



# Greater Sage-Grouse

## 2023 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

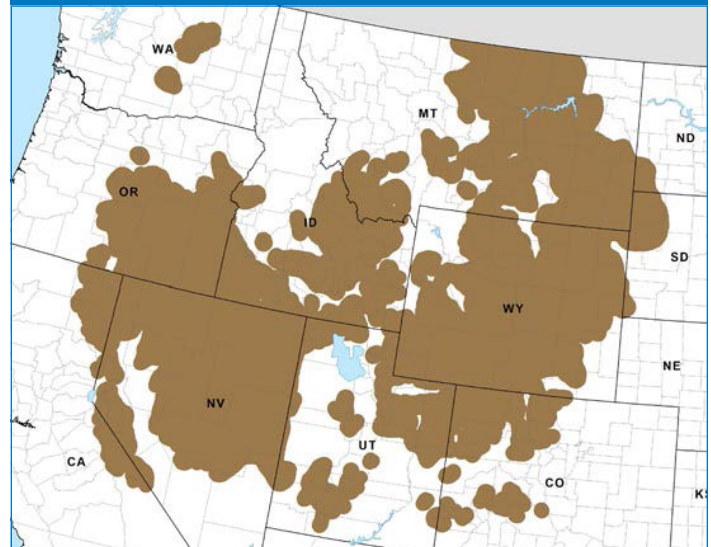
NRCS launched the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) in 2010 to strategically focus conservation efforts to help landowners voluntarily implement conservation actions that reduce threats facing working rangelands and maximize biological benefits to sage-grouse populations. NRCS' sage-grouse efforts are part 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.

## FOCUS AREAS



## 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 sagegrouse and other wildlife while improving operations.  
Photo by Jeremy Roberts



SGI WLFW FY 2023 Summary by State Fiscal Year 2022 Sage-Grouse Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance Contract Summary						
	Environmental Quality Incentives Program			Agricultural Conservation Easement Program		
State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
California	4,897	\$796,707	5	0	0	0
Colorado	3,113	\$189,083	4	1,331	\$2,480,250	3
Idaho	35,209	\$2,238,073	17	634	\$1,200,000	1
Montana	112,878	\$8,936,965	56	22,979	\$11,159,647	5
Nevada	4,496	\$158,024	2	0	0	0
North Dakota	3,056	\$179,135	4	0	0	0
Oregon	28,771	\$2,310,547	21	3,268	\$830,643	2
South Dakota	6,040	\$450,000	1	0	0	0
Utah	116,064	\$2,555,504	21	9,081	\$7,703,451	2
Washington	34,500	\$1,070,550	21	997	\$300,000	1
Wyoming	163,273	\$4,249,592	25	8,382	\$5,651,950	5
Total	512,296	\$23,134,179	177	46,672	\$29,325,941	19
Data source: NRCS Economic and Policy Assessment Division, October 2023						



Sage Grouse Photo by Jeremy Roberts.

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. less.

Overall Summary FY 2010 – 14

Total NRCS Investment .....\$267,842,610  
Number of Contracts.....1,129  
Total Acres Contracted ..... 4,419,421

Overall Summary FY 2015 – 23

Total NRCS Investment ..... \$405,292,768  
Number of Contracts.....1,880  
Total Acres Contracted .....6,110,411

Overall Summary TOTAL

Total NRCS Investment .....\$673,135,378  
Number of Contracts.....3,009  
Total Acres Contracted .....10,529,832

2023 Milestones:

Acres Completed FY 2015–23      Acres In Progress FY 2015–23

Reducing Wildfire Risk and Addressing Invasive Grasses:



Removing Invading Conifers:



Protecting Lands from Exurban Development:



Protecting Grazing Lands from Cultivation:



Protecting and Restoring Mesic Areas:



Marking Fences to Reduce Collisions:

