

United States Department of Agriculture



Utah NRCS Action Plan to Conserve:

*Identified Priority Fish and Wildlife
Species and Habitats in Utah*

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Utah NRCS with assistance from the
State Technical Advisory Committee

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I. Background

The Chief's 2005 Action Plan for Fish, Wildlife and Wetlands calls for NRCS leadership at the national and state level to recognize and promote fish and wildlife conservation as an agency priority. Also identified was the need to ensure all NRCS programs use their authorities to address fish and wildlife concerns and to focus conservation efforts on habitats and species of greatest conservation need. A national NRCS oversight and evaluation report completed during 2004 for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) also states the need to focus conservation efforts in order to have a more meaningful effect.

As a result of national and state leadership, special NRCS program and cost-share initiatives have been directed to promote conservation of high priority species and habitats (e.g., Pacific and Atlantic salmon-WHIP; sage grouse-WHIP; northern bobwhite quail habitat restoration-WHIP, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); Bull and Cutthroat Trout initiative-EQIP). Recent Memorandums of Understanding have been signed at the national level with multiple partners (Trout Unlimited, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Quail Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, to name a few) to help deliver effective conservation for the Nation's fish and wildlife resources.

This action plan for Utah NRCS identifies conservation targets, major threats and conservation actions for each target, and discusses opportunities for NRCS programs to help implement conservation actions. Note that the conservation targets chosen are not meant to be inclusive of all fish and wildlife conservation issues in Utah, but are a subset upon which NRCS programs can focus. This action plan is a dynamic document to be adapted to address changing or evolving conservation issues as identified by NRCS and its conservation partners.

Identified fish and wildlife conservation targets and resource concerns may be addressed under the authorities of one or multiple NRCS programs. National guidance recommends the entire portfolio of NRCS delivered Farm Bill programs be used to benefit the nation's fish and wildlife resources.

II. National and Regional Fish and Wildlife Priorities

Projects that enhance habitat essential for the survival of species protected under the Endangered Species Act and those that are candidates for listing have first priority for Farm Bill program funding. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, requires federal agencies to use their programs to actively support the goals and objectives of the Act. NRCS National Policy states the Agency's intent to ensure conservation of federally protected species through implementation of its programs. Conservation of federally protected species and species in decline is an objective of the EQIP, Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and WHIP.

Executive Order 13186, Protection of Migratory Birds, signed by President Bill Clinton in January 2001, requires all federal agencies to promote the recommendations of migratory bird programs, as well as other conservation considerations. A Memorandum of Understanding between NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is being developed to guide implementation of Executive Order 13186.

As directed by Executive Order 13352, Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation, signed by President George W. Bush in August 2004, NRCS will also use its existing programs to contribute to National or Regional conservation plans and initiatives. Cooperative Conservation is also identified as an overarching strategy in the NRCS Strategic Plan 2005-2010. Plans and Initiatives that have well defined objectives and use a partnership approach to focus resources of state and federal agencies and national conservation organizations are emphasized. National or Regional conservation plans and initiatives to which Utah NRCS can contribute are summarized below. Objectives of these plans and initiatives are recognized and supported by numerous conservation agencies and organizations. Projects involving multiple partners are more cost effective for NRCS and more technically sound. Therefore, projects which combine the technical and financial resources of Utah NRCS with other partners will be favored in the ranking criteria for Farm Bill program funding.

In addition, the NRCS Strategic Plan for 2005-2010 lists Healthy Plant and Animal Communities as one of six Mission Goals. Outcomes of this goal include working lands, wetlands and waters that provide habitat for diverse and healthy migratory birds and other wildlife, aquatic species, and plant communities. To increase the effectiveness of our ongoing efforts to help people protect and enhance plant and animal communities on private lands, NRCS will facilitate the adoption of landscape-scale habitat protection plans that provide at-risk and declining species access to water, food, and shelter, as well as corridors for seasonal migration and provide funds to help develop and implement such area-wide plans (NRCS 2006).

North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Partners in Flight)

http://www.partnersinflight.org/cont_plan/default.htm

This plan provides a continental synthesis of priorities and objectives that will guide landbird conservation actions at national and international scales. The scope includes the 448 species of native landbirds that regularly breed in the U.S. and Canada. The plan also highlights the need for stewardship of the species and landscapes characteristic of each portion of the continent, identifying 158 species that are particularly representative of large avifaunal biomes, and whose needs should be considered in conservation planning.

Important Bird Areas (Audubon)

<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html>

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more bird species, and include sites for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating species. To qualify as an IBA, the site must support species of conservation concern, species with restricted ranges vulnerable because they are not widely distributed, species that are vulnerable

because their populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome, or species, or guilds vulnerable because they occur at high densities due to flocking behavior.

Utah currently has 10 IBAs: the five major bays on Great Salt Lake - Farmington, Ogden, Bear River, Gilbert (or South Arm), and Gunnison (or North Arm); Provo and Goshen Bay on Utah Lake; Cutler Marsh-Amalga Barrens in Cache County; the Upper Strawberry Watershed in Wasatch County; the Lytle Preserve in Washington County; Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge in Juab County; Ouray National Wildlife Refuge in Uintah County; Deseret Land and Livestock Ranch in Rich County; the Fremont River within Capitol Reef National Park in Wayne County; and Clear Lake Waterfowl Management Area in Millard County. Program applications for privately owned lands within, adjacent, or near these IBAs will be favored in the ranking criteria for Farm Bill program funding.

North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (FWS)

<http://www.nacwcp.org/pubs/complete.pdf>

This plan is the product of an independent partnership of individuals and institutions having interest and responsibility for conservation of waterbirds and their habitats and provides a framework for the conservation and management of 210 birds that utilize aquatic habitats. The plan documents a process for species status assessment, identifies many key issues requiring conservation action, and proposes the development of a continental monitoring partnership including standardized methodology, bias-assessment, and internet-accessible database systems to support status and trend evaluation.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan (FWS)

<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/nawmp/images/NAWMP2004.pdf>

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan is an international action plan for a partnership of government, non-government and private organizations to conserve migratory birds throughout the continent by conserving landscapes, guided by sound science. Plan projects contribute to the protection of habitat and wildlife species and its goal is to restore waterfowl populations to their 1970s levels by conserving habitat.

