



2019 Annual Report





**Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands
Annual Report: October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019**

Access electronic digital copy here: PartnersInTheSage.com/2019-annual-report

The purpose of this document is to provide a FY 2019 Annual Report on the partnership accomplishments of the intra-agency agreements between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV). The first intra-agency agreement was signed in June 2016 and provided \$4,448,000 over five years (2016-2021). A second agreement was signed in August 2019 to expand partnership work for an additional five years (2019-2024).



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

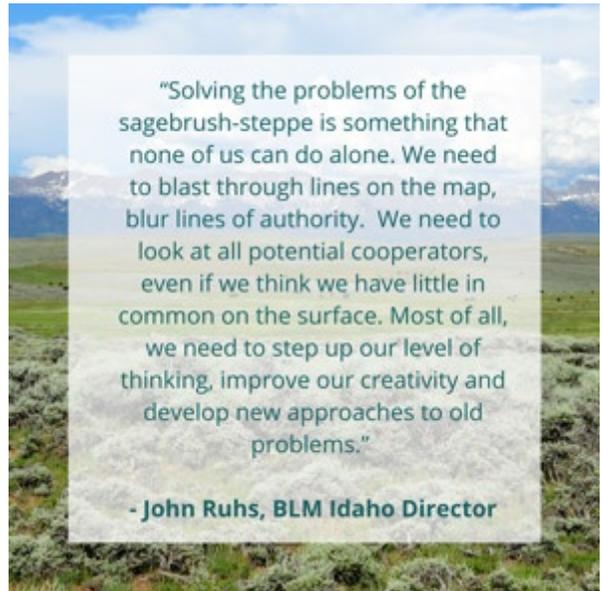
Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Overview of Achievements	4
<hr/>	
Restoring & Conserving Sagebrush Habitat: Field Delivery Capacity	6
Summary of Sage Capacity Team	6
Sagebrush Ecosystem Alliance (Utah)	7
Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership	8
Bi-State Local Area Working Group (California/Nevada)	9
NRCS SGI Shared Positions (Idaho/Wyoming)	10
Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership	11
Outcome-based Grazing Demonstration Projects	12
Local Implementation Teams (Oregon)	13
<hr/>	
Telling BLM's Story: Communications and Outreach Projects	15
Web Portal: PartnersInTheSage.com	15
Sage Capacity Team Support	16
Media Workshop: Fire and Invasives	16
1st Video Released	17
Storymap: Community Partnerships in Action	17
Feature Stories & Fact Sheets	17
<hr/>	
Actionable Science to Inform Strategic Conservation	19
Joint Tracking of Conifer Removal Across the West	19
Wetland Resilience and Resistance in Sagebrush Ecosystems (Mesic)	20
Conifer Removal for Songbirds on Public Lands	21
Interactive Web Application	21
Ecosystem Services: Quantifying Trends in Rangeland Health	22
Outcome-based Evaluation of Conifer Removal in Lakeview, Oregon	23
<hr/>	
Technical Transfer: Sharing Science with the Field	24
2019 Society for Range Management Conference: Video Recording	24
NRCS Western Working Lands For Wildlife 2019 Workshop	24
Riparian and Wet Meadow Restoration: Place-Based Technical Assistance	25
Private Lands Partnership in a Public Land State	25
First Annual Sagebrush Collaborative Forum	26
Mesic Science Outreach	26
<hr/>	
Strengthening Partnerships: IWJV Administration	27
Funding Accomplishments	27
Partnership Development	28
Team Support	29

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) entered into a formal partnership in June 2016 to expand successful private land conservation practices to public 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 fourth year of this partnership, the following 2019 Annual Report captures the major accomplishments of the BLM, IWJV, and hundreds of partners. The report summarizes activities of two intra-agency agreements. The first agreement was signed in June 2016 to deliver sage grouse and sagebrush habitat conservation that supported the [MOU between the BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\), and U.S. Forest Service \(USFS\)](#) for the period FY 2016-2021. It provided \$4,448,000 in federal funds and has been leveraged with \$3,671,260 in additional funds. The second intra-agency agreement was signed in August 2019 to expand upon the proven success of the BLM-IWJV partnership in achieving community-based sagebrush habitat conservation through diverse public-private partnerships for the period FY 2019-2024. The second intra-agency agreement provided federal funding of \$631,000, leveraged with more than \$238,475 in 2019. In sum, this public-private partnership has resulted in \$8,988,735 in funding for sagebrush rangeland conservation.



The current agreement focuses on the following six priorities of the Department of Interior and BLM:

- a. reduce catastrophic rangeland wildfires;
- b. prevent and control noxious and invasive weeds;
- c. restore wet meadow and riparian habitats;
- d. remove conifers that have expanded into sagebrush habitat;
- e. implement range structural improvements; and,
- f. coordinate habitat protection and restoration actions associated with big game migratory corridor efforts.

The central part of our work involves providing additional resources to the field to help BLM and its partners achieve public land conservation goals. Equally important, the IWJV's support—via these agreements—is bringing specific outreach and communications tools to support the BLM and its messages around the need for collaboration on large and persistent threats like catastrophic wildfire in rangelands, annual invasives, and the need for conifer removal.

The most powerful testimony to these intra-agency agreements is that we are working hand-in-hand with BLM leadership at multiple levels across many states and their district and field offices. Together, we allocate time to build relationships, seek to understand common priorities, and develop opportunities to use this partnership agreement to overcome hurdles to sagebrush

rangeland conservation, especially pertaining to building stronger relationships with communities, public land grazers, sportsmen and women, and land managers.

Overview of 2019 Achievements



38 BLM Field, District, or State Offices supported with additional capacity



3 additional partner positions/contracts for a total of 12 at end of FY 2019



103 field projects implemented



63,172 acres impacted



\$6,358,623 in project funding



539 partners engaged



181 landowner visits

A few of our most noteworthy accomplishments from this past year include:

- Increased field delivery capacity positions from nine to 12 positions/contracts to assist BLM personnel across eight states with implementing and collaborating with partners on sagebrush habitat projects/treatments.
- Released a video entitled [Welcome to Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands](#), an introductory clip highlighting the purpose and value of the IWJV-BLM partnership.
- Hosted a [media workshop](#) focusing on rangeland wildfire and invasives in the Elko, Nevada, area and received national media coverage and broader public awareness.
- Hosted the first annual [Sagebrush Collaborative Forum](#) to bring our Sage Capacity Team (i.e., field delivery capacity positions), BLM, and other key partners together for peer-to-peer learning to provide resources, contacts, successes, challenges, and ideas around collaborative sagebrush conservation.
- Established a new intra-agency agreement with the BLM to scale up proven practices, expand our focus, and address increasing interest through 2024.

- Developed the IWJV Sagebrush Conservation Committee that focuses on rangeland wildfire and invasives and implemented an exploration and production campaign to increase partnerships with the oil and gas industry.

The IWJV is committed to helping protect communities, wildlife habitat, natural resources, and the public lands that BLM manages in the West. We are pleased to share the following 2019 Annual Report with BLM leadership and agency staff, the IWJV Management Board, and the incredible array of partners who have played a crucial role in this effort.





