

Advocates want coal mining banned near sage grouse

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BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Wildlife advocates have filed a legal petition with the federal government that seeks a prohibition on coal mining in areas across the West with prime habitat for sage grouse.

The petition was filed Wednesday with the U.S. Office of Surface Mining by the group WildEarth Guardians. The agency has 90 days to respond.

Jeremy Nichols is the climate program director for WildEarth Guardians. He said a mining ban in sage grouse habitat makes sense given that other federal agencies are working to reverse the bird's long-term decline.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has said grazing, mining and other pressures are imperiling sage grouse across the West.

The agency is under a 2015 deadline to decide whether to add the chicken-sized birds to the list of threatened and endangered species.

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