

INTERMOUNTAIN WEST
JOINT VENTURE

conserving habitat through partnerships

May 3, 2019

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Ron & Thad:

On behalf of the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) Management Board and staff, I extend our sincere appreciation to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for partnering with the IWJV on the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT).

Please find attached the SGI SWAT NRCS Quarterly Report for January-March 2019. The report also contains the following appendix: Objectives and Evolution of the SGI SWAT.

Please give me a call at (406) 549-0287 if you have any questions. We look forward to reporting on future SGI SWAT successes!

Sincerely,

Dave Smith
IWJV Coordinator



Sage Grouse Initiative Strategic Watershed Action Team

Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31, 2019

Intermountain West Joint Venture
May 3, 2019



The Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT) continued to make significant gains this past quarter in each of its three focus areas: people and partnerships, science and technology, and communications and outreach. The following reports on these accomplishments from January – March 2019.

PEOPLE & PARTNERSHIPS

SGI would like to thank U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff, partners, and ranchers for all of their great work and dedication to conserving sage grouse and the sagebrush ecosystem in 2018. The positive momentum for SGI's proactive, voluntary working lands conservation model continues to grow following the U.S. Fish Wildlife Service's (FWS) 2015 decision not to list sage grouse under the Endangered Species Act. Thanks to the many partners, SGI is proving that this new paradigm of cooperative conservation on working lands is making a difference for ranchers, wildlife and rural economies.

SWAT Field Staff

The SWAT field staff have continued to expand and accelerate SGI conservation delivery this quarter with support from local and state NRCS staff, funding partners, Pheasants Forever (PF) and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV). The team's dedicated and enthusiastic range conservationists, wildlife biologists, and natural resource specialists not only help get conservation on the ground but also spread the shared vision of achieving wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching throughout the West. Below are some of the incredible highlights from the SWAT field staff and PF's efforts to support SGI delivery this reporting period.

Conservation Implementation

PF and the IWJV maintain a detailed tracking system to document SWAT field staff progress on a quarterly basis. These contributions are rolled up with other NRCS actions and reported to the FWS, during the sage grouse status review process, to ensure landowner and partner efforts are considered in Endangered Species Act listing decision reviews.

Partner Positions Accelerate Conservation—The additional field capacity support provided by SWAT partner positions across the West has essentially enabled NRCS to double the amount of SGI conservation. Partner staff have helped plan or implement:

- **2,891,865 acres** of rangeland improvement to increase overall rangeland health and resiliency through sustainable ranching to benefit sage grouse and other wildlife.
- **332,982 acres** of conifer removal in key nesting, brood-rearing, and wintering habitats. Removing encroaching conifers from sagebrush rangelands to increase water availability and eliminate tall structures in otherwise suitable habitat. As birds re-colonize former habitats, increased bird abundance is anticipated.
- **318 miles** of "high-risk" fence near leks to be marked or removed. Marking fences is expected to reduce sage grouse fence collisions by 83%.

SWAT Position Update

SWAT field staff talent and work does not go unrecognized by NRCS and the other partner employers that work with us. As position vacancies arise, PF works with NRCS, hiring entities and funding partners to re-assess position locations to ensure technical assistance is focused where it's needed most; positions are quickly refilled to minimize disruption to conservation delivery. Here are changes that occurred this quarter:

- **Rebecca Burton** was selected as the first ever Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) position with PF in Craig, Colorado. She will still be focused on delivering SGI programs and practices but will also have the ability to work on Colorado’s Native Cutthroat Trout Initiative, which occupies the same region, as well as any other working lands projects that the state may develop in the future. Rebecca graduated from the University of Wyoming with a bachelor’s degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Management. She has worked with the Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, NRCS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Mule Deer Foundation. Rebecca is from Saratoga, Wyoming, which is just to the north of Craig; her familiarity with the landscape and local partners makes her an ideal fit for this position.



