

PARTNERING TO CONSERVE

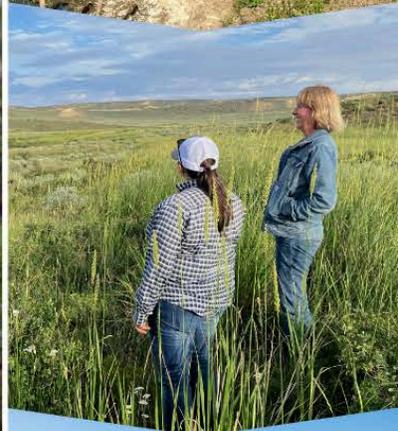
SAGEBRUSH

RANGELANDS



FY 2023

ANNUAL REPORT



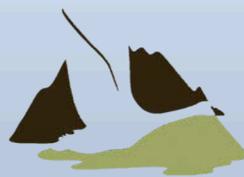
Annual Report

October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

Access a digital copy at www.PartnersInTheSage.com/Annual-Reports.

The purpose of this report is to share partnership accomplishments of the intra-agency agreements between the Bureau of Land Management and the Intermountain West Joint Venture during fiscal year 2023. Between FY 2016 and FY 2023, BLM Headquarters has provided \$8,513,237 to build sagebrush rangeland capacity in priority landscapes. These funds have been matched with \$6,542,956 by dozens of partners. BLM State, District, and Field Offices have also contributed \$562,517. Our eight-year partnership has resulted in **\$15,618,710** in funding to support sagebrush rangeland conservation. These collaborative efforts have helped deliver **\$51,348,590** in projects, benefiting communities, wildlife, and habitat across the West.

The goal of our work is to scale up efforts to conserve intact and resilient sagebrush rangelands through proactive, science-based, landscape-scale management and restoration on public, Tribal, and private lands. This partnership is a premier example of how to effectively accelerate the pace and scale of deliverable conservation actions that address threats to sagebrush rangelands across ownership boundaries. Throughout this endeavor, we have continued to support locally led efforts to conserve, connect, and restore the lands, waters, and wildlife on which we all depend, making this partnership a conservation catalyst across the American West.



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE



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Executive Summary



The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the [Intermountain West Joint Venture](#) (IWJV) continue building on eight years of success founded on innovative intra-agency agreements. This collaboration, known as [Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands](#), implements voluntary, incentive-based restoration and management of sagebrush rangelands across jurisdictional boundaries. Its success relies on a commitment to growing field-level support, producing in-depth communications, and expanding the technical transfer of science to the field. Through the continued dedication of BLM staff and financial support from congressional dollars, the work this partnership accomplishes has become a respected model of conservation across the West.

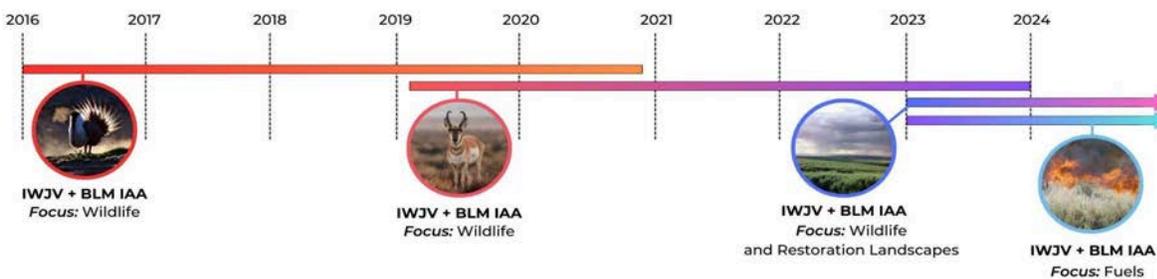
In FY 2023, these successes enabled the BLM and the IWJV, along with a vast network of partners, to accelerate the pace and scale of much-needed, on-the-ground capacity to implement project funding from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). These agreements and partnerships encourage the BLM, IWJV, and diverse partners (federal agencies, state fish and wildlife agencies, private landowners, Tribes, and the energy industry) to work together to conserve this nationally significant sagebrush ecosystem.

The BLM and IWJV launched the next level of their partnership with two new agreements in FY 2023 to expand their work together for an additional five years. [One agreement](#) focuses on wide-reaching threats to the sagebrush ecosystem: wildfire fueled by invasive annual grasses and changing climatic conditions. The other new agreement seamlessly builds on the partnership's foundation, driving existing efforts forward and supporting the BLM's Restoration Landscape efforts.

As a result of the historic Inflation Reduction Act, this partnership is further supporting ecosystem restoration and the economic resilience of western communities in specific BLM-identified [Restoration Landscapes](#) within the IWJV's boundaries (Appendix A). Through these investments, this partnership will enhance ongoing sagebrush conservation and restoration by establishing new positions. These new roles are in addition to the existing Sage Capacity Team that serves as a proven, successful model for cross-jurisdictional conservation and restoration work.

Together, the IWJV, BLM, and dozens of partners continued to build and promote collaborative efforts spanning the sagebrush biome this year. At the heart of this partnership is a shared vision: we and our partners achieve effective and durable conservation outcomes by providing meaningful support to innovative, community-based conservation efforts. Throughout 2023, this partnership continued to bring people together to spark and accelerate effective and lasting conservation. This further catalyzes the implementation of on-the-ground projects that work for wildlife and communities.

“Remarkable things happen when Westerners work together,” said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning. “This funding through President Biden’s Investing in America agenda will leverage the power of partnerships between government agencies, communities, landowners, industry, and non-profits for the shared goal of improving sagebrush habitat and rangeland health.”



A timeline of [intra-agency agreements](#) between the IWJV and the BLM.

The partnership addresses threats and opportunities in sagebrush ecosystems, focusing on six strategies:

- Reducing catastrophic rangeland wildfires
- Preventing and controlling noxious and invasive weeds
- Restoring wet meadow and riparian habitats
- Removing conifers that have expanded into sagebrush habitat
- Supporting outcome-based grazing and rangeland health
- Coordinating habitat protection and restoration actions associated with big game migratory corridor efforts



The core of our work involves providing capacity to the field to help the BLM and other partners achieve conservation across boundaries. Notably, we've built relationships with 62 BLM State, District, and Field Offices to identify barriers to planning, implementation, and evaluation. We support BLM's collaboration with partners on persistent, large-scale threats like invasive annual grasses, catastrophic wildfire, conifer encroachment, drought, and impacts of climate change on sagebrush rangelands. We also bring targeted communications, outreach, and technical transfer tools to address these challenges.



Images from across sagebrush country by IWJV staff in FY 2023.

