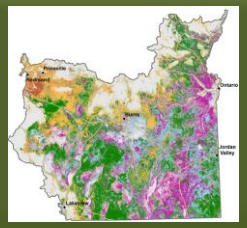
The Oregon SageCon Dashboard

Updated: June 2021

The **SageCon Dashboard** provides an overview of the status and trends of sagebrush rangeland condition, sage-grouse populations, and collaborative conservation efforts in southeastern Oregon.

The Challenges and Threats



Rangeland condition

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Sage-grouse populations

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Human development

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The Efforts and Opportunities

The SageCon Partnership

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Conservation actions

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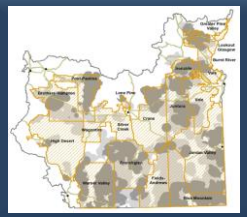


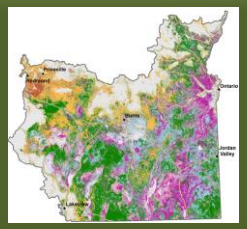
Habitat protection

Pages 10-11

The SageCon Dashboard was produced by Megan Creutzburg, Institute for Natural Resources at Oregon State University on behalf of the SageCon Partnership, 2021

The Oregon SageCon Dashboard

The Challenges and Threats



Rangeland condition in Oregon has declined due primarily to **invasive grasses**, **wildfire**, and **juniper encroachment**.

Pages 4-5

9.1 million acres of functioning sagebrush rangeland

4.1 million acres impaired by invasive grasses

2.9 million acres impaired by juniper expansion

3.1 million acres of rangelands burned

Sage-grouse populations have been in decline over several decades as a result of poor habitat condition and other threats.

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14,200 estimated sage-grouse population in Oregon

Human development poses a threat to sage-grouse range-wide. New programs help minimize conflict between development and sage-grouse. Page 7

0.36% average developed area in sage-grouse Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs)

The Oregon SageCon Dashboard

The Efforts and Opportunities

The SageCon Partnership was formed as a collaborative group to address issues affecting sagebrush ecosystems in Oregon.

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>40 organizations involved in the SageCon Partnership

>$78 million invested in conservation actions

Conservation actions are occurring at an unprecedented level across federal, state and private lands to address threats.

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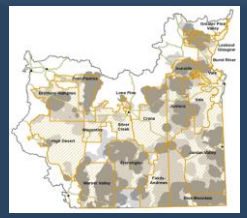
1.1 million acres treated to address invasive plants

251,000 acres treated to address juniper

207,000 acres treated to address other threats



Habitat protection has occurred through fire protection associations and voluntary conservation agreements.

Pages 10-11

91% of core habitat protected by Fire Associations

544,000 acres of private lands enrolled in CCAAs

713,000 acres of state lands enrolled in CCAAs

589,000 acres of BLM lands enrolled in CCAs

Rangeland Condition - Vegetation

9.1 million acres of functioning sagebrush rangeland (ecostates A and A-C)