A primary aspect of the BLM-IWJV partnership agreement involves creating field capacity to accelerate, coordinate, and streamline conservation treatments in sagebrush habitats. The IWJV works closely with BLM field, district, and state office personnel to determine their needs and ensure additional support is value-added. Each partner position created is leveraged with additional partner (public and private) funding to increase efficiency and outcomes.

Sage Capacity Team

Funds in the BLM-IWJV agreement [support field positions or contracts](#)—also called the Sage Capacity Team—in eight states including: Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming ([see map here](#)). These positions are non-federal and are hosted by non-governmental organizations or other institutions. Each position was reviewed and approved by corresponding BLM field and state offices, and the Management Oversight Group (MOG).

Overview of FY 2019 Field Accomplishments

The following are FY 2019 accomplishments of seven positions; an additional six positions are in the process of being recruited and/or filled.

Overview of Capacity		Partnership Accomplishments	
Total Projects Planned	35	Conifer Removed (ac)	15,287
Total Projects Completed	103	Fuels Treatment (ac)	1,532
Total Acres Impacted	63,172	Fuel Breaks (ac)	71
Total Project Funding	\$ 6,358,623	Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated (ac)	1,120
Partners Engaged	539	Vegetation Management/Habitat Enhancement (ac)	27,794
Landowner Visits	181	Prescribed Grazing (ac)	17,346
Meetings/Field Tours	231	Fence Modification (mi)	27
Outreach/Educational/Volunteer Events	27	Wet Meadows Restored (ac)	22
		Seedlings Planted	500
		Mesic Structures Installed	242
		Mesic Habitat Preserved/Restored (mi)	10

PROJECT DELIVERY:**Sagebrush Ecosystem Alliance (SEA)*****Landscape Coordinator*****Supports BLM Salt Lake City Field Office/West Desert District Office****Tremonton, Utah*****Established 2017***

Capacity Need:

- Increase field capacity for collaborative sagebrush conservation
- Improve cross-agency, cross-partner conservation and communication
- Increase efficiencies in managing public land uses and implementing restoration projects in sagebrush ecosystems

The Sagebrush Ecosystem Alliance was created in 2017. BLM and local landowners requested funding to support a Landscape Coordinator for the SEA. This position was filled by Calee Garn who provides support to BLM, the West Box Elder Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) Group, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Utah Department of Natural Resources, NRCS, Utah State University, and ranchers in West Box Elder County. Additionally, this position has started the process of updating the West Box Elder CRM Conservation Action Plan. The Landscape Coordinator works closely with BLM Range Management Specialists, the Renewable Resources Manager, and helped increase communications between ranchers and agency staff. The coordinator also played an important role assisting with post-fire rehabilitation on the Goose Creek Fire Complex and Shelter Pass Fire Complex. A primary accomplishment in 2019 was the completion of a study called “Evaluating Relationships of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perception between Ranchers and Bureau of Land Management Professionals” (Garn, 2019).

***Overview***

Total Projects Planned: 5
Total Projects Completed: 3
Partners Engaged: 18
Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 24
of Landowner Visits: 35
Total Acres Impacted: 29,145

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifers Removed: 2,402 acres
Veg Management/Hab Enhanced: 26,743 acres
Fence Modification: 12.7 miles
Mesic Structures Installed: 35
Total Project Funding (completed): \$4,104,033
Total Project Funding (planned): \$274,500

PROJECT DELIVERY:**Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership (SMSP)*****Sagebrush Conservation Coordinator*****Supports: BLM Dillon Field Office/Western Montana District Office****Dillon, Montana*****Established 2018***

Capacity Need:

- Enhance coordination among partners (e.g., schedule, organize, and facilitate meetings)
- Improve project management (e.g., define priorities and implement coordinated actions across jurisdictional boundaries)
- Build strategic outreach/communications (e.g., build relationships outside southwest Montana, develop brochures for landowners, and communicate success stories)

The Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership hired a Sagebrush Conservation Coordinator, Sean Claffey, in June 2018. The coordinator helps members of the SMSP coordinate and fund projects to restore and enhance sagebrush habitat and enhance field delivery of conservation actions across southwest Montana. Partners include BLM; NRCS; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife; Red Rocks Lakes National Wildlife Refuge; Montana, Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Montana Department of Natural Resources; The Nature Conservancy; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Montana Conservation Corps; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Mule Deer Foundation; Beaverhead Watershed Committee, and more. In 2019, partner coordination and project management primarily focused on three types of projects: conifer treatment, wetland/wet meadow restoration, and mesic habitat restoration. Important capacity-building accomplishments included signing several agreements and MOUs to execute projects, increased planning and coordination, and delivering education and outreach. The coordinator also joined a collaborative NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program funding team to request \$930,000 for Source Point Water Depletion in Montana's High Divide, and facilitated grants totaling \$461,046 with \$244,520 in matching funds. For more information, [see this report](#).

***Overview***

Total Projects Planned: 7

Total Projects Completed: 11

Partners Engaged: 26

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 7

of Landowner Visits: 4

Total Acres Impacted: 3,541

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifers Removed: 3,529 acres

Wet Meadows: 12 acres

Mesic Structures Installed: 200

Total Project Funding (completed): \$212,449

Total Project Funding (planned): \$286,372

PROJECT DELIVERY:

Bi-State Local Area Working Group (LAWG)

Data & Communications Coordinator

Supports: BLM Bishop Field Office

Bishop, California

Established 2018

Capacity Need:

- Increase effectiveness and efficiency in meeting reporting and accountability requirements
- Broaden outreach to more of the Bi-State community
- Add agency capacity to implement priority projects on the ground
- Coordinate actions across ownership boundaries for seamless conservation

The Bi-State Sage Grouse Data and Communications Coordinator position was established in 2018 and filled by Amy Sturgill to support the Bi-State LAWG as a point of contact charged with managing organization logistics, coordinating conservation efforts, and championing the success of this unique conservation collaborative. In 2019, the coordinator identified conservation priorities and organized meetings to develop annual work implementation plans. She completed the [2012-2018 Action Plan Accomplishment Report](#) to better understand what percent of the actions had been implemented and how to prioritize conservation efforts moving forward. Finally, she attended conferences, outreach events, and volunteer stewardship days, acting as an ambassador to share the amazing story of this hard-working and dedicated collaborative. Project partners are extensive and include: Inyo and Humboldt Toiyabe National Forests, California and Nevada BLM, US Geological Survey, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Nevada Department of Wildlife, NRCS, Nevada State Parks, Mono County, local land trusts, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners.