Restoring and Conserving Sagebrush Habitat: Field Delivery Capacity



We use the latest research, science-based planning, and decision-support tools to create field capacity that accelerates, coordinates, and streamlines conservation actions and treatments across fence lines. By engaging with BLM State, District, and Field Offices and communities, we identify needs such as staffing capacity, clearances and consultation, or planning tools, and create field-based support. Investments from BLM Headquarters in partner positions are leveraged with additional funding (federal, state, private, and corporate) to provide collaborative infrastructure—increasing efficiency and producing desired outcomes.

Total FY 2018–2023 Accomplishments

404,122	acres of conifer removal
5,327	acres of fuels treatment
2,993	acres of fuel breaks
18,227	acres of conservation easements
24,036	acres of annual/noxious weeds treated
105,787	acres of vegetation treatment/enhancement
80,748	acres of improved grazing practices
8,359	acres of wet meadows restored
1,625	mesic structures installed
649,471	total project acres
62	BLM Field, District and State Offices supported with capacity

Sage Capacity Team

One of the most powerful elements of this partnership has been our ability to build and support the much-needed “boots on the ground” through developing field delivery capacity positions that work on voluntary, proactive sagebrush habitat conservation in partnership with the BLM across the West. These positions are pivotal, adding capacity and becoming a powerful and coordinated team to achieve cross-boundary, landscape scale impacts across the sagebrush biome.

As of FY 2023, funds in the BLM-IWJV partnership support field delivery positions in 10 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. These positions are referred to as the [Sage Capacity Team](#); they are non-federal positions that are hosted by non-governmental organizations or other institutions (Appendix A). 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.



Images of Sage Capacity Team success from FY 2023. Images include (center) installation of mesic structures in NV (Buffalo-Skedaddle Sage-Grouse Working Group); (clockwise from top left) a grazing allotment field tour (Results Oriented Grazing for Ecological Resilience); a Threat Based Strategic Conservation Workshop in OR (Prineville & Vale Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Teams); sagebrush seedling planting in ID (Sage Grouse Initiative Range and Wildlife Conservationist); a cowboy checks fence markers on an OBGA in CO (Outcome-based Grazing Coordinator); IRCP hosts a Society for Range Management Youth Range Tour (Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership); wet meadow restoration in SW MT (SW MT Sagebrush Conservation Partnership Coordinator & Project Manager); new fence installation on ranches in NM (New Mexico's Coordinating Wildlife Biologist); and further wet meadow restoration in SW MT (SW MT Sagebrush Conservation Partnership Coordinator & Project Manager).

SAGE CAPACITY TEAM



Janyne Little
Buffalo-Skedaddle
Sage Grouse
Working Group
Project Coordinator
-Susanville, CA



Adrienne Hoskins
Outcome-base
Grazing
Coordinator
-Pocatello, ID



Katlyn Uhart
Results Oriented
Grazing for
Ecological
Resilience
Facilitator
-Reno, NV



Tracy Misiewicz
Bi-State Local
Area Working
Group
Coordinator
-Bishop, CA



Vacant
Sage Grouse
Initiative Range
and Wildlife
Conservationist
-Burley, ID



Kathy McKim
New Mexico's
Coordinating
Wildlife Biologist -
Habitat Planning
and
Implementation
Specialist
-Chama, NM



India Young
Northwest Colorado
Sagebrush
Conservation
Partnership
Coordinator
-Grand Junction, CO



Sean Claffey
Southwest Montana
Sagebrush
Conservation
Partnership
Coordinator
-Dillon, MT



Jackson Gregory
Arizona Partnership
Coordinator
-Prescott, AZ



Connor White
Bruneau-Owyhee
Sage-Grouse
Habitat Project
Outreach
Coordinator
-Boise, ID



Emma Fullerton
Southwest
Montana
Sagebrush
Partnership IAG
Coordinator
-Dillon, MT



Alex Dohman
Burns and
Lakeview
Oregon LIT
Coordinator
-Lakeview, OR



Brenda Richards
Idaho Rangeland
Conservation
Partnership
Coordinator
-Murphy, ID



Grace Hershberg
The High-Line
Sagebrush Anchor
-Malta, MT



Jordan Menge
Arizona Strip
Wildlife
Biologist-Habitat
Planning &
Implementation
Specialist
-St. George, UT



Vacant
Sage-Grouse
Local
Implementation
Teams
Coordinator
-Hines, OR



Nancy Webb
Wind River/Bighorn
Basin District IAG
Coordinator
-Worland, WY



Vacant (hiring
in process)
Bristlecone
Project
Coordinator
-Ely, NV

FY 2023 Accomplishments in the Field



A timeline of intra-agency agreements between the IWJV and the BLM.

The following table includes the cumulative accomplishments of the Sage Capacity Team in FY 2023.

Overview of Capacity		Partnership Accomplishments	
Total Projects Planned	68	Conservation Easements (acres)	5,257
Total Projects Completed	74	Conifer Removed (acres)	77,151
Total Project Acres	95,787	Annual/Noxious Weeds Treated (acres)	6,205
Total Project Funding	\$13,179,243	Vegetation Management/Habitat Enhancement (acres)	308
Partners Engaged	640	Wet Meadows Restored (acres)	6,612
Landowners Engaged	139	Fence Modification (miles)	16
Meetings/Field Tours	139	Seedlings Planted	279,300
Outreach/Volunteer Events	15	Mesic Structures Installed	530

FY 2023 Sage Capacity Team Accomplishment Reports

The following narratives detail the accomplishments of each position. Please see the [Partners in the Sage](#) platform to learn more about each position and their location.

Field Delivery Capacity Icon Key

Each position provides "Project Delivery" or "Partnership Facilitation" services, and in some cases both.

Project Delivery:



Partnership Facilitation:



1 and 2. Southwest Montana Sagebrush Conservation Partnership Coordinator and Project Manager (Montana)



Supports: Dillon BLM Field Office, Western Montana District Office
Established 2018; Project Manager position created in 2021

The Partnership Coordinator and Project Manager support the Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership (SMSP) to increase its rate of on-the-ground habitat restoration accomplishments. These two positions leverage success with existing programs to attract new partners, build more partnership capacity, and broaden the SMSP's scope of work in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem of southwest Montana.

On-the-ground restoration efforts focus on three major threats to the sagebrush steppe ecosystem: conifer encroachment, riparian and wet meadow degradation, and invasive annual grasses. The SMSP treated an unprecedented 15,000 acres of conifer expansion in FY 2023, and accelerated stream and wet meadow restoration work.

The SMSP and partners built 456 new mesic restoration structures in FY 2023. They also

continued to monitor and maintain all past projects to assess project efficacy and to better understand the effectiveness of various process-based techniques across diverse meadow and stream habitats in southwest Montana. This year, the SMSP also created a prioritization guide for upcoming wet meadow restoration projects by collaborating with a local contractor to identify potential restoration sites; began a new project called "Flexible Grazing in the Missouri Headwaters of Southwest Montana"; and initiated hiring for three new positions: an Invasive Annual Grass Coordinator, a Range Management Specialist, and a Montana Forest Action Plan Forester.

