



**Annual
Operational
Plan
FY 2025**



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

FINAL



CONTENTS

- Introduction1**
- FY 2025 Areas of Emphasis1**
- Sagebrush Conservation2**
 - Programmatic Work2
 - Field Delivery Capacity3
 - Science and Technical Transfer3
 - Communications4
 - Meetings, Events, Support5
- Water 45**
 - Programmatic Work6
 - Field Delivery Capacity6
 - Science and Technical Transfer7
 - Communications7
 - Meetings, Events, Support8
- Western Forests9**
 - Programmatic Work9
 - Field Delivery Capacity9
 - Science and Technical Transfer10
 - Communications10
- Operations and Government Relations11**
 - Programmatic Work11
 - Events12
- Appendix: List of Acronyms13**

INTRODUCTION

The Intermountain West Joint Venture's (IWJV) Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Annual Operational Plan (AOP) provides the proposed actions that will be implemented in the federal fiscal year (October 1, 2024–September 30, 2025). The management board's approval of the AOP enables the IWJV Coordinator to direct the IWJV's staff time and resources throughout the fiscal year.

The AOP in recent years blended the type of detail more typical of an implementation plan with the more specific information normally tied to the annual budget to compensate for an out-of-date implementation plan. With the recent complementation of IWJV's Implementation Plan, the IWJV is returning to a more traditional AOP that points to the technical foundation of the implementation plan and strategic plan as guiding documents and outlines our work plans on an annual basis.

The IWJV staff and the vast network of partners make the IWJV's work successful. As our staff has grown, our network of partners and ability to support conservation have grown. As outlined in the strategic plan and implementation plan, our primary habitats of focus are sagebrush, wetlands, and western forests. We have habitat teams focused on each of those areas. In addition to the programmatic staff support, we have two fundamental "programmatic tools": communications and science-to-implementation. The overall IWJV operational structure and support allow the habitat programs and leads for the programmatic tools to be successful. We round out the work with a robust government relations effort that will enable us to connect funding to implementation and help voice essential policy implications that can have significant impacts on the ability of funding to have the intended benefits at the ground level.

Over the years, the IWJV's work has remained relevant because we have maintained our core values, focused on our critical habitats, and leveraged existing and new information, partnerships, and funding opportunities to accelerate strategic on-the-ground conservation. The IWJV is unique in many ways. We are a bridge organization between large-scale conservation entities and the implementation groups that do meaningful on-the-ground conservation work. The people on the ground will do the implementation work. We cannot be overly prescriptive in how and where the work will be done; rather, we collaboratively identify and share sets of concepts, approaches, ideas, and strategies people can use to enact the conservation work as outlined in the implementation plan.

The AOP is an opportunity for the IWJV to detail to the management board its approach and associated funding to execute those plans. The AOP details how the IWJV will use funding over the next fiscal year to maximize impacts in the habitats we work in utilizing our programmatic tools, partnerships, and increased field delivery capacity in collaboration with our many partners.

FY 2025 Areas of Emphasis

In FY 2025, the Sagebrush Conservation and Water 4 programs will prioritize strategic expenditures of funds from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which have comprised an increasing portion of IWJV budget growth over the last few years through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) investment in the Sagebrush Conservation Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) investment in the Water 4 program. The significant new funding investments prioritize increased field delivery capacity and support of actions associated with science-to-implementation and communications needed to deliver unprecedented conservation funding in the near term.

In addition, in FY 2025, we will hire a Western Forests Conservation Coordinator to lead the program. Launching from the staff work already completed, the coordinator will play a critical role in the scale-up and growth of the program in a similar framework to the Sagebrush Conservation and Water 4 Programs.

SAGEBRUSH CONSERVATION

The Sagebrush Conservation Program works across local and landscape scales to promote resilient sagebrush rangelands through proactive, voluntary, science-based management and restoration with diverse partners.

