



# Sage-Grouse Initiative

## 2013 Progress Report SGI

Natural Resources Conservation Service



### Overview

The greater sage-grouse population has dwindled to about 200,000 birds during the past several years. This iconic bird once numbered about 16 million before settlement. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will determine whether to list the species under the Endangered Species Act in 2015. A decision to list the sage-grouse could have far-reaching effects on ranching as well as business industries such as energy production.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) launched the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) in 2010 to promote sustainable ranching. NRCS leads this partnership of ranchers, agencies, universities, conservation groups, and businesses in 11 western states. Ranchers play a pivotal role by voluntarily enrolling their lands in SGI to improve habitat and conserve intact sage-brush lands. This strong partnership for this at-risk species works through voluntary cooperation, incentives, and community support.

SGI uses a highly targeted and science-based approach that seeks to conserve healthy sage-grouse populations and enhance its habitat. It is designed to recover sage-grouse by helping ranchers improve and conserve their lands.

SGI has proven attractive to agricultural producers as a voluntary, incentive-based approach to achieving wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching.

### Funding

Between 2010 and 2013, NRCS has invested \$247 million, while partners and landowners have provided an additional \$107 million, bringing the total SGI investment to \$354 million. Agricultural producers on 953 ranches have carried out combinations of conservation practices on 3.8 million acres across 11 western states.

Ranchers used the following programs in fiscal year 2013 to carry out sage-grouse conservation work:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Farm and Ranch Lands Conservation Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Grassland Reserve Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program

### Results

Major SGI achievements in fiscal year 2013:

- Significantly advanced science to quantify and document benefits derived from establishing conservation easements, removing encroached conifers, and marking fences.
- Began the development of a range-wide decision support tool to help target and scale up conifer removal in priority areas.
- Greatly expanded communication efforts by unveiling a new SGI website, [www.sagegrouseinitiative.com](http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com), designed as a compelling and practical resource for landowners, partners, media, and educators.

- Surpassed the 1 million-acre-conserved milestone with significant help from the SGI Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT), a team of 24 shared natural resource professionals that serve the 11 western states. With significant partnership support, the SWAT is expected to serve the states through 2016.

SGI's impressive achievements from 2010-2013 include:

- Reduced the overarching threat of fragmentation by preventing subdivision of large and intact ranches through the establishment of 381,659 acres of conservation easements. These investments work in tandem with state and federal policy to increase benefits to birds. For example, conservation easements in Wyoming are expected to help reduce by two-thirds the anticipated bird losses by embedding conservation easements inside Wyoming's core areas.
- Added hiding cover that is expected to increase sage-grouse numbers by 8 to 10 percent within the 2.6 million acres of grazing systems implemented.
- Removed 276,250 acres of invasive conifer in core habitats, preventing a loss of 60 percent of the available forage.
- Prevented 2,800 sage-grouse fence collisions annually and reduced fence strike risk by 83 percent by marking or moving 537 miles of "high-risk" fence (*Stevens et al. 2013-WSB*).

### Conservation Beyond Boundaries

California  
Colorado  
Idaho

Montana  
Nevada  
North Dakota

Oregon  
South Dakota  
Utah

Washington  
Wyoming

**Fiscal Year 2013 Sage-Grouse Initiative  
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts/Agreements**

State	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)			Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)			Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)		
	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres
<b>California</b>	11	\$1,321,531	27,879	0	0	0	2	\$36,818	782
<b>Colorado</b>	8	\$789,589	38,551	4	\$10,600,000	30,196	0	0	0
<b>Idaho</b>	26	\$2,546,201	80,716	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Montana</b>	11	\$2,385,236	76,957	1	\$500,000	4,087	11	\$435,758	5,633
<b>Nevada</b>	14	\$808,707	45,168	0	0	0	7	\$156,145	5,957
<b>North Dakota</b>	7	\$344,426	15,598	0	0	0	1	\$39,470	1,840
<b>Oregon</b>	31	\$3,048,196	42,237	0	0	0	16	\$1,014,109	17,408
<b>South Dakota</b>	9	\$900,437	44,034	0	0	0	3	\$455,658	21,885
<b>Utah</b>	16	\$2,544,891	18,906	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Washington</b>	10	\$869,588	12,745	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Wyoming</b>	15	\$1,410,280	116,371	6	\$5,269,766	17,972	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>\$16,969,082</b>	<b>519,162</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>\$16,369,766</b>	<b>52,255</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>\$2,137,958</b>	<b>53,505</b>



State	Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)			Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)		
	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Contract Acres
<b>California</b>	1	\$1,464,710	2,037	0	0	0
<b>Colorado</b>	9	\$4,301,680	1,964	0	0	0
<b>Idaho</b>	7	\$6,607,444	16,210	0	0	0
<b>Montana</b>	3	\$2,776,137	6,933	0	0	0
<b>Nevada</b>	2	\$8,105,847	4,456	3	\$7,300,000	926
<b>North Dakota</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Oregon</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>South Dakota</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Utah</b>	3	\$5,996,800	16,289	0	0	0
<b>Washington</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Wyoming</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>\$29,252,618</b>	<b>47,889</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$7,300,000</b>	<b>926</b>

\*Data source: Protracts for new enrollment 10/25/13.

**For More Information**

For more information and updates about SGI and other NRCS conservation efforts, please visit  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/initiatives/?cid=steldevb1027671>

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