

Greater Sage-Grouse

2021 Progress Report



The greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), an iconic ground-dwelling bird native to the arid sagebrush plains of the American West, experienced significant population declines over the last 50 years. The population declines have resulted from habitat loss and fragmentation associated with land conversion, energy development, urbanization, wildfire, conifer encroachment and invasive species. NRCS is working with local, state and federal partners to reverse this trend by reducing threats to sage-grouse.

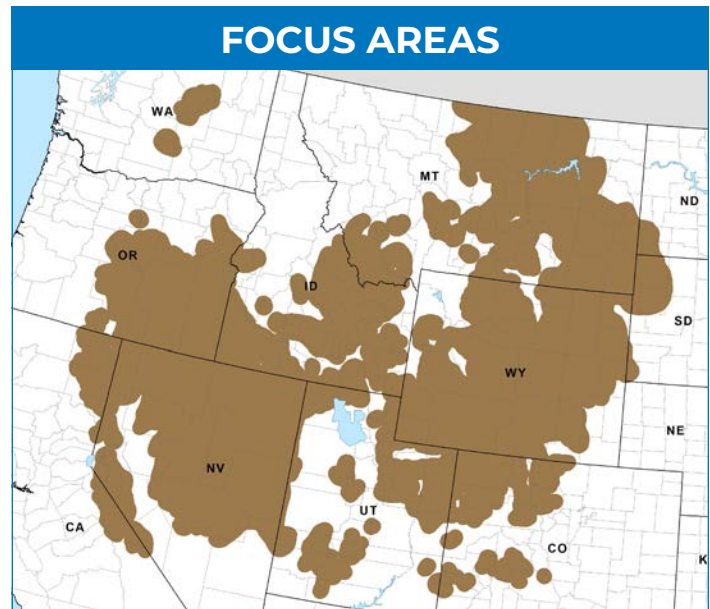
NRCS and the Sage-Grouse

NRCS launched the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) in 2010 to strategically focus conservation efforts to help landowners voluntarily implement conservation actions that reduce threats facing working rangelands and maximize biological benefits to sage-grouse populations. NRCS' sage-grouse efforts are part of Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), through which NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help ranchers restore and protect habitat for sage-grouse. WLFW also provides ranchers with regulatory predictability under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which ensures regulatory compliance for ranchers who continue to manage their ranches using NRCS-prescribed conservation practices for up to 30 years.

This conservation work is centered on defending core intact rangelands and expanding these priority cores for people and wildlife.

Actions

- Establishing conservation easements to prevent working ranches from being cultivated or subdivided.
- Removing invading conifer trees to maintain forage while allowing birds to recolonize otherwise suitable habitats.
- Controlling cheatgrass and other invasive annual grasses to maintain healthy rangelands.
- Improving grazing management.
- Marking fences to reduce bird collisions.
- Restoring wet meadows and late-season riparian habitats to improve water availability benefiting late season grouse broods, other wildlife and livestock.



Outcomes and Impacts

WLFW is enhancing NRCS' ongoing conservation efforts to support sage-grouse recovery by strategically focusing resources to conserve large and intact rangelands. Projects are tailored to address primary threats impacting rangeland resiliency while simultaneously maximizing bird benefits. Since 2010, WLFW scientists have authored [61 peer-reviewed publications](#) that help target conservation and quantify outcomes for threats that can be reduced with voluntary actions. These papers have been cited 1,264 times thus far by other researchers in the scientific literature and another 43 times in the Federal Register to articulate the outcomes of voluntary conservation (SGI Outcomes in Conservation Report 2015) in Endangered Species Act determinations.

Through conservation, ranchers like John O’Keeffe in Oregon are helping the sage-grouse and other wildlife while improving operations. Photo by Jeremy Roberts.



Fiscal Year 2021 Sage-Grouse Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance Contract Summary						
	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)			Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)		
State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
California	7,198	\$1,276,150	7	0	0	0
Colorado	8,794	\$449,863	4	12,867	\$4,401,975	6
Idaho	7,237	\$1,789,965	8	1,200	\$337,500	1
Montana	192,968	\$7,524,436	81	14,201	\$8,316,767	3
Nevada	18,942	\$678,262	7	0	\$0	0
N. Dakota	961	\$40,988	1	0	\$0	0
Oregon	26,816	\$3,387,893	33	0	\$0	0
S. Dakota	15,004	\$409,007	3	0	\$0	0
Utah	90,234	\$4,913,775	50	0	\$0	0
Washington	17,589	\$2,623,631	23	3,101	\$1,162,500	1
Wyoming	142,358	\$2,359,300	17	12,106	\$4,310,000	4
Totals	528,055	\$25,453,269	234	43,475	\$18,528,742	15

Data source: NRCS Economic and Policy Assessment Division, October 2021

NRCS Goals

Starting in 2015, NRCS refined SGI delivery through creation of SGI 2.0, and strategically focused on addressing six threats to sage-grouse. Today, work is further refined through a new five-year WLFW Framework for Conservation Action (<https://www.wlfw.org>) which is designed to benefit sage-grouse and all who live and work in sagebrush country.

Improving sage-grouse habitat goes hand-in-hand with maintaining healthy, productive grazing lands.

Photo by Ken Miracle.



Overall Summary

Total NRCS Investment:.....\$575,172,633



Number of Contracts:.....2,573



Total Acres Contracted:.....9,066,734



Milestones FY15-21 ■ Acres Completed ■ Acres In Progress
Addressing Sage-Grouse Threats in Conservation Strategy.

Reducing Wildfire Risk and Addressing Invasive Grasses:.....1,524,379 total acres



Removing Invading Conifers:.....378,166 total acres



Protecting Lands from Exurban Development:.....136,796 total acres



Protecting Grazing Lands from Cultivation:.....1,334,160 total acres



Protecting and Restoring Mesic Areas:.....17,797 total acres



Marking Fences to Reduce Collisions:.....1,122,988 total feet