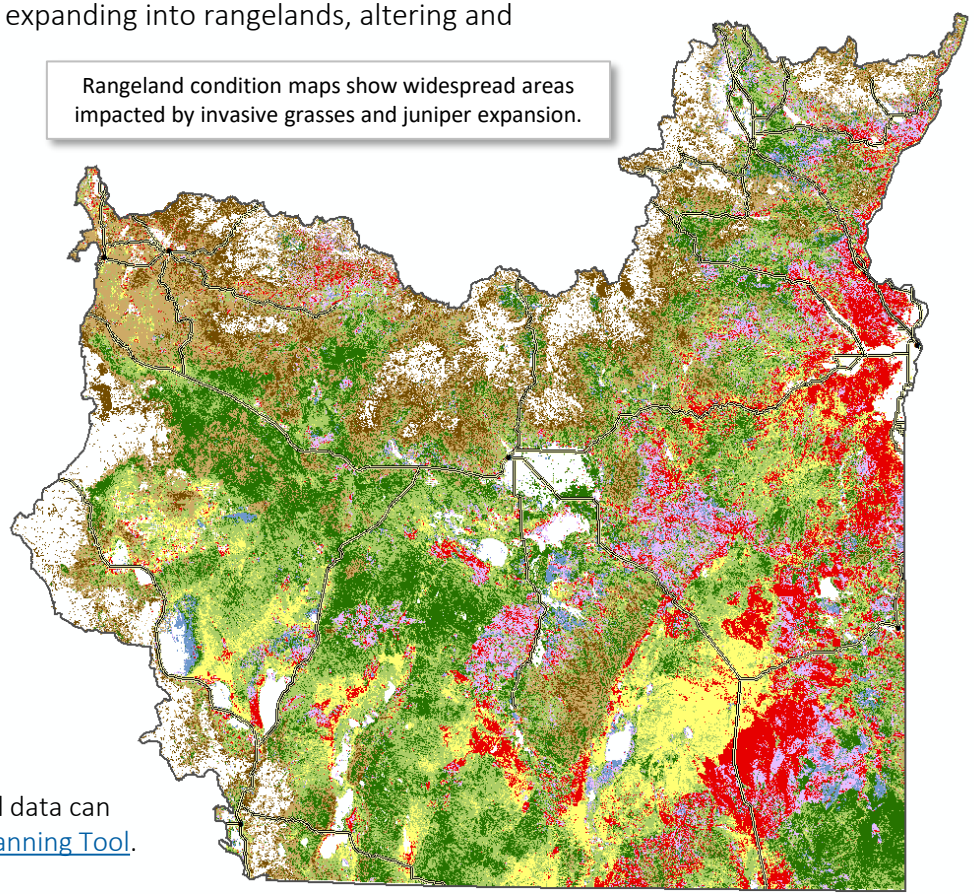
4.1 million acres impaired by invasive grasses (ecostates C and D)

2.9 million acres impaired by juniper expansion

Invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass degrade habitat condition, reduce forage quality, and cause more frequent and severe wildfire. Once established, invasive grasses are difficult to control.

Western juniper, a native species in Oregon, has been expanding into rangelands, altering and degrading habitat for sagebrush-dependent species.

Rangeland condition maps show widespread areas impacted by invasive grasses and juniper expansion.



Sagebrush rangelands in southeastern Oregon cover a patchwork of federal, state and private lands. Rangeland condition has been mapped across all lands using threat-based models, which characterize current vegetation composition and the level of threat from annual grass invasion and juniper encroachment. See the SageCon Rangeland Condition Report for more information about condition and trend across Oregon's rangelands. This dataset was updated in 2021 with a new suite of Ecostate Time Series maps that capture change in rangeland condition over nearly four decades using state-of-the art remote sensing technology.

- A: Good condition shrubland
- A-C: Intermediate condition shrubland
- B: Good condition grassland
- B-D: Intermediate condition grassland
- C: Poor condition shrubland
- D: Poor condition grassland
- Juniper: low-mid cover
- Juniper: high cover
- Towns
- Major roads

The current threat-based model ecostate map and other spatial data can be viewed and downloaded through the SageCon Landscape Planning Tool.

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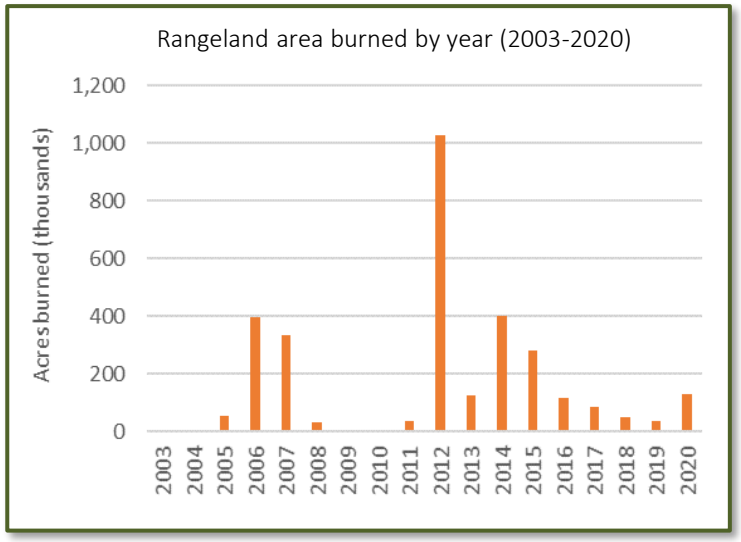
3.1 million acres of rangelands burned in Oregon (2003-2020)