In FY 2025, we will help the BLM and other partners deliver proactive conservation in the sagebrush biome to address the following areas of emphasis: reducing the risk of wildfire and invasive weeds, restoring wet meadows, removing expanding conifers, supporting outcome-based grazing, and coordinating on big game corridor conservation. The [Sage Capacity Team](#) (SCT), which has grown dramatically in the last year, is the primary implementation arm of the *Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands* effort and provides collaborative infrastructure—increasing efficiency and maximizing impacts in the sagebrush. Significant investments of IRA and BIL funding from BLM offer the opportunity to significantly expand the SCT and seamlessly build on the BLM-IWJV partnership, driving efforts at an accelerated pace. We will oversee, coordinate, and support over 30 positions, collectively enabling the BLM to implement epic levels of conservation. This field-level workforce catalyzes landscape-scale conservation, while the IWJV core staff sagebrush team is crucial in managing the field delivery capacity positions, providing science-to-implementation support, and executing a dynamic array of communications projects. While the partnership with BLM is the primary operational focus, the IWJV also supports the larger sagebrush conservation effort with technical transfer and communications services in collaboration with the USFWS, state fish and wildlife agencies, NRCS, and other organizations. The operational work is outlined below:

Programmatic Work

- Provide field-level capacity and oversight for habitat projects to address implementation bottlenecks and increase targeted outcomes across public and private lands. Maintain existing SCT positions established through this partnership and add new positions in priority landscapes.
- Produce a “Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands” annual report that summarizes annual and cumulative impacts of funding, including projects implemented, number of acres impacted, communications and technical transfer products created, and other relevant metrics.
- Increase science capacity and technical transfer to better focus implementation, assess biological and social outcomes, and improve program delivery.
- Provide and enhance communication and outreach strategies to share successes of conservation efforts, highlight the places and people making a difference in the sagebrush rangelands, and increase buy-in to strategic and focused implementation.
- Strengthen the engagement of federal, state, Tribal, and private partners in cross-boundary collaborative sagebrush habitat conservation by integrating financial, technical, and other resources for long-term biological and social outcomes.
- Engage the IWJV Sagebrush Committee, comprising board members and other decision-makers, to guide the IWJV’s sagebrush conservation efforts, address relevant threats and issues, and advance voluntary, incentive-based conservation of the sagebrush ecosystem through collaboration.

Field Delivery Capacity

- Oversee, coordinate, and support over 30 SCT positions; work with SCT position-hosting entities to recruit employees for the positions and onboard them with BLM; compile position sustainability assessment proposals to assess the efficacy of the positions for renewal.
- Coordinate and implement sagebrush conservation across land ownership boundaries.
- Fill critical gaps in field delivery capacity.
- Track projects and outcomes.
- Collaborate with partners to leverage and scale up management and restoration actions within strategic landscapes in the sagebrush biome.
- Leverage federal funding allocations with other agencies, collaboratives, and partners to secure substantial grant-based funds.
- Build locally based, effective collaboration that promotes landscape-scale conservation planning and enhances partnerships.
- Provide range and wildlife technical assistance targeting public and private lands conservation efforts, to assist with overall project coordination, management, and success.



Science and Technical Transfer

- Provide strategic science-to-implementation support and mentorship to the SCT and their partners to further implement conservation and restoration efforts.
- Provide technical transfer support for the [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\) Conservation Planning Tool](#) by hosting up to three workshops in bi-state area (Nevada and California) communities with BLM staff and other partners.
- Assist [Results Oriented Grazing for Ecological Resilience](#) with the application and communication of a USGS-developed grazing decision support tool.

