

Executive Order 15-18



2015

Through

2020

Oregon Sage-Grouse State Action Plan Report

This report is prepared for the Governor's Office and Oregon Legislature to reflect executive state agency implementation actions conducted through state-funded programs in partnership with federal and local actors from 2015-2020.



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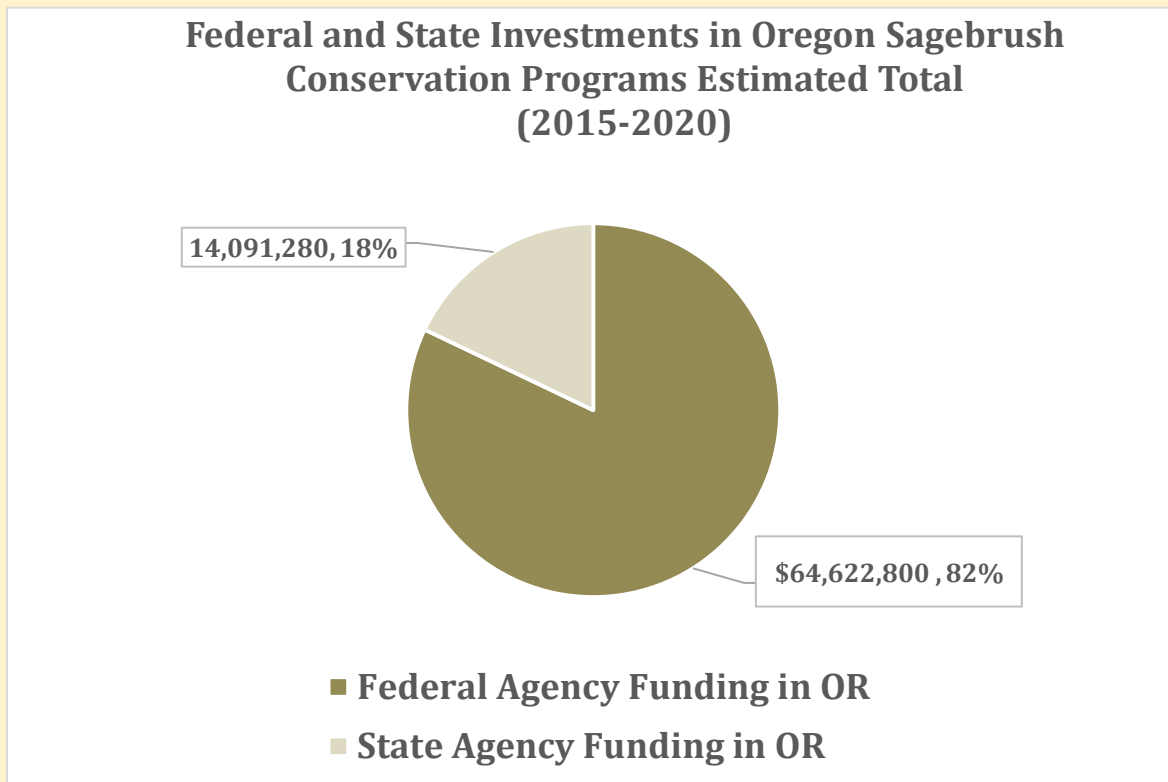
Photo Credit: Julia Babcock, 2019 SageCon Summit Field Tour in Burns

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, as part of state efforts across the West to avert the need for an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing, Governor Kate Brown signed [Executive Order 15-18](#) adopting the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan. The Order directs executive branch agencies to advance implementation of the Plan as well as coordination across state, federal, and local governments and tribes in partnership with local stakeholders. This State Action Report marks the third biennial report to the legislature and Governor's office, summarizing and accounting for Oregon state agency actions advanced with state funds. Since 2015, through state agency programs and partnerships, the State of Oregon has invested over \$15 million dollars in implementation of the State Action Plan and coordinated processes through bi-partisan support of various funding packages. A significant portion of that funding, \$10 million, came through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) as part of sagebrush/sage-steppe [Focused Investment Partnership \(FIP\)](#) spanning 10 years to support actions tied to sage-grouse, sagebrush habitat, and rural community health.

By investing in Oregon's rangelands and the sagebrush species and communities which rely on these ecosystems, SageCon partners have leveraged resources to support continuity across a vast landscape. A rollup of investments is highlighted in the summary chart below, representing an estimate of federal and state agency investments in on-the-ground actions ranging from habitat restoration to invasive annual grass removal to rangeland fire management. Investments made in Oregon from 2015-2020 are based on self-reporting from federal and state agency staff across multiple programs, years and resources associated with sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat within Eastern Oregon. The estimated total of \$78 million in investments across federal and state agencies reflects ongoing engagement and commitments to leverage landscape-level impacts that result in meaningful action on the ground. In all over 1.5 million acres have been treated to address invasive plants, juniper, fire and other priority threats. To see a breakdown of on the ground work leveraged through federal, state and local investments in Oregon see the [Conservation Actions Report](#). The [SageCon Dashboard](#) rolls up five years of data to provide an overview of the status and trends of sagebrush rangeland condition, sage-grouse populations, and collaborative conservation efforts in southeastern Oregon.