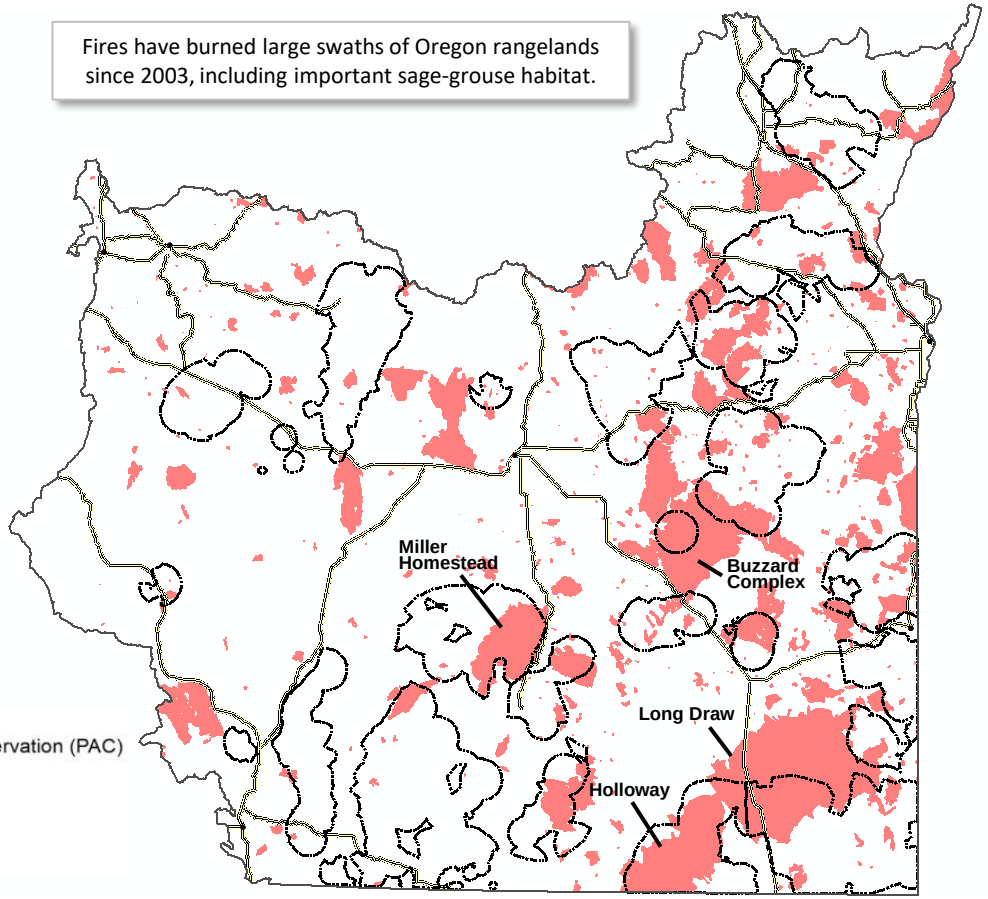
Small, patchy fires are a natural part of the sagebrush ecosystem. However, mega-fires fueled by invasive grasses have become more common in recent years, and are destructive to property, livestock, and wildlife habitat. Fires also spread invasive species, leading to a cycle of expanding invasion and repeated fire.

Fire is highly variable from year-to-year depending on weather, vegetation, and many other factors. Fire protection (see page 10) has helped reduce the area burned in recent years. Sagebrush ecosystems are slow to recover after fire, especially in lower elevation and drier areas.



Of the 3.1 million acres burned from 2003-2021, 1.3 million acres were in important sage-grouse habitat (PACs). 277,000 acres have burned multiple times. The largest rangeland fires in Oregon occurred in 2012 and 2014, labeled on the map.