Overview

Total Projects Planned: (not available)
Total Projects Completed: 85
Partners Engaged: 355
Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 28
Outreach/Educational/Volunteer Events: 27
Total Acres Impacted: 11,219

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifers Removed: 8,786 acres
Fuels Treatment: 1,532 acres
Fuel Breaks: 71 acres
Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated: 320.4 acres
Prescribed Grazing: 500 acres
Fence Modification: 14.3 miles
Wet Meadows Restored: 10 acres
Mesic Structures Installed: 7
Seedlings Planted: 500
Total Project Funding (completed): \$1,928,035
Total Project Funding (planned): \$1,900,000

PROJECT DELIVERY:

**NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Shared Positions
Range and Wildlife Conservationists
Supports: BLM Burley Field Office/Lander Field Office**

**Burley, Idaho; Lander, Wyoming
Funding established in 2018**

Capacity Need:

- Support shared positions that fulfill the intent of the NRCS-BLM-USFS MOU
- Landscape-level conservation and habitat enhancement between private and public lands

SGI, IWJV, and BLM continue to partner to achieve landscape level conservation, habitat enhancement and increase collaborative partnerships through partner positions. Two positions responsible for this are located in Burley, Idaho and Lander, Wyoming.

The Burley SGI position, filled by Connor White and hosted through Pheasants Forever, continued to implement cross-boundary conservation work in south central Idaho in 2019. Connor receives broad support from local and state partners, and continues to attract large project dollars toward the work being done in the area. The primary work focuses on Utah juniper removal for sage grouse habitat improvements. Project details are [described here](#). This position plays an integral role in merging private and state projects and funding with federal land projects and funding. This has created a culture in which projects are done on a landscape scale instead of by land ownership.

**Overview**

Total Projects Planned: 20
Total Projects Completed: 3
Partners Engaged: 8
Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 7
of Landowner Visits: 10
Total Acres Impacted: 1,621

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifers Removed: 570 acres
Veg Management/Hab Enhanced: 1,051 acres
Total Project Funding (completed): \$75,525
Total Project Funding (planned): \$812,236

The Lander SGI shared position, previously filled by Mandi Hirsch, played a critical role in working with numerous partners on landscape-scale projects that required shared vision, funding, communication, and cooperation. She completed planning and implementation for collaborative cross-boundary SGI projects on several large-scale ranching operations. Implemented projects include a collaborative prescribed grazing plan and monitoring on 16,846 acres and plans to remove 14,344 feet of fence and build 14,750 feet of new wildlife-friendly fence in 2020. She also planned and facilitated Phase 2 of annual invasive cheatgrass treatment on 800 acres.

The position has started planning two cross-boundary SGI prescribed grazing plans with landowners, BLM, and additional partners (approximately 128,415 acres). This shared position

began planning and designing a large-scale Beaver Dam Analog project as well as a range improvement contract for an existing Working Lands for Wildlife CSP contract. Overall, this partner position laid the groundwork for cross-boundary partnerships and conservation project implementation, paving the way for future collaborative conservation in western Wyoming.

Note: The Lander position has been vacant since April 1, 2019 and is currently being refilled.

Overview

Total Projects Planned: 3
Total Projects Completed: 1
Partners Engaged: 9
Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 8
of Landowner Visits: 24
Total Acres Impacted: 17,646

Partnership Accomplishments

Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated: 800 acres
Prescribed Grazing Implemented: 16,846 acres
Total Project Funding (completed): \$38,581
Total Project Funding (planned): \$131,729

PARTNERSHIP FACILITATION:

Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership (IRCP)

Coordinator

Supports: BLM Idaho State Office/Owyhee Field Office

**Statewide
Established 2018**

Capacity Need:

- Create overarching entity that works across organizations with vision and focus
- Build consensus around needed rangeland management practices, research, and policies
- Leverage resources (e.g., ideas, knowledge, and financial capital) to implement conservation practices in sagebrush ecosystems

The IRCP Coordinator, Brenda Richards, was hired in September 2018 to focus on priorities including: (1) communications, (2) organization building, (3) outcome-based land management, and (4) building a learning network. In 2019, key accomplishments included:

- a. hosting the first Annual Rangeland Conservation Partnership Meeting in Boise with over 135 attendees to map out the focus of IRCP;
- b. launching a website to help network and share rangeland information and learning opportunities;
- c. participating in over 125 meetings to provide outreach for IRCP and foster consensus on the economic, social, and ecological aspects of healthy and productive rangelands in Idaho;
- d. working with BLM leadership to help facilitate permit renewals in a constructive, coordinated fashion;
- e. partnering with BLM’s targeted grazing project in the Owyhee Field Office, involving six permittees, Owyhee County, BLM, IRCP; and,



See the [IRCP 2019 Annual Report](#) for more.

Overview

Partners Engaged: 75

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 125

of Landowner Visits: 35

PARTNERSHIP FACILITATION:

**Outcome-based Grazing Authorizations (OBGA) Demonstration
Coordinator**

**Regional
Established 2018**

Supports: BLM Nevada State Office/Lakeview, Oregon Field Office

Capacity Need:

- Facilitate communications between the permittees and BLM on 11 OBGA projects
- Develop relationships with Rangeland Management Specialists in BLM field offices (associated OBGA pilots)
- Assist permittees in developing their ranch sustainability objectives
- Provide technical assistance to BLM in developing appropriate monitoring protocols that BLM can use in measuring whether operational objectives of the OBGA pilot are being met over the life of the permit

In 2018, BLM Washington Office requested the IWJV's support of 11 [OBGA demonstration projects](#) through providing technical and partnership expertise. A position was created to facilitate enhanced communications between the permittees, the BLM, and partners. In 2019, the OBGA Coordinator, Duane Coombs, worked closely with permittees and field staff on specific needs associated with the individual projects. Emphasis was given to the Fitzgerald Ranches OBGA project administered out of the Lakeview, Oregon, field office. As the term permit renewal (TPR) was being finalized, support was provided to review NEPA documents, grazing schedules, and the one protest that was filed.

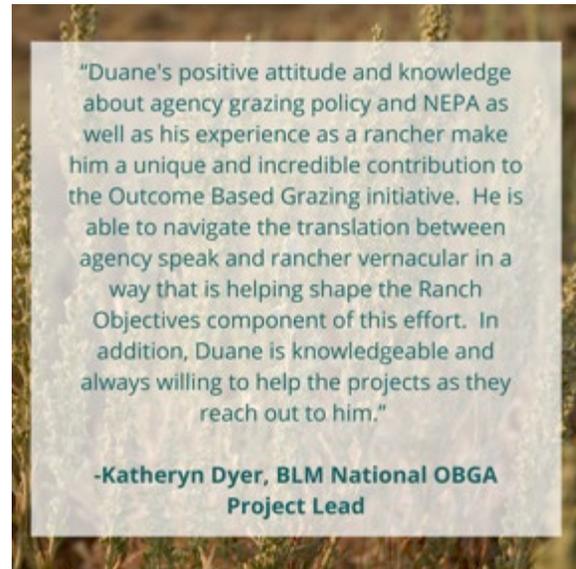


In early August, a cooperative monitoring training was hosted in Lakeview for the permittees and field staff. Dr. Tamzen Stringham and Devon Snyder from the Stringham Lab at University of Nevada (Reno) taught a day-long classroom session that was attended by approximately 25 permittees from the Lakeview field office. The second day of the training was a field day specifically designed to address monitoring needs for the Fitzgerald Ranches TPR. The products of this training were used in the NEPA documents associated with the final TPR signed in September 2019. The Fitzgerald Ranches OBGA permit is the first permit fully encompassing the OBGA banner.