These funding investments are critical to proactively addressing threats to the sagebrush ecosystem and rural community rangeland health as identified in the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan and associated programs. These threats include rangeland wildfire and invasive annual grasses, which not only impact sage-grouse but many of the State's other wildlife species as well as ranching and livestock operations; recreation interests like backcountry hiking, hunting, and birding; and other economic and social values.



Oregon's programmatic approaches and elements include land use and mitigation rules adopted by the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission; local county programs; state agency invasive weed, wildfire, and Common School Fund / state land management programs; and voluntary commitments by Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA) members and private landowners working with and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and others through regulatory assurance or incentive programs such as Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. These efforts--and related coordination with federal agency programs and federal public land management partners--serve as the cornerstones of Oregon's overall approach to addressing threats to sage-grouse, sagebrush ecosystems, and rural economic and community health across what amounts to approximately one-third of the state.

Because the sagebrush ecosystem, its wildlife, and rural communities span private, state, and federal lands involving multiple layers of government jurisdiction and diverse non-governmental interests, a coordinated, integrated, and landscape-level governance and implementation approach remains necessary. Wildfire and invasive annual grass concerns continue to mount, and they don't respect property ownership boundaries. Continued funding support and state investment remains key to the Action Plan's effectiveness in addressing threats as well as the long-term partner capacity and sustainability of rural communities.

Oregon's Action Plan was developed through the Sage-Grouse Conservation Partnership (SageCon Partnership), a collaborative effort that gathered together government entities, private sector, and diverse non-governmental interests to design and advance this state-based approach as well as to shape federal planning on US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands. Along with other state plans and actions taken by BLM and western states, Oregon's approach was central to the September 2015 decision that sage-grouse were not warranted for listing under the ESA at that time.

The SageCon Partnership continues today as a hub for coordination, integration, conflict resolution, collaborative problem-solving and solution-shaping across stakeholders holding diverse interests and values. Related to this, a Memorandum of Understanding addressing partnership expectations and commitments has been signed by federal government agencies and the State of Oregon (with a placeholder for county signatures). Direction to enter this type of MOU is found in the State Action Plan, Executive Order 15-18, and U.S. Dept. of the Interior Secretarial Order 3353 (part of federal administration efforts to increase cooperation with western states).

This State Action Report responds to Executive Order 15-18's direction and summarizes state executive branch agency actions undertaken from 2015-2020 with legislative and lottery fund investments tied to the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan in rural Oregon. In addition to addressing sage-grouse population and habitat threats, this state investment promotes human community resilience and health through local capacity and job creation (e.g., active management work advanced under contract or by the local workforce), support for local rural entities and institutions (e.g., RFPAs, SWCDs, Local Implementation Teams, etc.), and economic benefits related to sustainable advancement of development projects and improved rangeland health. Complementary reporting efforts further contextualize and illustrate how state funds leverage conservation actions not just in Oregon on an agency-by-agency basis (as summarized below) but also where Oregon stands amongst Western states in the scale and pace in which it is contributing to sagebrush restoration and management. An overview of 2020 west-wide reporting efforts has been developed into a supporting [presentation](#). The [SageCon Partnership Dashboard](#) provides detailed accounting around threats, opportunities and challenges in Oregon.

STATE AGENCY ACTIONS and INVESTMENTS

Through leveraged investments, shared partner capacity and coordinated actions for implementation, the following state executive branch agency reports reflect progress made in implementing the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan from 2015-2020. These actions are supported through the Sage-Grouse Conservation Partnership (SageCon) efforts to strategically apply legislative funding and OWEB lottery funds. References below to policy option packages (POP) and bill numbers are from the 2015, 2017 and 2019 sessions of the Oregon Legislature.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) conserves and manages Oregon's sage-grouse populations through its wildlife and conservation programs, statutes and rules, which include population and habitat goals. ODFW's wildlife-division local staff and biologists engage with private landowners, federal agencies, hunting and other recreation interests, and the broader public in advancing the agency's mission. In addition, through OAR 635-140-0000, ODFW oversees development and implementation of a mitigation program that ensures economic development projects (and impacts) are consistent with sage-grouse conservation. This mitigation program syncs with state and local land use rules and a mitigation hierarchy set forth through DLCD OAR 660-023-0115 and also applies to other state agency actions in sage-grouse habitat. For more information around ODFW's multifaceted efforts including the latest sage-grouse population report and mitigation materials: <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/sagegrouse/>



Notably, Sage-grouse lek survey efforts during 2020 were the third highest accomplished to date in Oregon. Of the 1,180 individual leks and 795 lek complexes known to exist or have existed in the state, 65.5% and 63.4%, respectively were surveyed during 2020. ODFW Population reports from 2016-2020 are posted on their website here: <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/sagegrouse/population.asp>

Legislative and other state investment

- **\$500,000** in pre- and post-fire habitat resilience work (2015 POP 801, adopted in 2015 SB 5511).
- **\$350,000** for mitigation coordinator and development and mitigation work (2015 POP 801).
- **\$425,000.00** for mitigation coordinator and development and mitigation work (2017).
- **\$413,934.00** for mitigation coordinator and development and mitigation work (2019).
- **\$90,000** for Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) two joint positions \$100,000+ for Local Implementation Team Coordinator positions for the Baker, Prineville and Vale districts to support community-based sage-grouse population and habitat conservation management (2016-2020).