Rebecca Burton

- **Jake Northuis** was selected for the PF position in Rexburg, Idaho. This position was formally in Mountain Home, but after it was vacated by Hayden Boll, local partners decided that there was a greater capacity need in Rexburg. Jake graduated from Lake Superior State University with a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. He brings a knowledge of USDA and its associated programs through work as a Farm Bill Biologist with the Blue Water Conservation District – located in Michigan’s Thumb – working on the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative. Jake will help with post-fire restoration efforts taking place in the Rexburg area.



Jake Northuis

- **Julie Unfried**, formally in one of the two PF positions in Waterville, Washington, has accepted a new PF position in Oregon, as part of a collaborative effort among BLM, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, FWS, IWJV, PF and private landowners. Beginning in April, Julie will be the Local Implementation Team Coordinator and serve as a liaison between federal, state, and local governments/stakeholders in matters regarding conservation of sage grouse and sagebrush ecosystems at the local scale. Washington partners are discussing next steps for the vacant Waterville position.

SWAT Field Staff Calls & Webinars

PF and the IWJV continue to host monthly coordination conference calls in which SWAT members receive SGI and agency updates, share accomplishments, experiences, and ideas, ask questions, and receive continuous technology transfer and training.

Beginning this quarter, SWAT staff were introduced to the grant writing process, including how to approach and write grants given their specific agreements. The first of a four-part training began in March and will conclude in June:

- **March:** Matt Holland, PF Grant Development Director, presented to the SWAT on where to start the grant writing process. This included gaining an understanding of what is needed before writing the grant, where to look for funding, how to examine cost-share and matching requirements, and checking with respective hiring entities to ensure that company and agreement policies are followed during the process.

1st Annual Western Working Lands for Wildlife Workshop – June 19-20, 2019 in Twin Falls, Idaho

Planning for the first ever Western WFW Workshop is well underway, and organizers are predicting a sizable turnout. Just like the annual SGI workshops before it, this event will be another great venue for partners to meet and showcase the latest in western rangeland conservation. The two-day gathering is set to highlight conservation efforts related to range resilience over the last decade, the latest science, and stories from private landowners on their work towards achieving rangeland resiliency across the 19 western states. There are currently 188 participants already registered for the event with at least one representative from each of the western states (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) and more than 25 landowners (a number which is expected to rise). The planning team is working with [Partners for Conservation](#) to help provide travel stipends to landowners. Additionally, Ron Nichols, a former NRCS communications specialist, will be a guest speaker. Ron championed the creation of the soil health movement within NRCS.

SCIENCE & TECHNICAL TRANSFER

On the SGI science front, the first quarter of 2019 included the release of a new *Science to Solutions* article and the release of the recorded WFW presentations from the 2019 Society for Range Management (SRM) Conference.

[Conserving Diverse Wet Habitats Keeps Western Rangelands Resilient](#)

A new *Science to Solutions* article – [Conserving Diverse Wet Habitats Keeps Western Rangelands Resilient](#) – was produced in coordination with research

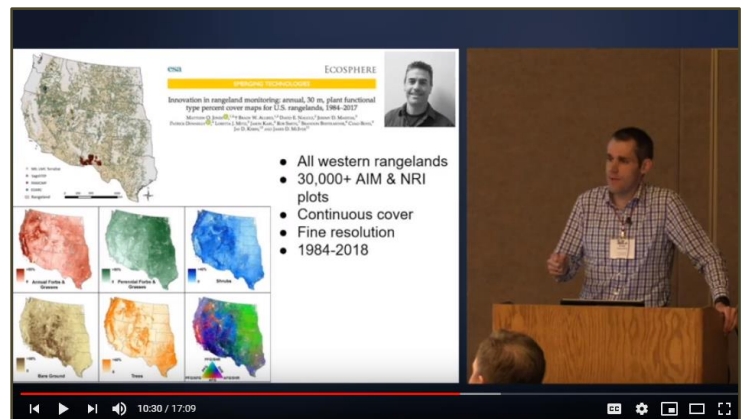
done by scientists at the University of Montana and IWJV. The researchers analyzed mesic resource productivity and mesic areas' drought-sensitivity in the Great Plains, Rocky Mountains and Great Basin. Sage grouse and many other species rely on a range of mesic habitats to sustain their populations. Landscapes

with the greatest uncertainty in mesic abundance and distribution support the fewest grouse. By partnering to conserve mesic resources across both public and private lands, we can open up more habitat for sage grouse to move between seasonal habitats and safely raise their young. This cross-boundary, landscape-scale conservation approach ensures western rangelands are resilient for wildlife and livestock long into the future.