In November, the Washington Office OBGA lead and the OBGA Coordinator hosted a two-and-a-half day "Objective and Monitoring Plan Workshop" in Reno at the Nevada BLM State Office.

This workshop was designed for the field staff and permittees working on the eleven OBGA demonstrations. Ten of the 11 projects had either staff, permittees, or both in attendance. Each project presented an update, including challenges they have encountered. Experts from the National Operations Center in Denver, Colorado, were on hand to discuss opportunities and techniques to integrate current BLM programs and procedures into the OBGA permit renewal process. The various partners in the projects were able to network and share experiences at this very successful workshop. [See workshop report here.](#)

The Coordinator shared the purpose, need, and goals of OBGA in numerous interactions with Western Governors' Association, Public Lands Council, state cattlemen's organizations, local conservation districts, and various collaborative groups across the West. One new OBGA term permit renewal was fully processed, two permit renewals that were previously completed are being implemented, and several Range Health Evaluations were completed. At least two fully-processed OBGA term permit renewals are expected to be completed in 2020. Significant effort was also put into communications related to OBGA, including this [newly designed map](#).



Overview

Partners Engaged: 30

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 29

of Landowner Visits: 55

PARTNERSHIP FACILITATION:

Local Implementation Teams (LIT)
Coordinator

Deschutes, Crook, and Malheur Counties, Oregon
Established 2019

Supports: Prineville District Office/BLM Central Oregon Field Office/Vale District Office/Malheur Field Office

Capacity Need:

- Build effective collaboration at the local level to promote and support landscape-scale conservation planning
- Reinvigorate and provide support to two LITs (Prineville and Malheur)
- Work with BLM to create Comprehensive Threat Reduction Plans

The LIT Coordinator, Julie Unfried, was hired in April of 2019 and is hosted by Pheasants Forever. This coordinator is working to facilitate local interest groups in an effort to find common ground and develop local, cross-jurisdictional strategies to enhance, improve, and restore sage grouse habitat conditions throughout central and eastern Oregon (Deschutes, Crook, and Malheur Counties). The coordinator has provided the needed capacity to organize the LITs and foster

collaborative partnerships among stakeholders to build rapport, understand interests, and set in motion the LIT collaboration process. The coordinator has presented at multiple community events such as the Owyhee County Watershed Council meeting, the Rangeland Fire Protection Association’s annual summit, and a volunteer field work event hosted by Oregon Hunters Association and the USFS. She hosted the first Prineville LIT meeting which focused on developing the LIT team charters, identifying steering committees and membership, and providing information to participants about LIT purpose and alternative strategies for collaboration. Additional meetings have been planned for the Malheur LIT group. Once LIT structure is established, Julie will work with each group to compile existing resources and inventory existing project work across each landscape, help the groups develop goals, and assist with drafting strategic plans for future project implementation. [Access this position’s report here.](#)



Overview

Partners Engaged: 18

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 3

of Landowner Visits: 18





An important facet of the BLM-IWJV partnership is increasing strategic communications related to BLM and partner accomplishments, and success stories of sage grouse and sagebrush conservation. The overall communications goal is to advance proactive, collaborative conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem by: 1) increasing awareness about the BLM-IWJV partnership to facilitate collaborative conservation, 2) engaging partners in specific conservation actions identified in the MOU, and 3) showcasing proven models and other BLM-led innovations to transfer success. Primary target audiences include BLM staff across multiple levels of the agency, NRCS, USFWS, USFS, state fish and wildlife agencies, agricultural landowners and organizations, non-governmental organizations, and funders. Greater emphasis is also being placed on communicating about rangeland wildfire, annual invasives, conifer encroachment, and outcome-based grazing. Below is a list of our most significant accomplishments and products in 2019.

Web Portal: 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. This is accomplished by showcasing and promoting healthy working lands in the American West for the benefit of people and wildlife. By bringing a diversity of perspectives, values, and resources together on this platform, we advance our shared purpose of durable sagebrush conservation through partnerships. The following website metrics are for October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.

Total website unique page views: 16,346

Most popular stories:

[Outcome-based Grazing at the Winecup Gamble Ranch](#) article: 1,017 views

[Formation of a New Rangeland Partnership in Idaho](#) article: 576 views

[Cheating the Sage, Mule Deer Foundation Journal](#) article: 557 views

[Reporting on Fire & Invasives in Sagebrush Country](#) article: 432 views

[Crossing Boundaries for Conifer Removal](#) article: 316 views

Selection of newly-developed/refreshed pages:

<https://www.partnersinthesage.com/community-based-capacity>

<https://www.partnersinthesage.com/conifer-removal>

<https://www.partnersinthesage.com/wet-meadow-restoration>

<https://www.partnersinthesage.com/fire-and-invasives>

<https://www.partnersinthesage.com/sagewest>

eNewsletter: Content posted on the website's news feed is then compiled every other month in a newsletter and emailed to a database of approximately 4,300 contacts. 34% of our database contacts open our newsletters (average open rate for governmental programs is 27%). Our eNewsletter content drives 46% of our website's visits, followed by social media (34%), organic searches (12%), and direct referrals from a partner's websites (8%).

Sage Capacity Team Communications Support

The BLM, IWJV, and partners are investing in people in priority landscapes to develop lasting conservation partnerships in the form of community-based conservation capacity. By building and maintaining a webpage for the Sage Capacity Team, members of the team, their partners, and people not yet engaged with the Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands effort can connect with others working to coordinate conservation across public and private boundaries, break through bottlenecks and challenges, track projects and success, and facilitate forums that bring partners together. [Review the Sage Capacity Team and links to their work here.](#)

Media Workshop: Fire and Invasives

For those working and living in sagebrush country, the beauty of this place, its fragility, and its value might not seem like a hard or insignificant story to tell. Unfortunately, there are millions of people who do not understand this ecosystem or even know about its existence. To address this challenge, we hosted an event in May 2019, specifically for journalists, that showcased sagebrush rangelands to a dozen communicators from around the West. These reporters travelled to the Elko, Nevada, area for an intensive workshop on rangeland fire and the invasive plants that can infill the resulting void. The purpose of the event was to help these reporters gain a more in-depth understanding of the fire-invasive cycle in sagebrush country, build relationships with the expert speakers who are deeply invested in this ecosystem and the communities within, and see burned landscapes in the gravity they face. With this knowledge, contacts, and visuals, these journalists now have more tools available to reach their diverse audiences with this crucial information. Here are the stories that have been produced as a result of this journalist workshop:

- June 27, 2019 - [VIDEO: Inside the fight to save the west from fire](#) from Reno Gazette-Journal
- June 27, 2019 - [America's 'Sagebrush Sea' in the West is going up in smoke. Will anyone help?](#) from Reno Gazette-Journal
- June 24, 2019 - [US releases review on removing vegetation to prevent wildfires](#) from the Associated Press
- June 24, 2019 - [Here's what cheatgrass is and why it holds so much fire risk](#) from Reno Gazette-Journal
- June 13, 2019 - [The West's worst fires aren't burning in forests](#) from High Country News (also picked up by the Bend Source on July 10, 2019)
- June 10, 2019 - [With more extreme wildfire, state and federal agencies look to improve suppression, prevention funding](#) from the Nevada Independent
- May 22, 2019 - [Sagebrush Under Siege](#) from Methow Valley News
- May 30, 2019 - [A Sea Of Sagebrush Disappears, Making Way For Fire-Prone Cheatgrass](#) from National Public Radio
- April 18, 2019 - [Wildfires, Invasive Grass Threaten Future of Western Sagebrush](#) from Bloomberg Environment

Video: Released 1st and Filmed Content for 2nd Video in Idaho

In March 2019, the partnership released its [first video](#) entitled *Welcome to Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands*, an introductory clip establishing the basics of our collaboration with the BLM, the focus of this partnership, and an invitation for partners to engage. This video has been viewed over 500 times and is an integral tool to communicating about this effort to new audiences. When meeting with new partners, this video is often played to showcase the partnership opportunity. Due to its high quality, this video was shown in a conservation film promotional series at the 2% for Conservation 2019 Conference. In September 2019, the IWJV staff, a contract videographer, local rancher, and Idaho BLM partners filmed content near the Boise, Idaho area for a second video on sagebrush rangeland fire and invasive annual grasses. This video is in production and scheduled for release in 2020.



Storymap: Community Partnerships in Action

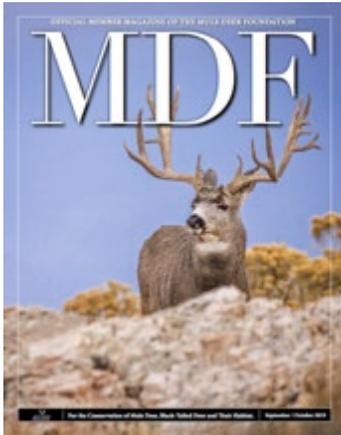
In 2019, the partnership [storymap](#) received a design and content “facelift” for the purpose of adapting to new technology and enabling more story content. Two new stories on the Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership and Winecup Gamble Ranch’s Outcome-based Grazing have since been added. All of the Sage Capacity Team members were also placed on a unique tab within the storymap that links to information about these positions and their partnerships.

Featured Stories & Fact Sheets

By connecting digital content to a variety of media outlets and platforms, new and broader audiences are reached. Here are just a few of the different communications that were published in 2019:

- **Web portal post**, [The Modern Firefight](#), by Julia Babcock (November 2018). This story highlighted Oregon’s RFPAs and how they work closely with federal agencies for fast and coordinated responses to rangeland fires.
- **Society for Range Management**, [AIM and Shoot: Delivering and Sharing Range Data Quickly](#), by Colin Dovichin (March 2019). These recorded presentations delivered at the “Harnessing Technology to Improve Conservation Effectiveness on Western Working Lands” symposium detail new technological innovations that are revolutionizing how managers can monitor, study, evaluate threats, and improve working rangelands across the West.
- **SageWest Newsletter**, [Putting the Science to Work](#), by Hannah Nikonow/Michelle Crist (April 2019). This essay by the lead editor of the Science Framework for Conservation and Restoration of the Sagebrush Biome, Part Two: Management Applications, summarizes the framework of management approaches for applying science and prioritization to sagebrush habitats.

- **Science to Solutions**, [Big Picture of Woodland Management in Sagebrush Country](#), by Hannah Nikonow (May 2019). This synthesis of research on conifer encroachment supported by the BLM-IWJV partnership communicates management actions.
- **BLM Daily**, [BLM and IWJV Provide Capacity for Sagebrush Conservation](#), by Meg McLachlan (June 2019). This BLM Daily article contributed to internal BLM communications about our partnership and the 2018 accomplishments and impacts that will form the bedrock for collaboration at multiple scales across the West.



- **Mule Deer Foundation Journal**, [Cheating the Sage](#), by Hannah Nikonow (August 2019). This article was written for sportsmen and women, and communicates the threat of invasive annual grasses to big game.
- **Fact Sheet**, [Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands: Creating Cross-Boundary Collaboration](#), by Hannah Nikonow (September 2019). This fact sheet was updated to share the partnership's purpose and priorities.





Funding from the initial intra-agency agreement supported science projects coordinated by NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) Science Advisor, Dr. Dave Naugle at the University of Montana, a team of scientists, and cooperating universities. The overall goal was to conduct science-based evaluations to spatially prioritize conservation treatments, measure the biological response of sage grouse and sagebrush obligate species to conservation treatments, monitor collective efforts to determine outcomes, and support adaptive management of conservation programs and projects. The following six projects were funded. (Three were completed in FY 2019 and three are ongoing and will carry into FY 2020.)

Status of Projects

Joint Tracking of Conifer Removal Across the West	Completed
Wetland Resilience and Resistance in Sagebrush Ecosystems (Mesic)	Completed
Conifer Removal for Songbirds on Public Lands	In Progress
Interactive Web Application	Completed
Ecosystem Services: Quantifying Trends in Rangeland Health	In Progress
Outcome-based Evaluation of Conifer Removal in Lakeview, Oregon	In Progress

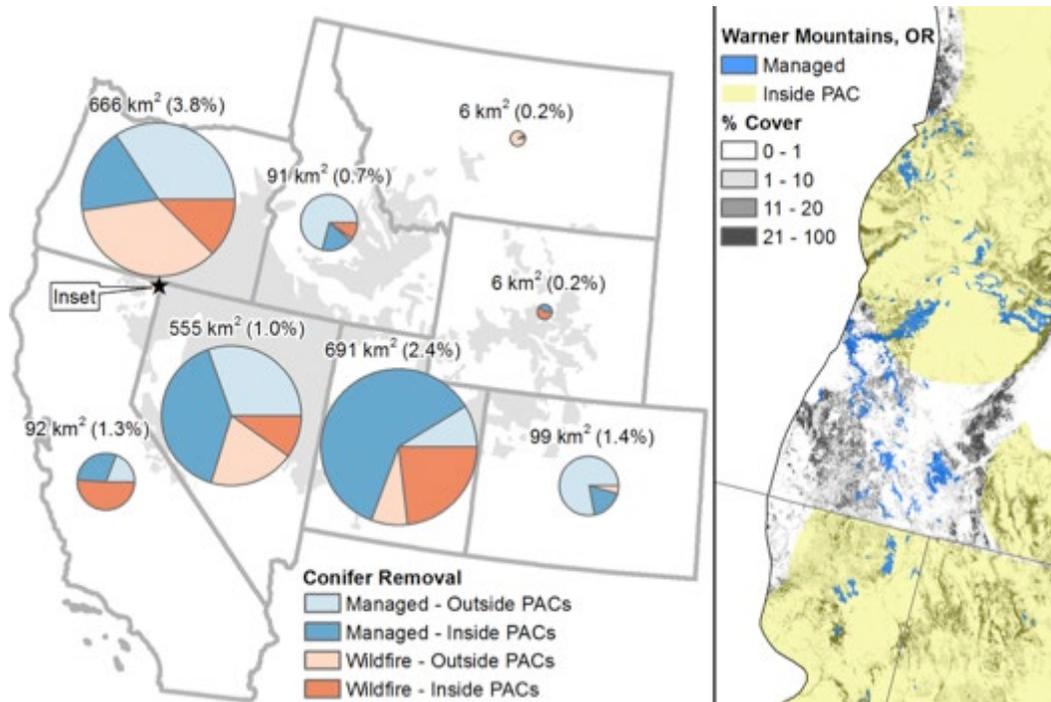
Below is a summary of FY 2019 accomplishments that increased our collective scientific knowledge and ability to implement sage grouse and sagebrush habitat conservation.