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

Pre- and post-fire habitat resilience work

- **\$65,000**—annual grass control at edge of core habitat (post-fire) on Department of State Lands (DSL) across 3,000 acres.
- **\$24,000**—annual grass control in core habitat (post-fire) on ODFW state wildlife area land (500 acres).
- **\$2,400**—Invasive grass treatment near Sheep Rock
- **\$53,000**—herbicide application for annual grass resiliency treatment (intact sagebrush habitat with moderate annual grass invasion) on DSL lands in core and low density sage-grouse habitat across 1,400 acres.
- **\$162,000**—seed technology research effort with Oregon State University (OSU)/Burns Agricultural Research Station (investigating the application of seed pellets, hydroseeding material, and furrow depth in rangeland fire restoration).
- **\$25,000**—purchased and stored herbicide to treat approximately 4,000 acres for quick treatment during next fire season.
- **\$140,000**—purchased thirty GPS radio transmitters for fitting on sage-grouse. When conducting prioritization of pre-fire habitat protection and post-fire habitat restoration to benefit sage-grouse, it is imperative to target actions towards those areas that will have life-history benefits beyond breeding/lek season only. Targeted GPS telemetry data from a subset of priority areas of conservation most at risk of wildfire will serve to improve the ability of decision makers to direct pre-fire and post-fire habitat improvement projects towards areas that have the greatest potential benefit to populations, both in terms of excluding fire from critical sage-grouse habitat areas throughout their life-cycle and in restoring those areas following fire. Additionally, significant data gaps exist regarding the distribution of late-summer and winter habitat for the species across much of the range in Oregon. These life-history phases have significant impact on population trajectories. The GPS data will improve knowledge of habitat use and population modeling efforts throughout all of Oregon's priority areas of conservation.

Development and mitigation work

- **Established a full-time mitigation program coordinator position**—tasked with implementation of ODFW's 2015 mitigation rules. Coordinator worked with SageCon partners to build the Habitat Quantification Tool and related mitigation credit and debit calculation efforts; engaged with agency and other partners in building the DLCD Development Registry and broader Decision Support System; and engaged development project applicants, local county planners, and others on specific site-level development permitting and application of the Habitat Quantification Tool and related mitigation obligations. The coordinator remains engaged in in-lieu fee mitigation credit development efforts.
- **Mitigation pathway and development permit advancement**—for economic development projects in rural Oregon, including the following:

Small scale projects moving forward

- Fiber optic line and transmission line (Lake County) – Both projects are located in core sage-grouse habitat. The county determined each project as an outright permitted use (no permit required) and therefore did not trigger sage-grouse mitigation rules.

- Dwellings (Lake County) – two dwellings were permitted in sage-grouse core habitat. The area is zoned for development and should not have been incorporated into core during the mapping exercise. There is another dwelling proposed within a few miles of the previous two. The current project proposal impacts sage-grouse core and low-density habitat. ODFW is working through discussions to determine further details and potential triggers to the sage-grouse rules.
- Aggregate mine for farm use (Deschutes county) – This project fell on the edge of low density near irrigated agriculture. Through great coordinated efforts, the project proponent significantly reduced the size of the proposed mine to under 5 acres and agreed to limited operation outside of sage-grouse breeding and nesting seasons. Under the rules as a small development, it did not meet the proximity requirements to a nearby lek to trigger the rules.

Large scale projects

- Communication tower (Malheur County) – 450 ft cell tower was proposed in low density habitat along Hwy 78. The project was close to being finalized but the project proponent decided not to proceed because the cost of mitigation through ODFW's In-Lieu Fee was too expensive.
- ODOT quarry expansion (Baker county) – ODOT has proposed a quarry expansion along I-84 near Pleasant Valley. ODFW is holding several coordination meetings around mitigation responsibilities and roles to be completed by the end of 2020.

Other projects still in the formative stage:

- Boardman to Hemingway transmission line (multiple counties).
- Spencer Wells aggregate project (Deschutes County).
- Little Eagle Butte sunstone mine projects (Lake County).
- Glass Buttes cell tower—input on BLM project (Deschutes County near Brothers).
- Solar energy siting projects (initial discussion with no final plans received; Harney County, near Burns and Riley).
- Calico Resources Grassy Mountain Gold Project (Malheur County).
- **Commitment of \$30,000 in partnership with DLCD funds** to construct the State's Development Registry (as required by Oregon Administrative Rules) through contract with OSU's Institute for Natural Resources.

Local Implementation Team (LIT) Coordination

Local Implementation Team Positions are supported through ODFW in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and Pheasants Forever. Over the 2015-2020 period, LIT's have aligned with the Sage-Grouse State Action Plan and the Oregon Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy, with over \$100,000 allocated from ODFW funding. LIT coordinators covering the North/South Vale, Prineville, and Baker districts provide facilitation and coordination for these teams to prioritize and address threats to sage-grouse populations, habitat, and rangeland health at the local community level. Moving forward, additional LITs and coordinators are intended for the Burns and Lakeview districts. Read more about LIT history and resources here: <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/sagegrouse/lit.asp>

NRCS/SGL jointly-funded work

Managed and oversaw two NRCS SGI private lands conservation projects. Duties included landowner outreach regarding the SGI program, site evaluation, conservation plan development, conservation implementation contracting, project monitoring, and project reporting.