United States Shorebird Conservation Plan (FWS)

<http://shorebirdplan.fws.gov/USShorebird/downloads/USShorebirdPlan2Ed.pdf>

This plan was developed by state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to conserve migratory shorebirds and their habitats. The plan provides a scientific framework to determine species, sites, and habitats that most urgently need conservation action. Goals of the plan are to ensure that shorebird habitat, adequate in quantity and quality, is maintained at the local level, and to maintain or restore shorebird populations at the continental and hemispheric levels.

Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs)

<http://www.nabci-us.org/bcrs.html>

Initiated by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI), BCRs are ecologically distinct regions in North America with similar avian communities, habitats, and resource management issues. BCRs were established to assist in range-wide bird

conservation by dividing the US into distinct conservation units. Their purposes include facilitating communication among bird conservation initiatives, facilitating regional bird conservation, promoting partnerships, and identifying and resolving conflicting conservation priorities. Utah is covered by three BCRs:

- **Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region (BCR 16)** includes the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains to the west and the Southern Rocky Mountains to the east, separated by the Colorado Plateau.
- **Great Basin Bird Conservation Region (BCR 9)** includes the Northern Basin and Range, Columbia Plateau, and the eastern slope of the Cascade Range.
- **Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region (BCR 10)** includes the Northern Rocky Mountains and outlying ranges in both the United States and Canada, and also the intermontane Wyoming Basin and Fraser Basin.

Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) Coordinated Bird Conservation Plan

<http://www.iwjb.org/IWJVImplePlan2005.pdf>

IWJV promotes the restoration and maintenance of all bird populations; fosters the protection, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands, riparian habitats, and the widely diverse uplands characteristic of the region. This plan coordinates the needs of all priority birds in the Joint Venture. It identifies planning focal points, which are key geographies where priority birds and priority habitats come together. Conservation projects will be generated within these areas to promote effective and efficient conservation expenditures. This plan is a summary of the eleven State Coordinated Bird Habitat Conservation Plans.

Intermountain West Regional Shorebird Plan

<http://shorebirdplan.fws.gov/RegionalShorebird/downloads/IMWEST4.doc>

The intermountain west is North America's most important region for several shorebird species for breeding and other life history stages. The most important issue facing shorebird conservation in the intermountain west is the competition for water. The plan addresses this and other issues through five goals, including habitat management, population monitoring and assessment, research, outreach, and planning for regional cooperation in conservation.

III. State Fish and Wildlife Priorities

Utah Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy

http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/cwcs/utah_cwcs_strategy.pdf

A Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) for Utah was developed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and their partners to satisfy requirements of the State Wildlife Grant program. The CWCS provides a wealth of information on the abundance, distribution, current knowledge, conservation and priority status of Utah's fish and wildlife. NRCS strives to use its programs to assist in a coordinated effort to help implement Utah's CWCS within the context of NRCS national priorities, local priorities and program objectives and capabilities.

A team approach was used to prioritize habitats for the Utah CWCS. The team consisted of Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) employees, representatives from other government agencies, conservation organizations, an agricultural group, and a sportsman's group. Five criteria were used for prioritizing habitats as follows:

- a. Abundance of the habitat in Utah
- b. Threats to the habitat in Utah
- c. Trends of the habitat in Utah
- d. Importance of the habitat to Tier I, II, and III species in Utah
- e. Importance of the habitat to Utah's overall vertebrate biodiversity

Key Habitats Types identified in the CWCS for conservation, restoration, and management in Utah are listed below in priority order. Descriptions of the habitat types are provided in Appendix A.

1. Lowland Riparian
2. Wetland
3. Mountain Riparian
4. Shrubsteppe
5. Mountain Shrub
6. Flowing Water (Lotic)
7. Wet Meadow
8. Grassland
9. Standing Water (Lentic)
10. Aspen Forest

For the CWCS, UDWR adopted a three-tiered system to group species in order of greatest conservation need. Tier I includes federally listed Threatened and Endangered, federal Candidate, and Conservation Agreement species. Most Tier I species have recovery plans or conservation agreements and associated strategies; a recovery plan is not required for federal Candidates. In cooperation with agency and private partners, UDWR has initiated conservation agreements for a few of the federal Candidate species. Recovery plans and conservation agreements have been developed by multiple parties indicating the breadth of support among agencies and other interested parties for the actions required in these documents. The recovery plans and conservation agreements include recommended conservation actions that are based on the best science available at the time of preparation. These actions have been vetted by partners and are reviewed at regular intervals.

The species on the Tier II list are Utah Species of Concern, which is a subset of the State Sensitive Species List. The State of Utah rule establishing the Sensitive Species List requires justification of the Species of Concern in individual species accounts. A panel of expert biologists from the UDWR was convened to develop the State Sensitive Species List. The information they considered included:

- a. Species biology, life history
- b. Population – abundance, conditions
- c. Distribution
- d. Threats

The panel developed a list of native species that were believed to be of greatest conservation need based on these parameters. Agency reports, published peer-reviewed literature, and personal knowledge were all used to support the list. Once this list was completed, it was cross-referenced with the Utah Natural Heritage rankings and a very high degree of correlation was observed. The correlation with the independently developed Natural Heritage rankings provided some measure of confirmation that the Species of Concern List was accurate.

The Species of Concern list was reviewed by an internal Utah Department of Natural Resources committee and edited in accord with their direction (especially to clarify and further support species accounts). The list was then approved by the Wildlife Board (UDWR 2005).

Tier III species were identified in the same process as that for Tier II species. The Tier III list includes species that are of conservation concern because they are linked to an at-risk habitat (e.g. mule deer), have had a substantial decrease in population size, or there is little information available, especially information regarding the species' life history, population status, and threats. Accordingly, the primary action currently described for the Tier III species is to gather more information regarding their status and any threats to them or their habitats. The lack of information itself was deemed of sufficient importance to constitute a threat.

The full list of species in Tiers I, II, and III may be found in the Chapter 5, Table 5.1 of the Utah CWCS (Sutter, et al., 2005, pp. 5-3 to 5-8).

