



NFWF

Sagebrush Landscapes 2017 Grant Slate

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FUNDING PARTNERS

- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services

ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores our nation's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Created by Congress in 1984, NFWF directs public conservation dollars to the most pressing environmental needs and matches those investments with private funds. Learn more at www.nfwf.org

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Columbia spotted frog

OVERVIEW

In 2017, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced the first round of grants for the Sagebrush Landscapes Program, identifying 11 sagebrush landscapes as high priorities for conservation. These sage landscapes represent a prominent ecosystem unique to the West. This year, six new habitat improvement/restoration and capacity building grants totaling more than \$700,000 were awarded, generating \$1.1 million in match from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of more than \$1.8 million.

The sage ecosystem supports a wide range of species, including greater sage-grouse, Gunnison's sage-grouse, migratory birds, and mammal and reptile species found only in native sagebrush habitats. Sagebrush landscapes also support populations of big-game species, including elk, pronghorn and mule deer.

The program is making investments in several key areas based on partner interests and conservation opportunity:

- **Wet meadow habitat:** Found across the entire sagebrush landscape, this habitat is critically important for a wide array of sagebrush and wetland species, as well as livestock production. NFWF investments will help advance awareness, technical resources and localized action for the conservation of these important habitats.

(continued)



Greater sage-grouse

- **Multiple ownership:** Private, state and federal management of parcels continues to be a challenge to conservation efforts throughout the west. NFWF is working in geographies that can benefit from additional capacity that allows for cross jurisdictional project management to occur and further conservation efforts.

Landscape Scale Riparian/Wet Meadow Restoration, Coordination and Technology Transfer in the Sagebrush Landscapes Of Western Colorado (CO)

Grantee: Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
 Grant Amount: \$150,000
 Matching Funds: \$152,661
Total Amount:..... \$302,661

The Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District will enhance coordination, increase knowledge and technology transfer, and implement restoration and install structures that improve mesic habitats in much of the ESA federally listed Gunnison sage-grouse's range of western Colorado. The public-private partnerships will utilize the

most appropriate restoration techniques to restore mesic habitats in the most cost-effective manner, through site prioritization, development of a "toolbox" of methods and monitoring techniques, field assessments and design workshops with experts, outreach to private landowners, and funding for on-the-ground restoration work in the Gunnison, San Miguel, Crawford and Pinon Mesa focal areas of Colorado. The long-term goal of this collaborative, landscape scale restoration is to increase Gunnison and greater sage-grouse populations and promote healthy sagebrush landscapes throughout western North America.

Restoring High-Elevation Mesic Seeps And Streams in Southwest Montana: An All Lands, All Hands Approach to Protect Critical Sage-Grouse and Songbird Habitat (MT)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy
 Grant Amount: \$115,000
 Matching Funds: \$115,000
Total Amount:..... \$230,000

The Nature Conservancy and partners will develop an

integrated suite of projects to restore sage-grouse brood rearing habitats in stands of mountain big sagebrush near mesic seeps and first-order streams located immediately downslope of melting snowfields using two overarching innovative conservation approaches: rock/brush structures and conifer removal. Using an all lands, all hands approach, the project will further collaboration between ranching, agency, and conservation communities. It will quantify outcomes at large scales using rigorous science and research to understand how rock and brush structures and conifer removal techniques increase soil moisture, expand the extent of mesic vegetation, increase the abundance of forbs and insects for sage-grouse broods, and influence songbird populations.

Triangle Wetlands Projects (ID)

Grantee: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Grant Amount: \$75,000

Matching Funds: \$150,000

Total Amount:..... \$225,000

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will lead The Idaho Sage-Grouse Actions Team, which includes representatives from nine private, local, state and federal entities, exists to advance across-the-board efforts in Idaho dedicated to benefiting sage-grouse and sagebrush ecosystems and specifically restoration activities beneficial to priority wildlife species, such as the greater sage-grouse, Columbia spotted frog, and redband trout in Owyhee County, Idaho through improvement of mesic habitats. Conifer encroachment removal is currently the highest priority restoration activity for the Owyhee sagebrush landscape in the short term, but more complex restoration activities such as mesic habitat restoration need to occur in conjunction with conifer treatments to collectively reduce threats to all life stages of sagebrush dependent species and to maximize conservation investments.

Idaho Sagebrush Landscape Restoration Specialist (ID)

Grantee: Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission

Grant Amount: \$200,000

Matching Funds: \$202,500

Total Amount:..... \$402,500

The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission will employ a Sagebrush Landscape Restoration Specialist position that will primarily focus on restoring lost hydrology to wet meadow, mesic and wetland areas. Landscape scale improvements to these limited resources are expected to benefit from implementation across jurisdictional boundaries and are expected to have the greatest impact to sage-steppe obligates and associated species across Idaho.

Southwestern Wyoming Sagebrush

Habitat Restoration Collaborative (WY)

Grantee: Little Snake River Conservation District

Grant Amount: \$150,000

Matching Funds: \$422,475

Total Amount:..... \$572,475

The Little Snake River Conservation District will lead the Southwestern Wyoming Habitat Restoration Collaborative to conserve sagebrush habitat across a 20 million-acre landscape in the Upper Green River watershed, with a specific emphasis on working wet meadows with the following outcomes:

- Maintain, restore and enhance sagebrush habitat with particular emphasis on intertwined mesic habitat to benefit greater sage-grouse, mule deer and other sagebrush or wet meadow dependent wildlife species and support productive livestock operations
- Pilot a range of available tools, including emerging human dimensions techniques, to design and implement successful conservation strategies for working wet meadows, as well as monitor and export results to inform future mesic habitat conservation projects in sagebrush systems
- Highlight the value of cross-jurisdictional capacity and coordination to leverage funding and efficiently deliver conservation across large landscapes

Audubon – Advancing the

SageWest Communications Network

Grantee: National Audubon

Grant Amount: \$34,200

Matching Funds: \$34,200

Total Amount:..... \$68,400

Audubon will coordinate the newly established SageWest Communications Network, a voluntary collaboration of a wide range of stakeholders committed to improving communications about the sagebrush ecosystem, elevating not only individual efforts but the larger dialog about the value and need for sagebrush conservation. NFWF support of Audubon Rockies will ensure continued partnership and leadership in SageWest's efforts to strategically coordinate internal and external communications among participants. Specifically, Audubon will continue to host/manage listservs to facilitate networking, engage in priority workgroups that advance messaging and implementation of sagebrush conservation actions, oversee updating of the network's communications guidance document, develop resources available to SageWest's participants, work with partners in hosting strategic field tour(s) that elevate on-the-ground restoration projects, and fund/organize a SageWest meeting in 2018.