Additional work

- **Habitat:** Utilized federal Pittman-Robertson funds along with state hunting license dollars to match with partner funds in advancing seed collection, seedling grow-out and restoration planning, including **\$61,000 for habitat-scale mapping in Baker County**.
- **Population Surveys: \$997,076 for sage-grouse monitoring since 2015.** Lek/population monitoring with assistance from federal agency partner biologists and “Adopt a Lek” volunteer program. Counting sage-grouse on leks during the breeding season is a standard approach to estimating population levels. 2020 marked the greatest proportion of leks ever surveyed in Oregon. (Seventy three percent of all known leks were surveyed). Data gathered included annual lek attendance by each July and brood count by August. See <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/sagegrouse/population.asp>
- **Coordination:** Since 2015, ODFW has placed and continues to support a lead sage-grouse coordinator staff position in rural Oregon within the range of the bird (currently based out of Hines, OR). This staffer works with other agencies, LITs, landowners, and other partners in advancing the Action Plan and related wildlife and habitat work.
- **Wildfire and Predation Research:** Utilized federal Pittman-Robertson funds matched with state hunting license dollars to continue long-term study on sage-grouse response to wildfire in southern Harney and Malheur counties, and to institute a new research project investigating raven influence on sage-grouse nesting success in Baker and northern Malheur counties. See <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/sagegrouse/population.asp>

Oregon Department of Forestry

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) provides leadership and capacity in managing one of the primary threats to sage-grouse habitat: rangeland wildfire. Though the majority of private sage-grouse habitat is not on protected lands served by ODF’s fire division, legislative funds and ODF staff support have created an important partnership with [Rangeland Fire Protection Associations \(RFPAs\)](#) and federal BLM fire programs to coordinate protection and response on private, state, and federal land. ODF provides coordination, training, equipment and resources to RFPAs to align with standards and capacity for BLM. Notably, RFPAs are a voluntary resource asset for Oregon, with individual members generally being landowners who contribute significant hours, materials, and other contributions on otherwise unprotected lands.



Photo Credit: Bing Bingham

In 2019, the [Oregon Governor’s Council on Wildfire Response Report](#) included acknowledgement of the value of RFA capacity and the need to significantly advance invasive annual grass treatments in order to reduce rangeland wildfire risk, along with recommendations to expand these programs and improve funding to address rangeland fire prevention, response and restoration efforts: Unfortunately, the 2019 legislative session ended prematurely before the recommendations and related funding could be fully reviewed and acted upon.

The following table depicts rangeland fire activity and acres burned across Oregon’s sagebrush country since 2016, when the Oregon legislature’s significant 2015 investment in RFA capacity improvement

began to play out. For context, the acres burned figures for this period are dramatically lower than Oregon’s pre-2015 levels (e.g., 2012--over 1 million acres burned; 2014--over 500,000 acres burned), when less funding and less attention was placed on RFPA work. While RFPA capacity does not control the number of fire starts in a given year, the adequacy of RFPA capacity does directly influence how many starts grow to any significant size (versus being caught on initial attack), which is a key part of the RFPA program’s value proposition and supported by the figures below.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Fires	116	146	168	114
Acres Burned	87,422	103,388	76,380	34,475

Legislative and other state investment

\$1.6 million for wildfire (2015 POPs 119 and 120; adopted as part 2015 SB 5019, supplemented via 2015 SB 5507 Sec. 120.)

- Direct connection to local RFPAs
- 22 RFPAs are now supported statewide (covering 16 million acres of sage-grouse habitat)

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

ODF and RFPA Capacity


- **\$400,000**—ODF staffing (field coordinator position working directly with RFPAs) and administrative support. Both are limited-duration positions. Field coordinator funding is one-half general funds and one-half federal funds. Administrative support is fully funded by the general fund.
- **\$1.2 million**—pass-through funds to counties and RFPAs. (ODF coordinated with OWEB to administer the funds.) See appendix A for details for FY 2016 and 2017. Some money went to counties directly. Each county with an RFPA received a percentage of money based on the amount of sage-grouse habitat in that county. The rest of the money was awarded to RFPAs through a competitive grant process. Items funded include the following:
 - **RFPA operating budget** (ODF pays up to one-half with an RFPA in-kind match). ODF will reimburse up to 50 percent of the RFPA operating budget and in-kind time for administration costs (insurance, state filing fees, accountant work, etc.).
 - **Communications equipment** (e.g., radios used during fire operations)—Legislative funds were applied to procurement, upgrades, and maintenance, resulting in more than doubling pre-2016 capacity.
 - **Firefighting equipment** (e.g., engines, bulldozers, tenders, water tanks, liners). Nearly a thousand pieces of equipment were purchased with the legislative funds.
 - **RFPA liability insurance** (paid from a different part of general funds).

