

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

PartnersInTheSage.com

PARTNERING TO CONSERVE
SAGEBRUSH
RANGELANDS

PARTNERING TO CONSERVE SAGEBRUSH RANGELANDS

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) entered into a formal partnership in June 2016 to improve sagebrush conservation on public and private lands. This work is being accomplished by increasing voluntary collaboration and partnerships, improving science and technology transfer, advancing communications, as well as implementing projects in the field. The partnership is based on the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI), a model for voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private lands across the west.



TOGETHER, THE BLM-IWJV PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHED THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT RESULTS IN 2018:

- 102 projects completed
- 66,154 acres impacted with a diversity of conservation treatments
- \$3.226 million of projects funded
- 387 partners engaged
- 116 landowner visits
- 72 forums created to support public and private partners





(Top Left) Wet meadow restoration structures are low-cost, low-maintenance, and high-benefit conservation practices.

(Top Right) The online app in-use. This tool provides powerful information to help landowners and resource managers track vegetation through time and plan actions to improve sagebrush rangelands.

(Below) The RAP app was launched in September 2018.



Putting Science into Practice

SCIENCE CAPACITY

CONIFER REMOVAL MAP:

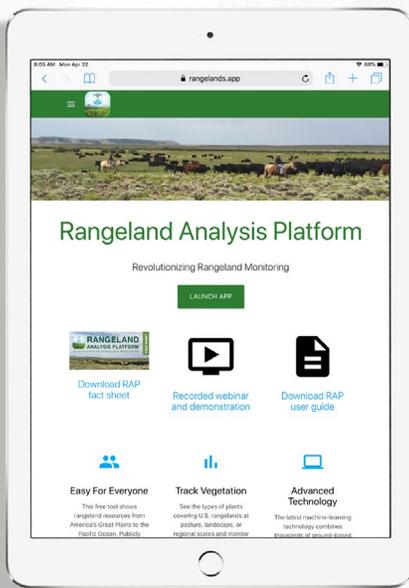
Using satellite imagery, the University of Montana and NRCS SGI worked with Colorado State University to [map conifer cover](#) over time, which allows partners to visualize the extent of conifer removal on an annual basis, quantify cumulative conservation outcomes, and identify potential partnership projects for the future.

MESIC RESOURCES MAP:

In 2017, NRCS published a [geospatial dataset that maps and characterizes wetland resources](#) throughout the western U.S. aimed at identifying sage-grouse brood-rearing habitat on both private and public lands. In 2018, an annual update was made to this dataset and deployed online where it can be easily accessed and used by managers to help target conservation and conduct outcome-based evaluations of treatments.

RANGELAND ANALYSIS PLATFORM:

In September 2018, the University of Montana and NRCS SGI launched the [Rangeland Analysis Platform \(RAP\)](#). This public online application provides simple and fast access to geospatial data characterizing western U.S. rangelands (e.g., percent vegetation cover of annual grasses and forbs, perennial grasses and forbs, shrubs, trees, etc.). The tool was developed to provide landowners, resource managers, conservationists and scientists access to data that can inform land management planning, decision-making and the evaluation of outcomes.



Technical Transfer

SHARING SCIENCE



LIVE BROADCAST:

2018 SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Following the successful model of providing technical support at the 2017 Society for Range Management Conference, SGI, BLM, IWJV and Utah State University collaborated for a second year to provide videography and staff support for two special sessions in January 2018. [Click here](#) to view proceedings from these sessions.

WORKSHOP:

COMBATING WILDFIRE AND WEEDS

More than 135 conservation partners met in Boise, Idaho, during [SGI's 8th Annual Workshop, titled Combating Wildfire and Weeds](#), in May 2018. Over the course of two days, participants heard from ranchers, firefighters, researchers, local nonprofits and public land managers about the amazing results that come from working together locally to achieve a shared vision: healthy sagebrush rangelands for people and wildlife.



FIELD TRAINING:

RIPARIAN AND WET MEADOW RESTORATION

In 2018, BIO-Logic Inc. was contracted to provide technical assistance to BLM, NRCS and local partners seeking to launch local projects using Zeedyk and other restoration techniques in mesic habitats to benefit sage-grouse and sagebrush ecosystems. Support was provided to the first of three pilot sites in Susanville, California (BLM Eagle Lake Field Office). Nearly 30 people attended including: private landowners, California Mule Deer Association, Point Blue Conservation Science, NRCS, Nevada Department of Wildlife, BLM and others.

(Bottom Left) The Strategic Watershed Action Team Annual Workshop brought partners from across the country together to tour the Soda Fire and hear the lessons partners learned.

(Middle Left) Participants attending the mesic restoration workshops were taught how to "read the landscape" and "think like water."



Restoring & Conserving Sagebrush Habitat

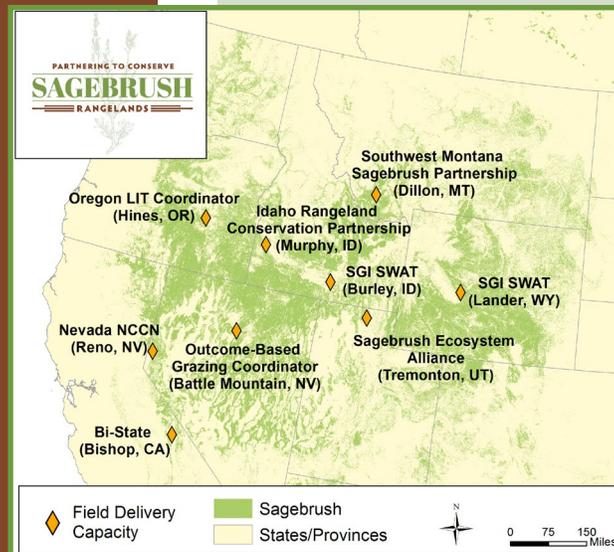
FIELD DELIVERY CAPACITY & PARTNER DEVELOPMENT

A major aspect of the BLM-IWJV partnership agreement involves creating demonstration projects and providing field capacity to accelerate, coordinate and/or streamline conservation treatments in sagebrush habitats. These partnership-driven positions help address bottlenecks or hurdles identified by the BLM and its partners. Funds in this agreement are currently supporting 9 field positions or contracts in California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Utah.