[See the list of legacy science products funded from this partnership here.](#)

Joint Tracking of Conifer Removal Across the West

The University of Montana worked with Colorado State University to map conifer cover over time (2011-2017), allowing partners to visualize the extent of conifer removal on an annual basis, quantify cumulative conservation outcomes, and identify potential partnership projects for the future. In FY 2019, new remote sensing analysis was conducted to map reductions in pinyon-juniper cover across sage grouse range with a method for rapidly updating maps of canopy cover. Results indicate that accelerated tree reduction efforts in the past several years (2011-13 to 2015-17) amount to 1.6% of the area supporting tree cover within the study area and are likely just keeping up with estimates of expansion. Wildfire accounted for one third of all estimated conifer reduction in the region (0.56% of the treed area), highlighting the important

role natural processes still play in stemming woodland advancement. This new science is key to informing rangewide progress on conifer expansion and removal, and adaptations that may be needed by managers and practitioners.



Areas of predicted cover reduction by state and their classification as wildfire or management inside or outside of sage grouse Priority Areas for Conservation. [See all figures from this study here.](#)

- *Manuscript:* Reinhardt, Jason R. et. al. 2019. [Quantifying pinyon-juniper reduction within North America's sagebrush ecosystem](#). Rangeland Ecology and Management, in press.
- *Science to Solutions:* [Big Picture of Woodland Management in Sagebrush Country](#), 2019.
- Most [recent science on conifer removal](#) updated on Partners in the Sage, 2019.
- High-resolution Conifer Canopy Cover Mapping across Sage Grouse Habitat in [Utah](#), [Idaho](#), [Oregon](#). [Click here to see a map.](#)

While this science project is technically complete, IWJV, NRCS, and BLM are working on joint technical transfer and communications to engage partners in scaling up conifer removal across the West based on this project.

Wetland Resilience and Resistance in Sagebrush Ecosystems (Mesic)

In 2017, NRCS WLFW and University of Montana published a geospatial dataset (funded in part by this partnership) that maps and characterizes wetland resources throughout the western U.S. This also identifies sage grouse brood-rearing habitat on both private and public lands. In 2018-19, annual updates were made to this dataset and deployed on the [SGI interactive web application](#) where they can be easily accessed and used by managers to guide conservation targeting and outcome-based evaluations of treatments.

Conifer Removal for Songbirds on Public Lands

In 2018, University of Montana produced [new maps predicting abundance of sagebrush- and woodland-obligate species](#) within the U.S. distribution of sagebrush steppe systems, in partnership with NRCS, USFWS, and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies . Maps were created using point count data from the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS).



This project created the foundation for NRCS WLFW, USFWS, and University of Montana to quantify the large-scale impacts of conifer removal on avian communities. In FY 2019, these partners modeled occurrence and indices to abundance in relation to multi-scale habitat features for nine songbirds reliant on both sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands for breeding. Comparing predicted distributions of declining species to conifer removal targeted for sagebrush restoration under the umbrella of sage grouse revealed that management has largely aligned with distributions of declining sagebrush-obligate songbirds, and avoided that of pinyon jay. Because conifer removal is barely keeping pace with expansion, they hypothesize that the transition of heterogeneous conifer stands to persistent woodlands, rather than management, may be limiting pinyon jay populations, similar to how encroachment is impacting sagebrush obligates.

- *Manuscript:* Tack, J. et al. 2019. Decision-Support Tools for Migratory Songbirds in Sagebrush-Steppe: Is management complementarity for sagebrush obligates and pinyon jay possible? Condor: Ornithological Applications, in review.
- *Manuscript:* Reinhardt, J. et al. In prep. Conservation planning in context: Maximizing benefits to sagebrush- and woodland-obligate birds.
- TWS 2019 Symposium: [Conifers in Context: A Community-Based Evaluation of Conifer Removal for Sagebrush and Woodland Obligates](#)

Interactive Web Application

The NRCS SGI [Interactive Web Application](#) is the primary mechanism for transferring spatial data tools to land managers and conservation practitioners. The web application contains spatial data for tree canopy cover, ecosystem resilience and resistance, fence collision, cultivation risk, and mesic resources. This project was completed FY 2017-2018.

Ecosystem Services: Quantifying Trends in Rangeland Health

In September 2018, the [Rangeland Analysis Platform](#) (RAP) was created by the University of Montana and NRCS, and supported with funding from the BLM-IWJV partnership. This public online application provides simple and fast access to geospatial data characterizing western U.S. rangelands. 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.

The maps and data provided by the RAP are intended to be used alongside local knowledge and site-specific data to inform management actions that improve rangelands and wildlife habitat. The platform provides the ability to monitor rangelands across time and space. The RAP currently provides data on vegetation cover and will include forage productivity, riparian condition and sensitivity, climate and drought monitoring, and more by combining the latest remote-sensing technology with massive satellite imagery archives. Its datasets allow users to monitor trends and changes at the pasture, landscape, or regional scales from 1984 to 2017. For more information, see the [RAP Fact Sheet](#) and [User Guide](#).

Montana/Dakotas BLM pioneered the use of the RAP for management decisions in BLM. Colin Dovichin, BLM Montana/Dakota Monitoring Lead, gave numerous presentations and demonstrations of the RAP in 2019. These included gatherings of all Montana/Dakota GIS and Fuels staff as well as all interested field staff in most of the local field offices. Colin also presented at the [Society for Range Management Annual Meeting](#). RAP has been used by range staff in six local field offices, in addition to programmatic staff in Wild Horse and Burro, Wildlife, and Fuels program areas for various analyses. The BLM plans to continue to provide field offices throughout the agency additional information to better understand how and when the data can be effectively used to assist with monitoring efforts and management decisions.