An integral part of project implementation is engagement with a variety of partners including multiple agencies, the Youth Employment Program (YEP), and local community members. YEP employees engaged with the SMSP and built and maintained mesic restoration structures,

installed hand-built stream restoration structures in perennial streams, removed conifer, mapped cheatgrass, and installed informational signs like [this one](#).

Overview

Total Projects Planned: 14

Total Projects Completed: 32

Partners Engaged: 12

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 8

of Landowners Engaged: 40

Total Project Acres: 15,441 acres

Communications products showcasing the SMSP's work this year included two videos highlighting [wet meadow research and work with YEP](#), and an [article](#) on the use of fire as a management tool

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifer Removed: 15,416 acres

Mesic Structures Installed: 456

Total Project Funding Completed: \$1,901,897

3. Prineville & Vale Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Teams (LIT) Coordinator (**Oregon**)



Supports: Prineville BLM District Office, Vale District Office, Malheur Field Office
Established 2019

The Coordinator made great strides in helping the Vale and Prineville LITs to achieve their internal communication and collaboration goals. In particular, the Prineville LIT partners recently used a consensus process detailed in their [charter](#) to collectively develop a [Sage-Grouse Threats Reduction Plan](#). This plan will provide a framework for local partners to coordinate sage grouse conservation efforts across ownership and management boundaries within the Prineville LIT area.

Overview

Partners Engaged: 67

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 17

Projects Completed: 4,378 acres

Projects Planned: 15,660 acres

The Coordinator also aided the LITs in developing landscape-scale proposals, which led to plans for a two-part workshop introducing Prineville to SageCon's Threat-Based Strategic Conservation workshop model.

Finally, through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Sagebrush Conservation BIL-awarded grant, the partnership treated over 3,000 acres of juniper and invasive annual grasses, with another 14,000 acres forthcoming.

4. Bruneau-Owyhee Sage Grouse Habitat (BOSH) Project Outreach Coordinator (Idaho)



Supports: Boise BLM District Office
Established 2020

The Coordinator provides technical support to the BLM Boise District Office and the BOSH Project, one of the largest juniper-removal efforts in the country, located in southwest Idaho's Owyhee uplands. The Coordinator serves a critical role of improving logistical and communications connectivity between federal, state, and local entities including the BLM, Idaho state departments, the USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Pheasants Forever as these entities pursue common goals for Western juniper removal in this region. A communications [StoryMap](#) illustrating the context, science, and goals of the BOSH project was produced in FY 2023.

This year was a banner year for the BOSH project, with more acres of juniper successfully removed in FY 2023 than in any year since the project's inception. The project accomplished 52,973 acres of juniper removal across the region and created 359 acres of fuel breaks, representing a combined \$1,877,041 investment from all sources. To leverage funding via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, plans for FY 2024 are even more ambitious, with a high-end goal of 89,895 acres of juniper removal (dependent on intended BLM investment).

Overview

Total Projects Planned: 5
Total Projects Completed: 5
Partners Engaged: 10
Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 9

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifer Removed: 52,973 acres
Conifer Removal Planned: 89,895 acres
Total Project Funding Completed: \$1,877,041

5. Outcome-based Grazing Authorization Coordinator (Idaho)



Supports: BLM Headquarters
Established 2018

The Coordinator provides capacity to expand the Outcome-Based Grazing (OBG) program within BLM and among livestock operators. In FY 2023, the Coordinator promoted OBG extensively by:

- Running monthly meetings
- Writing article overviews

- Developing a mobile monitoring application
- Forging relationships with new partners
- Presenting at the 2023 Society of Range Management's annual meeting

- Running an in-person field tour of the Little Snake Ranch OBG authorization (OBGA)
- Collaborating with IWJV communications staff to produce materials about the program, including a widely distributed [tri-fold](#) and two educational video series
- Helping project participants through many stages of the OBGA process

In particular, by fostering collaboration between the BLM and outside partners—including BLM,

USDA Jornada, and TechMatters/Terrasos—the Coordinator facilitated the development of a mobile monitoring application, [LandPKS](#), that has greatly expanded connections between partners in FY 2023. By refining the existing mobile application, the partnership made it a more user-friendly program that can now be used as an integral part of OBGA cooperative monitoring. A soils-data collection component will be released for beta testing at the 2024 SRM meeting, followed by a vegetation monitoring component.

Overview

Demonstration Projects Implementing OBGA Grazing Decisions: 8/10

Communications Projects Completed: 3

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 7

6. Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership (IRCP) Coordinator (Idaho)



Supports: Idaho BLM State Office, Owyhee Field Office
Established 2018

The Coordinator broadens and supports the IRCP by participating in meetings, events, workshops, and educational outreach regarding rangeland issues, and by assisting in planning for project efficiency and funding. Outreach this year included hosting the Society for Range Management Youth Ranch Tour, in which students learned about Idaho rangelands and issues such as sage grouse conservation, fire and invasives, partnerships on projects, challenges, and the role IRCP fills in local conservation.

The Coordinator was instrumental in bringing landowners to the table to participate in BLM's

Bruneau Owyhee Sage Grouse Habitat program. This collaboration enabled numerous accomplishments, including juniper removal, productive discussions on renewable energy Cheatgrass Challenge projects, streambank restoration projects, and facilitation of discussions between local stakeholders regarding plans to treat Mormon Cricket and grasshopper infestations.

In collaboration with the Jordan Valley Cooperative Weed Management Area Coordinator and a Rejuvra team, the IRCP hosted

a workshop for agency staff on Rejuvra and other available weed treatments.

The Coordinator notes that the IRCP is often a catalyst that keeps projects moving along by getting the right people together. The IRCP continues its work to share and distribute

rangeland information, to coordinate projects towards successful outcomes, and to help cross-educate stakeholders so they better understand relevant issues, processes, and potential solutions toward fostering healthier rangelands.

Overview

Total Projects Completed: 1

Partners Engaged: 13

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 47

of Landowners Engaged: 4

Total Project Acres: 2,700 acres

Partnership Accomplishments

Annual/Noxious Weed Treated: 2,700 acres

7. Burns and Lakeview Oregon Local Implementation Team (LIT) Coordinator (**Oregon**)



Supports: Burns BLM District Office, Lakeview Field Office
Established 2021

The Coordinator serves as a liaison between federal, state, and local governments and stakeholders, streamlining conservation efforts across interest groups and ownership boundaries.