- Expand science partnerships with the USGS and other agency and university researchers to facilitate coproduction of actionable science and link science to implementation.
- Lead the Sagebrush Technical Transfer Network, which aims to equip sagebrush partners to do effective technical transfer by strengthening and supporting capacity- and skill-building through guidelines, resources, processes, and direct support.
- Deliver an in-person workshop on technical transfer at the 2025 Society for Range Management annual meeting and support the development of technical transfer training for USGS scientists working on sagebrush topics.
- Support and collaborate with State Conservation Partners (SCP) to maximize science, technical transfer, communications, and partnership development targeting sagebrush conservation efforts.
- Hold several workshops to support the [Invasive Annual Grass Tech Transfer Partnership](#), hosted by the University of Wyoming's Institute for Managing Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems (IMAGINE). These workshops will put science into practice, helping land managers address invasive annual grasses.
- Support the NRCS and the University of Nevada, Reno, in maintaining and updating science on the [PJ Encroachment Education Project website](#).
- Assist people with accessing, interpreting, and applying technical products focused on pinyon-juniper woodlands developed under the Western Forests Program (e.g., spatial tools for prioritizing pinyon-juniper woodland conservation while maintaining sagebrush habitats).
- Assist the BLM National Operations Center Sage Grouse Team with efforts to support BLM offices in completing multi-scale Sage Grouse Habitat Assessment Framework assessments.

Communications

- Develop conservation partner and SCT stories that inform and inspire partnership and conservation practices, featuring how management and restoration benefit wildlife and local communities in the sagebrush biome. This could include a scripted video self-filmed by SCT members, Q&As, social media features, the release of the new map depicting their positions, etc.
- Create new communication products about the BLM, exploring new tactics and tools such as developing films, audio productions, or storymaps to 1) address the BLM's needs and opportunities; 2) share conservation successes and lessons learned within field offices and communities; and 3) engage partners in ways most relevant to their work.
- Elevate the USFWS and BLM BIL-funded projects and IRA Restoration Landscapes efforts across the Intermountain West through communications products focusing on partners working on project implementation. Maintain a repository of communications products featuring BIL- and IRA-funded projects to serve as a collective view on the wide-ranging impacts of this unique funding.
- Facilitate virtual workshops and other strategic communications to expand mesic conservation and restoration, such as highlighting Zeedyk projects completed through our partnerships.
- Lead the distribution of the five-part film series illustrating the outcomes and versatility of the Outcome-based Grazing Authorization program (created by the IWJV in 2024), deliver training modules to the BLM for internal sharing, and publish an illustrated video on the program for interested livestock operation managers, in collaboration with the Outcome-based Grazing Authorization Coordinator.
- Refresh the IWJV's Sagebrush Conservation Program and partnership promotional products, including the [video](#) and [fact sheet](#).
- Grow the collective audience by championing the impacts of locally led conservation through public-facing content to grow awareness of BLM-IWJV joint accomplishments.
- Utilize sagebrush communications proposals, project strategies, and distribution plans to dedicate funding and staff time efficiently for impactful communications products.
- Leverage communications support with the Science to Implementation Team and partners to advance the technical transfer of knowledge and data relevant to sagebrush habitat conservation using a variety of communications approaches, such as www.PartnersInTheSage.com, fact sheets, videos, social media, and other digital tactics and tools detailed in the implementation plan.

Meetings, Events, Support

- Reinforce and grow the sagebrush partnership by maintaining solid relationships, hosting intentional meetings and forums, and innovating ways to support a growing and robust network of practitioners.
- Convene in-person meetings with the SCT, IWJV staff, and representatives of BLM leadership to strengthen relationships, engage in team-building, share knowledge, and build technical skills.
- Collaborate with the BLM Management Oversight Group and BLM Division Chiefs to expand awareness of our partnership within BLM offices at all levels (national, state, and local). This will entail regular meetings with the BLM Division Chiefs, members of the BLM Management Oversight Group, and the IWJV core team (with at least one of these meetings taking place in person) to discuss recommendations on program implementation, including approval on funding recommendations, budget oversight, and priority areas of work. These meetings are crucial to maintaining and strengthening relationships with leadership across multiple BLM divisions and offices.
- Engage with the BLM State Directors, District Managers, and others through various meetings and other opportunities (i.e., Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meetings, etc.).
- Expand BLM field office awareness and support of the BLM and IWJV partnership through continued outreach and meetings that bridge the gap between science and implementation, explore new capacity opportunities, enhance communications, etc.