Utah Partners in Flight Avian Conservation Strategy

http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/publications/pdf/utah_partners_in_flight.pdf

Utah Partners in Flight (UPIF) was organized in 1993 for the purpose of addressing the status of avian populations within the state and to provide data relevant to issues raised concerning the status of neotropical migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere. Utah NRCS and conservation partners recognize attempts to reverse or at least curb declining trends will require a coordinated and cooperative effort. Utah's Avian Conservation Strategy, completed in 2002, lists 24 priority bird species and 6 priority habitats for conservation efforts. The Strategy also recommends appropriate conservation actions required to accomplish stated objectives.

UPIF Priority Species

The UPIF Rankings Committee employed these criteria in prioritizing Utah bird species: relative abundance, breeding distribution, winter distribution, threats in breeding range,

other threats not related to breeding, importance of Utah to breeding range or habitat, and population trend data. Species are listed below in priority order.

1. Lewis's Woodpecker
2. Abert's Towhee
3. American Avocet
4. Mountain Plover
5. Lucy's Warbler
6. Sage-grouse (both greater and Gunnison)
7. American White Pelican
8. Bobolink
9. Virginia's Warbler
10. Gray Vireo
11. Bell's Vireo
12. Black Rosy-Finch
13. Long-billed Curlew
14. Sharp-tailed Grouse
15. Brewer's Sparrow
16. Black Swift
17. Black-necked Stilt
18. Broad-tailed Hummingbird
19. Ferruginous Hawk
20. Yellow-billed Cuckoo
21. Black-throated Gray Warbler
22. Three-toed Woodpecker
23. Sage Sparrow
24. Gambel's Quail

UPIF Priority Habitats

Riparian (Lowland and Mountain Riparian) and Wetland habitats are the most important to avian diversity in the state. These categories combined are used by Utah's birds as either breeding or wintering habitat almost twice as much as any other habitat category. Lowland Riparian habitat provides breeding or winter habitat for 107 birds, 8 of which are Priority species. Lowland Riparian is followed by Mountain Riparian (46 total and 1 Priority species) and Wetland (35 total and 4 Priority species) in importance as breeding or wintering habitat. Because of their importance to avian diversity, **Lowland Riparian, Mountain Riparian and Wetland** habitats are considered UPIF Priority Habitats.

In contrast, Shrubsteppe habitat (sagebrush/grassland) does not support a wide variety of species (only 8 species use Shrubsteppe as primary or secondary breeding or winter habitat, 3 of these are Priority species). However, several species are considered "sagebrush obligates" and can survive only in Shrubsteppe and the closely related High Desert Scrub habitat (28 total and 4 Priority species). Also, Utah provides a significant proportion of the world's sagebrush-grasslands; making Utah vital to the survival of birds such as Sage-grouse, Sage Thrashers, Brewer's Sparrows and Sage Sparrows. Because **Shrubsteppe** grades into **High Desert Scrub** and because both habitats are important to

“sagebrush obligates” and associated species, these two habitats are considered UPIF Priority Habitats.

Pinyon-Juniper habitat is also considered a UPIF Priority Habitat for much the same reasons as Shrubsteppe and High Desert Scrub. It supports relatively few (22 total species), highly habitat specialized birds (4 Priority species) and Utah is a significant portion of Pinyon-Juniper range (Parrish, et al., 2002).

Descriptions of the habitat types are provided in Appendix A.

Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Utah

<http://www.iwjv.org/Images/UTPlan2005.pdf>

The Utah State Steering Committee of the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IMJV) includes representatives from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, NRCS, Ducks Unlimited Inc, National Audubon Society, and The Nature Conservancy of Utah. The group started meeting in 1994 primarily as a wetlands and waterfowl group, but moved to an all-bird focus in 2001. The group is a statewide forum for the discussion and implementation of projects to identify, protect and restore key wetlands and associated upland habitats.

The planning objectives of the Utah Steering Committee of the IWJV are to 1) Create a planning forum, through the in which representatives of state and federal conservation agencies and wildlife conservation groups work collaboratively to develop coordinated habitat goals, objectives and projects that address the conservation needs of all bird species in Utah; and 2) Review, merge and synthesize the habitat goals and objectives of existing bird conservation plans into a coordinated planning document that reflects the habitat priorities of all bird conservation programs in Utah.

The Plan lists all the priority species from the various National, Regional, and State Bird conservation plans described above. In addition, the Utah Steering Committee ranked 24 major habitat types into three categories of priority. Three criteria were used to rank these habitat types: 1) Statewide importance to birds; 2) Degree of threat; and 3) Opportunities (funding, partnerships, and feasibility for habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement.) The three categories were defined as:

Priority A: High threat, high opportunity, and high value to birds statewide

Priority B: One criterion may be high, but generally the habitat is of moderate concern

Priority C: Relatively low threat, low opportunity, and low value as habitat statewide

Priority A Habitats are: Lowland Riparian, Mountain Riparian, Wetlands and Associated Uplands, Shrubsteppe, Wet Meadow, Playa. Descriptions of the habitat types are provided in Appendix A.

Utah Native Plant Society's Utah Rare Plant Guide

<http://www.utahrareplants.org/>

The Utah Native Plant Society (UNPS) was formed in late 1978 out of a growing concern for imperiled rare plant species. UNPS is a non-profit conservation and educational organization with programs and committees focused around the protection of Utah's rare native plants. The Utah Rare Plant Guide (URPG) converts and updates the Utah Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive Plant Field Guide (Atwood, et. al 1991) to an on-line, electronic version available to the public. The URPG does not prioritize plant species, however it does list them by status and by habitat type.

Although plants are not generally considered "wildlife" in NRCS programs, USDA Fish & Wildlife Policy does state as a goal of the Department "...to ensure the presence of diverse, native and desired non-native populations of wildlife, fish, and plant species..." Also, plants are included in the Healthy Plant and Animal Communities Mission Goal in the current NRCS Strategic Plan (NRCS 2006).

Therefore, NRCS will look for opportunities to use Farm Bill programs to protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance or restore populations of rare native plants. Top priority will be given to plants listed under or candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

IV. Local Fish and Wildlife Priorities and Special Project Areas

NRCS and its conservation partners continue to identify where priority conservation problems or opportunities exist. Prioritization of specific areas of concern is needed to identify which species or habitats warrant immediate attention in the context of NRCS program applicability.