Through the Senate Bill 762 Landscape Resiliency Program, a total of \$9 million in Oregon Department of Forestry funds have been invested into the [Southeast Oregon Wildfire Resiliency](#) project. Treatments under this project within the Burns and Vale LIT area are aimed at reducing fine fuels, primarily invasive annual grasses, to minimize the threat of large-scale wildfires. Members of the Burns and Vale LIT collaborated with the Harney Wildfire Collaborative to reapply for further grant funding through the Landscape Resiliency Program.

Burns and Lakeview LIT partners have also agreed to move forward in developing a Threats Reduction Plan, pending the review of redesignated sage grouse core habitat by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Finally, the Coordinator is an active member of local collaborative partnership networks, including SageCon and the newly formed Tri-Corners Community Collaborative. SageCon is a collaborative partnership focused on ecological, social, and economic resilience in Oregon's sagebrush country. The Lakeview partners and LIT hosted the 2023 [Oregon SageCon Summit](#) this year. The Coordinator also provides GIS support for the Tri-Corners Community Collaborative, a sagebrush conservation collaborative that includes

landowners, local land managers, and other stakeholders to engage the community on working lands and inter-refuge landscapes.

Overview

Partners Engaged: 39

Landowners Engaged: 9

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 12

Total Projects Planned: 2,810 acres

8. Sage Grouse Initiative Range and Wildlife Conservationist (Idaho)



Supports: Twin Falls BLM District Office, Burley Field Office
Established 2018

The Conservationist continues improving the southern Idaho landscape with multiple partners by removing Utah juniper and assisting with range seeding, sagebrush planting, and mesic restoration on multiple land ownerships. Projects included 275,000 seedlings planted

across the Burley area and aerial perennial seeding across 223 acres on Mountain Meadow. Additional work included assisting with mesic restoration on multiple land ownerships. The position plays a vital role as a go-between for these partnerships and projects.

Overview

Total Projects Completed: 3

Total Projects Planned: 6

Partners Engaged: 5

of Landowners Engaged: 6

Partner Meetings/Field Tours: 6

Partnership Accomplishments

Veg Management/Hab Enhanced: 223 acres

Seedlings Planted: 275,000

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 6

Total Project Funding Completed: \$1,678,679

9. Buffalo-Skedaddle Sage-grouse Working Group Project Coordinator (California)



Supports: Bishop BLM Field Office
Established 2020

The Coordinator provides oversight to the Buffalo-Skedaddle Sage-Grouse Working Group's goals while significantly increasing its capacity

to design, implement, and monitor projects to benefit Greater Sage-grouse. The Working Group remains united in its mission to formulate and

execute impactful conservation and land management strategies, aiming for the enduring preservation of the Greater Sage-grouse, sagebrush ecosystems, and sustainable rural landscapes. The group saw several years of large planning efforts begin to pay off in FY 2023, as several thousand acres of small juniper trees were cut. Youth crews assisted in implementing several riparian restoration projects on BLM land this year.

An exciting new research project was initiated this year with funds obtained from multiple grants. The Coordinator worked in collaboration with the University of California Cooperative Extension colleagues and the BLM to test virtual fence technology on a public grazing allotment scale. Virtual fence technology has the potential to provide a more precise, flexible, cost-effective, and environmentally neutral tool for controlling the distribution of cattle on range compared to conventional fencing methods.

Overview

Total Projects Completed: 7

Total Projects Planned: 14

Partners Engaged: 46

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 11

of Landowners Engaged: 3

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifer Removal Completed: 3,767 acres

Conifer Removal Planned: 41,033 acres

Total Project Funding Completed: \$411,231

Total Project Funding Planned: \$2,141,258

10. Results Oriented Grazing for Ecological Resilience (ROGER) Facilitator (Nevada)



Supports: Nevada BLM State Office, Multiple District/Field Offices
Established 2020

The Facilitator keeps the ROGER stakeholders informed and connected as a key support in organizing and facilitating several partner meetings throughout the year. This ranger-led collaborative seeks solutions for adaptive management within current and impending

sage grouse land use plan amendments to improve ecological resilience, landscape health, and productivity through planned grazing.

This year, the ROGER Steering Committee also hosted a field tour, including a Grazing Management Planning Tool demonstration where the group discussed management challenges on the range, such as riparian health, invasive species, and grazing flexibilities.

Overview

Partners Engaged: 65

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 7

of Landowners Engaged: 25

11. Bristlecone Project Coordinator (Nevada)

Supports: Bristlecone BLM Field Office, Ely District Office
Established 2020



The Bristlecone Project Coordinator position was vacant throughout FY 2023. Given the challenges in hiring in Ely, Nevada, partners are working to re-hire this position in early 2024 to continue impactful conservation work in this landscape.

12. Northwest Colorado Sagebrush Conservation Partnership Coordinator (Colorado)

Supports: Grand Junction BLM District Office, White River Field Office
Established 2021



The Coordinator assists Colorado BLM and partners to facilitate delivery and implementation of conservation efforts by the BLM and collaborative partners across northwest Colorado. Two pinyon-juniper thinning projects were successfully implemented to reduce hazardous fuels and improve sagebrush habitat for big game. These projects were completed under a statewide Master Stewardship Agreement between the Mule Deer Foundation and the BLM, an agreement designed to promote partnership opportunities, increase capacity for BLM staff, and improve project delivery.

This position was vacant the last two months of FY 2023 and refilled in early January 2024. White River Field Office Fire Management Specialist Landon Smith said, “The Coordinator has done a great job of leveraging her relationships and networks to focus multiple pots of money on difficult but important cross-boundary work. The work she performs is integral to the planning and implementation success for the Fire/Fuels program in the White River Field Office.”

Overview

Partners Engaged: 15

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 4

of Landowners Engaged: 3

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifer Removed: 274 acres

Total Acres Planned: 2,564 acres

Total Project Funding Completed: \$108,290

13. Bi-State Local Area Working Group Coordinator (California/Nevada)



Supports: Bishop BLM Field Office
Established 2018

The Bi-State Sage-Grouse Local Area Working Group works across jurisdictional boundaries to monitor Bi-State Sage-grouse populations and improve sage grouse habitat. The Coordinator helps to ensure partners are working together effectively and efficiently by facilitating communication and collaboration among various BLM staff and multiple partners to ensure that BLM efforts to conserve the Bi-State Sage-grouse are coordinated across the region. These efforts allow more on-the-ground projects to be completed, such as planning necessary under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to carry out projects including removing almost 2,000 acres of conifer removal, and acquiring just over 4,000 acres of key sage grouse habitat.

Overview

Total Projects Completed: 20
Total Project Acres: 15,766 acres
Partners Engaged: 313

The Local Area Working Group is currently developing a new 10-year Action Plan that will guide conservation work to conserve the Bi-State Sage-grouse on the public-private lands over the next 10 years. The Coordinator spent a significant amount of time on this conservation plan and organized and implemented a communication and outreach campaign in FY 2023 to gather feedback on important threats and priorities within the community, including collaborating with the Bi-State Tribal Natural Resources Committee and the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada for ideas.