WATER 4

Water 4 accelerates the conservation of wetlands and flood-irrigated agriculture to benefit people and wildlife through collaborative, science-driven partnerships and programs.

In FY 2025, we will advance collaborative, multi-benefit wetland habitat conservation by bolstering locally driven efforts to support resilient watersheds across the Intermountain West. Drought in the West is no longer a temporary, regional issue; it is a long-run, landscape-scale problem with implications for food security, human health and communities, the economy, and fish and wildlife. The high stakes and complex nature of western water challenges require unprecedented collaboration by investing in the people, practices, and partnerships needed to address current and future water-related challenges. The recognition that human water management is directly intertwined with wetlands conservation success has elevated key opportunities for conservation in places where people are actively stewarding habitat for wetland-dependent birds: flood-irrigated grass hay agriculture and managed wetland habitats. Recognizing the importance of local context in these landscapes, the Water 4 Program centers on supplying partners with the resources they need to address on-the-ground challenges by providing capacity, communications, science, and partnership coordination support to accelerate wetland habitat conservation. Investments from partners across the Intermountain West, including the NRCS in California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah, as well as the USFWS Region 8 in the Klamath Basin, collectively enabled the [rapid growth of Water 4 field delivery capacity](#) in FY 2024. This team will continue to grow in FY 2025, filling crucial implementation needs while seamlessly aligning with Water 4 goals and priorities across essential wetland habitats. The Water 4 Program will build a supporting framework for field delivery capacity efforts, laying the groundwork for strategic conservation through continued science development, integrating new research into the work of conservation practitioners in the water and wetlands space, and developing innovative messaging to communicate the challenges and opportunities in wetlands conservation to expanded audiences. The operational work is outlined below:

Programmatic Work

- Provide oversight and coordination for investments in capacity within existing organizations, building robust relationships that deliver upon shared partnership goals and priorities.
- Work closely with agency, state, NGO, and private lands partners to identify opportunities to integrate Water 4 science products into conservation programs, planning, and processes.
- Work in partnership with the fisheries community to identify priorities and support projects that benefit both aquatic habitats and adjacent wetlands and irrigated agriculture in riparian corridors
- Advance wetland conservation activities in key habitats, as outlined in the implementation plan.
- Support communication and outreach strategies to elevate narratives supporting flood-irrigated agriculture and managed wetlands, share successful conservation efforts, and increase public awareness of threats to wetlands in the Intermountain West.
- Explore opportunities to expand engagement with and support for wetland managers as stewards of some of the most important wetland habitats in the Intermountain West.
- Strengthen the engagement of federal, state, Tribal, and private landowners in cross-boundary collaborative wetland habitat conservation by identifying shared priorities to support watershed-scale, multi-benefit management of resilient water and wetland habitats.
- Engage the IWJV Water 4 Committee to leverage the expertise of board members and other decision-makers to guide the IWJV's wetland conservation efforts, address relevant threats and issues, and advance voluntary, incentive-based, and collaborative water and wetlands conservation in the Intermountain West.
- Produce a Water 4 annual report that summarizes the annual and cumulative impacts of funding, including projects supported, the status of new and continued capacity investments, communications and technical transfer products, and other relevant metrics.
- Oversee, coordinate, and support Water 4 field delivery capacity positions; work with host entities to recruit employees for new and existing positions; track implementation successes to report to funding partners and ensure continued alignment between on-the-ground work, partner goals, and Water 4 priorities.
- Manage and build on the strong history of collaborative conservation in the Southern Oregon-Northeastern California (SONEC) region through the work of the SONEC Conservation Delivery Coordinator, supported by the other Water 4 Coordinator and other program staff. Key roles include:
 - Management and implementation of the Klamath Basin Farming and Wetland Collaborative Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
 - Participation in local and regional stakeholder groups, providing technical expertise to inform wetland conservation efforts.
 - Support for planning and implementing USFWS BIL funding through key projects in the Klamath Basin.
 - Oversight and support of field delivery capacity within the SONEC region; facilitation of connections between regional conservation practitioners and field delivery capacity staff; construction of linkages between capacity work and NRCS programs such as the Working Lands for Waterbirds Conservation Implementation Strategy.
 - Storytelling support for partnerships in the Klamath Basin and larger SONEC region in collaboration with the Water 4 Communications Team, highlighting critical issues facing the region while featuring successful projects and partnerships.

