put up \$5,000 towards legal fees in a challenge to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data regarding the Greater Sage-grouse. During the regular meeting of the Carbon County Board of Commissioners Wednesday, a "joinder" was approved in a Data Quality Act Challenge to the Fish and Wildlife Service Conservation Objectives Team Report and related matters. A joinder of claims refers to bringing several legal claims

against the same party together.

Under the Data Quality Act of 2001, the Office of Management and Budget has issued guidelines ensuring and maximizing the quality and objectivity, utility and integrity of information, including statistical information, disseminated by federal agencies, including Fish and Wildlife.

Data 'just not reliable'

Deputy County Attorney Christian Bryner said the challenge was initiated by the Western Energy Alliance, raising questions about the reliability of USFW data-gathering methods regarding Sage-grouse population numbers, the density of leks, and other statistics. Bryner said, "The Fish and Wildlife Service are relying on data that's just not reliable and doesn't match what's actually happening on the ground and doesn't reflect actual solutions that are available." He said Duchesne County has already joined the challenge, along with several counties in Montana and Nevada.

Bryner continued, "The legal team is in place. They're asking for \$5,000 for us to get

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involved in this litigation to support the challenges. This will greatly affect any decision made as to the Greater Sage-grouse; any listing, or any plans or amendments to plans. Correct and proper data need to be relied on by the federal government. Any decision made as to the Greater Sage-grouse will greatly affect Carbon County, and so my recommendation is that the county get involved with this."




Commissioner Jae Potter concurred, saying, "They are overreaching and they have no business trying to put in these kind of rules with falsified data. In my opinion this is just one more maneuver by the environmental groups to put an end to carbon-based production, and I for one, would be supportive of a joinder agreement to see what else we can do."

Commissioners Mellor and Hopes also agreed, and the motion to join the litigation was approved.

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