Partnership Accomplishments

Conifer Removed: 3,489 acres
Conservation Easements: 5,257 acres
Veg Management/Hab Enhanced: 80 acres
Total Project Funding Completed: \$7,751,004

14. Arizona Strip Wildlife Biologist / Habitat Planning and Implementation Specialist (Arizona)



Supports: Arizona Strip BLM District Office
Established 2020

The Specialist enhances partnerships with cooperating agencies, enabling large-scale coordination in this remote northwestern corner of Arizona—the Arizona Strip—between the

Grand Canyon and the Utah state boundary line. In FY 2023, project applications for conifer mastication submitted via the Arizona Strip

Habitat Working Group were awarded through two funding sources.

Within various projects and proposals, the most significant socio-economic impact to the Arizona Strip community would be the successful employment of contractors to complete

Overview

Total Projects Planned: 3

Partners Engaged: 3

mastication projects. With continued funding through the IRA and BIL, the Specialist hopes to maintain a consistent work opportunity for contractors, thereby enabling connectivity between planning teams and technicians able to meet goals for conifer removal in the field.

Partnership Facilitation

Total Acres Planned: 509 acres

Total Project Funding Planned: \$350,000

15. New Mexico's Coordinating Wildlife Biologist / Habitat Planning and Implementation Specialist (New Mexico)



Supports: New Mexico BLM State Office, Farmington and Albuquerque District Offices, Taos and Farmington Field Office
Established 2021

The Specialist focuses on partnership facilitation and coordination across agencies to plan and implement on-the-ground conservation projects for big game and other sagebrush-obligate species. She attended Soil and Water Conservation District board meetings that have proven to be vital in relationship-building with the community. The Specialist is instrumental in planning and writing project agreements due to trust she's built with smaller

rancher/landowners by highlighting the specific issues these landowners may face, including the effects of changing elk migration corridors. The Specialist has found success in planning a specific project that implements corridor-related range improvements, such as installation of wildlife-friendly fencing, while also setting aside acreage for pollinators and nesting migratory bird species. The ranchers involved are employing local contractors.

Overview

Total Projects Planned: 2

Partners Engaged: 48

Partnership Meetings/Field Tours: 26

Partnership Facilitation

Total Acres Planned: 40 acres

Total Project Funding Planned: \$127,867

16. Montana Big Game Habitat Improvement Project Coordinator (**Montana**)



Supports: Eastern Montana/Dakotas BLM District Office, Miles City, Havre, Malta, Glasgow, Lewistown Field Offices, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Established 2022

The Coordinator facilitates partnership efforts to ensure project implementation occurs successfully across land ownership lines from the Canadian border to the Musselshell Plains in Montana through the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The Project Coordinator streamlines interactions with the NRCS, the BLM, and additional partners and guides local conservation committees through project-ranking and funding processes.

The Coordinator's primary success in FY 2023 was collaborating with 16 partners to

implement five projects with landscape-level outcomes, connecting big game migration corridors and winter ranges, protecting waterfowl habitat, and enhancing ground-nesting upland bird habitat. These projects help facilitate the connectivity between 20,142 acres, of which 14,982 acres are BLM-administered lands. The project investments include fence removals and modifications, grassland seedings, and prescribed grazing infrastructure and implementation.

Overview

Partners engaged: 16

Total projects planned: 5

Total acres planned: 20,142

Total BLM acres: 14,982

Total project funding planned: \$1,190,152

Telling BLM's Story: Communications and Outreach



A strong partnership with the BLM and their communication staff helped to continue producing a suite of numerous sagebrush rangeland projects with high impact. As the BLM and IWJV continued their fruitful partnership, communications services supported and amplified accomplishments such as the renewed and new intra-agency agreements, hiring and re-hiring of Sage Capacity Team members, planning and filming content for Outcome-based Grazing videos and training modules, virtual and in-person workshops, and more.

Partnership News

[Fuels-focused Intra-agency Agreement Announcement](#)

Building on seven years of success founded on innovative intra-agency agreements, the BLM and IWJV kicked off the next level of their partnership. This work has an increased focus on wildfire risk reduction and fuels management throughout sagebrush country.

[Landing Page on Restoration Landscapes](#)

In 2023, the BLM identified 21 Restoration Landscapes, which are designated areas to provide investments in ecosystem restoration and the economic resilience of communities. The IWJV is establishing field-based capacity positions in a number of these places and is supporting their endeavors with technical transfer of science and communications. Alongside BLM storytellers, we are helping produce videos, articles, field tours, and other outreach products about these places and partnerships.

Standout Sagebrush Communications Projects

The Sagebrush Capacity Team and other field-level natural resource partners are the IWJV's greatest connection to the ground and the best people to explain the challenges and successes around achieving durable conservation. Our communications staff works closely with these individuals to carefully identify and craft compelling stories. Not all projects are ripe for communications attention, and the field folks are irreplaceable in guiding our outreach efforts. The following projects are some of the larger ones that were completed in FY 2023:

Changing a Landscape to a Lifescape Film

This [film](#) about the Humboldt Ranch explores the restorations of miles of streams on mixed public lands administered by the BLM and private lands owned by Nevada Gold Mines. The detailed before-and-after imagery in this film, which depicts stream restoration across decades due to improved grazing practices, is exciting and instills hope in viewers. This video received over 9,700 views on YouTube, was a selected film in the 2023 Wild and Working Lands Film Festival, and was shown in 2024 at the Cowboy Poetry Gather's debut film festival. This video built on the wild success of 2022's "Restoring Dixie Creek" film (produced by the same contract videographers).

Virtual Five-hour Wet Meadow Restoration Workshop + Field Event

A five-hour online webinar tailored with Utah presenters for a Utah audience gave the 200 participants an overview of low-tech restoration implementation. The [virtual version](#) of this workshop is now available for free online, and certain sections have been viewed over 1,500 times. This event was followed by an in-person workshop for Utah agencies in Helper, Utah, which is described in [this StoryMap](#). Taken together, the virtual and in-person workshops provided valuable learning experiences for a variety of audiences. Although both workshops were aimed at Utah participants, the virtual

version will remain an online resource to which we may refer wider audiences in perpetuity.

Vegetation Trends Across BLM Allotments Over 30 Years

The IWJV partnered with Working Lands for Wildlife to produce multiple communications about a new study that used a remote sensing tool to assess trends in vegetation cover and production for all BLM rangelands in Western states over the last 30 years. This study, [Long-Term Trends in Vegetation on Bureau of Land Management Rangelands in the Western United States](#), was supported by the IWJV with BLM funding. To develop a [detailed communications plan](#) for the rollout of these findings, the IWJV worked with a dozen partners, including numerous BLM representatives at the National Operations Center, as well as their Headquarters Communications and External Affairs offices. We published a BLM Daily, news posts on [PartnersInTheSage.com](#) and Working Lands for Wildlife that included a Q&A with the study's author, and multiple social media elements. The communications plan also supported the study's presentation at the Society for Rangeland Management. This is an example of how communications support behind the rollout of a new body of science can help translate the research findings into improved management practices.