See the SageCon Rangeland Condition Report for fire summaries across southeastern Oregon.



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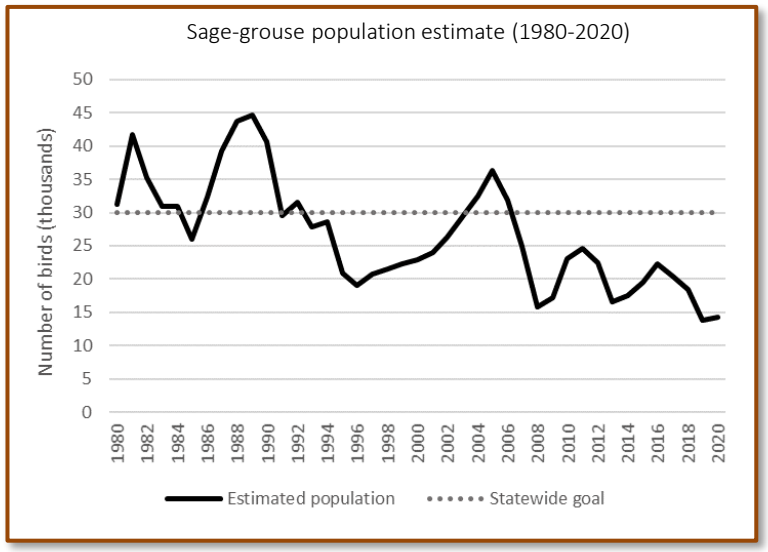
14,200 estimated sage-grouse population in Oregon (2020)

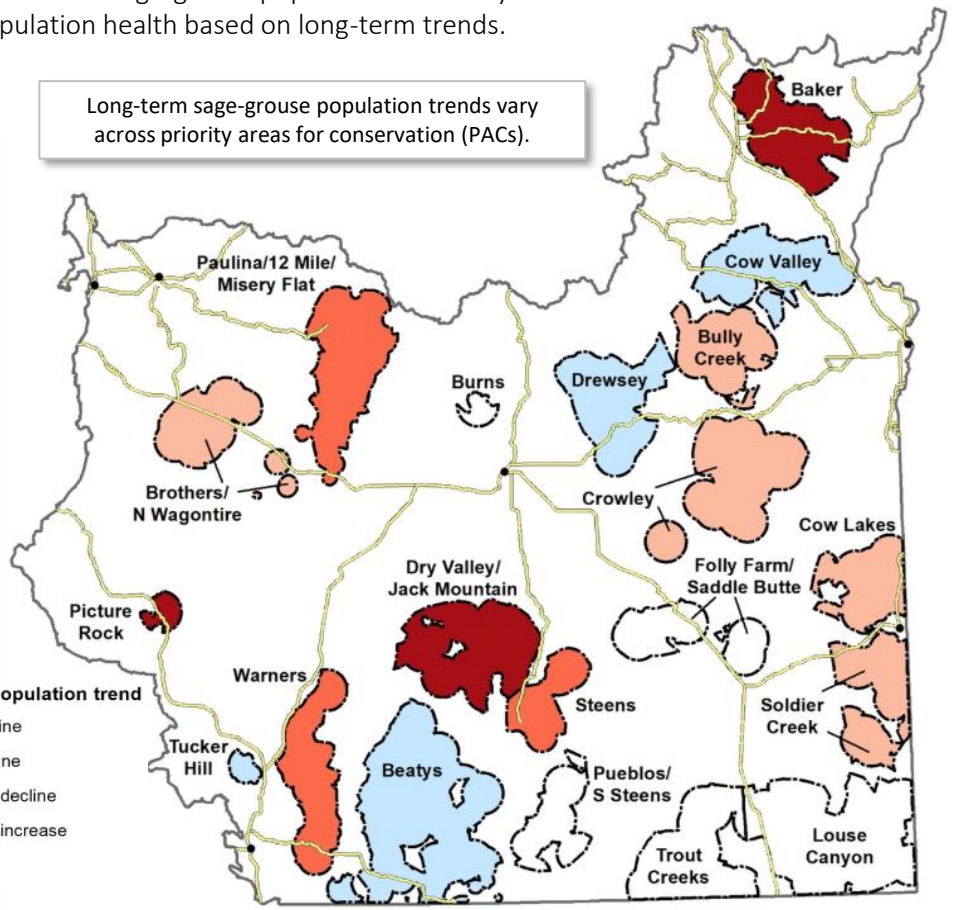
Sage-grouse populations have declined in Oregon due to habitat loss and other threats.