RAP Google Analytics: October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019

* 6,569 unique users; 11,935 sessions; 25,271 page views

* Average session duration is 2:31 minutes; use of the actual app averages 5:33 minutes

* 50% of users directly type the URL, 30% search online, 20% are referrals. Top six referrals are:

sagegrouseinitiative.com; usda.gov; nrcs.usda.gov; billingsgazette.com; wyomingpublicmedia.org; and sites.google.com



Rangeland Analysis Platform

Revolutionizing Rangeland Monitoring

LAUNCH APP

Data download statistics: June 24, 2019 - December 31, 2019

- * 1,551 unique visitors
- * 33.2 TB (terabytes) of data downloaded
- * 9,033,718 total requests

- *Manuscript:* Reinhardt, J. et al. In prep. Conservation planning in context: maximizing benefits to sagebrush- and woodland-obligate birds.
- TWS 2019 Symposium: [Conifers in Context: A Community-Based Evaluation of Conifer Removal for Sagebrush and Woodland Obligates](#)

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. The specific objectives that have reached conclusion are: 1) modeling of sage grouse habitat selection during nesting and brood-rearing, before and after juniper treatments; 2) modeling the demographic and population response of sage grouse to juniper management; and 3) modeling landscape resistance to sage grouse movements in relation to juniper. The project objectives for 2018-2020 shifted to: 1) establish a baseline characterization of thermal environments for sage grouse broods; 2) establish temporal variation in space of broods and how it relates to conifer; and 3) examine the effects of conifer avoidance on chick survival. The original study area is located in the Warner Mountains in Lake County, Oregon. In 2018, the study area was expanded to include areas in Washoe County, Nevada, and Modoc County, California.

- 2019 Warner Sage Grouse Research Field Season Report ([available here](#))
- Andrew Olsen dissertation: [Greater Sage Grouse Demography, Habitat Selection, and Habitat Connectivity in Relation to Western Juniper and its Management](#)
- SGI Science Communications: [Sage Grouse Populations Grow When Conifers are Removed](#), 2019.
- TWS 2019 Symposium: [Cut a Tree, Grow a Grouse: Implications of Juniper Removal for Sage Grouse Population Growth](#)





One of the most striking aspects of the BLM-IWJV partnership is the work we have invested in with NRCS WLFW, University of Montana, Society for Range Management, and many other science partners and stakeholders to produce, share, and apply the latest science. Over the last three years, we have built important relationships with these colleagues, demonstrated success, and are increasingly poised to expand the use of an array of decision support tools and research findings to benefit partners in implementing restoration and management treatments. In FY 2019, we implemented the following technical transfer projects.

2019 Society for Range Management Conference: Video Recording

Event: “Harnessing Technology to Improve Conservation Effectiveness on Western Working Lands” technical workshop

Date: February 2019

Attendees: 30 in person

Outcomes/Products: Nine presentations detailed new technological innovations that are revolutionizing how managers, ranchers, and others can monitor, study, evaluate threats, and improve working rangelands across the West. All nine presentations were compiled on [SGI’s YouTube channel](#) and are available for on-going viewing. Each presentation is approximately 20 minutes long and includes high-quality audio and images from each presenter’s slides.

The [conference proceedings were posted](#) along with other BLM science on climate adaptation strategies. The SGI landing page with the videos has received 396 total page views and 356 unique page views since it was posted on March 19, 2019, with the biggest spike in March to June 2019.

NRCS Western Working Lands for Wildlife 2019 Workshop – Rangeland Resiliency

Event: Field-based workshop

Date: June 2019

Attendees: 200 conservation partners and producers

Outcomes/Products: Lessons and photos from the workshop (see link below)

For the past several years, the BLM-IWJV partnership has supported SGI’s annual workshop that brings together agricultural producers, land managers, USDA NRCS staff, BLM, and non-governmental partners for a two-day event. In FY 2019, the annual gathering focused on how partners have worked across boundaries, both literally and figuratively, to implement conservation efforts that have improved rangeland resiliency in highly diverse landscapes. A total of 13 representatives from BLM attended this event. Of particular note, the participants

[visited the Burley \(Idaho\) project](#), one of the landscapes associated with the BLM-IWJV partnership. Learn more about this event here: [Western Working Lands for Wildlife 2019 Workshop – Rangeland Resiliency](#)

Riparian and Wet Meadow Restoration: Place-based Technical Assistance and Support

Event: Field-based technical consulting and training

Dates: August-October 2019

Attendees: 39 conservation partners (including 9 BLM field office staff)

Outcomes/Products: Technical skill transfer via hands-on training

In 2018, BIO-Logic Inc., a natural resource consulting firm, was contracted to provide technical assistance to BLM, NRCS, and local partners seeking to launch projects using Zeedyk and other restoration techniques. These services were targeted in priority landscapes where partners are working collaboratively to address mesic habitats to benefit sage grouse and sagebrush ecosystems. In FY 2019, site visits were conducted to multiple sites in four states, including: 1) Spring Creek, Owyhee Mountains, and Fish Creek, Pioneer Mountains (in multiple Idaho counties); 2) Strawberry Creek, Deep Creek, and Granite Mountain (Fremont County, Wyoming); 3) Battle Creek, South Fork Moreau, Indian Creek, and Antelope Creek (Butte County, South Dakota); and, 4) Sheep Mountain, Hackberry Creek, Sand Creek, and Cottonwood Creek (Carter County, Montana).

BIO-Logic's Shawn Conner and NRCS Sagebrush Ecosystem Specialist Jeremy Maestas organized planning teams in each of these visits, viewed current condition of mesic areas, discussed restoration/preservation opportunities, and provided reports with specific site observations, recommendations, and next steps for [Montana](#), [Wyoming](#), and [Idaho](#) sites. Piloting, then scaling up low-tech riparian restoration across the region will continue to be an important emphasis of our collaborative work in sagebrush ecosystems.

Private Lands Partnerships in a Public Land State

Event: National conference with field tour of Rich County, Utah

Dates: September 2019

Attendees: 170 conservation partners from 30 states

Outcomes/Products: Final report (see below)

In September of 2019, 170 landowners and conservation partners gathered in Ogden, Utah for the 12th annual Private Lands Partners Day (PLPD), focusing on private lands conservation partnerships in a state where two-thirds of the land is federally-owned. The first day featured a field tour of Rich County, Utah, with presentations by ranchers and their operations on public lands. The second day featured presentations by agency representatives, landowners, and partners describing innovative collaborations from across the country. This was the first year this private lands event brought in important landscape perspectives related to public lands and sagebrush habitat conservation, and connected to flagship projects in the west associated with the objectives of the BLM-IWJV partnership (e.g., Three Creeks Grazing Project, the Outcome-based Grazing Project in Nevada, and Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative). For more information, [see this report](#).

First Annual Sagebrush Collaborative Forum

Event: Regional forum featuring relationship building and technical transfer

Dates: October 2019 (funds expended in FY 2019)

Attendees: 50 conservation partners

Outcomes/Products: Article on web portal and four presentations shared

The first Annual Sagebrush Collaborative Forum was sponsored by BLM and hosted in Boise, Idaho, with 50 leading conservation professionals who are teaming up to implement the BLM-IWJV partnership. These attendees from across the West gathered to share their successes, challenges, and ideas around collaborative sagebrush conservation. The overarching purpose of this meeting was to bring the Sage Capacity Team, BLM, and other federal, state, community, and non-governmental partners together for hands-on, peer-to-peer learning to provide numerous resources and contacts, and further their efforts in the landscapes in which they work. Two presentations focused on technical transfer as part of this agreement, including: [Data and Tools to Inform Targeted Projects](#) and [Shared Vision: Science for Resiliency and Cross-Boundary Conservation](#). [Visit this page to learn more about the forum and download additional presentations.](#)

Mesic Science Outreach

Event: State-based workshop in Nevada

Dates: June 2019

Attendees: 20 conservation partners

Outcomes/Products: Transfer of concepts in *Manuscript*: Donnelly, J.P. et al. 2018.

