

## Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

# Curlew National Grasslands Area Restoration Project

2016–2018



*Stream restoration sequence to reduce bank erosion, relocate stream channel, and establish natural floodplain*

In south eastern Idaho, on the northern edge of the Great Basin, lies the Curlew National Grassland. The rolling hills of sagebrush, distant mountain peaks, and wide open skies easily capture the imagination. But the arid environment underscores the reality of water scarcity. This makes the region's springs, streams, and riparian areas especially important for plants and wildlife. Locally known as the sagebrush steppe, this region is also a priority conservation area for Greater sage-grouse. It is also important habitat for migrating birds and Monarch butterflies. This Joint Chiefs' project implemented a multifaceted suite of projects to restore watershed conditions and wildlife habitat. Central to these projects were restoring watershed function and improving agricultural practices on the adjacent working grasslands. Specifically, degraded roads and stream crossings have contributed to streambank erosion and adversely impacted water supply. The region's working lands—primarily rangelands and croplands—are major contributors to the local economy. Conservation practices carried out on agricultural lands included improving the efficiency of irrigations systems, decreasing soil erosion from cultivation, and fencing livestock out of waterways.

PROJECT IMPACT:  
**7,800 feet**

Rock Creek and Deep Creek stream restoration activities covered more than 7,800 linear feet on federal land.

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2016–2018: \$1,374,743  
Total USDA and partner project funds: \$1,636,346

## PROJECT RESULTS



*Mating display of the Greater sage-grouse*



### Stream restoration:

bioengineered practices were used to stabilize and reconnect 1.5 miles of eroding stream channel to the floodplain.



### Non-native invasive plant removal:

Russian olive and tamarisk trees were removed from 185 acres to enhance native riparian habitat.



### Sagebrush and farmland management improvements:

conservation practices were implemented on private lands to directly benefit sage-grouse and water quality.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

Photos in this document are public domain or stock imagery unless otherwise noted.

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## CURLEW NATIONAL GRASSLANDS AREA RESTORATION PROJECT



Partners review streambank restoration work plans in the Curlew National Grasslands (Credit: Kris Millgate)

## Farming for the Future

The Curlew National Grasslands lay outside of Malad, Idaho. They are the only national grasslands in Idaho and are under protection through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership—a collaboration between the USDA Forest Service and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work together to improve the health, resilience and sustainability of areas where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands.

Grasslands have a tremendous amount of value for habitat and livestock. It is important we manage them so deliberately. It goes beyond just the intrinsic value of habitat, it's about the working landscape.

The Curlew provides sagebrush steppe habitat to the threatened sage grouse and is a critical component for working ranches.

"We feed the cattle hay in the wintertime, and in the summertime we're on public lands," said rancher Renelle Skidmore.

"Bridging relationships between public and private lands is what these Joint Chiefs' projects are all about," said Idaho State Conservationist Curtis Elke. "The partnership uses the best science to protect the land, while still allowing people to use the land."

On the Curlew National Grasslands, the streams are a limited resource.

"In the past, the cattle graze out of the stream. The aquatic habitat suffers, and we lose streambank. So, we're getting the cattle alternative water sources," said Laren Nadler, Curlew rancher and NRCS district conservationist for the Malad Field Office. "The success here is the ability to take away private and public boundaries and apply conservation on a whole landscape-type scale focusing on one area."

This project enabled NRCS, the Forest Service, ranchers and the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust to work together for a common goal. It has also opened doors for future conservation partner possibilities."

This is the crux of the Curlew Area Restoration – multifaceted and interrelated projects located on the Curlew National Grasslands and adjacent private lands that were designed and implemented to improve the watershed and natural resource conditions across the target area. The individual projects focused on creating win-win results for both private and public land management in ways that benefit local farmers and ranchers as well as the wildlife and public that use these lands.

A 14-minute video about the project can be found at [youtu.be/Fy6bjUJiaZY](https://youtu.be/Fy6bjUJiaZY).

For more information, please visit [nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports](https://nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports)



USDA Under Secretary Bill Northey (left) examines soil from Jay Hanson's no-till field

## Key Partners

Oneida County  
Idaho Fish and Game  
Curlew Grazing Association  
Governor's Office of Species Conservation

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