Five Popular Rangeland Stories

[Utah Low-Tech Wet Meadow Restoration: Virtual Workshop](#) - 4,177 views

[New Study: Vegetation Trends Across BLM Allotments Over 30 Years](#) - 1,272 views

[Wind River Restoration: Effort Puts Funding to Work Against Cheatgrass](#) - 1,026 views

[Finding Balance with Fire in Montana's Sagebrush Country](#) - 514 views

[Rethinking the Focus on Forest Fires in Federal Wildland Fire Management](#) - 379 views



Newly installed Zeedyk structures from the Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership in FY 2023.

Sharing Science With the Field: Technical Transfer



The rangeland science discipline has made great strides in producing innovative science and cutting-edge datasets, maps, and tools to support the conservation and management of globally important ecosystems. Yet, there is a persistent gap between science production and on-the-ground implementation of conservation and management actions. To bridge science and implementation, Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands continued our strong investments in technical transfer. From websites to webinars to reports to one-on-one support, our partnership led, engaged in, or funded the efforts below. In response to the needs of our partnership, we continued to grow and refine our approach to technical transfer.

Technical ("tech") transfer is the process of transferring science, data, technology, best practices, and other technical information to end-users who influence land management. When done successfully, technical transfer expands awareness and integration of this information and facilitates adoption of practices that strengthen on-the-ground outcomes of management activities.

Technical Transfer Projects Completed in FY 2023

Improving Climate Resilience of Persistent Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands Report

Managers increasingly seek information to guide the management of persistent pinyon-juniper woodlands due to increasing local tree mortality and decline of the iconic

Pinyon Jay. The IWJV partnered with the BLM and the USFWS to develop a new report titled [Improving Climate Resilience of Persistent Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands](#). Its purpose was to characterize primary threats to persistent woodlands, identify the role of changing

climate, and highlight new efforts and approaches to develop management strategies that build woodland health and climate resilience.

Rangeland Technical Transfer Network

Technical transfer to bridge science and implementation requires significant time, skills, and expertise, which are rarely explicitly taught or supported. Thus, many people engage in technical transfer with limited capacity or resources. This year, the IWJV and Institute for Natural Resources launched the [Rangeland Technical Transfer Network](#). This professional network seeks to equip individuals with resources, training, examples, and professional networks to support and strengthen their technical transfer work.

Invasive Annual Grass Technical Transfer Partnership

[The Invasive Annual Grass Technical Transfer Partnership](#), facilitated through the University of Wyoming Institute for Managing Invasive Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems, helps land managers address the greatest threat to the sagebrush biome: invasive annual grasses. Centered around the proactive “Defend and Grow the Core” framework, this effort aims to equip land managers with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to implement effective invasive annual grass management. The IWJV Sagebrush Conservation Coordinator and Science to Implementation Coordinator serve on the core team for this partnership, which received funding from BLM in FY 2023.

Technical Transfer Support to the Sage Capacity Team

The Science to Implementation Team continues to support the Sage Capacity Team in accessing,

interpreting, and applying science, data, and tools through technical transfer. Tailored to the needs of individual SCT positions, our support includes one-on-one assistance, using the latest data to prioritize and plan conservation work, custom science synthesis, GIS and data support, and more. We additionally invested in scaling up our approaches to SCT support in anticipation of new positions onboarding in FY 2024.

Support to the Sagebrush Conservation Design

[The Sagebrush Conservation Design](#) working group leveraged recent advancements in remotely sensed land cover products to develop spatially and temporally explicit maps of sagebrush rangeland condition and landscape threats. The IWJV Science to Implementation Coordinator served on the core group of experts and provided support for technical transfer and outreach of spatial data products, helping to ensure they were relevant to managers and end users.

Capacity Support for the Sage Grouse Habitat Assessment Framework

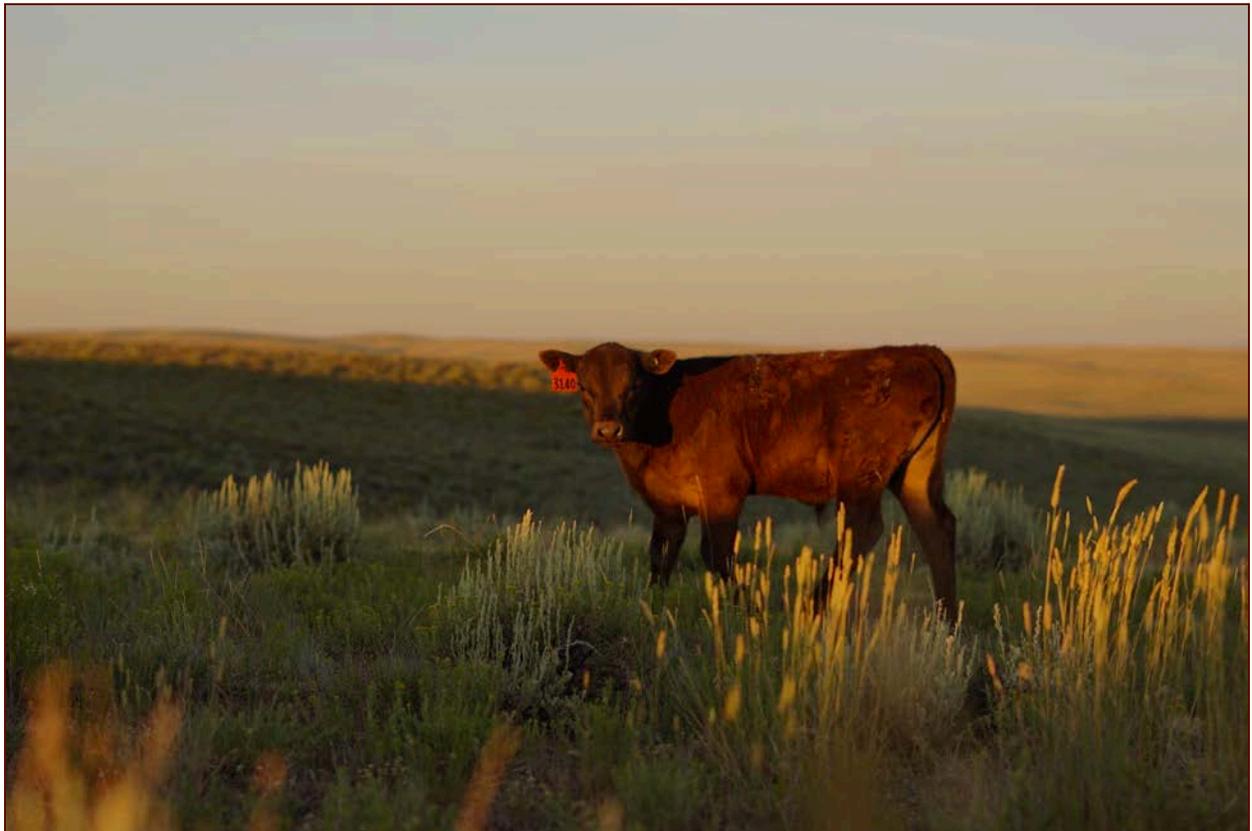
The BLM implements the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) across the sage grouse range in order to evaluate whether BLM-managed lands are meeting habitat needs for sage grouse. To support the BLM in completing HAF assessments, the IWJV Science to Implementation Specialist provided support to the National Operations Center Sage-Grouse Team on report writing, helping to complete two Mid-Scale Assessments, three Site-Scale Assessments, and two Management Unit Supplements.