[WFW-Sponsored Videos from the 2019 SRM Conference](#)

The recordings of nine presentations sponsored by WFW under the “Harnessing Technology to Improve Conservation Effectiveness on Western Working Lands” symposium became available for watching on [SGI's YouTube channel](#) in March. The presentations detail new technological innovations that are revolutionizing how managers, ranchers, and others can monitor, study, evaluate threats, and improve working rangelands across the West. The recordings were made possible thanks to a partnership with BLM. The nine videos include:

- Rangeland Analysis Platform: New Technology Revolutionizes Rangeland Monitoring
- AIM and Shoot: Delivering and Sharing Range Data Quickly
- Optimizing Productivity Models for Enhanced Rangeland Monitoring
- Mapping Riparian Sensitivity to Drought Stress: An Index for Evaluating, Targeting, and Monitoring Restoration
- Large Scale Rangeland Resilience Planning
- Mapping Cross-scale Transitions in Rangelands
- Synchronizing Conservation to Seasonal Wetland Hydrology and Waterbird Migration in Semi-Arid Landscapes
- Conifer Management in Context: Prioritizing Tree Removal Projects for Sagebrush and Woodland Obligates
- Quantifying Restoration Across the Sage Steppe: Mapping Conifer Cover, Removal Efforts, and Fire



COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

Stories & Posts

NEW SCIENCE | [Conserving Diverse Wet Habitats Keeps Western Rangelands Resilient](#) – This post and accompanying [Science to Solutions](#) article feature new research from Patrick Donnelly, IWJV Spatial Ecologist. It details how landscapes with the most intact mesic resources support higher populations of sage grouse and other wildlife. **TOP VIEWED POST! 455 views**

[Woody Invasion Impacts Water on Great Plains](#) – This March post and accompanying [Science to Solutions](#) article – [Woody Invasion in the Great Plains Diminishes Water Resources](#) – features research from SGI/WLFW researcher, Dirac Twidwell. While it's focused on the Great Plains, the findings are applicable to sagebrush ecosystems. **86 post views just in March & before the end of this reporting quarter**

NEW RESOURCE | [Watch Working Lands for Wildlife Presentations from 2019 Society for Range Management Conference](#) – Thanks to a partnership with BLM, the nine WLFW presentations from the 2019 SRM Conference were recorded and are available on SGI's YouTube channel [here](#). **135 post views & 114 cumulative video views**



*Mule Deer Foundation
President/CEO Miles Moretti*

ASK AN EXPERT | [How Do Mule Deer Use Sagebrush?](#) – In this post, Miles Moretti, Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) President/CEO, explains how MDF works to restore sagebrush habitat through proactive, partnership-based conservation. **TOP VIEWED POST! 574 views**

[Patterns in Rangeland Productivity and Land Ownership and What They Mean for Conservation](#) – This post features University of Montana Rangeland Ecology Associate Professor Dr. Brady Allred discussing new research that uses the [Rangeland Analysis Platform](#) to detail rangelands productivity over time and ownership. **108 post views**

STAFF PROFILE | [Without Telling Our Story, It's Just a Bunch of Work](#) – Tim Griffiths, NRCS WLFW West Regional Coordinator formally introduces Brianna Randall and Greg Peters, two members of the WLFW team focused on communications, in this post. He also explains how WLFW

is the umbrella initiative that includes SGI, the [Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative](#), and other similar efforts. **112 post views**

FEATURE | [Conservation Insight Report Confirms Benefits of Conifer Removal](#) – The NRCS Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) released a new report – [Conifer Removal Benefits Sage-Grouse, Other Sagebrush Birds, and Rangeland Productivity](#) – detailing the benefits of removing encroaching conifers for sage grouse and other wildlife. The report analyzed several SGI-led projects where encroaching conifers were removed and found that these projects do benefit wildlife. This post shared the findings and provided a convenient SGI landing page for folks to learn more. **324 post views**

