



RANGELAND WILDFIRES AND INVASIVES ENDANGER FUTURE OF WESTERN COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES

Sagebrush rangelands once covered nearly 250 million acres in western North America.

TODAY, THIS LANDSCAPE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO HALF ITS ORIGINAL SIZE AND IS RAPIDLY SHRINKING.

Fire is a primary culprit and is fueled by annual invasives. These rangelands are important and help drive our nation's economy through energy and livestock production and are home to critical regional water resources. Equally important, these lands are wildlife meccas and provide habitat for some 350 species. Deep-rooted traditions, from Native American use to ranching to hunting, all rely on healthy sagebrush landscapes.



MILLIONS OF ACRES OF SAGEBRUSH ARE VULNERABLE OR ALREADY DEGRADED DUE TO CATASTROPHIC WILDFIRE, ANNUAL INVASIVES LIKE CHEATGRASS, AND CONIFER ENCROACHMENT.

THE CHALLENGE

- Most wildfire in the continental U.S. occurs on rangelands (56%) despite the disproportionate media coverage of forest fires. Within the Department of Interior's jurisdiction, the number is even higher, where 73% of all acres burned are rangelands.
- From 2000 to 2018, over 15 million acres of sagebrush rangelands were lost, primarily in Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho. Large fires between 100,000 to over 400,000 acres are now commonplace.
- The solution in the West is addressing the "Big Squeeze" where there is too much fire in the lowlands and too little in the uplands.
- Cheatgrass is fueling much of the problem in the lowlands where as little as 1% cheatgrass can double the risk of wildfire. Cheatgrass-dominated lands burn every 1-5 years, as opposed to the historic 50-100+ year fire cycle.
- Too little fire in the higher elevations has helped fuel an unprecedented woodland expansion which has resulted in fuel loads that are 6 times higher than in uninfected rangelands.



YOUR HELP IS NEEDED TO SCALE UP PROVEN SOLUTIONS

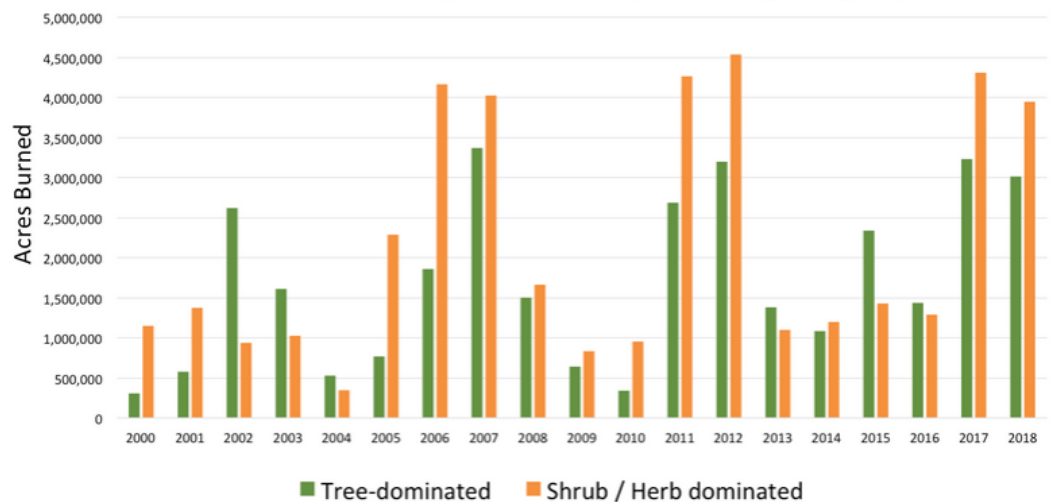
THE TOP 3 THINGS WE NEED TO DO TODAY ARE:

1) Reduce impacts of wildfire and cheatgrass

Reduce the frequency, intensity, and impact of mega-wildfires with vegetation management, prevention actions, and post-fire recovery. Halt the conversion of sagebrush rangelands to exotic annual grasses with proactive community-based partnerships.



**Comparison of Acres Burned for Forests and Shrub/Grasslands from 2000 to 2018
Across All Ownerships Nationwide (Preliminary Analyses)**



2) Scale up removal of juniper and other invading conifers

Scale up targeted conifer removal to prevent the loss of sagebrush habitat and wildlife species. Utilize the latest science to craft management prescriptions based on ecological site potential and historical stand conditions to address the needs of multiple species.

3) Protect and restore wet habitats

Protect and restore water resource resiliency - a prime asset of western rangelands. Springs, streamside riparian areas, and flood-irrigated meadows are crucial to wildlife and livestock, and are essential for ranching, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Sustaining scarce water resources also supports large urban centers.

"As ranchers, we make management decisions in hopes of maintaining sagebrush wet meadows year after year because they are critical, not only for our livestock, but also for the wildlife that we steward."

**- Kim Brackett,
Idaho Rancher and Chair of
Cattlemen's Beef Board**



DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS HAVE UNITED AND BEGUN ADDRESSING THESE PROBLEMS AND WE NEED YOUR HELP:

- 1)** Increase technical and financial resources by federal wildlife and land management agencies to scale up proven practices.
- **Direct multi-year funding** by both Congress and the Executive Branch to DOI and USDA to address all three priorities across jurisdictional boundaries, including agency and cooperative agreements with partners.
 - **Ensure adequate annual support for rangeland wildfire and invasive species** operations within federal programs to hire and maintain technical staff.
 - **Help implement the Western Weed Action Plan**, a strategic approach for addressing invasive plants in the sagebrush biome. Leadership and line authority funding is needed at all levels to raise the profile of invasive species management.
 - **Provide support for community-based entities** through foundations and partnerships with full participation and shared decision-space by federal agencies (e.g. Cooperative Weed Management Areas and Rural Fire Protection Associations).

Wildland Fire Funding

	BLM	USFS
Acres Managed	245 million acres	193 million acres
5-Year Average Acres Burned	2.1 million	1.7 million
Fuels Management Funding	\$85 million	\$400 million
Preparedness	\$180 million	\$1.3 BILLION
Post-Fire Rehabilitation	\$35 million	\$180 million*
Rural/Partner Support	\$1 million	\$94 million

- 2)** Support land managers in the implementation of proactive conservation and restoration to ensure healthy, intact sagebrush habitat for future generations.
- **Lift hiring freezes and recruit a talented workforce** to work and live in local communities.
 - **Support travel for training and conferences** that build collaboration and bring diverse perspectives together with the best available methods for successful field-delivery projects.
 - **Encourage constituents to share in the future of sagebrush conservation** by getting engaged. Further public awareness of the wildfire and invasive species threats and encourage action now.

SAGEWEST

There is a growing sagebrush communications network called SageWest. Join the community here:
PartnersInTheSage.com/SageWest

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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This document is a product of the Intermountain West Joint Venture Sagebrush Conservation Committee and Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Sagebrush Executive Oversight Committee.

