ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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 coordinate conservation practices on public and private lands. The purpose of the partnership is to increase voluntary, incentive-based collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries for people, wildlife, and local communities. As we enter our fifth year of this partnership, the following summary of our 2020 Annual Report captures the major accomplishments of the BLM, IWJV, and multiple partners.

Download an electronic version of this report here:
PartnersInTheSage.com/2020-annual-report

THIS PARTNERSHIP FOCUSES ON SIX PRIORITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AND BLM:

- Reduce catastrophic rangeland wildfires
- Prevent and control noxious and invasive weeds
- Restore wet meadow and riparian habitats
- Remove conifers that have expanded into sagebrush habitat
- Implement range structural improvements
- Coordinate habitat protection and restoration associated with big game migratory corridor efforts

HIGHLIGHTS: A LOOK AT 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

41 BLM field, district, or state offices supported with capacity

2 new partner positions (for a total of 14)

84 field projects implemented

97,317 acres impacted

$9,499,509 in project funding

952 entities in our partnership network

148 landowner visits

Restoring & Conserving Sagebrush Habitat

FIELD DELIVERY CAPACITY

The vision for this multi-year effort is to use an "all hands, all lands" approach to help conserve the sagebrush ecosystem and the nationally significant wildlife, cultural, and economic resources it supports. We use strategic science to focus our efforts on creating field capacity that accelerates, coordinates, and streamlines conservation actions and treatments across fence lines. The IWJV builds relationships with BLM field, district, and state office personnel to determine their needs and establish additional field-based support.

PROJECT PROTECTS SAGEBRUSH, EMPLOYS OUT-OF-WORK GUIDES:

Sage Capacity Team member Sean Claffey coordinates projects to push back on conifer expansion, among many other tasks, to protect sagebrush habitat on public and private land. In 2020, he helped put together a field crew comprised of unemployed fishing guides who were out of work due to the pandemic. This work was so interesting Montana Public Radio did a story on it. Listen to it here.

Overview of Capacity		Partnership Accomplishments	
Total Projects Planned	33	Conservation Easements (ac)	4,100
Total Projects Completed	84	Conifers Removed (ac)	59,757
Total Acres Impacted	97,317	Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated (ac)	11,382
Total Project Funding	$9,499,509	Vegetation Management/Habitat Enhancement (ac)	20,233
Partners in Network	952	Prescribed Grazing (ac)	1,554
Landowner Visits	148	Fence Modification (mi)	28
Meetings/Field Tours	140	Wet Meadows Restored (ac)	291
Outreach/Education/Volunteer Events	21	Seedlings Planted	142,815
		Mesic Structures Installed	131

(Above map) As of FY 2020, funds in the BLM-IWJV partnership support 14 field positions (learn more here). These positions are referred to as the Sage Capacity Team. Each position helps to coordinate rangeland health and wildlife projects across public and private boundaries; address challenges in rangeland conservation; track projects; facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and forums; and communicate success stories.

Telling the BLM's Story
COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

The unprecedented events of 2020 brought a suite of new opportunities to our sagebrush communications efforts, some challenging and some highly positive. We shifted to almost all digital communications tools and products, including virtual methods of meeting with partners.

OUTCOME-BASED GRAZING AUTHORIZATION (OBGA) COMMUNICATIONS

RANCHING PROFILES

We produced profiles of the 11 participating permittees in OBGA, an innovative program designed to offer a more collaborative approach between BLM and livestock producers engaged in permit renewals. The profiles are housed on a landing page, which communicates about OBGA. This page received over 1,100 views in FY 2020.

"UP IN SMOKE" VIDEO

POWERFUL MESSAGING AND MARKETING

This video focused on calling attention to rangeland wildfire and invasive annual grasses by highlighting statistics about the scale and gravity of the fire-invasives cycle. The target audience was decision-makers, policymakers, and funding partners who are key to supporting a strategic approach to wildfire and invasives, increasing funding, and strengthening coordination across sagebrush rangelands. This video potentially reached 186,000 people due to creative distribution and marketing.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

A SageWest Summer Series 2020: Fire & Invasives ran May and June 2020 with a weekly dissemination of communication products on fire and invasives in sagebrush rangelands. Over this eight week period, members of the SageWest network contributed 17 products on this topic to heighten awareness about this issue prior to the 2020 fire season. The content for this series was housed on www.PartnersInTheSage.com and this helped drive viewership across this portal. Activities, like this collaborative series, highlight the value of BLM-IWJV communications capacity and the partnership networking that is essential to scale up conservation impact.

SAGEBRUSH SCIENCE TRANSLATION TO THE FIELD

DYNAMIC MESIC HABITATS

This story *Gambling Grouse: Private Wet-Meadows or Public Mesic Rangelands* was written to summarize important biome-wide research for field practitioners working on public and private land conservation. As more frequent and intensifying droughts are forecasted in coming decades, conserving water resources will be critical to the maintenance of sage grouse and other western wildlife. Now is the time to double-down on mesic area restoration (see photo below) and conservation as well as conifer removal in the right places.

Actionable Science

IMFORMING STRATEGIC CONSERVATION

These three multi-year science projects are coordinated by NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), University of Montana, Oregon State University, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with BLM and a team of scientists.