Support to Oregon BLM Land Health Community of Practice

The Nature Conservancy supports all BLM Districts and Field Offices in the State of Oregon in implementing Land Health Assessments through their Land Health Community of Practice. The IWJV Science to Implementation Specialist provided support on science synthesis and delivery to address questions developed by the Community of Practice. We provided a synthesis of research related to grazing and invasive annual grasses for use in Land Health and NEPA assessments, reducing barriers to using relevant science.

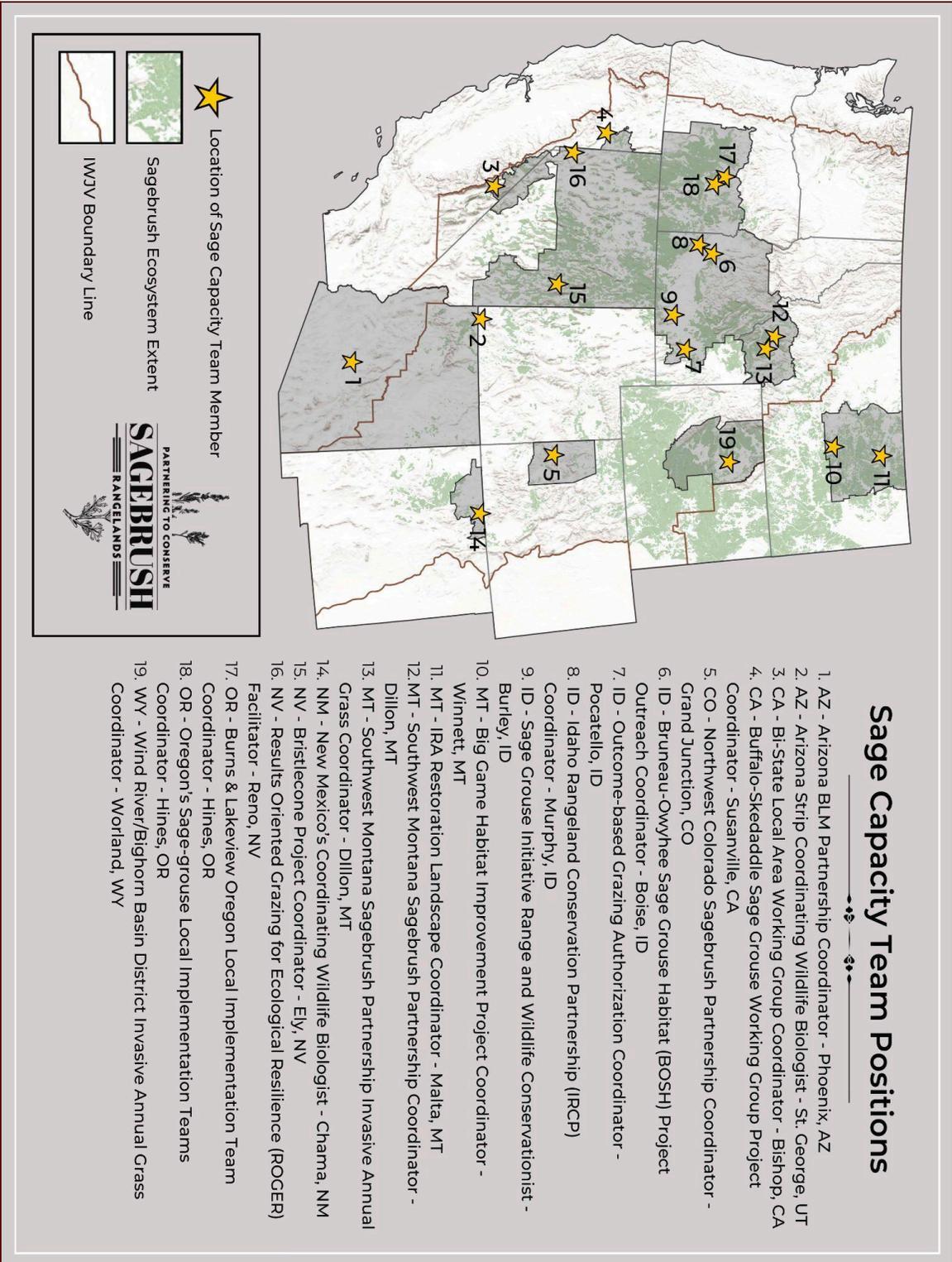
Rangeland Analysis Platform Landscape Explorer

As ecosystems change over time, imagery can provide a record of changes that are difficult to identify with the human eye. To give users a view into the past and provide context to landscape changes like conifer expansion, the BLM funded the Landscape Explorer through the Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands Partnership. This online platform provides a user-friendly way to visualize and compare historical and modern imagery side-by-side. It is available for the entire western United States.