Sage-grouse population estimates are less than half of state-wide objective of roughly 30,000 birds. The species was considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2010 and 2015, but the need for listing was avoided based on the unprecedented level of collaborative planning and conservation efforts across the west.

A robust program has monitored leks (breeding sites) for several decades. Sage-grouse populations naturally fluctuate up and down, and therefore it is important to assess population health based on long-term trends.



Long-term sage-grouse population trends vary across priority areas for conservation (PACs).



Although sage-grouse populations have declined in Oregon, long-term trends across the state range from small increases in some areas to large declines in others. For more information see the annual sage-grouse population reports.

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0.36% average developed area in sage-grouse Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs)

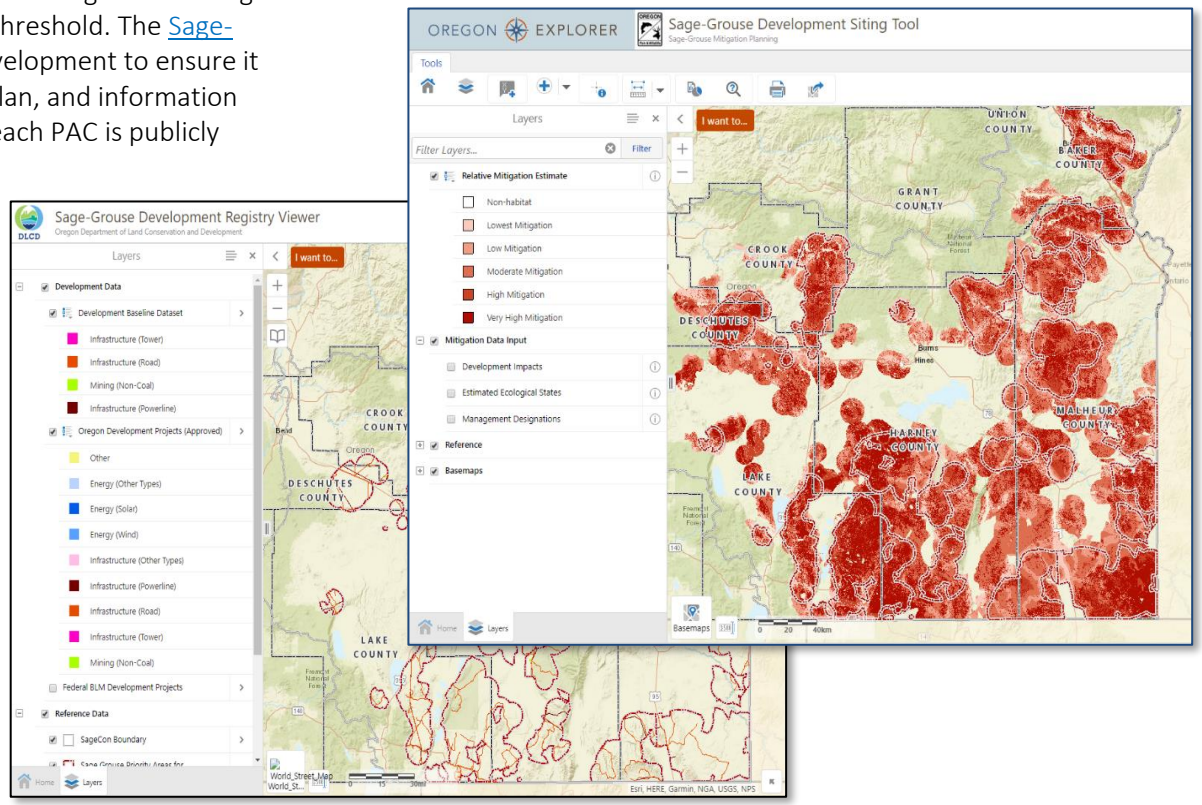
Human development creates important economic opportunity for rural communities, but development in sage-grouse habitat can reduce population viability. Oregon rules established in 2015 help minimize conflict between economic development and sage-grouse conservation by moving development away from the most important habitat.