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)
CEAP-Wildlife Conservation Report
February 2019

Conifer Removal Benefits Sage-Grouse, Other Sagebrush Birds, and Rangeland Productivity

Summary of Findings

The encroachment of native conifers (piñon-juniper) into western sage-steppe rangelands has negatively affected ecosystem services provided by sagebrush habitats and threatens sagebrush-dependent wildlife. When these conifers now dominate, relationships between snow distributions, water budgets, plant community dynamics, and wildlife habitat are disrupted.

Large-scale encroached conifer removal is an increasingly widespread practice that benefits rangeland productivity and restores habitat quality for sage-grouse and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife. Recent studies show that after encroached conifers are removed, sage-grouse occupancy, nest survival, and brood success are greatly improved. Studies also show that sagebrush songbirds recolonize rapidly following encroached conifer removal.

Encroached conifers cause snow to accumulate uniformly on rangelands, resulting in faster snowmelt than on more open landscapes where water is stored longer in drifted snow. Removing the conifers can improve summer water budgets, which benefits ranchers and wildlife.

Through the Sage-Grouse Conservation Service and partners have worked to increase the utilization of mechanical conifer removal to improve and restore sagebrush habitats for wildlife and rangeland sustainability.

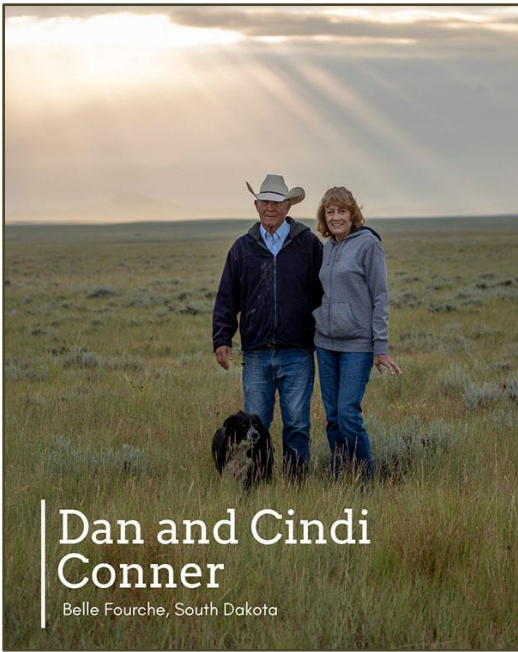
Background

Woodland encroachment into grassy biomes is compromising grassland ecosystem function across the globe (Veldman *et al.* 2015; Naeckley *et al.* 2017). In the United States, native woody plants have invaded over 800 million acres of historically non-forest lands (Eldridge *et al.* 2011). Encroachment of conifers into sage-steppe rangelands in the western U.S. negatively impacts ecosystem services provided by sagebrush habitats (Kormos *et al.* 2017) and threatens the greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush-dependent wildlife (Donnelly *et al.* 2017; Holmes *et al.* 2017; Sandford *et al.* 2017; Severson *et al.* 2017a,b; Hamilton *et al.* 2018). This Conservation Insight highlights recent studies that show the benefits of encroached conifer removal—an increasingly widespread conservation practice—to sage-grouse and other sagebrush birds, as well as rangeland health and productivity.

Pinon-juniper conifers have spread into millions of acres of sagebrush habitat since the mid-19th century due primarily to fire suppression, climate change, and land use change. Though conifers are native to the Intermountain Western U.S., their encroachment into native rangelands of the region has altered the dynamics of sagebrush systems, compromising ecosystem resilience and negatively impacting the occupancy and habitat use of sagebrush-dependent wildlife. Although conifer removal in the western U.S. is increasingly common, little was known until recently whether the practice achieves its intended conservation outcomes (Miller *et al.* 2017).