[Seasonal drought in North America's sagebrush biome structures dynamic mesic resources for sage grouse](#). Ecology and Evolution.

The IWJV facilitated outreach of BLM-funded mesic conservation science important to public-private lands sage grouse management. In Winnemucca, Nevada, the IWJV co-sponsored a partner workshop with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss integration of BLM-owned high-elevation mesic sites into sage grouse conservation strategies. Additionally, IWJV science staff attended and presented mesic science findings at the Sagebrush Collaborative Forum in Boise, Idaho (highlighted above). Planning for a 2020 wetlands workshop was also initiated for the Bear River watershed, focused on supporting multi-state climate resiliency strategies benefiting waterbirds and sage grouse on private and BLM lands. IWJV provided technical support associated with the Wetland Resilience and Resistance in Sagebrush Ecosystems (Mesic) science project (above).





The IWJV is uniquely positioned to oversee and implement intra-agency agreements, especially given our [highly diverse executive-level Management Board](#) composed of state fish and wildlife agencies, federal agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations, corporate members representing the energy sector, and private landowners including public land ranchers. With this diversity, our Management Board bridges multiple perspectives and has been very effective over the last decade in finding common ground for sagebrush habitat conservation. Here is a snapshot of our most important partnership accomplishments from 2019.

Funding Accomplishments

The BLM and IWJV developed a new intra-agency agreement for up to \$5,000,000 over five years (FY 2019-2024). This agreement was made possible through the continued and vital support of USFWS Integrated Region 5-7, and their ability to ensure a 1% indirect rate as part of a Service First Agreement. The purpose of the new agreement is to expand upon the proven success of the BLM-IWJV partnership in achieving community-based sagebrush habitat conservation through diverse public-private partnerships with a focus on six strategies:

- a. reducing catastrophic rangeland wildfires;
- b. preventing and controlling noxious and invasive weeds;
- c. restoring wet meadow and riparian habitats;
- d. removing conifers that have expanded into sagebrush habitat;
- e. implementing range structural improvements; and,
- f. coordinating habitat protection and restoration actions associated with big game migratory corridor efforts.

New funding is being infused into field delivery, communications, and other vital partnership work. Specific funding highlights from 2019 include:

- Total BLM funds contributed to date is **\$5,079,000**.
- Total fund leverage and in-kind services is **\$3,909,735** representing an increase of **\$1,001,421** from FY 2018.
- Partnership leverage ratio averages **57:43** (BLM:partners) surpassing the original goal of a 75:25 ratio.

- IWJV’s long-time partner, ConocoPhillips, committed up to **\$200,000** annually over five years. This is their second such investment toward sagebrush habitat conservation since 2015.
- Approximately **88%** of the BLM funds provided through this agreement have been programmed for project work.

Partnership Development: 2019 Partner Spotlights



539 partners representing federal agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, local government, non-governmental organizations, tribes, and universities;



38 BLM Field, District, or State Offices supported with additional capacity;



400 BLM contacts in the IWJV partnership database;



26 state fish and wildlife and agricultural agencies engaged through direct funding, guidance, or oversight of collaboration on projects;



Outreach to **181** private landowners; and,



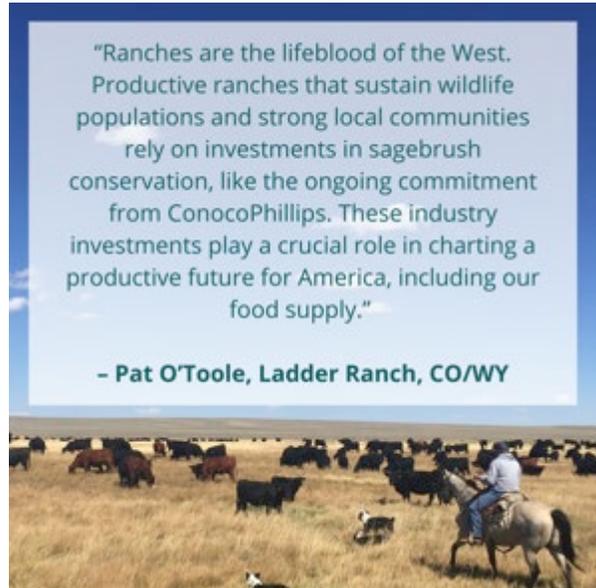
Ongoing coordination with NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife on science, tech transfer, and communications to maintain a strong public-private land sagebrush conservation coalition.

Exploration and Production Company Campaign

Building on our existing relationship with ConocoPhillips Company, the IWJV initiated a new campaign in 2019 to establish connections and common ground with other exploration and production (E&P) companies working in the sagebrush ecosystem. While energy development and conservation of sagebrush habitat can seemingly be at odds at times, the IWJV believes issues such as invasive species, wildfire, conifer encroachment, and exurban development are of concern to both. Two additional E&P companies were invited to a special engagement session as part of the IWJV Management Board Meeting in September 2019 in Dillon, Montana. Issues surrounding wildfire and invasive species such as cheatgrass were clear concerns and priorities for these E&P companies. Another major focus of the session was the role of healthy sagebrush habitat in carbon sequestration. The IWJV Management Board and the E&P companies in attendance were encouraged by the discussion and agreed to engage further with additional companies in FY 2020.

Pheasants Forever

The IWJV and Pheasants Forever have enjoyed a successful partnership dating back to 2011. When the initial intra-agency agreement was created, Pheasants Forever brought a sophisticated and important set of organizational expertise to support the BLM-IWJV partnership. This included their role in supporting fiscal and administrative functions related to the intra-agency agreement as well as field delivery capacity support through their powerful national niche in creating boots on the ground and support to the NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative. Pheasants Forever’s support reached a new level this year as they took the lead role as the hosting entity for five field delivery capacity positions as part of the BLM-IWJV partnership, with more planned for FY 2020.



Team Support

The IWJV utilizes ten percent of the BLM funds to support the following important services: oversight/management, team coordination, executive-level briefings and communication with leadership of BLM and key partners, partnership development and expansion, facilitating partner contributions to agreement projects, financial tracking and budget oversight, accomplishment reports, events and meeting coordination, meeting facilitation, partnership database support, and recognition and celebration of partners. A brand new accomplishment in FY 2019 was the development of the IWJV Sagebrush Conservation Committee to work hand-in-hand with the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Executive Oversight Committee. The purpose of the Sagebrush Conservation Committee is to: provide a diverse, agile, and actionable team of IWJV Management Board Members and other decision-makers to guide the IWJV’s sagebrush conservation efforts; address relevant threats and issues; and fill a (not otherwise occupied) niche that advances voluntary incentive-based conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem through collaboration.