Through Oregon Administrative Rules, the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan limits the amount of development that can occur in sage-grouse priority areas for conservation (PAC), limiting large-scale human development to 3% of the area in each PAC, up to a 1% increase per decade. They also establish a mitigation hierarchy requirement for development in sage-grouse habitat, consisting of avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation. See Economic Development & Mitigation in Oregon Sage-Grouse Habitat for an overview of the programs.

As of 2019, development thresholds across 20 Oregon PACs ranged from 0.1% to 1.03%, all well below the 3% threshold. The Sage-Grouse Development Registry monitors development to ensure it does not exceed the thresholds set in the plan, and information about the current level of development in each PAC is publicly accessible through the web tool.

The SageCon partnership also developed a web tool to aid in development siting decisions. The Sage-Grouse Development Siting Tool provides project-specific information to developers and planners about the mitigation program and minimizing development impacts to sage-grouse habitat in Oregon.

More information can be found at the Department of Land Conservation and Development and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife websites, and in the Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan.



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>40 organizations involved in the SageCon Partnership

>$78 million invested in on-the-ground conservation actions in Oregon rangelands (2015-2020)

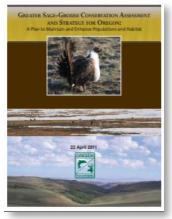
The SageCon Partnership provides a forum for coordination and leveraging resources across a diverse group of stakeholders interested in rangeland health, Greater sage-grouse, and rural communities in southeastern Oregon.

SageCon Partnership Timeline of Major Milestones in Oregon

2010

2010: US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined sage-grouse was warranted but precluded from listing under the **Endangered Species Act**.

2011: Oregon Dept of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) released the Sage-Grouse **Conservation Assessment and Strategy** for Oregon.



2012: **SageCon Partnership** formed to coordinate conservation of sage-grouse in Oregon, in response to the US Secretary of Interior call for development of state action plans.

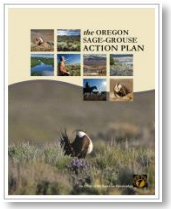
2012 to 2014: over 1.5 million acres of Oregon rangelands burned in wildfires. In response, **Rangeland Fire Protection Associations** were expanded to cover most sage-grouse habitat (see page 10).

2013: USFWS released the range-wide Conservation Objectives Report to identify the primary threats to sage-grouse and guide planning efforts.

2014: **Candidate Conservation Agreements** began to advance voluntary conservation actions on private and public lands (see page 11).

2015: Governor's **Executive Order** and **Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan** outlines a collaborative approach to addressing threats to sage-grouse, including **land use and mitigation rules** (see page 7).

2015: Bureau of Land Management Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse **Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment** (BLM ARMPA) was developed in close coordination with the state. BLM has invested over **$35 million** in implementation and began the new Assessment Inventory and Monitoring (AIM) program.



2015

2015: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) committed **$10 million** to sage-grouse conservation in the state and the Oregon legislature appropriated over **$3 million** to implement the state Action Plan.

2015: USFWS determined that the sage-grouse was **not warranted** for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

2015-2019: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Sage Grouse Initiative and other programs invested **$13 million** in conservation on private rangelands.

2016: SageCon governance structure established, including a Coordinating Council, Staff Implementation Team and technical working groups.

2017: SageCon **decision support tools** were developed to monitor development and aid in development siting and coordinated landscape planning

2019: BLM ARMPA amendment (a preliminary injunction prohibits implementing the amendment, and the 2015 management plan remains in effect).

2019: two **local implementation team** coordinators hired to coordinate actions in Vale, Prineville and Baker.

2019-2020: A Memorandum of Agreement between BLM and ODFW addressed compensatory mitigation across public and private lands, and a Memorandum of Understanding outlined SageCon partnership commitments and roles.