As a result of the state’s legislative funding, the level of fire protection related to sage-grouse habitat and rural rangelands has increased due to increased interest and engagement in RFPA membership,

increased capacity and skills, improved collaboration and coordination with the BLM, and resulting increases in acres covered by RFPAs. Specifically, **Twenty-four RFPAs have been formed in Oregon**, covering 16 million acres of sage-grouse habitat with fire protection capacity. [2020 RFPA Directory with maps of coverage by association](#). See Further accomplishments below:

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Trained Firefighters	116	146	168	114
Untrained Support	87,422	103,388	76,380	34,475
Fire Engines	248	283	335	345
ATV/UTV & Tanks in trailers	94	90	120	101
Water Tenders	50	54	62	55
Dozers & Road Graders	124	112	117	100
Tractors with Transports	41	51	45	48

The greatest benefit that the legislative funds have provided are increased response and capacity through investment in communication, coordination, and collaboration with other partners related to landscape-level wildfire protection and health, especially among BLM, NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). The RFPA training provided by ODF staff was a significant value-add for capacity and integration with BLM fire operations, including an increase in RFPA membership engagement. BLM contributed time and money to leverage training activities. A yearly refresher will be held. Additional RFPA highlights include:

- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed to formalize BLM and RFPa coordination.** Related to BLM's Resource Management Plan Amendment instruction memorandum and Secretary of Interior order regarding wildfire, which includes tracking with a focus on fire and sage-grouse habitat overlap, this MOU marks notable improvement in agency and landowner relations.
- **Increased coordination with other agencies** (ODA, ODFW, etc.) to manage investments across the fire and invasive grass cycle. 

Oregon Department of Agriculture

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) oversees programs and public investment in improving conditions for water, soils and a rich diversity of plants and crops. ODA has a role in the regulation of private agricultural lands in Oregon and restoration efforts for sage-grouse habitat as well as other habitat on those lands. ODA administers Oregon's Invasive Noxious Weed Control Program and oversees the [Oregon State Weed Board](#) (OSWB), in addition to its administrative connections, and supports SWCDs and the [Oregon Invasive Species Council](#).




The [Noxious Weed Program](#) works with local, state, and federal partners as well as private landowners to implement and coordinate invasive weed control projects. A number of these activities benefit sage-grouse habitat. ODA works with the OSWB to prioritize projects and award noxious weed control grants. OSWB grants are for on-the-ground weed control projects that restore, enhance or protect fish and wildlife habitat, watershed function, and native salmonids or water quality. The following summarizes the primary ODA projects and grant awards that benefit and protect Oregon's sage-grouse core habitat. These include state lottery funds and general funds, OSWB grants (which are lottery-funded through OWEB), and federally funded BLM projects that are coordinated through ODA.

Legislative and other state investments

- \$344,000 (2015 general fund and lottery fund)
- \$426,000 (2015 lottery fund)
- \$291,000 (BLM in 2015)
- \$100,000 Oregon Invasive Species Council (2015 POP 320, adopted via 2015 HB 5002)
- Noxious Weed Program (2015 POP 320, adopted via 2015 HB 5002)
- \$461,854.00 Oregon State Weed Board Grants (2016)
- \$491,552 Oregon State Weed Board Grants (2017)
- \$1,029, 839.50 Oregon State Weed Board Grants (2018-2019)

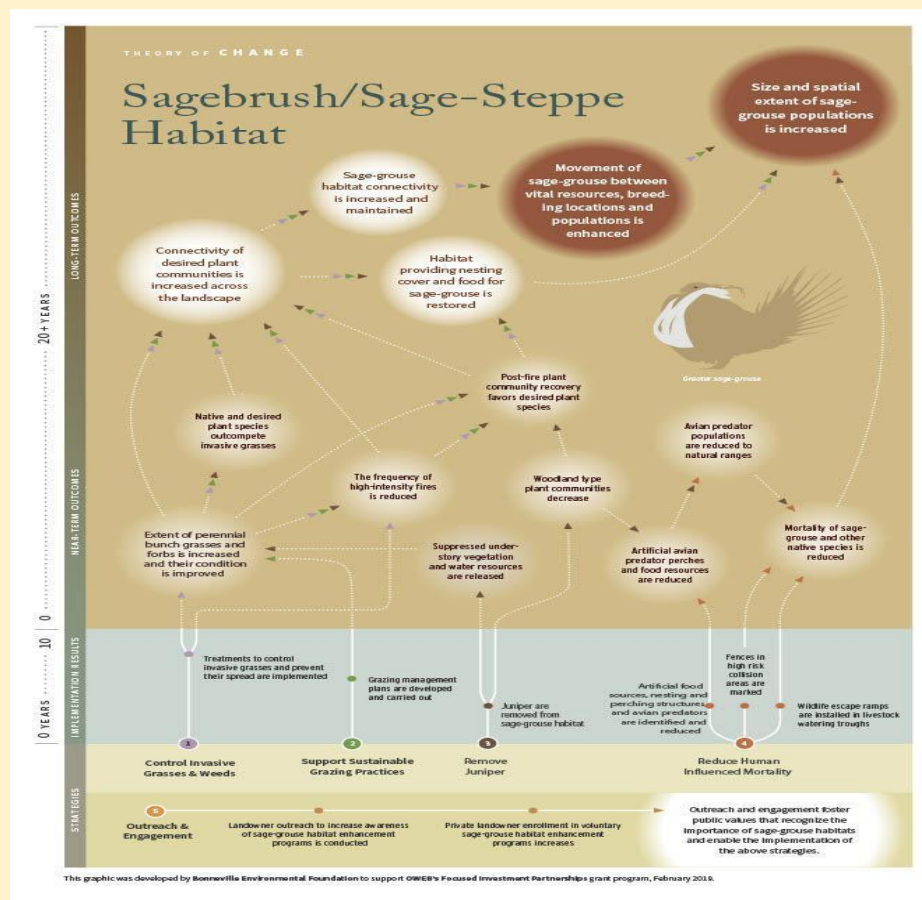
Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