Sean Claffey facilitated several important projects that we would not have been able to complete without his assistance. Projects include conifer removal in priority sage-grouse habitat, as well as mesic restoration that will enhance and expand sage-grouse nesting and brood rearing habitat. In addition, through Sean’s coordination, we have been able to save a significant amount of money per acre by having a contractor work on several projects across boundaries with several different funding sources.

- Pat Fosse
BLM Dillon, Montana Field Office

Overview of Capacity		Partnership Accomplishments	
Total Projects Planned	56	Conservation Easements (ac)	4,155
Total Projects Completed	102	Conifer Removed (ac)	15,960
Total Acres Impacted	66,154	Fuels Treatment (ac)	3,055
Total Project Funding	\$3,226,190	Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated (ac)	1,913
Partners Engaged	387	Vegetation Management/Habitat Enhancement (ac)	6,551
Landowner Visits	116	Prescribed Grazing (ac)	33,591
Meetings/Field Tours	55	Fence Modification (mi)	26
Outreach/Education/Volunteer Events	17	Fence Removal/Installation (ft)	5500/8155
		Wet Meadows Restored (ac)	929
		Seedlings Planted	147,500
		Mesic Structures Installed	347
		Mesic Habitat Preserved/Restored (mi)	2
		Wildlife Escape Ramps Installed	12
		Population Monitoring (PMUs)	5



(Photos) In multiple landscapes, our field coordinators and their partners are removing thousands of acres of conifers across ownership boundaries. These positions are key to facilitating communications between agencies and landowners.



Telling the Story

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH CAPACITY

WEBSITE:

PARTNERSINTHESAGE.COM

The purpose of PartnersInTheSage.com is to communicate about the BLM-IWJV partnership and help catalyze proactive, voluntary and community-led sagebrush rangeland conservation. Content posted on the website's news feed was compiled every other month in a newsletter and emailed to a database of 4,000 contacts.



STORY MAP:

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

In its debut release, this [story map](#) highlighted sagebrush partnerships that are building conservation bridges between the science and the people that spark change for their communities. The first five stories showcased where public and private partners are collaborating on voluntary, proactive and highly organized conservation projects that have an impact across large areas, including Bi-State collaboration; conifer cutting in the Warner Mountains and Vya; Sagebrush Ecosystem Alliance in Utah; wet meadow restoration in Gunnison Basin, Colorado; and Soda Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) in Idaho and Oregon.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN:

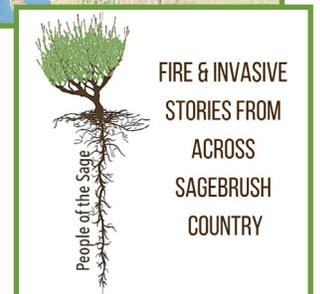
SAGEWEST—PEOPLE OF THE SAGE (2018 SERIES)

Throughout August 2018, partners across the American West shared stories of incredible people working to combat the twin threats of wildfire and invasive species in sagebrush country. Called "People of the Sage: Fire & Invasives," this social media-based campaign was driven by compelling feature stories, first-person essays, videos and portraits. Members of SageWest, a diverse sagebrush communications network, produced [this series with 15 original stories](#) about scientists, ranchers, biologists, young professionals, conservation teams, firefighters, range specialists, birders and teachers.

(Left Middle) Making Room Out West, published in Pheasants Forever Journal, highlighted BLM conifer removal projects in southeastern Oregon and Burley, Idaho.

(Right Middle) The Partnership in Action story map features regional partnerships and will be updated with new stories in 2019.

(Bottom Right) The People of the Sage campaign run by SageWest showcases people who work on combating fire and invasives in sagebrush country.



Partnerships & Coordination

IWJV SUPPORT



The IWJV is governed by a highly diverse executive-level Management Board comprised of state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, corporate members representing the energy sector and private landowners including public lands ranchers. The IWJV brings important expertise in developing public-private partnerships and working at multiple scales to advance sagebrush habitat conservation.

OUR PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE:

- 387+ (and growing) key partners representing federal agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, local government and non-governmental organizations, tribes and universities
- 14+ state fish and wildlife and agriculture agencies engaged through direct funding, guidance/oversight or collaboration on projects
- 400+ BLM contacts in the IWJV partnership database
- 2 statewide collaboratives in the Great Basin (Idaho and Nevada) that are networking >53 partners
- A legacy approach to cross-state collaboration in the Bi-State with 302+ partners
- The IWJV and Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies are lock-step in a long-run effort to conserve the sagebrush ecosystem and proactively support wildlife populations and communities for future generations.
- In the upcoming year, this partnership will also seek to engage the Western Governor's Association via actions associated with the sagebrush-relevant Secretarial Orders.



(Photos) Conservation takes a village. From traveling into the field with partners to sharing lessons learned, to getting into the nitty gritty with projects, to pushing a field tour bus out of the mud, this partnership takes an all-hands-on-deck approach.





PartnersInTheSage.com

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INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

