

FLOOD-IRRIGATED GRASS HAY

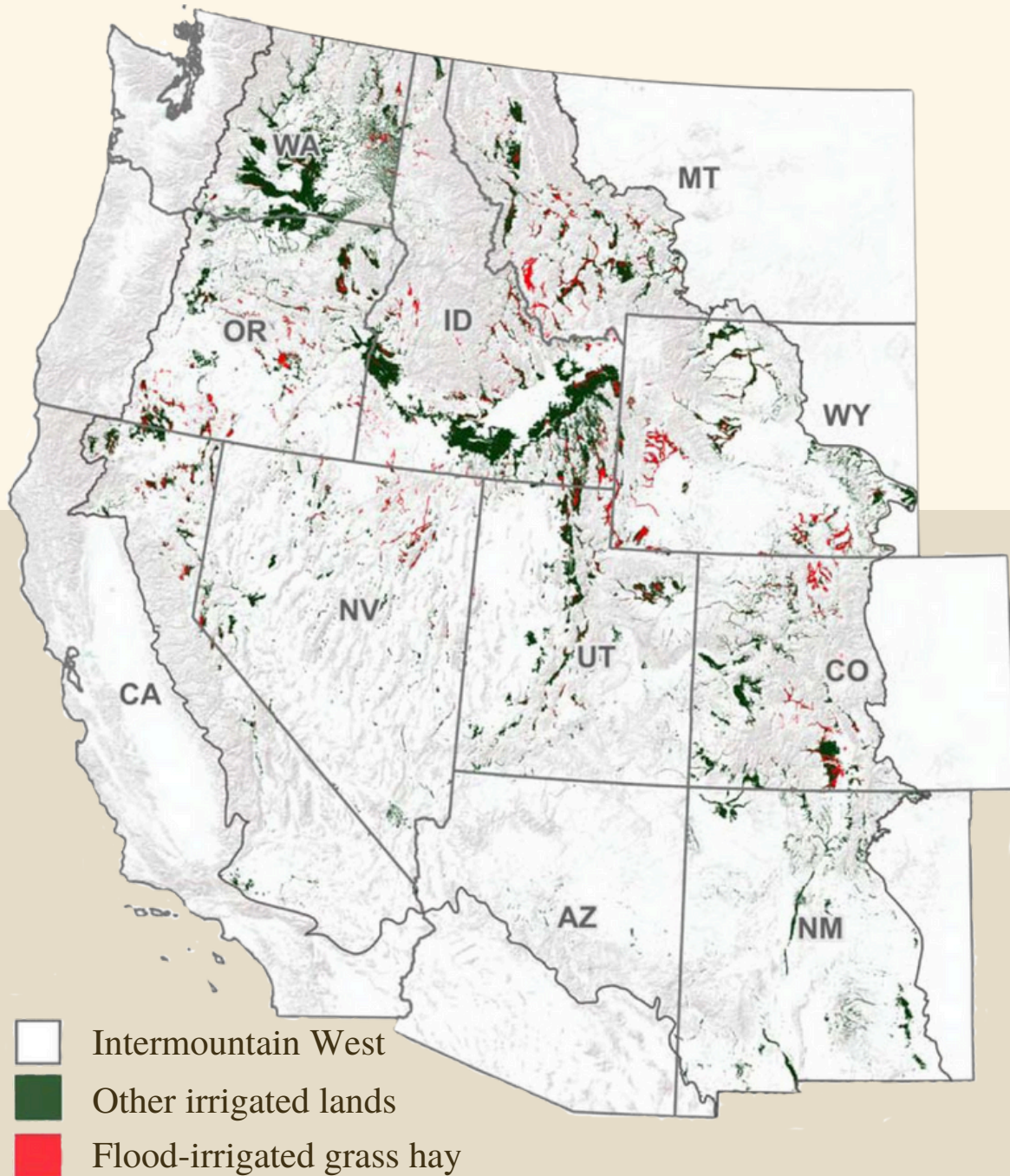
BENEFITTING WATERSHEDS FROM THE TOP DOWN

FLOOD-IRRIGATED GRASS HAY PROVIDES

58

PERCENT OF THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST'S TEMPORARY WETLANDS

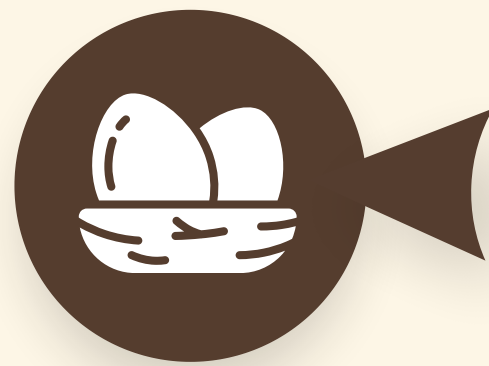
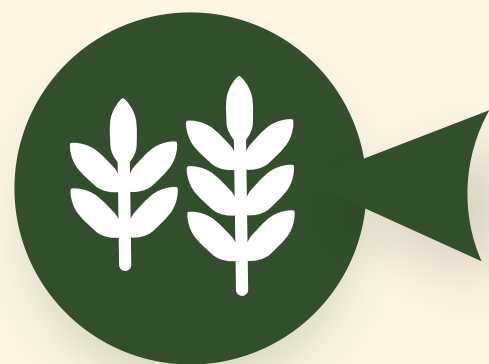
Temporary wetlands are wet less than 2 months each year but are important habitat for many migratory birds and other wildlife.



Although flood-irrigated grass hay only accounts for 2.5 percent of the Intermountain West's irrigated footprint, it is often found in headwaters systems that affect the region's important watersheds.

SYSTEM THREATS

Changes in water management that eliminate flood irrigation or conversion to more efficient forms of irrigation like drip or pivot can decrease water availability at a watershed and basin scale due to the loss of return flows and sometimes even an increased amount of consumption enabled by the more efficient infrastructure.



Whole Watershed Benefits

93 percent of flood-irrigated grass hay agriculture occurs in historical riparian floodplains and mimics natural flooding cycles, influencing groundwater recharge and return flows at multiple scales.

"Green Ribbons" of the West

These grassy meadows are crucial to producing hay and forage for western ranches and also support wildlife-sustaining riparian plants such as willows, cottonwood, and wildflowers.

Key Seasonal Habitat

Wildlife that depends on wetlands, from migratory waterbirds to big game animals, can often be found using flood-irrigated grass hay meadows for various life cycle needs.

CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Increasing funding for flood irrigation infrastructure modernization projects can help keep these fields wet.



Working land conservation easements are another key tool for keeping ranching practices intact.