Field Delivery Capacity

Given the unique context for water and wetland conservation in different regions across the West, position priorities vary widely but will include:

- Fill capacity gaps and alleviate implementation bottlenecks to accelerate program delivery.

- Strategically and effectively deliver Farm Bill conservation programs and IRA funds on private lands.
- Address landscape-scale threats and advance conservation in key habitats to support wetland-dependent migratory birds.
- Support the protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of agricultural working lands that provide habitat for migratory birds and other terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Supply capacity and technical support to facilitate funding for conservation easements through programs such as the NRCS Agricultural Easement Program (ACEP)-Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and the ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easement.
- Strengthen engagement between federal, state, NGO, and private landowners to build an understanding of what it takes for conservation efforts to be successful, from top-level funding to on-the-ground implementation.
- Identify multi-benefit project opportunities that align the conservation of important wetland habitats with the priorities of other stakeholders, such as local communities, fisheries groups, agricultural producers, and other conservation and land management entities.
- Support cross-boundary habitat work that builds landscape resilience within watersheds, contributing to the long-term persistence of priority wetlands and aquatic habitats.

Science and Technical Transfer

- Provide strategic science-to-implementation support and mentorship to Water 4 field delivery capacity positions and their partners to further implement conservation and restoration efforts.
- Provide technical transfer support for the [Wetland Evaluation Tool \(WET\)](#) by working with end users to provide trainings and demonstrations, supply data for in-house analysis, and aid in interpreting results.
- Work with agency partners and other stakeholders to ensure the long-term sustainability of the WET platform, underscoring its important role in informing long-term wetland habitat conservation goals and objectives.
- Continue to develop and adapt support tools for the WET, including [user guides](#), [tutorials](#), and other resources to enhance the useability of and access to IWJV-produced wetland science.
- Collaborate with IWJV partners in custom analyses using IWJV data products to support outcome evaluation for water- and wetlands-related conservation projects.
- Engage in speaking and presentation opportunities to share IWJV-produced science, including research on [flood-irrigated grass hay](#), [sandhill cranes](#), and other forthcoming projects.
- Support the integration of IWJV's wetland science tools into partner conservation planning frameworks and ranking criteria.
- Develop Regional Wetland Profiles to support the wetland conservation strategies outlined in the implementation plan, stepping down IWJV science, priorities, and tools into locally relevant documents that can be leveraged to prioritize and inform conservation activities.
- Collaborate with communications staff to develop science-driven educational materials highlighting threats and opportunities in wetland conservation for various audiences, from traditional conservation practitioners to policymakers, water management staff, and the general public.
- Finalize and publish in-progress research focused on wetland habitat trends in the West, habitat bottlenecks for key migratory bird species, and spatial assessments of white-faced ibis migratory and breeding habitat use.

Communications

- Develop stories highlighting collaborative conservation efforts that support wetlands and watershed health, featuring the Water 4 capacity team and other partners. These stories will focus on the power of partnerships to overcome conservation challenges, innovative funding mechanisms, projects in priority wetland habitats, and landscape resiliency tied to watershed function.