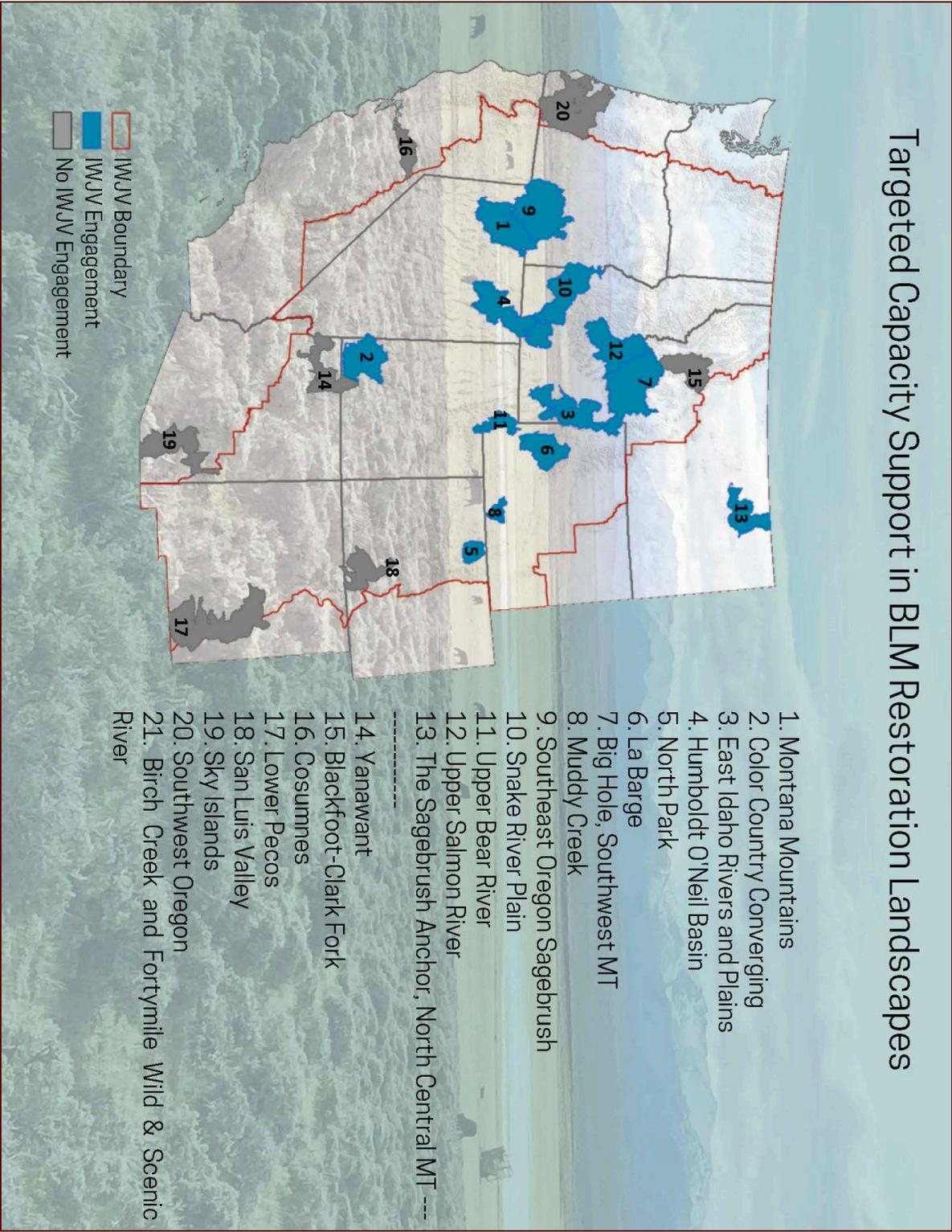


A calf on an Outcome-based Grazing Demonstration Project in FY 2023.

Appendix A: Sage Capacity Team Maps



Targeted Capacity Support in BLM Restoration Landscapes

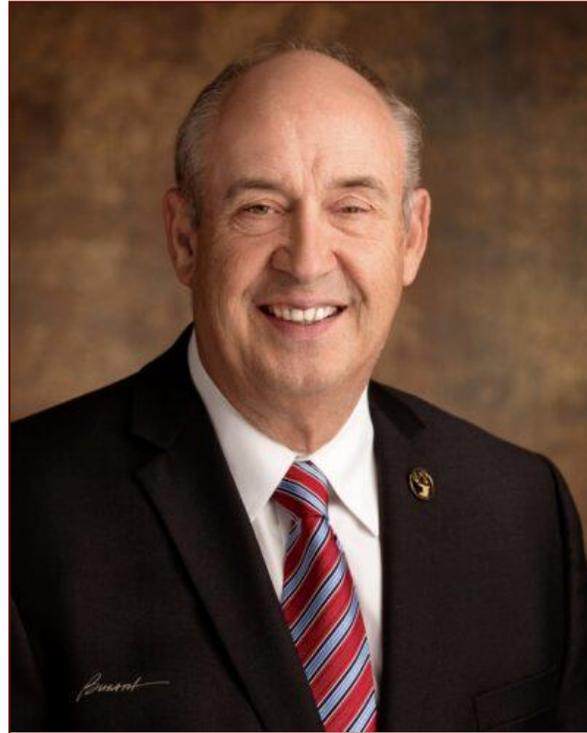


Appendix B: FY 2016–2023 Funding Accomplishments

New funding was added to support field delivery, communications and outreach, technical transfer, and other aspects of our work. Note that these funds do not include BIL or IRA funds.

Source	Amount
BLM Headquarters	\$8,513,237
BLM State Offices/Other	\$562,517
Partner Contributions	\$6,542,956
Capacity Total	\$15,618,710
Partnership Leverage (BLM : partners)	58 : 42
Total Project Funds reported by other agencies	\$51,348,590
Grand Total	\$66,967,300

Appendix C: A Tribute to Miles Moretti



Miles Moretti

1953 - 2023

Miles Moretti was a longtime member of the IWJV Management Board who fully embodied the JV partnership ethic, perhaps better than any individual in the 30-year history of the IWJV. He led many aspects of the IWJV's Government Relations efforts and established a remarkable legacy in that realm. Miles brought his infectious energy and collaborative spirit into impactful meetings with members of Congress and with Departmental and agency leadership in Washington, D.C., for many years. On first encountering the diverse groups of ranchers, NGO staff, energy company representatives, and wildlife agency leaders on Capitol Hill, Congressional members and staff often said, "What are you all doing together? We don't see this every day!" Miles approached his life's work with a positive slant and a passion for finding common ground, building trust, respect, and relationships at every turn. He laughed large, warmed hearts, and never took himself too seriously. He was a wildlife conservation icon, but to so many of us, he was something larger and more important—a true, down-to-earth friend. Miles made all of us stronger, happier, and better people.

—Dave Smith, IWJV Coordinator

Appendix D: List of Acronyms

- BIL:** Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- BLM:** Bureau of Land Management
- BOSH:** Bruneau-Owyhee Sage Grouse Habitat
- FY:** Fiscal Year
- HAF:** Habitat Assessment Framework
- IRA:** Inflation Reduction Act
- IRCP:** Idaho Rangeland Conservation Partnership
- IWJV:** Intermountain West Joint Venture
- LIT:** Local Implementation Team
- NEPA:** National Environmental Policy Act
- NRCS:** Natural Resources Conservation Service
- OBG (OBGA):** Outcome-Based Grazing (Authorization)
- RCPP:** Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- ROGER:** Results Oriented Grazing for Ecological Resilience
- SMSP:** Southwest Montana Sagebrush Partnership
- USFWS:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- YEP:** Youth Employment Program