Currently, prioritization at the local level is coordinated through the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development (UPCD) Regional Action Teams. Focus Areas have already been mapped by these Teams for shrubsteppe habitat restoration. Additional Focus Areas for riparian habitat restoration will be mapped in the near future. Eligible applicants within or bordering these designated Focus Areas receive additional environmental points during ranking of applications submitted for the WHIP, EQIP and GRP.

Focus Areas for WRP have been developed with the input of the State Technical Advisory Committee and wildlife agency partners. WRP Focus Areas include priority sites identified by the Intermountain West Joint Venture, those within the Great Salt Lake – Utah Lake Ecosystem, and those that could provide habitat for the least chub or Columbia spotted frog.

Additional areas meriting special consideration can be identified at the state and/or local levels. A requirement for additional special project area designation for NRCS programs should be consensus of need, a well-defined geographic area, and local and multi-agency interest and investment to resolve identified resource concerns.

V. Utah NRCS Fish and Wildlife Conservation Targets

The prioritization systems used by the State Plans described above provide a foundation for NRCS to focus conservation efforts on habitats and species of greatest conservation need. National leadership has specifically directed States to utilize their State Wildlife Agency's CWCS to establish species and habitat priorities to be addressed with Farm Bill program funding.

To further identify which Utah fish and wildlife conservation issues can be effectively addressed using NRCS programs, an option paper was developed for consideration by the Utah State Technical Committee (USTC). USTC members were asked to provide recommendations to NRCS on which of the key habitat types and Tier I – III species from the CWCS to focus.

NRCS used these recommendations, along with best professional judgment and reference literature to draft a revised State Fish and Wildlife Plan. The USTC Wildlife Subcommittee and other interested USTC members reviewed the draft and provided additional comments which were incorporated into the final plan.

V – 1. Targeted Habitat Types and Species

NRCS Utah will give highest priority for Farm Bill program funding to projects that protect, improve, enhance or maintain the habitat types listed below in priority order. However, all projects benefiting any habitat type will continue to be considered for eligible funding opportunities.

1. Lowland Riparian
2. Wetland
3. Mountain Riparian
4. Shrubsteppe
5. Flowing Water (Lotic)
6. Wet Meadow
7. Grassland

Species listed in all Tiers in Utah's CWCS that use one of the above as their primary, and in some cases, secondary, habitat type will be considered priority species for Farm Bill program funding. Exceptions include species with such limited habitat requirements or distribution that NRCS programs have little opportunity to affect them and species that are extirpated or experimental in Utah. Other exceptions are species with threats beyond the jurisdiction of NRCS programs, and those that have too little information available on their habitat needs for NRCS programs to address. Priority species may change over time as more information becomes available on species' status and habitat needs.

Targeted habitat types and associated species are listed in Table 1 below. Note that not all of the species occur in the associated habitat types statewide. Some are limited geographically as well as by habitat type. Targeted species will be used primarily to rank Farm Bill program applications. Tier I species are given highest priority, Tier II species

second highest, and Tier III species third priority. In addition, special conservation efforts are progressing through established partnerships for the greater and Gunnison sage-grouse and the Utah prairie-dog.

Table 1 – NRCS Utah Targeted Habitat Types and Associated Species

Habitat Type	Priority 1 Species	Priority 2 Species	Priority 3 Species
Lowland Riparian	Bald Eagle, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Virgin Spinedace, Virgin River Chub	Arizona Toad, Lewis's Woodpecker, Allen's Big-eared Bat, Big Free-tailed Bat, Western Red Bat, Cornsnake, Western Threadsnake	Canyon Treefrog, Abert's Towhee, Bell's Vireo, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Lucy's Warbler, Northern River Otter, Yuma Myotis, Cornsnake
Wetland	Columbia Spotted Frog, Least Chub, fat-whorled pondsnail, Kanab ambersnail	Western Toad, Short-eared Owl	Northern Leopard Frog, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt
Mountain Riparian	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Bluehead Sucker, Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	Western Toad, Leatherside Chub, Smooth Greensnake	Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Northern River Otter
Shrubsteppe	Gunnison Sage-grouse	Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage-grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pygmy Rabbit	Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Mule Deer
Flowing Water (Lotic)	Bluehead Sucker, Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, Bonytail, Colorado Pikeminnow, Colorado River Cutthroat Trout, Flannelmouth Sucker, June Sucker, Humpback Chub, Razorback Sucker, Roundtail Chub, Virgin Spinedace, Virgin River Chub, Woundfin	Desert Sucker, Leatherside Chub	Canyon Treefrog
Wet Meadow	Columbia Spotted Frog	Bobolink, Smooth Greensnake	
Grassland	Utah Prairie-dog	Burrowing Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Short-eared Owl, Gunnison's Prairie-dog, White-tailed Prairie-dog	Great Plains Toad

V - 2. Target Habitat Threats and Conservation Actions

NRCS programs can be used to address some of the threats and implement some of the conservation actions identified in Utah's CWCS. Other threats and conservation actions

are beyond NRCS' jurisdiction. Threats and actions to be addressed with NRCS programs are summarized below by targeted habitat type.

Lowland and Mountain Riparian Habitats

Threats include habitat degradation through stream channelization, habitat loss and fragmentation, invasion by non-native species, and improper grazing management. Priority conservation actions to be implemented with NRCS programs are restoration and improvement of habitat by restoring meanders and planting native vegetation, habitat protection through rental and easement programs, control of non-native invasive vegetation, and implementation of prescribed grazing systems that include use exclusion where appropriate.

Wetland and Wet Meadow Habitats

Threats include habitat loss and fragmentation (including loss of adjacent upland habitat), contamination with pollutants, improper grazing management, and invasion by non-native plant species. Priority conservation actions to be implemented with NRCS programs are wetland restoration, enhancement, and creation; habitat protection through rental and easement programs; promotion of conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and improve water quality; control of non-native invasive vegetation, and implementation of prescribed grazing systems, including use exclusion where appropriate.

