



INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

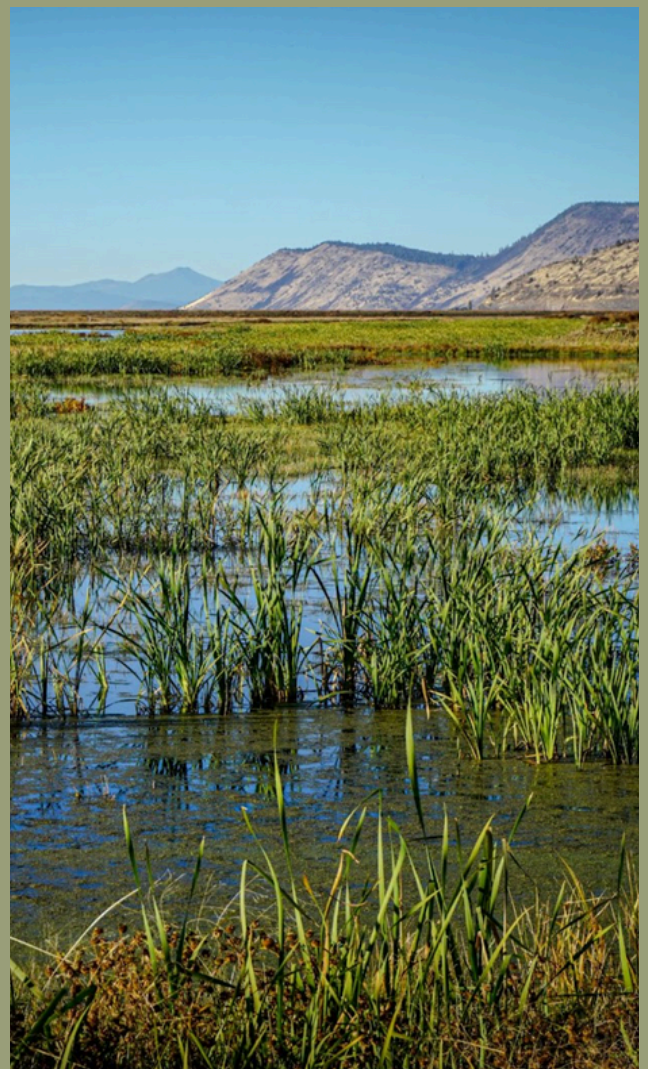
WATER 4

- 2024 -

WATER & WETLANDS

Wetlands in the Intermountain West are inordinately valuable to wildlife and people. Often found along the West's waterways and valley bottoms, they support irrigated agriculture, provide vital habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, sustain floodplain function, and recharge aquifers.

To ensure the persistence of migratory birds into the future, we need intact wetland landscapes sustained by healthy watersheds. The complex nature of western water challenges requires broad collaboration to identify solutions that benefit both communities and wildlife. In 2024, the Water 4 program delivered resources to address on-the-ground challenges through science, capacity, and communications.

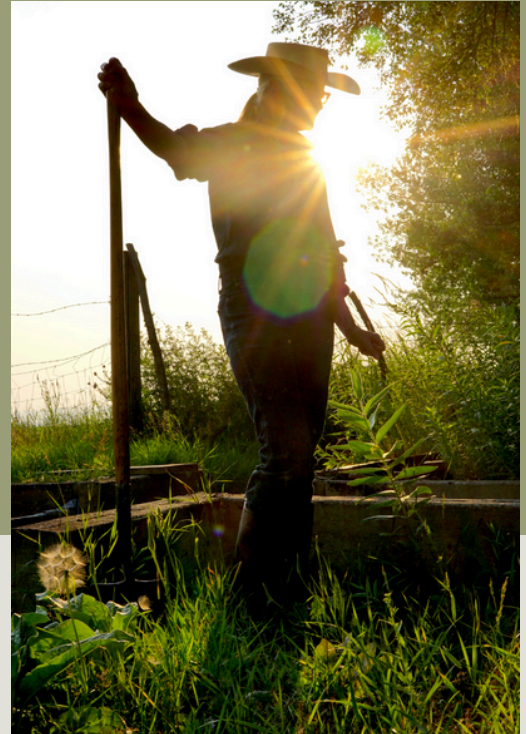


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Conservation for Working Lands

Conservation easements protect agricultural lands that provide important wildlife habitat and other conservation values. In 2024, the IWJV and the University of Wyoming's Ruckelshaus Institute hosted a [Agricultural Land Easement Workshop](#) to collaboratively identify strategies to accelerate the implementation of Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements and Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Building off of a successful 2023 workshop, the 2024 event brought together a group of partners from a variety of professional backgrounds that produced multiple recommendations for increasing working lands conservation easements across the West.

[READ THE WORKSHOP
REPORT](#)



Delivering Wetland Science to Practitioners

Throughout FY 2024, Water 4 staff released two new bodies of IWJV science. This research identifies some of the most important wetlands to conserve at the intersection of wildlife habitat and agriculture: flood-irrigated grass hay “working wetlands.”

Outreach around both papers is robust and ongoing. It includes interactive maps, factsheets, and user guides designed to make these bodies of work available and applicable to people working to conserve wetlands and water across the West, from landowners to scientists.



WETLAND BENEFITS OF FLOOD-IRRIGATED GRASS HAY



GREATER SANDHILL CRANE BREEDING HABITAT

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Conservation Gains with Added Capacity

The Water 4 program defines conservation capacity as the human capital needed to implement conservation at a desired pace and scale. Filling strategic capacity needs can alleviate bottlenecks, support local communities, and streamline program implementation.

Putting the right people in the right places.

- 7** people and organizations providing resources for ranchers and land managers.
- 6** biologists supporting wetlands and working agriculture.
- 4** coordinators advancing conservation easements on working lands.
- 3** groups implementing riparian and aquatic restoration.



Water 4 has invested in 20 positions (and counting) to accelerate the pace and scale of conservation in the Intermountain West.

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Sharing Stories & Science

In 2024, Water 4 communications highlighted the science, people, and programs that are enhancing wetland benefits for communities, migratory birds, and other wildlife.

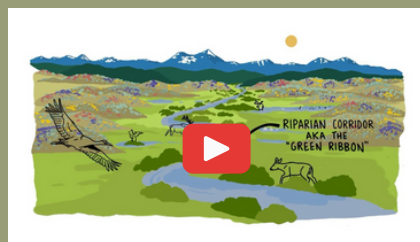


NRCS Programs at Work in Utah

- A Strategic Funding Pool enables producers in the Bear River Watershed to update their flood irrigation infrastructure. [Read the story.](#)
- Beaver Dam Analogues funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program are helping prevent flooding and restoring water availability. [Read the story.](#)

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Illustrating Flood Irrigation



A new short video from Water 4 communications highlights how flood irrigation practices in the right places can benefit watersheds from the top down.

[Watch it here.](#)