Encroached conifers also impact the quality of sagebrush habitats by altering soil resources and hydrology (the dynamics of water in an ecosystem) in ways that limit water availability to native shrubs and undesirable herbaceous plants. Western juniper—a conifer species common to

A photograph showing a landscape with sagebrush in the foreground and encroaching conifers in the background. The conifers are visible as dark, dense shapes against the lighter, open rangeland.



RANCHER VIDEO | [Our Amazing Grasslands Video – The Conner Ranch](#) – This [video](#), produced by the [South Dakota Grassland Coalition](#), features Dan and Cindi Conner and their ranch near Belle Fourche, South Dakota. NRCS partnered on the video by providing sage grouse footage and outreach support. The video also features NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Mitch Faulkner.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT | [Pheasants Forever Provides Critical Support for Sage Grouse and Lesser Prairie-Chicken Efforts](#) – This post features two recent PF *Journal of Upland Conservation* articles – [Multi-Species Partnerships Define the West](#) and [Upland Gamebirds Forever](#) – that detail the PF’s sage grouse and lesser prairie-chicken efforts. The articles also feature SGI staff. **95 post views**

SAGE WHIZ QUIZ | [Sagebrush](#) – This quiz about sagebrush tested the audience’s knowledge of this key plant.



Most Downloaded Resources:

1. [SCIENCE TO SOLUTIONS](#): Conserving Diverse Wet Habitats Keeps Western Rangelands Resilient (70 downloads)
2. [SGI SWAT PARTNER POSITIONS](#): Field staff contact information (69 downloads)
3. ‘Conserve Our Western Roots’ [POSTCARD](#) and [POSTER](#) (62 total downloads)
4. [CEAP REPORT](#): Conifer Removal Benefits Sage-Grouse, Other Sagebrush Birds, and Rangeland Productivity (54 downloads)

Website Analytics:

- The [SGI website](#) received ~20,450 total page views over the quarter, a decrease of 8% over the last quarter. Paid search drove 150 users, or 1.6% of total page views to the site this quarter; however, the number of pages per visit for these users increased by 11% over the last quarter. The total number of visitors dropped to 9,011 this quarter, roughly 15% fewer than last quarter. The number of new users also dropped to 8,427, about 16% fewer than last quarter.
- Time spent on the SGI website averaged 1:43 per session for this quarter. This is an increase of 17.5% over the last quarter.
- The [SGI Interactive Web App](#) received 2,106 page views this quarter, compared to 1,715 last quarter; it had 709 users, an increase of 8.4%.

E-newsletter:

Open rates dropped a bit this quarter, but click through rates improved or stayed static; the rates from each month in the quarter were as follows:

- [January](#): 21% open rate | 40% click through rate
- [February](#): 20% open rate | 35% click through rate
- [March](#): 17% open rate | 36% click through rate



*Wet meadow with sagebrush.
Photo by Brianna Randall*

Top Social Media Posts:

[FACEBOOK](#) (January) | 160 likes, 36 shares, 4,203 views, 214 total reactions, comments and shares | If you haven't had the chance to watch the hour-long documentary that PBS's Nature put out a couple of years ago, you've got a few more days to watch it for FREE. PBS is airing the full episode of "The Sagebrush Sea" now through Jan 10th. Check it out!

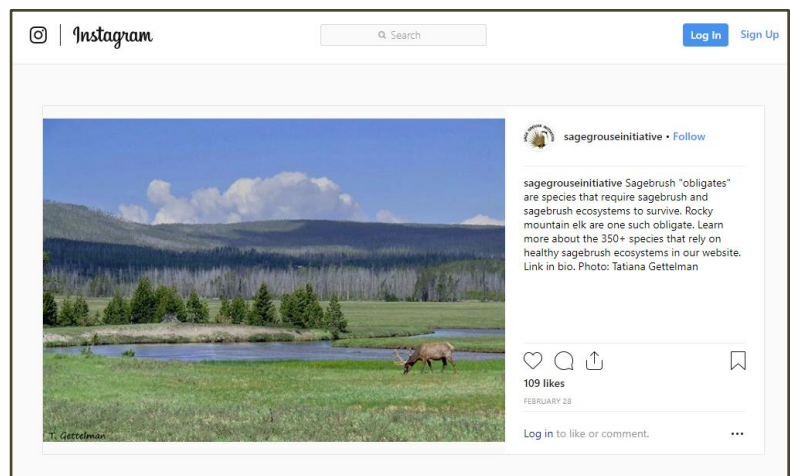
[FACEBOOK](#) (February) | 131 likes, 25 shares, 2,803 views, 171 total reactions, comments and shares | Healthy soil literally provides the foundation for all life in the sagebrush ecosystem. Diverse native plants put down roots that protect our precious soils, help the land retain water, and support critical ecological functions and resilient landscapes. Learn more about these critical plants and share this awesome Western Roots Graphic today!