Shrubsteppe Habitat

Threats include habitat loss and degradation, brush eradication, fire cycle alteration, improper grazing management, and invasion by non-native plant species. Priority conservation actions to be implemented with NRCS programs are habitat protection through rental and easement programs; restoration using brush management and range seeding practices planned to improve brush, grass and forb cover; control of non-native invasive vegetation and native encroaching conifers; and implementation of prescribed grazing systems.

Flowing Water (Lotic) Habitat

Threats include habitat degradation through stream channelization, habitat loss and fragmentation, contamination with pollutants, nutrient and sediment loading, invasion by non-native species, and improper grazing management. Priority conservation actions to be implemented with NRCS programs are restoration and improvement of habitat by restoring meanders and planting native vegetation; in-channel habitat improvement through removal of barriers to fish passage, screening of irrigation diversions, and addition of large wood; habitat protection through rental and easement programs; promotion of conservation practices that reduce soil erosion and improve water quality in

the watershed; control of non-native invasive vegetation; and implementation of prescribed grazing systems, including use exclusion where appropriate.

Grassland Habitat

Threats include habitat loss and degradation, fire cycle alteration, improper grazing management, and invasion by non-native plant species. Priority conservation actions to be implemented with NRCS programs are habitat protection through rental and easement programs; restoration using brush management, range seeding, and prescribed burning where appropriate; control of non-native invasive vegetation; and implementation of prescribed grazing systems.

VI. Farm Bill Program Opportunities

Fish and wildlife achieved co-equal status with other resource concerns (e.g., soil, water, air, etc.) with authorization of the 1996 Farm Bill. Co-equal status was re-affirmed during re-authorization of the Farm Bill during 2002. Therefore, Farm Bill programs are expected to use their authorities to address fish and wildlife resource concerns when applicable. In order to maximize fish and wildlife conservation opportunities using the full complement of NRCS administered Farm Bill program authorities, it is imperative that aggressive outreach concerning program opportunities be exerted by NRCS and conservation partners.

VI - 1. Cost-Share Assistance Programs

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The EQIP has the greatest potential of all NRCS programs to directly address fish and wildlife resource needs on working agricultural land. One of four national priorities identified in the 2002 EQIP rule is conservation of at-risk species. Any of the priority targets and associated issues identified in this action plan can be addressed by agricultural producers through cost-share contracts lasting from 2 - 10 years. Fish and wildlife habitat enhancement can be a primary or secondary objective of applicants to this program, and management incentive payments may be made under EQIP. Particularly suited to EQIP are projects that support conservation of species like sage-grouse and Utah prairie dog while also improving livestock forage, and those that minimize impacts on water quality and water quantity from agricultural pursuits.

Earmarks in EQIP provide funding to the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRBSCP). CRBSCP provides cost share and some technical assistance to apply salinity control practices and wildlife habitat replacement. The CRBSCP is led by Bureau of Reclamation, NRCS, and the Colorado River Salinity Control Program Forum through State Agriculture Department and Soil Conservation Districts.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The WHIP provides cost-share payments to enhance habitat for fish and wildlife on both non-agricultural and agricultural land through contracts lasting 5 – 15 years. Fish and wildlife habitat must clearly be the primary management objective of all applicants, and management incentive payments cannot be paid. National program priorities are to promote the restoration of declining or important native wildlife habitats; protect, restore, develop or enhance wildlife habitat of at-risk species; reduce the impacts of invasive species on wildlife habitats; and protect, restore, develop or enhance declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats.

Because wildlife species and habitats are not restricted by property boundaries, a WHIP participant is defined broadly as an individual, partnership, association, corporation, cooperative, estate, trust, joint venture, joint operation, or other business enterprise or other legal entity and, whenever applicable, a State, a political subdivision of a State, or any agency thereof.

Although non-private lands are eligible, the WHIP rule sets a very high threshold for funding projects that are not on private land. State, county, or local government owned lands can be eligible if, *on a case-by-case basis*, the State Conservationist concurs with the District Conservationist that acceptance of such land and the habitat improvement accomplishments are of *sufficiently high priority* to merit use of WHIP resources. Federal lands are eligible only in those limited circumstances where the benefit is primarily on private lands.

Utah WHIP funds will be focused on developing wildlife habitat on privately owned lands. When WHIP funds are used on government-owned land, there must be a clear connection between the habitat needs of a high priority wildlife resource and the location of the land. Education or aesthetics shall not be the sole nor primary purpose of a WHIP funded project.

VI - 2. Easement and Long-Term Rental Programs

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPP)

The FRLPP provides matching funds to State, Tribal, or local farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements from privately owned farms. The function of this program is to preserve land that contains prime or unique soil, historical or archaeological resources. The FRLPP ranking process is required to give priority to parcels that provide special social, economic and environmental benefits to an area. In areas of the state under extreme development pressure, (e.g., southern Utah, Wasatch Front, and Cache Valley), this program provides an opportunity to maintain open space and habitat important to many wildlife species.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The GRP offers permanent and 30-year easements and rental agreements lasting 10, 15, 20, or 30 years. The primary program focus is to preserve grazed native grasslands, pasturelands and shrublands that are under threat of conversion to other land uses. Maintaining and improving plant and animal biodiversity on actively grazed land is a program emphasis. Enrolled land may require periodic manipulation to maximize wildlife habitat and preserve grassland functions and values. Protection of grassland bird breeding habitat is mandated. In addition, this program has the potential to contribute toward conservation and preservation of habitat suitable for other open land wildlife such as the Utah prairie-dog.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The WRP offers permanent and 30-year easement options as well as 10-year restoration cost-share agreements to restore and enhance functions and values of wetlands that were degraded or drained for agricultural purposes prior to December 23, 1985. The foremost objective of the WRP is to restore wetland ecosystems to enhance habitat for migratory birds, wetland wildlife, and threatened and endangered species. Secondary objectives include improved water quality, attenuation of flooding, groundwater recharge, and other benefits derived from properly functioning wetland systems.

VI - 3. Stewardship Program

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

The CSP supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations. CSP sign-ups are offered in selected watersheds across the Nation on a rotational basis. Farmers and ranchers that have already implemented conservation actions that benefit fish and wildlife are eligible for higher levels of stewardship payments. CSP participants can also receive payments for enhancing fish and wildlife habitat on enrolled lands over the life of their contract.

