Western Big-Game Migration Program

NFWF CONTACTS

Chris West
Director,
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
chris.west@nfwf.org
303-222-6484

Seth Gallagher
Manager, Rocky Mountain Regional Programs
Rocky Mountain Rangelands
seth.gallagher@nfwf.org
303-222-6483

Daley Burns
Coordinator, Regional Programs
Rocky Mountain Rangelands
daley.burns@nfwf.org
202-595-2440

PARTNERS

- DOI
- USDA - NRCS
- Conoco Phillips
- BNSF Railway

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 5,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of $6.1 billion.

Learn more at **www.nfwf.org**

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
1133 15th Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, D.C., 20005
202-857-0166

Elk migrating in Colorado

BACKGROUND

The Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game and Migration Corridors Program is dedicated to conserving critical winter range and migration corridors to maintain healthy populations of pronghorn, elk and mule deer, and the phenomenon of annual migration of those species. The program was launched in 2019 to help private landowners, community-based nonprofits and state agencies efficiently work together to conserve priority habitat corridors and big game herds.

The Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big Game Program is a result of Interior Secretarial Order 3362 and a partnership with the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Forest Service, BNSF Railway and ConocoPhillips. The program is working with conservation partners across 11 western states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

(continued)

Pronghorn grazing in Wyoming

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There are significant threats to these incredible migrations throughout the west. Habitat fragmentation often limits the availability of high quality forage and cover and poor habitat condition limits the health and reproductive success of the herd. Modern improvements in wildlife science such as global positioning collars, and remote sensing technologies provide the ability to learn and adapt management efforts with precision. Utilization of technology and the priorities of state game and fish agencies narrows the geographic scope of projects while increasing the project efficiency and return on investment.

This program aims to conserve critical winter range and migration corridors through:

- Restoring degraded priority winter range, stopover areas and migration corridors by activities identified in the State Action Plans such as removing encroaching trees from sagebrush ecosystems, rehabilitating areas damaged by fire or treating exotic/invasive vegetation to improve the quality and value of these areas to big game and other wildlife.
- Working cooperatively with private landowners and State highway departments to achieve permissive fencing measures including potentially modifying, removing, installing or seasonally adapting fencing if proven to impede movement of big game through priority migration corridors.
- Conservation easements and management agreements, or other actions to protect bottlenecks within corridors and other areas within priority winter range, stopover areas threatened by fragmentation.
- Utilizing other proven actions necessary to improve the habitat quality or restore priority big-game winter range, stopover areas or migration corridors across the West.

There have been two rounds of grants announced under this program in 2019 and 2020 which cumulatively awarded $5.2 million across 24 projects, leveraging $28.9 million in matching contributions to generate a total conservation impact of more than $34.1 million. The projects collectively will:

- Protect 46,113 acres of private land from fragmentation through conservation easements
- Restore 48,429 acres of public and private land through efforts like invasive weed and conifer removal treatments
- Improved management on 524,346 acres of public and private land through efforts like grazing and wildlife management plans
- Remove or improve 201 miles of fencing to be more wildlife friendly, reducing direct mortality and increasing landscape connectivity.