[FACEBOOK](#) (March) | 140 likes, 33 shares, 6,190 views, 206 total reactions, comments and shares | It's almost mid-March and that means it's almost mating season across the sagebrush sea. Check out this cool video from Connor White, SGI staff based in Hailey, Idaho. Love how these guys strut around the lek, working hard to impress the ladies, but don't seem to get very far. 😊

[INSTAGRAM](#) (January) | 176 likes | It's mid-winter in sagebrush country. But the days are getting longer bit by bit. Photo: US Forest Service [#sagegrouse](#) [#wildlife](#) [#birds](#) [#rangeland](#) [#birdsofinstagram](#) [#americanwest](#) [#cariboutargheernationalforest](#)

[INSTAGRAM](#) (February) | 109 likes | Sagebrush "obligates" are species that require sagebrush and sagebrush ecosystems to survive. Rocky mountain elk are one such obligate. Learn more about the 350+ species that rely on healthy sagebrush ecosystems in our website. Link in bio. Photo: Tatiana Gettelman

[INSTAGRAM](#) (March) | 534 views | Strut, strut, strut your stuff. It's early mating season on the sagebrush sea. To celebrate, we're sharing this video snippet from Connor White, SGI staff in Hailey, Idaho.



[TWITTER](#) (January) | 56 likes, 26 retweets, 5,305 impressions | Like sage grouse, mule deer are also able to digest sagebrush and rely on it during winter due to its availability and high protein content. Just one of the 350 species that rely on healthy sagebrush rangeland. [#350species](#) [#muledeer](#) [#sagegrouse](#) Photo: Tom Koerner/USFWS

[TWITTER](#) (February) | 64 likes, 26 retweets, 11,787 impressions | Root-a-toot-toot! Diverse native plants put down roots that protect our precious soils, help the land retain water, and support critical ecological functions and resilient landscapes. And they look great on posters! Download yours now! bit.ly/2yodgWw

[TWITTER](#) (March) | 31 likes, 15 retweets, 7,367 impressions | Sagebrush “obligates” are species that depend on healthy sagebrush landscapes. Of course, the sage grouse is one, but a host of other species from giant, 700-pound bull elk to tiny, one-pound pygmy rabbits, also require sagebrush to exist. bit.ly/2KQJX4K

SUMMARY

The SGI SWAT is a model for science-based, landscape-scale habitat conservation—and a model for the future. It represents a landmark step forward in helping NRCS – through partnerships with FWS, state fish and wildlife agencies, and others – address many of the bottlenecks that have long prevented Farm Bill conservation programs from realizing their true potential for wildlife habitat conservation in the West.