VI - 4. Grant Opportunities

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

The CCPI is a voluntary program established to foster conservation partnerships that focus technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds and air sheds of special significance. The CCPI is established to encourage the formation of partnerships to devise and implement watershed or regional solutions to pressing natural resource priorities associated with agriculture and rural settings. Terrestrial and freshwater aquatic habitat is a conservation priority for CCPI. Under CCPI, funds are awarded to State and local governments and agencies, Indian Tribes, and non-governmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers.

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

The CIG is funded under authority of EQIP and is an attractive alternative for agricultural producers that allows greater flexibility and use of innovative approaches to treat pressing environmental concerns and to ensure compliance with Federal, State and local regulations. Although wildlife habitat is currently not a targeted natural resource concern for the CIG National component, fish and wildlife may be secondary beneficiaries of actions to improve soil, water and atmospheric resources and health of grazing lands. States with CIG State component can add a wildlife habitat resource concern at the discretion of the State Conservationist.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Grants (FWCG)

The purpose of FWCG is to encourage evaluation and the development of existing and new technology approaches while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production on private lands. FWCG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of fish and wildlife conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches into NRCS technical manuals and guides, and to the private sector. FWCG will stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been evaluated and demonstrated sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success for technology transfer. FWCG funds target on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects, field demonstrations, and evaluation processes.

VI. WHIP Applicant Ranking and Evaluation

All NRCS programs require an evaluation process to prioritize proposed projects in order to maximize environmental benefits accrued from program delivery. For most NRCS programs a ranking process which awards points for anticipated environmental benefits is mandated. As previously stated, national oversight and evaluation reviews for WHIP and EQIP have recommended screening and/or ranking processes that facilitate achievement of clearly defined national, regional, state and local priorities and cost-effective program delivery. The recommended ranking process for the WHIP in Fiscal Year 2007, based on recommendations of this action plan is provided in Appendix B. NRCS will continue to work with national, regional, state and local entities to refine program ranking and evaluation processes for all natural resources, including fish and wildlife. The National Ranking Tool, which is scheduled for full implementation in FY2007, is expected to improve consistency in addressing national priorities. Future guidance on the National Ranking Tool from NRCS National Headquarters may necessitate changes to the ranking process proposed in Appendix B.

The Chief's 2005 Action Plan for Fish, Wildlife and Wetlands recognized a need to provide more biologist input for WHIP planning to maximize effective implementation of the program. In support of this need, Utah NRCS requires a biologist (NRCS or partner

staff) to be involved in the application ranking and early planning phases of all WHIP projects.

VII. Criteria for Measuring Success

NRCS employs periodic national program reviews, annual state program reviews, and annual conservation planning quality assurance reviews to ensure programs and conservation technical assistance are achieving their intended purpose. In addition, well designed program ranking tools can be used to track whether program outreach is effectively attracting high value conservation projects.

Although environmental monitoring of individual projects is desirable, NRCS does not have staffing to support such an effort. Therefore, NRCS must rely on established long term monitoring efforts (e.g., Christmas bird counts, waterfowl surveys, etc.) or on the efforts of partners and volunteers to document whether program implementation is benefiting intended targets. It is essential that selected projects, especially those involving state and/or federally listed species and restoration of natural communities, be monitored to evaluate success and in order to be able to employ adaptive management. NRCS and its conservation partners will strive to develop specific monitoring protocols and to explore whether non-Farm Bill programs and/or Farm Bill program financial and technical assistance money can be used to selectively monitor priority projects. Projects with a monitoring or research component provided by partners will receive higher priority for Farm Bill program funding.

The USDA-NRCS/USU Sage-grouse Restoration Project (SGRP) is an example of a cooperative monitoring effort involving private landowners, public and private conservation agencies and organizations, and universities in a process to integrate, evaluate, and document the effects of 2002 Farm Bill conservation practices in restoring sagebrush-steppe ecosystems to benefit sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligates. Partners include NRCS, Utah State University (USU); USU, College of Natural Resources; USU Extension Services; Jack H. Berryman Institute; Western Governors' Association; WAFWA, Western States Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee; North American Grouse Partnership; and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources.

The purpose of SGRP is the identification, integration, evaluation, and documentation of effects of 2002 Farm Bill conservation technologies and strategies on sage-grouse and other sagebrush-steppe obligates. This information will be used to assist NRCS, Soil Conservation Districts, state wildlife agency field staff, and private landowners in the planning and implementation of habitat projects and practices on private lands to benefit sage-grouse and other sagebrush-steppe obligate species. The projects implemented also will contribute to range-wide sage-grouse conservation efforts. This project will provide current information on the role of existing conservation practices and technologies relative to conserving sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species. The information gained from the multi-state experiments also will assist local sage-grouse working groups in complying with the conservation plan reporting requirements set forth in the U. S. Fish

and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts (PECE) When Making Listing Decisions.

Additionally, the SGRP will result in the development of a web-based library that will provide farmers and ranchers with visual information and real-time data regarding the role of NRCS conservation practices in increasing their productivity and natural resource conservation. This information will allow them to optimize the benefits of conservation planning.

Lastly, the SGRP will identify private lands conservation planning needs to a much wider research audience. This ultimately will increase the awareness and involvement of the best researchers in the field to address field-level technology needs.

To address this need, the SGRP includes a grants-in-aid program that will provide funds for the design and implementation of research and demonstration projects that will evaluate and communicate the effectiveness of 2002 Farm Bill conservation practices and technology in restoring or enhancing sage-grouse habitat on private lands.

VIII. Partner Involvement

Utah NRCS will continue to work with a variety of conservation partners to effectively deliver Farm Bill Programs in a manner which benefits fish and wildlife resources and which focuses efforts to help solve priority national, regional, state and local fish and wildlife issues. In addition, Utah NRCS is an active member of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development and its Watershed Restoration Initiative.

Four Farm Bill Program Biologist positions, jointly funded by NRCS and UDWR and located in NRCS Field Offices, will soon be filled in Utah. These biologists will increase the effectiveness of this partnership and help coordinate programs of both agencies to further mutual fish, wildlife, and habitat goals.

A list of conservation partners supporting Utah NRCS' Fish and Wildlife Action Plan is provided in Appendix C.

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Appendix A. – Utah Habitat Type Descriptions *

* Note: This is not a comprehensive list of all habitat types in Utah, merely those mentioned in this Plan. Information was taken from the Utah CWCS. Descriptions of all Utah Habitat Categories can be found in Table 7.1 of that document (Sutter, et al., 2005, pp. 7-1 to 7-5).

Habitat Type	% of Area of Utah	Habitat Description
RIPARIAN, WETLAND and OPEN WATER HABITATS		
Lowland Riparian	0.2 %	Streamside areas generally <5,500 ft. elevation; principal woody species include: Fremont cottonwood (<i>Populus fremontii</i>), salt cedar (<i>Tamarix pentandra</i>), netleaf hackberry (<i>Celtis reticulata</i>), velvet ash (<i>Fraxinus velutina</i>), desert willow (<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>), true willows (<i>Salix</i> spp.), and squawbush (<i>Rhus trilobata</i>).
Mountain Riparian	0.2 %	Streamside areas generally >5,500 ft. elevation; principal woody species include: willow, narrowleaf cottonwood (<i>Populus angustifolia</i>), thinleaf alder (<i>Alnus tenuifolia</i>), water birch (<i>Betula occidentalis</i>), black hawthorn (<i>Crataegus douglasii</i>), rocky mountain maple (<i>Acer glabrum</i>), redosier dogwood (<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>), and wild rose (<i>Rosa woodsii</i>).
Wetland	0.2 %	Low elevation marsh and wetland areas <5,500 ft. elevation; principal species include: cattail (<i>Typha latifolia</i>), bullrush (<i>Scirpus</i> spp.), and sedge (<i>Carex</i> spp.).
Wet Meadow	< 0.1%	Water saturated meadows that include mostly grasses, forbs, sedges, and rushes (<i>Juncus</i> spp.) at 3,300-9,800 ft. elevation. Principal species include sedges, rushes, reedgrass (<i>Calamagrostis</i> spp.), timothy (<i>Phleum</i> spp.), bluegrass (<i>Poa</i> spp.), hairgrass (<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>), willowherb (<i>Epilobium</i> spp.), cinquefoil (<i>Potentilla</i> spp.), saxifrage (<i>Saxifraga</i> spp.), etc. Primary associated woody species include: willow, honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera</i> spp.), and water birch.
Playa	4.4 %	Sand flats and mosaics of sparsely vegetated and barren playa flats at 4,200-5,300 ft. elevation. Principal vegetation is pickleweed (<i>Allenrolfea occidentalis</i>). Primary associated species include: samphire (<i>Salicornia</i> spp.), mound saltbush (<i>Atriplex falcata</i>), greasewood, saltgrass (<i>Distichlis stricta</i>), and seepweed.
Standing Water (Lentic)	3.4 %	Open water: lakes and reservoirs.
Flowing Water (Lotic)	< 0.1%	Open water: streams and rivers.

SHRUBLAND HABITATS		
Shrubsteppe	13.4 %	Shrubland principally dominated by big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>), black sagebrush (<i>Artemisia nova</i>), low sagebrush (<i>Artemisia arbuscula</i>), or silver sagebrush (<i>Artemisia cana</i>); or dominate sagebrush shrub land and perennial grassland at 2,500-11,500 ft. elevation. Principal associated grass species include: bluebunch wheatgrass (<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>), needlegrass (<i>Stipa comata</i>), sand dropseed (<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>), blue grama (<i>Bouteloua gracillis</i>), Thurber's needlegrass (<i>Stipa thurberiana</i>), western wheatgrass (<i>Agropyron smithii</i>), Indian ricegrass (<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>), galleta (<i>Hilaria jamesii</i>), and cheatgrass (<i>Bromus tectorum</i>). Primary associated shrub species include: rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus</i> spp.), snakeweed (<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>), winterfat (<i>Ceratoides lanata</i>), shadscale (<i>Atriplex confertifolia</i>), bitter brush (<i>Purshia tridentata</i>), and oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp.). Primary associated tree species include: juniper (<i>Juniperus</i> spp.), pinyon (<i>Pinus</i> spp.), mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus montanas</i>), and ponderosa pine (<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>).
Mountain Shrub	1.3 %	Deciduous shrubland at 3,300-9,800 ft. elevation principally dominated by mountain mahogany, cliff rose (<i>Cowania mexicana</i>), bitter brush, serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier utahensis</i>) and (<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>), buckbrush (<i>Ceanothus</i> spp.), chokecherry (<i>Prunus virginiana</i>), snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos</i> spp.), pointleaf manzanita (<i>Arctostaphylos pungens</i>), and bearberry (<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>); or deciduous shrub land principally dominated by bigtooth maple (<i>Acer grandidentatum</i>); or forest principally dominated by mountain mahogany; or conifer forest; or woodland with spruce-fir dominate/associate or co-dominate with mountain shrub; Primary associated shrub species include: Gambel's oak (<i>Quercus gambelii</i>), currant (<i>Ribes</i> spp.), ninebark (<i>Physocarpus</i> spp.), mountain lover (<i>Paxistima myrsinites</i>), blueberry (<i>Vaccinium</i> spp.), elderberry (<i>Sambucus</i> spp.), Oregon grape (<i>Mahonia repens</i>), and pointleaf manzanita. Primary associated tree species include: Rocky Mountain maple (<i>Acer glabrum</i>), aspen (<i>Populus tremuloides</i>), Douglas fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>), white fir (<i>Abies concolor</i>), limber pine (<i>Pinus flexilis</i>), alpine fir (<i>Abies lasiocarpa</i>), Engelmann spruce (<i>Picea engelmannii</i>), and ponderosa pine.
High Desert Scrub	25.2 %	Shrublands at 2,200-10,300 ft. elevation principally dominated by greasewood (<i>Sarcobatus vermiculatus</i>), shadscale, graymolly (<i>Kochia vestita</i>), mat-atrilex (<i>Atriplex corrugata</i>), Castle Valley clover (<i>Atriplex cuneata</i>), winterfat, budsage (<i>Artemisia spinescens</i>), four-wing saltbush (<i>Atriplex canescens</i>), halogeton (<i>Halogeton glomeratus</i>), Mormon tea (<i>Ephedra</i> spp.), horsebrush (<i>Tetradymia canescens</i>), snakeweed and rabbitbrush; or low elevation perennial grassland co-dominate with shrubland. Principal grassland species include: galleta, indian ricegrass, three-awn grass (<i>Aristida glauca</i>) and sand dropseed. Primary associated forb species include: desert trumpet (<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>). Primary associated shrub species include: sagebrush, and black brush (<i>Coleogyne ramosissima</i>); other associated species include seepweed (<i>Suaeda torreyana</i>).