- The Noxious Weed Program supports integrated control projects that target state-listed noxious weeds. In 2017 alone, there were **26 of these projects valued at \$174,000.**
- **\$953,406 in total OSWB grants** in core habitat areas were awarded during the 2015–2017 biennium. In 2017 alone, OSWB awarded **\$491,552 to 22 grants** in core sage-grouse habitat counties. OSWB grants are Measure 76 lottery funds that are funded through OWEB and administered by ODA. **11 projects totaling \$135,900** were coordinated by ODA on federal lands in the calendar year 2017. These were BLM-funded, ODA-coordinated projects in core habitat counties. Funding continued at this level for the remainder of the 2017–2019 biennium totalling **\$271,800.**
- [ODA's 2019 Annual Noxious Weed Program Report](#) provides details of the "P Hill" project in Frenchglen to treat medusahead rye and veteneta.

- In 2018-2019, over \$1 million dollars was allocated through OSWB grants. See Appendix D for 2016-2019 reporting of funding distribution by weed board, county and year. 

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

As part of advancing the State's Sage-Grouse Action Plan, OWEB committed \$10 million over ten years associated with OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership work to achieve clean and measurable ecological outcomes for Oregon's sagebrush steppe. The funding has helped leverage federal funds associated with the NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program and SGI (including a \$9 million award to Oregon in 2015), and is directly connected to SWCDs and on-the-ground private land work related to voluntary Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) between landowners and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The diagram below provides the theory of change in the short and long-term to address threats and prioritize restoration activities in sagebrush/sage-steppe habitat ([full report](#)).



Legislative and other state investment

- \$3.4 million in Focused Investment Partnership and Open Solicitation Grants (2015-17 lottery funds)
- \$3.9 million in Focused Investment Partnership and Open Solicitation Grants (2017-19 lottery funds)
- \$1.5 million in Focused Investment Partnership and Open Solicitation Grants (2019-21 lottery funds)
- \$300,000 in Governor's Strategic Priorities Grant (2015-17 lottery funds)
- \$ 550,000.00 in Governor's Strategic Priorities Grant (2017-19 lottery funds)
- \$ 300,000.00 in Governor's Strategic Priorities Grant (2019-21 lottery funds)

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

As of the end of 2019, OWEB invested over \$7.5million in lottery funds in sage-grouse-related projects since the board's commitment. From 2015 through 2020, OWEB investments in sage-grouse projects through both the Focused Investment Partnership program and Open Solicitation grants funded the following activities:


- **36,890 acres** of Invasive annual grass treatments
- **37,590 acres** of Noxious weed treatments
- **6,770 acres** of Seeding
- **37,790 acres** of Juniper removal
- **650 acres** of Fuels management
- **2,280 acres** of Riparian restoration
- **15.25 miles** of fencing marked
- **17 water trough** escapement ramps constructed
- **25.37 miles** of livestock fencing built
- **9+ springs** developed (enhancing sage-grouse and other wildlife habitat)
- **Technical assistance money** provided to SWCDs to design projects

OWEB has also supported Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan advancement through its Governor's Strategic Priorities funding and associated Technical Capacity and Partnership grants. As of the end of 2019, these OWEB technical assistance grant funds totaling over \$1 million dollars have ensured staffing coordination of the SageCon Partnership and initiated or advanced the following actions:

- **Work with state agencies and partners to implement Action Plan** elements tied to conservation-based project tracking. Use decision-support tools to prioritize locations most conducive to habitat restoration and protection, as well as to steer development away from high-priority habitat.
- **Development, testing, and revision of the greater sage-grouse habitat evaluation** and measurement protocol (i.e., Habitat Quantification Tool), with relevance to mitigation-related

credits and debits tied to state rules that balance economic development and habitat conservation.

- **Monitoring program** design and advancement tied to the action plan.
- **Governance and Coordination across** governmental (e.g., state, federal, local, tribal) and non-government partners (e.g., conservation, agriculture, private landowners, business) to ensure respective authorities, programs, plans, and decisions are advanced in an integrated way.
- **Coordination and communication across partners**--including diverse interests both in Oregon and west-wide through regular newsletters, meetings, dissemination of tools and workshops, and an annual summit.
- **Oregon Explorer website completion** in spring/summer 2018. The site includes a repository of resources relevant to sage-grouse including ongoing partnerships, habitat restoration, development planning, and legal and scientific information.
- **Partner MOU** to reflect federal, state and local government roles and commitments going forward on key sage-grouse and sagebrush conservation priorities.