High elevation mesic habitat in Oregon. Photo by Jeremy Maestas

NRCS SGI SWAT AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE METRICS

- a) *Efforts for outreach to, and participation of, beginning farmers or ranchers, and Native American Tribes within the project area.* Five new Indian Tribes, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, or Beginning Producers were contacted by the SWAT field capacity staff this quarter.
- b) *Assistance provided to program participants to help meet local, state, and/or federal regulatory requirements.* The intent of SGI is to proactively conserve sage grouse habitat to negate the need for additional regulations. Participating producers are highly committed to sage grouse conservation, and SGI provides an excellent vehicle for addressing threats to sage grouse populations at very large scales.
- c) *Numbers of NRCS program participants assisted and/or cooperating in the project effort.* The SWAT partner positions made 1,409 contacts (field visits, etc.) with 641 different agricultural producers as of December 31, 2012. The reporting system was revised in 2013, and we now track Technical Assistance days. Since January 1, 2013, the SWAT provided 9,886.25 Technical Assistance days. This level of technical assistance provision is indicative of how the SWAT will ratchet up SGI implementation over the next few years.
- d) *Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) being employed through the SWAT agreement.* Twenty-six and three-quarters (26.75) FTEs (20.0 Field Delivery Capacity Partner Position FTEs, 1.0 SGI Field Capacity Coordinator FTE, 1.0 SGI Communications Coordinator FTE, 0.75 IWJV FTEs, and 4.0 Science Support FTEs) were employed during the reporting period.
- e) *Acres of project area addressed in NRCS program contracts and/or extents of conservation activities implemented in the project area.* The SGI SWAT, to date, resulted in the following accomplishments: conservation planning for 2,891,865 acres of grazing systems; 332,982 acres of conifer removal; 1,681,307 feet (318 miles) of fence marking or removal; 8,822 acres of wetland restoration; 38,587 acres of rangeland seeding; and 34,908 acres of conservation easements.
- f) *NRCS program dollars obligated in agreements in the projects area by program.* A total of \$524,592 in Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds were obligated during the reporting period. ***This brings the total amount contracted by the SWAT, to date, to an impressive \$73,377,657!***
- g) *Other partner or resource contributions from other agencies or organizations which help implement provisions of the agreements.* We have secured or leveraged a total of \$7.4 million in partner contributions to date.

Appendix A

Objectives & Evolution of the Sage Grouse Initiative Strategic Watershed Action Team

Launched in 2010, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) is a highly targeted and science-based working landscape approach to delivering the right conservation practices in the right places, in order to elicit a positive sage grouse population response to management. SGI uses dedicated Farm Bill conservation program funds, at appropriately large scales, to alleviate threats that otherwise fragment habitats—the primary reason for the species “candidate” designation under the federal Endangered Species Act. SGI targets Farm Bill resources to high sage grouse abundance centers, or “core areas,” to maintain large and intact habitats, rather than providing palliative care to small and declining populations.

The SGI Strategic Watershed Action Team (SWAT) was established in 2011 to strengthen NRCS' capacity to implement SGI. Over seven years later, SGI SWAT has continued building field capacity and strengthening the science guiding SGI, as well as bolstering communications capacity through partnerships. SGI SWAT objectives include:

- Increase field-level capacity by placing specialized human skill sets at critical geographic “pinch points” to increase SGI benefits.*
- Increase science capacity to better focus SGI implementation, assess biological outcomes, and continually improve program delivery.*
- Improve and enhance outreach and communication strategies to increase partner buy-in and SGI participation from landowners.*
- Expand SGI partnership to further leverage NRCS contributions resulting in increased outcomes and participation.*

This work has been facilitated through agreements with two major partners. In 2011, NRCS entered into an Interagency Agreement (IA) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) was charged with implementation of the IA on behalf of FWS. NRCS obligated \$9.3 million to the IA, which the IWJV leveraged to raise an additional \$7 million from an array of conservation partners including FWS, state wildlife and agricultural agencies, conservation districts, non-governmental conservation organizations, and energy companies. Between 2011 and 2016 – the term of the IA – the combined \$16.3 million resulted in:

- 2,443,193 acres of rangeland improvements; 308,144 acres of conifer removal; and 218 miles of high-risk fence marked or removed.*
- Completion of 14 major research projects that evaluated outcomes of conservation practice implementation or identified future conservation investments.*
- Establishment of a robust communications program with a top-notch website, strong social media presence, and innovative written series including Rancher Success Stories and Science to Solutions.*
- A network of conservation partners focused on sagebrush habitat conservation, as well as a new partnership between the IWJV and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) that seeks to expand the SGI SWAT model to public lands, specifically those managed by BLM.*

In June 2016, NRCS executed a Cooperative Agreement with Pheasants Forever (PF), obligating an additional \$5 million to continue the SGI SWAT effort through September 2019. PF is committed to working with partners in providing over \$2.68 million in match to the agreement.