GRASSLAND HABITAT		
Grassland	3.5 %	Perennial and annual Grasslands; or herbaceous dry meadows, including mostly forbs and grasses occurring at 2,200-9,000 ft. elevation. Principal perennial grass species include: bluebunch wheatgrass, sandburg bluegrass (<i>Poa secunda</i>), crested wheatgrass (<i>Agropyron cristatum</i>), basin wildrye (<i>Elymus cinereus</i>), galleta, needlegrass, sand dropseed, blue gramma, Thurbers needlegrass, western wheatgrass, squirreltail (<i>Sitanion hystrix</i>), timothy (<i>Phleum spp.</i>), poa (<i>Poa spp.</i>), spike (<i>Trisetum spicatum</i>), Indian ricegrass, and some sedges. Principle annual grass species is cheatgrass. Principal forb species include: yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>), dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>), Richardson's geranium (<i>Geranium richardsonii</i>), penstemon (<i>Penstemon spp.</i>), mulesears (<i>Wyethia amplexicaulis</i>), golden aster (<i>Chrysopsis villosa</i>), arrowleaf balsamroot (<i>Balsamorhiza sagittata</i>), hawkbit (<i>Agoseris pumila</i>), larkspur (<i>Delphinium spp.</i>), and scarlet gilia (<i>Gilia pulchella</i>). Primary associated shrub species include: sagebrush, shadscale, greasewood, creosote, rabbit brush, cinquefoil, snowberry, and elderberry. Primary associated tree species is juniper.
FOREST HABITATS		
Pinyon-Juniper	19.4%	Conifer forest at 2,700-11,000 ft. elevation principally dominated by Rocky Mountain juniper (<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i>), One-seed juniper (<i>Juniperus monosperma</i>), and Utah juniper (<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>); or conifer forest principally dominated by two-needle pinyon (<i>Pinus edulis</i>) or singleleaf pinyon (<i>Pinus monophylla</i>); or conifer forest co-dominated by Pinyon and Juniper. Primary associated tree species include: mountain mahogany, ponderosa pine, white fir, and Douglas fir. Primary associated shrub species include: sagebrush, black brush, and Gambel's oak.
Aspen Forest	3.4 %	Deciduous forest principally dominated by aspen at 5,600-10,500 ft. elevation. Primary associated conifer species include: Engelmann spruce, blue spruce, sub-alpine fir, white fir, Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, and ponderosa pine. Primary associated shrub species include snowberry and serviceberry.

Appendix B. – WHIP Ranking Criteria (Proposed) *

* Subject to change based on future national guidance and ranking tool implementation

WHIP Ranking Tool Questionnaire

100 points possible

1. Partner Contribution , 10 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Will partners contribute > 50% of the total project cost?	10
Will partners contribute 25-50% of the total project cost?	7
Will partners contribute 10-24% of the total project cost?	4
Will partners contribute < 10% of the total project cost?	0

2. Project Monitoring/Research , 15 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Will project have an experimental design studied by a university?	10
Will project have ecological monitoring conducted by a university, state or federal agency or ngo partner?	5
Will the project have annual status reviews conducted by NRCS or partner staff?	0

3. Coordinated Effort , 15 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Has project been approved by local UPCD Regional Team?	10
Does project address a specific component of an existing Endangered Species Recovery Plan, DWR Species Management Plan, CRMP or Areawide Resource Management Plan, or Sage Grouse Local Workgroup Plan?	5
Does the project involve the landowner working solely with NRCS or partner staff?	0

4. Targeted Habitat Types and Species Benefited, 30 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Will the project benefit 3 or more targeted habitat types?	15
Will the project benefit exactly 2 targeted habitat types?	10
Will the project benefit only 1 targeted habitat type?	5
Will the project benefit a habitat type that is not on the targeted list?	0
Will the project benefit at least one Priority 1 species?	15
Will the project benefit at least one Priority 2, but no Priority 1 species?	10
Will the project benefit at least one Priority 3, but no Priority 1 or 2 species?	5
Will the project benefit species not in the Priority list in Table 1?	0

5. Habitat Connectivity, 10 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Is the project within or contiguous with an area protected or targeted for protection for wildlife?	10
Is the project within 1 mile of an area protected or targeted for protection for wildlife?	5
Is the project more than 1 mile from an area protected or targeted for protection for wildlife?	0

6. Native Plant Emphasis/Invasive Species Control, 10 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

After the project is complete, will 90% or more of the plant community be composed of native species?	10
After the project is complete, will 50 - 90% of the plant community be composed of native species?	5
After the project is complete, will 50% or less of the plant community be composed of native species?	0

7. Improvement in Habitat Condition, 10 points possible, “Yes” = points shown, “No” = 0 points

Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 10?	10
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 9-9.9?	9
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 8-8.9?	8
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 7-7.9?	7
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 6-6.9?	6
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 5-5.9?	5
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 4-4.9?	4
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 3-3.9?	3
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 2-2.9?	2
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 1-1.9?	1
Does the difference between “After” Habitat Score – “Before” Habitat Score x 10 = 0-0.9?	0

Appendix C. – Utah Wildlife Conservation Partners

Federal Agencies

USDA - Farm Service Agency
USDA - Forest Service
USDI - Bureau of Land Management
USDI - Bureau of Reclamation
USDI – National Park Service
USDI - Fish and Wildlife Service

State Agencies

School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Utah State University Extension Service

Non-profit Organizations

Audubon Society
Environmental Defense
The Nature Conservancy
Trust for Public Lands
Utah Association of Conservation Districts
Utah Farm Bureau
Utah Resource Conservation & Development Councils Association