The SageCon Partnership staff team consists of Brett Brownscombe, Project Manager, Megan Creutzburg, Technical Lead, Julia Babcock, Communications Coordinator and Jennah Stillman, Project Associate. All tools associated with the above actions are available on the [Oregon Explorer SageCon Partnership Website](#) 

Department of Land Conservation and Development

The Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) oversees and administers—in connection with counties and local planners—Oregon’s land use system, goals, and related laws, including the protection of significant natural resources. In 2015, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) adopted rules specific to the protection of sage-grouse and its habitat. OAR 660-023-0115 sets standards and requirements to ensure project developers, county permitting entities, and other state agencies apply a



mitigation hierarchy (avoidance, minimization, and mitigation, including direct connection to ODFW’s mitigation rules) to specified economic development activities proposed in sage-grouse habitat. DLCD tracks, registers, and reports development levels in sage-grouse habitat against protective thresholds established in the rule. To date (as of May 2020) only one Core Area/PAC has reached over 1% disturbance level (well within the rule’s thresholds). [See Exhibit D in the 2020 Annual Staff Report](#) for details. Annual staff reports to LCDC reflecting state and county-level application of the Sage-Grouse Rule, including updates to the development registry for 2017-2019, are posted on the [DLCD Endangered and ESA Candidate Species in Oregon webpage](#)

Legislative and other state investment

- \$300,000 (2015 general fund) (2015 POP 108; adopted as part of agency budget in 2015 HB 5027 via 2015 SB 5507 Sec. 72)

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work


Staffing and technical assistance

- **Established sage-grouse coordinator position** (2015) to support the SageCon Partnership’s role in ensuring coordination, integration, conflict resolution, and opportunity advancement across state agencies, federal entities, local government, non-government organizations, landowners, and other partners.
- **Continued funding of Community Services Specialist position**--which works with county planners and broader interests to ensure compliance with and implementation support for the State’s land use system and related goals, including DLCD’s Sage-Grouse Rule.

Development and mitigation work

- **Construction of a State Development Registry** through an inter-governmental agreement with OSU and ODFW pursuant to the LCDC-adopted sage-grouse land use rules and in coordination with local counties and other partners. The registry tracks changes in human development in sage-grouse habitat from baseline levels, which is relevant to habitat protection, compliance with protection-based thresholds in LCDC’s rule, and advancement of economic development and mitigation. Data-sharing and syncing of the registry is underway with BLM, state agencies, and

county-level planning offices to ensure landscape-level coordination. Creation of the registry was completed at the end of the 2015–17 biennium, with DLCD funding leveraging **an additional \$30,000 in support** from ODFW (not included in the \$300,000 DLCD investment shown above).

- **Approximately \$40,000 in local planning from DLCD’s Technical Assistance Grant Program** (general funds not included in the \$300,000 DLCD investment shown above) to Harney County for Goal 5 planning work to implement LCDC’s sage-grouse rule.
- **Pursuant to Executive Order 15-18, DLCD staff has reached out to other agencies** to ensure agency plans and coordination agreements are up-to-date such that actions advanced or authorized by those agencies will be consistent with LCDC’s sage-grouse rule and ODFW’s mitigation rule. 

In 2020-21, LCDC is reviewing the adopted sage-grouse-specific administrative rules for implementing Goal 5 of Oregon’s land use system (OAR 660-023-0115), otherwise known as the "Sage-Grouse Rule." The rule defines significant sage-grouse habitat and identifies land uses that conflict with mating and rearing. It directs counties to review development permit applications using avoidance and mitigation criteria, and it also sets a limit on the amount of core habitat that can be lost due to new development. DLCD is now undertaking a 5-year review, with an LCDC hearing expected in January 2021. Input is being solicited from counties, federal and state agencies, and non-governmental partners that participated in the 2015 Rulemaking Advisory Committee process. For more information contact the [DLCD ESA Candidate Species page](#).

Department of State Lands

The Department of State Lands (DSL) manages Common School Fund public lands in Oregon. In 2015, DSL formalized its commitment to sage-grouse conservation by entering into a CCAA with USFWS applicable to over 600,000 acres of Common School Fund lands in Oregon's sage-grouse geography. The CCAA provides the state with ESA regulatory assurances so long as CCAA terms are met, and DSL continues to manage the state lands to model best practices in partnership with federal and state agencies and lessees.



Legislative and other state investment

- \$10,000 allocated every biennium to Harney County Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), Jordan Valley CWMA, and Lakeview CWMA for weed control on DSL common school fund/state trust lands.
- \$5,000 for purchase of fence markers and bird ramps
- \$19,000 for purchase of seed
- \$24,000 for contracted services for juniper removal

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

Habitat Work accomplished in core habitat areas and some low density habitat areas:

- **Post-fire rehabilitation** and spraying of invasive species on the Beaver Tables fire—approximately 500 acres (funded by ODFW).
- **Four miles of fence markers** installed.
- **30,000 acres** of range analysis completed.
- **Four wildlife escape ramps** on water tanks—five escape ramps installed.
- **7740 acres Invasive annual grass treatments**
- **73 acres of Seeding**
- **2665 acres Juniper removal** work completed on DSL lands (funded by NRCS and SGI).