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES: QUANTIFYING TRENDS IN RANGELAND HEALTH

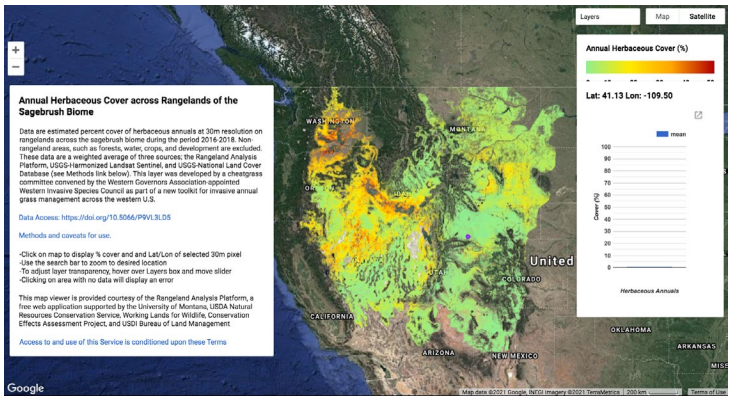
The Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP) was created in 2018 with funding support from the BLM-IWJV partnership. This online application provides access to geospatial data characterizing western U.S. rangelands. BLM staff have been using RAP outputs for range and wildlife habitat assessments. The RAP team continues to work with the BLM to improve outreach and training for BLM staff. In FY 2020, additional advancements and updates included rangeland productivity data, a cheatgrass data layer coordinated with Western Governors' Association, and ecosystem resilience and resistance data for rapid risk assessment across the range of sage grouse. Four peer-reviewed journal articles were produced supporting these developments.

CONIFER REMOVAL FOR SONGBIRDS ON PUBLIC LANDS

Efforts continued with this project to quantify large-scale impacts of conifer removal on avian communities. In one scientific evaluation, they used a systematic conservation planning approach to prioritize areas for conifer removal across the sage grouse range while incorporating a number of different songbirds. In addition, they modeled occurrence and abundance in relation to multi-scale habitat features for nine songbirds reliant on both sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands for breeding. It was revealed that management has largely aligned with distributions of declining sagebrush obligate songbirds and avoided that of pinyon jay. Peer-reviewed journal articles are in process and will be shared on our web portal.

OUTCOME-BASED EVALUATION OF CONIFER REMOVAL IN LAKEVIEW, OREGON

The overall objective of this study conducted by Oregon State University and partners has been to expand the existing database and provide a longer-term assessment of the effects of juniper removal on sage grouse habitat use and demography. Access the 2020 field season report here along with other science.



Technical Transfer
SHARING SCIENCE WITH THE FIELD

READING THE LANDSCAPE: WEBINAR

The webinar "Low-Tech Wet Meadow Restoration: Reading the Landscape" was presented on July 22, 2020. The webinar was a joint project with NRCS WLFW and approved for continuing education units by the Society for Range Management. A total 402 participated. The co-presenters, Jeremy Maestas, Ecologist, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Shawn Connor, Restoration Ecologist, Biologic Inc., showed participants how to use Bill Zeedyk's principles to recognize and prioritize wet meadow restoration.

INVASIVE ANNUAL GRASS RISK ASSESSMENT DATASETS AND TOOLS

The U.S. Geological Survey, Colorado State University, and partner organizations are conducting a comparison of mapping products for cheatgrass, medusahead, and venenata. The purpose is to provide managers with information about available invasive annual grass products and spatial data to help them make informed decisions on how to best select and use those data for their intended purposes. BLM and IWJV helped create a "co-production" process, including the development of a stakeholder work group and survey to advise the scientific review of datasets and products, as well establishing support to communicate final products in FY 2021.

FACILITATING ACTIONABLE SCIENCE RELATED TO CONIFER ENCROACHMENT

Mariah McIntosh joined the sagebrush team as a summer intern in 2020 to support capacity building for science and technical transfer related to sagebrush restoration. Mariah completed two reports that synthesized valuable information to help move science into the hands of field managers. In these efforts, the team held meetings with 12 BLM state, district, and field offices and SCT partner positions to identify needs to put science into action. Specifically, this work addresses the adequacy of available science and research; identifies barriers to accessing and applying research and science-based tools; and clarifies the role of the IWJV to further support BLM partners to inform strategic decisions, specifically regarding conifer and pinyon-juniper encroachment. To learn more, visit this link: summary report.

Strengthening Partnerships & Coordination

IWJV SUPPORT

The power of this public-private partnership is that we interface with the people who are key to conserving this nationally important ecosystem across multiple scales with shared vision and purpose. Our partnership network includes 952 entities that work together to develop innovative approaches to landscape conservation resulting in ecological, social, and economic outcomes for communities across the West.

FUNDING ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

POWERFUL LEVERAGE

- Total BLM Headquarter funds contributed to date is **$5,797,010**.
- Total other BLM funds contributed to capacity investments is **$332,779.**
- Total funds and in-kind services leveraged is **$4,460,302.**
- Total capacity funding through FY 2020 is **$10,590,091.**
- Total project funding in FY 2020 is **$9,499,509.**
- Partnership leverage ratio averages **57:43** (BLM:partners) surpassing the original goal of a 75:25 ratio.
- IWJV's long-time corporate partners, ConocoPhillips and PacifiCorp, each committed new funding in FY 2020. ConocoPhillips invested **$200,000** in FY 2020 for a total **$1,300,000** to support sagebrush rangeland conservation. PacifiCorp also continued their annual support of $30,000.
- Approximately **96%** of the BLM funds provided through this agreement have been programmed for project work.

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Photos courtesy of: BLM, Mandi Casolo, Sean Claffey, Duane Coombs, Kelli Dobrescu, Ken Miracle, Hannah Nikonow, Brenda Richards, James Rogers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Service

INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

To learn more about how to join the partnership click here.
Follow us on Facebook and Instagram to keep engaged.