



Public Lands Council

News Release

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Contact: Mike Deering, 202-879-9117 or mdeering@beef.org

PLC, NCBA and ICA Granted Authority to Defend Ranchers in Court Room

—US District Court Allows Ranchers Full Seat at Table in Sage Grouse Case

WASHINGTON (Sept. 23, 2011) - The U.S. District Court, District of Idaho, yesterday, Sept. 22, 2011, granted the [Public Lands Council](#) (PLC), the [National Cattlemen's Beef Association](#) (NCBA) and the [Idaho Cattle Association](#) (ICA) intervenor status in the Western Watershed Project's (WWP) challenge of the Bureau of Land Management's public lands grazing permit decisions. Specifically, WWP challenged grazing permits based on accusations that BLM did not account for preservation of sage grouse habitat. According to Dustin Van Liew, PLC executive director and NCBA director of federal lands, the accusations were not based on science and were presented solely to eliminate ranchers' ability to graze livestock on public lands. He said having intervenor status will allow the groups to fully participate in the legal proceedings.

"WWP's case is just the latest example of extremist organizations attempting to remove ranchers from public lands through unrelenting litigation. The ruling will allow us to give a voice to the thousands of public lands ranchers who manage the land and its resources to ensure a sustainable public lands grazing industry," said Van Liew. "Our industry has proven the compatibility of public lands grazing with improved wildlife habitat, including sage grouse. While the case is ongoing, it is important for us to have the ability to represent the interests of public lands ranchers."

Wyatt Prescott, ICA executive vice president, said without the January 2011 Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals landmark decision to abandon the Federal Defendant Only rule, PLC, ICA and NCBA would not have been allowed to defend ranchers in this case that will undoubtedly have significant impacts on the livelihoods of ranchers across the West.

"For decades because of the Federal Defendant Only rule, ranchers and other public lands users were forced to stand on the sidelines while well-funded environmental activists made a hobby of filing lawsuit after lawsuit alleging violation of environmental laws, like the WWP suit regarding sage grouse. The decision to allow ICA, PLC and NCBA to defend ranchers in this case is a direct result of that January decision," said Prescott. "We will base our actions in this case on proven evidence that public lands ranchers responsibly care for and manage the land and its resources, including wildlife habitat for the grouse."

The non-profit Western Resource Legal Center (WRLC) is representing intervenors in the sage grouse case.

"We are gratified that Judge Winmill has granted intervention. We look forward to being able to vigorously represent the ranchers in arguing against the merits of Western Watershed Project's claims," WRLC Executive Director Caroline Lobdell said.

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