- Create compelling communication products using engaging tactics and tools to share Water 4 priority messaging with new and expanded audiences. These may include:
 - An animated video detailing the importance of flood-irrigated grass hay agriculture and watershed health.
 - One-page summaries and fact sheets detailing key takeaways from recent wetland science, targeted toward decision-makers at the local, state, and national levels.
 - Collaboration with groups outside the traditional conservation community to grow the reach of Water 4 messaging.
 - Interactive storymaps and other products to communicate Water 4 concepts and priorities to diverse audiences.
 - Workshops (in-person and online) and field tours that coordinate with journalists and other communications professionals.
- Lead outreach efforts for new IWJV science and research products. Collaborate with Science to Implementation staff to develop outreach materials, science communication products, and presentations to highlight new IWJV-produced research as it is released.
- Manage and design landing pages for web-based tools, IWJV science papers and reports, and IWJV Wetland Landscape Profiles to ensure streamlined access for partners and other stakeholders.
- Elevate the importance of NRCS conservation programs in supporting the conservation of wetlands and water resources on working lands across the Intermountain West, integrating a landscape-scale perspective into features of locally driven project implementation.
- Produce outreach materials in collaboration with agency leads, to expand the reach of funding sources and project opportunities supporting agricultural conservation easements, flood-irrigated grass hay agriculture, and wetland and riparian restoration on private lands.



Meetings, Events, Support

- Develop a place-based workshop and/or field tour focused on messaging the unique challenges and opportunities of wetlands conservation in the Intermountain West through the lens of irrigated agriculture and managed wetlands. Key audiences may include national-level decision-makers unfamiliar with land tenure and water issues in the West or communications professionals challenged by capturing the nuances and multifaceted nature of water issues in their ongoing work.

- Initiate virtual gatherings of the entire Water 4 field delivery capacity position team, enabling networking opportunities, knowledge-sharing, and teambuilding with a network of practitioners focused on water-related challenges in different geographies across the West.
- Facilitate virtual workshops and webinars highlighting new IWJV science, linking recently released research with conservation practitioners and land and water resource management professionals.
- Maintain clear and consistent communications and regular meetings with funders, to ensure alignment between their funding goals and the IWJV priorities and programs.
- Host the third facilitated ACEP-ALE workshop, with a selection of land trust and NRCS easement practitioners focused on solution-oriented recommendations to improve the pace, scale, and outcomes of ACEP-ALE funding.
- Support North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) proposals and projects in the Intermountain West through engagement with a contractor who will provide technical assistance to partners that are developing grant proposals and support IWJV staff in proposal review.

WESTERN FORESTS

Western Forests focuses on partnership development, capacity building, and science-to-implementation efforts in pinyon-juniper woodlands and dry, frequent-fire forests.

As the IWJV's newest area of emphasis, the Western Forests effort in FY 2025 will be focused on the continued growth and development. We intend to hire a Western Forests Conservation Coordinator in FY 2025 and are exploring partnerships and financial agreements with several partners, including the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Ecological Restoration Institute, and the University of Colorado. The IWJV's niche in pinyon-juniper woodlands continues to grow, and IWJV's partners increasingly view the IWJV as a significant supporter of management and conservation efforts in this important biome. The operational work is outlined below:

