

# SAGEWEST 2020 Summer Series: Fire & Invasives



Invasive annual grasses are dramatically compromising sagebrush country by reducing forage quality and quantity, altering wildfire regimes, impacting species diversity, reducing wildlife habitat, and straining already challenged local economies. Amongst [SageWest's](#) 150+ entities (state and federal agencies, universities, collaboratives, non-governmental organizations, etc.) are many that are tackling this challenging issue. Thus, this platform is uniquely positioned to share these resources so as to improve awareness, facilitate coordination, and advance effective conservation efforts across this very large geography.

Throughout May and June, SageWest organized a weekly dissemination of communication products on fire and invasives in sagebrush rangelands. Over this eight week period, members of the SageWest network contributed 17 products on this topic to heighten awareness about this issue prior to the 2020 fire season. These stories ranged from in-depth articles on invasive annual plant identification to the use of native seed in post-fire restoration. Multiple videos were shared as well as research articles and science synthesis fact sheets. State-based invasives-focused initiatives also released breaking news content about their collaborative efforts. Many valuable resources were shared and compiled below for future reference.

Big thanks to everyone who contributed content early this year, we wish you well this fire season!

## VIDEOS

### [“Up in Smoke” - Intermountain West Joint Venture](#)

- Includes 5:56 min video that calls attention to the scale and gravity of fire and invasives on rangeland health and what can be done to combat this. Includes interviews of BLM experts and Idaho ranchers, with action opportunities - including the need for cross-boundary efforts.

### [“Sagebrush Seed Collection” - Nevada Division of Wildlife](#)

- This 2:50 minute video features NDOW Eastern Region Habitat Supervision Biologist, Caleb McAdoo describing a successful volunteer project where the public helped restore habitat ravaged by wildfire, in a sagebrush seed collection effort.

#### [“Basin on the Brink” - Western Colorado University Graduate Project](#)

- This 10 minute film dives into the Gunnison Basin in Colorado to feature a handful of the many partners teaming up to fight the cheatgrass that’s starting to overwhelm this area and its many sagebrush country occupants.

#### [“Cheatgrass in Sagebrush Country: Fueling Severe Wildfires” - Audubon Rockies and Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

- This 3:34 minute video captures the importance of a healthy sagebrush country and outlines the growing threat of cheatgrass. This unbranded video was made for broad use in communicating about this conservation challenge. Please notify Daly Edmunds ([Daly.Edmunds@audubon.org](mailto:Daly.Edmunds@audubon.org)) if you use this free resource.

## **MAGAZINE/ONLINE ARTICLES**

#### [Western Confluence Magazine: "Cheatgrass on Fire"- Univ. of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute](#)

- Article describes the history and latest efforts, focused on Great Basin. Links to peer-reviewed research provided at the end.

#### [Western Confluence Magazine: "Early Detection Rapid & Response" - Univ. of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute](#)

- Article describes the discovery of medusahead and ventenata, and how Wyoming’s Northeast Wyoming Invasive Grasses Working Group was created in 2017 and acted to minimize their impacts to rangeland.

#### [Wyoming Wildlife Magazine: "The Cheater" - Wyoming Game and Fish Department](#)

- Article describes the challenges and the efforts to fight cheatgrass in Wyoming, ending with ways the public can help prevent the spread and promote native plants.

#### [Wyoming Wildlife Magazine: "Herbicide trials" - Wyoming Game and Fish Department](#)

- Check out this feature story in the Wyoming Wildlife magazine about how herbicide trials are being implemented and studied to determine how different herbicides impact cheatgrass.

#### ["More Menace Than Cheatgrass?!" - The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming](#)

- This short blog post talks about the spread of ventana and medusahead, including their economic impacts. TNC is working with the Univ. of Wyoming’s Research and Extension Center to study two time-sensitive management questions.

#### [“Using Local Seeds” - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

- Using native, local seeds in restoration is taking off, just like the wildfires they are designed to follow. Read this feature story from Nevada about testing the use of these seeds and different restoration seed mixes in helping burned areas recover.

[“Weed Suppressive Bacteria: Testing a Control Measure for Invasive Grasses in the West” - U.S. Geological Service](#)

- This online story discusses Weed-Suppressive Bacteria (WSB) and how USGS researchers are evaluating its effectiveness.

[“Western Working Lands Snapshot | The Great Basin” - Sage Grouse Initiative](#)

- This monthly installment of the Western Working Lands “Snapshot” describes the Great Basin. Includes animated graphic that shows fire size and frequency from 1984-2017.

## COLLABORATIVES

[“The Cheatgrass Challenge” - Idaho Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

- A partnership of public and private agencies and organizations in Idaho has developed a strategy they call The Cheatgrass Challenge, starting in summer 2020 with projects in and around “core areas” where invasive annuals encroachment is low to moderate.

[Sage-Grouse Conservation \(SageCon\) Partnership Invasives Initiative](#)

- The SageCon Invasives Initiative was launched with Oregon partners to strategically link local and regional invasive grass efforts. Learn about their work here, which is led by working groups representing multiple partner organizations.

Douglas Core Area (DCA) Restoration Team: [Presentation/Fact Sheet](#) - Trihydro and Audubon

- The DCA Restoration Team has been working to restore wildfire burn areas within one of eastern WY’s Sage-grouse Core Population Areas. This post included link to 20 min presentation about this collaborative effort, given at the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies’ workshop for the *Sagebrush Conservation Strategy*, and fact sheet.

## WEBPAGES WITH RESOURCES

[“Cheatgrass and Medusahead” - U.S. Geological Service](#)

- Access this clearing house of research on invasive annual grasses being produced by the U.S. Geological Service’s science shop. Includes publications, data and tools, and multimedia resources.

[Webinar: “Why is Sagebrush Country Burning?” - Michele Crist, Bureau of Land Management](#)

- Landscape ecologist, Michele Crist (National Interagency Fire Center/BLM) presented a webinar specifically for SageWest. Discussed wildfire trends, the culprits and impacts, and challenges/opportunities. Website includes the recording, slides, and extensive list of resources referenced during her presentation.

**If you’re interested in learning more about SageWest, please [visit this page](#) and sign up to be part of the listserv that connects this network of sagebrush communicators.**

**This resource is also available online [here](#).**