DSL Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances

- **525,000 acres of habitat assessments** have been completed; thirty-one sage-grouse habitat assessments have been completed. All but sixteen assessments have USFWS concurrence.
- **DSL submitted an official report** based on CCAA requirements to USFWS in early 2017.

Rangeland Fire Protection Association Support

- **Approximately \$9,575 in RFPA support since 2016.** DSL pays dues wherever there is DSL Common School Fund land within an RFPA boundary, given the role RFPAs play in wildfire operational assistance on DSL/state lands

Oregon Department of Energy

The Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) continues to support and commit staff time to ongoing implementation of the Sage-Grouse Action Plan. As staff to the Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC), ODOE has been engaged in actions related to reviewing energy project permit applications in sage-grouse habitat as well as aligning agency/EFSC rules with the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan and ODFW mitigation rules.



Legislative and other state investment

No state funding specific to sage-grouse conservation or the implementation of the Sage-Grouse Action Plan.

Actions and related SageCon Partnership work

- Continued with ongoing review of the proposed Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission line project, a portion of which could impact sage-grouse habitat. B2H must comply with the mitigation requirements in the ODFW rules as well as the 1 percent and 3 percent large-scale development-related direct impact thresholds in state rules. Consequently, ODOE continues to work with ODFW on assessment of habitat impacts and corresponding mitigation requirements, as well as the OSU Institute for Natural Resources and other SageCon partners related to the direct impact calculations and assessment relative to the 1 percent and 3 percent thresholds. [Boardman to Hemingway siting process page](#).
- No other energy facilities meeting the EFSC-jurisdictional requirements have been proposed in sage-grouse habitat areas covered in the state's rules. Should any such facilities be proposed, ODOE and EFSC would work with ODFW and other SageCon partners on the review of the facility's potential impacts and required mitigation options as aligned with the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan. 🌱

Oregon Department of Transportation

To date, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has not completed any projects outside ODOT right-of-ways within designated sage-grouse habitat. One proposed cutbank maintenance project within designated sage-grouse habitat and outside ODOT's right-of-way is currently in the NEPA review stage with the BLM. ODOT is also currently in review with Baker County and ODFW regarding the proposed 32.09 acre expansion of the existing Pleasant Valley Quarry into designated sage-grouse habitat. A mitigation plan is currently in development. Project development of the quarry expansion (pictured above) is funded by the ODOT material source budget. The proposed cutbank project is funded by the state maintenance operations budget. ODOT receives no funding from the legislature related specifically to sage-grouse. 🌱



State Action Plan Report Conclusion

As Governor Brown stated in her September 2015 letter to SageCon Partners regarding Executive Order 15-18 and adoption of the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan, “with 10 million acres of sage-grouse habitat within the stunning high-desert and working rangelands of eight counties...a lot is at stake not just for wildlife but for all Oregonians.” Sage-grouse conservation, rangeland and rural community health requires collaboration on many levels, from addressing wildfire and invasive species threats on the ground to coordinating government actors, land use, and management policies across public and private ownership.



As demonstrated in this report, the Oregon Legislature and state agencies stepped up over the 2015–2017 biennium to meet these challenges and act. Their efforts to manage threats, as identified in the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan, demonstrate coordination across broad purposes and landscapes. Investment since that time has been less clear or robust. Whether it's by treating thousands of acres of juniper or noxious weeds, installing miles of fences and fence markers or expanding the capacity of RFPAs, state agencies and their partners continue to address threats in order to meet sage-grouse population and habitat goals in a way that also advances rural community and conservation benefits. It is through sustaining these partnerships that sage-grouse conservation moves forward. State funding and capacity remain critical to maintaining momentum towards a more resilient high desert landscape that supports rural community and economic values as well as conservation progress that averts the need for an Endangered Species Act listing. This report documents state funding, the work, and roles of state agencies that are part of the web of partners advancing an integrated approach to implementation of the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan.

As of December 2020, SageCon Partners have developed a 5-year dashboard to reflect the broader partnership activity leveraged in Oregon across multiple sectors and beyond the state funding and executive branch agency actions captured in the [SageCon Dashboard](#) and [Conservation Action Report](#).



This report is a joint effort of the [SageCon Partnership](#) staff at the [National Policy Consensus Center](#) at Portland State University, [Institute for Natural Resource](#) at Oregon State University and the following state agencies:

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
- Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE)
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF)
- Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI)
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD)
- Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL)
- Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

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SageCon Partnership Staff Team

Brett Brownscombe, SageCon Project Manager
National Policy Consensus Center, PSU
brownscombe@pdx.edu

Megan Creutzburg, SageCon Technical Lead
Institute for Natural Resources, OSU
Megan.Creutzburg@oregonstate.edu

Jennah Stillman, SageCon Project Associate
National Policy Consensus Center, PSU
jennah@pdx.edu

Julia Babcock, SageCon Communications Coordinator
National Policy Consensus Center, PSU
jjb@pdx.edu