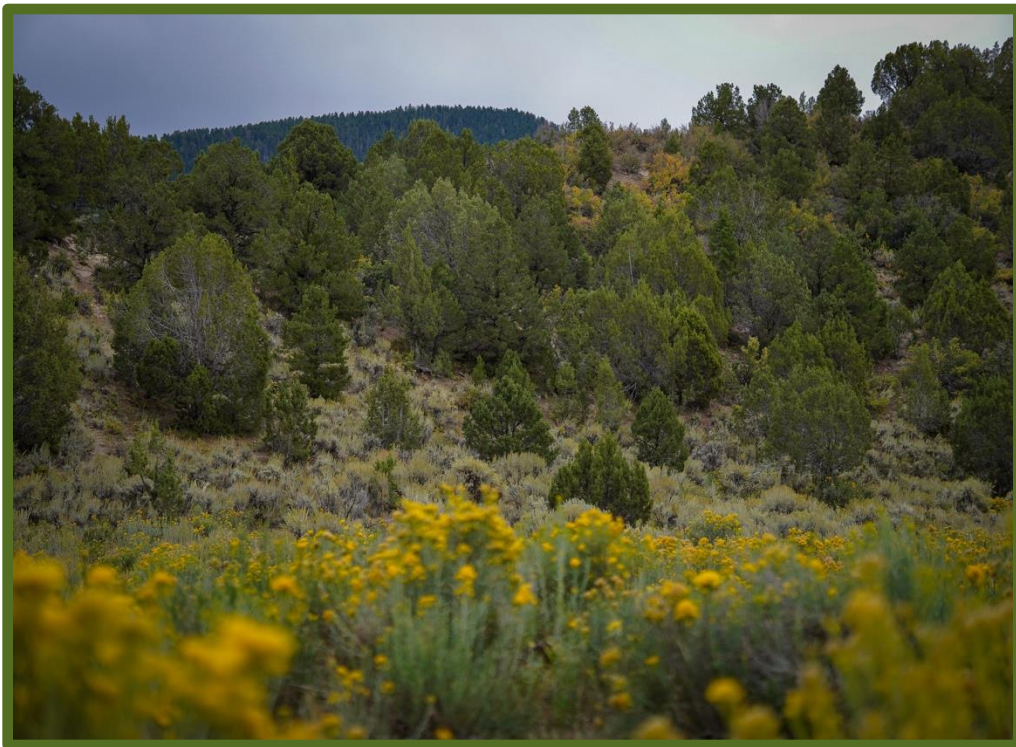
Programmatic Work

- Hire and onboard a Western Forests Conservation Coordinator who will:
 - Build off the initial science and partnership work of the Science to Implementation Team to develop a fully functional program guided by the implementation plan.
 - Strengthen relationships and grow new relationships with practitioners working on forest management, including federal agencies such as the BLM, USFWS, and USFS; Tribal Nations; state fish and wildlife agencies; researchers; and others.
 - Increase funding to support additional cross-boundary efforts around strategic forest management for wildfire risk reduction, birds, and other wildlife.
 - Engage the IWJV Western Forests Committee to leverage the expertise of board members and other decision-makers to guide the IWJV's western forests conservation efforts, address relevant threats and issues, and advance voluntary, incentive-based, and collaborative forest conservation in the Intermountain West.

Field Delivery Capacity

- Identify opportunities to develop conservation delivery positions bridging forest management and wildlife habitat needs. As strategic opportunities arise, support the NRCS, USFS, and other partners in building capacity to achieve benefits for birds and other wildlife.
- Continue to explore the development of NRCS-funded field delivery capacity positions focused on cross-boundary collaboration in northwest Montana.
- Explore the development of one to three partner wildlife biologist positions with Santa Fe National Forest in New Mexico.

- Provide technical support to the BLM-funded Southwest Colorado Fuels Specialist position, which is focused on managing pinyon-juniper woodlands.



Science and Technical Transfer

- Translate the results of the NRCS-funded Bird Conservancy of the Rockies project (focused on assessing wildfire risk reduction and forest bird outcomes of fuels management in Montana) and assist NRCS and other Montana partners with accessing, interpreting, and applying this information.
- Launch and facilitate the Pinyon-Juniper Woodland Project. This USFWS-funded project seeks to develop a science-based spatial strategy for managing and conserving pinyon-juniper woodlands. Facilitate recurring virtual meetings with a science team and advisory team and plan and execute an in-person workshop to develop project deliverables (maps, supporting information).
- Identify science, data, and knowledge gaps relating to forest management and forest birds, particularly pinyon-juniper woodlands and Pinyon Jays. Work with funders and researchers to catalyze, support, and communicate priority science development in these areas.
- Provide science-to-implementation support to forest managers. Focus on spatial targeting of management to benefit forest birds, synthesizing and communicating the effects of management actions on forest birds and other wildlife, and connecting people to emerging science and data to inform forest and woodland management.

Communications

- Collaborate with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and the NRCS to communicate outcomes of the Montana fuels management and forest bird project.

- Elevate conservation projects and management practices associated with pinyon-juniper woodlands and other forest types that benefit wildlife, climate resilience, and human livelihoods. The initial focus may be on the bi-state area of California and Nevada, and the Colorado Plateau, where researchers and managers are collaborating to prioritize and learn from innovative treatments to address forest health, human values, and wildfire risk.
- Support technical transfer endeavors with external-facing communications campaigns, product development, and distribution strategies.
- To better amplify outreach, develop new relationships with communications professionals working on these forest types to team up on outreach efforts.

OPERATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Effective and efficiently run operations are the foundation for advancing the IWJV's mission and habitat conservation work. Of equal importance is the conservation funding available to accomplish the IWJV's work — the IWJV's government relations efforts build relationships and trust, deliver conservation messages, and capitalize on opportunities to maximize the availability and impact of conservation funding to achieve on-the-ground results.

FY 2025 will bring a change in presidential administration; no matter the outcome, the IWJV will continue to be flexible in our operations to ensure we adapt as guidelines and needs change. The IWJV's approach to conservation funding and ability to deliver on commitments, and the relationships we have established with partners, will guide our work across the spectrum of internal IWJV operations and external government relations efforts. The operational work for FY 2025 is outlined below:

Programmatic Work

- Engage with the IWJV Management Board for ongoing critical analysis of board membership composition and recruitment. We will work to sustain an influential board that meets partnership expectations, represents diverse voices, drives Western conservation, and models the partnership-driven, collaborative ethic the IWJV celebrates.
- Ensure staff stay connected across programs. By committing to a process of adaptive management, the IWJV will listen and respond to staff concerns, create opportunities for collaboration between programs, and use staff time and skills appropriately.
- Continue to adapt operations for efficiency and growth via refined budget-tracking and other operational tools and processes.
- Review and revise the staff performance management process to grow staff skills, support areas identified as growth opportunities, and provide access to training and events that fit each individual's unique priorities and needs.
- Further understand where policies can be improved to address the pace of program implementation, providing support, language, and recommendations to agencies to support efficient spending without losing the integrity of funding and program oversight.
- Continue to maximize conservation funding in the West and grow our conservation capacity and impact by sustaining relationships with decision-makers and cultivating dynamic partnerships.
- Utilize the IWJV's powerful Government Relations Committee's contacts to facilitate meaningful conversations and actions with federal agencies, congressional members, and staff through relationships forged over many years.

- Expand representation at D.C. Hill Visits and elsewhere to elevate voices, messages, and the people critical to conservation in the West.
- Support the Western Conservation Leadership Development Program in its purpose of *equipping a diverse set of public and private partners in the western region with the leadership and relationship capacities needed to inspire and create a legacy of conservation for future generations.*
- Continue to link science-informed decision-making to conservation implementation. We strive for strategic, large-scale impacts tailored to the unique circumstances of landscapes and partnerships.
- Collaborate with a contract developer to improve the infrastructure of www.IWJV.org and address the accessibility, function, speed, and organization of our website, which is our primary communications platform.
- Produce materials and messaging for board members, staff, and partners to share with decision-makers on conservation successes and ways to overcome conservation challenges.
- Provide travel reimbursements, honorariums, and/or sponsorships to partners through the established process.

Events

- Host a fall and spring management board meeting.
- Conduct an annual fly-in to Washington, D.C.
- Convene all staff for an in-person retreat.
- Host an in-person SCP meeting.
- Sponsor a Directors' luncheon at the summer Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting.

APPENDIX: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEP: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

ALE: Agricultural Land Easements

AOP: Annual Operational Plan

BIL: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

BLM: Bureau of Land Management

FY: Fiscal Year

IRA: Inflation Reduction Act

IWJV: Intermountain West Joint Venture

JV: Joint Venture

NAWCA: North American Wetlands Conservation Act

NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service

SCP: State Conservation Partners

SCT: Sage Capacity Team

SONEC: primarily southern Oregon and northeastern California, plus a slice of northwestern Nevada

USFS: U.S. Forest Service

USFWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USGS: U.S. Geological Survey

WET: Wetland Evaluation Tool