2020

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Conservation Actions

1.1 million acres treated to address invasive plants

251,000 acres treated to address juniper encroachment

207,000 acres treated to address other threats

Treatments implemented from **2015-2018**, compiled across public and private lands in Oregon

An unprecedented investment in actions to benefit sagebrush habitat and sage-grouse populations has improved rangeland condition and supported the local restoration workforce.

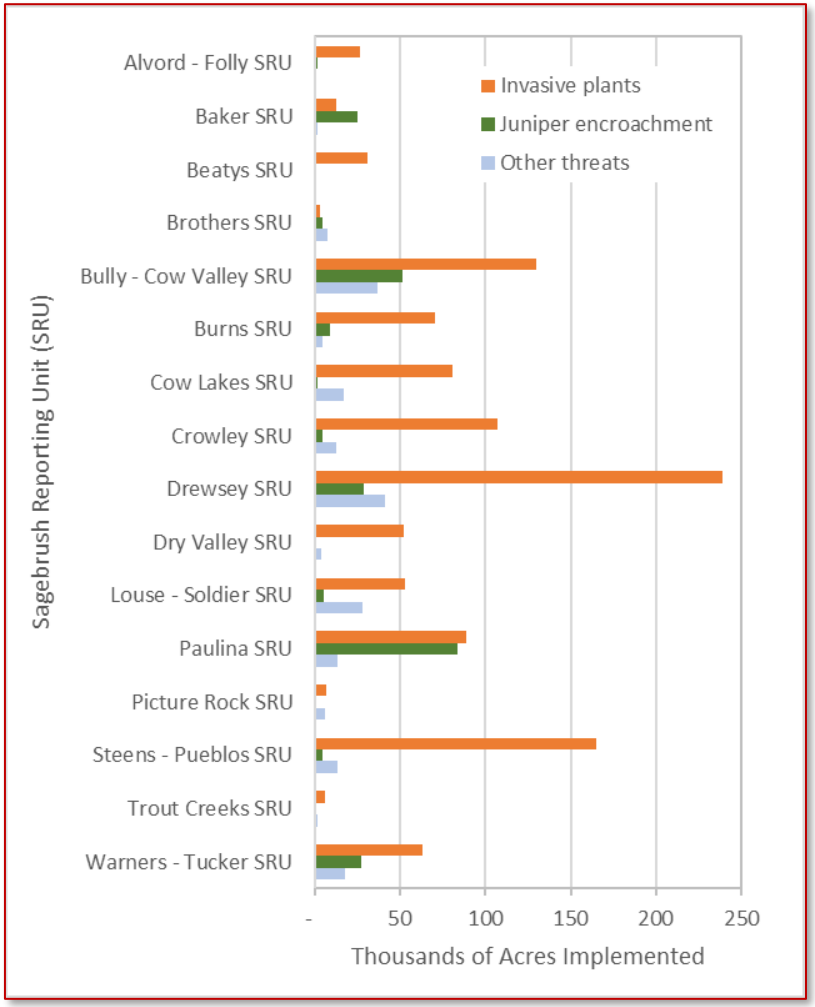
The SageCon Partnership compiled conservation actions taken by partners across public and private lands through the Conservation Efforts Database. Conservation actions were summarized across 17 Sagebrush Reporting Units (SRUs): large units that cover all lands, are centered around sage-grouse PACs, and obscure personally-identifiable information on private lands. See the SageCon Conservation Actions Report for more information about conservation actions in each SRU.

Conservation actions shown here are organized by threat, and multiple actions on the same acreage will be counted multiple times if they address different threats. Therefore, the sum of all conservation actions is not an accurate representation of the total area treated or the amount of habitat restored.

For more resources from partner organizations:

- OWEB Focused Investment Partnership report on the Oregon Model to Protect Sage-Grouse
- NRCS Farm Bill fact sheets and accomplishment reports
- BLM 2020 implementation report

Conservation actions over the next several years will focus more heavily on invasive annual grasses through coordinated, strategic efforts such as the SageCon Invasives Initiative.



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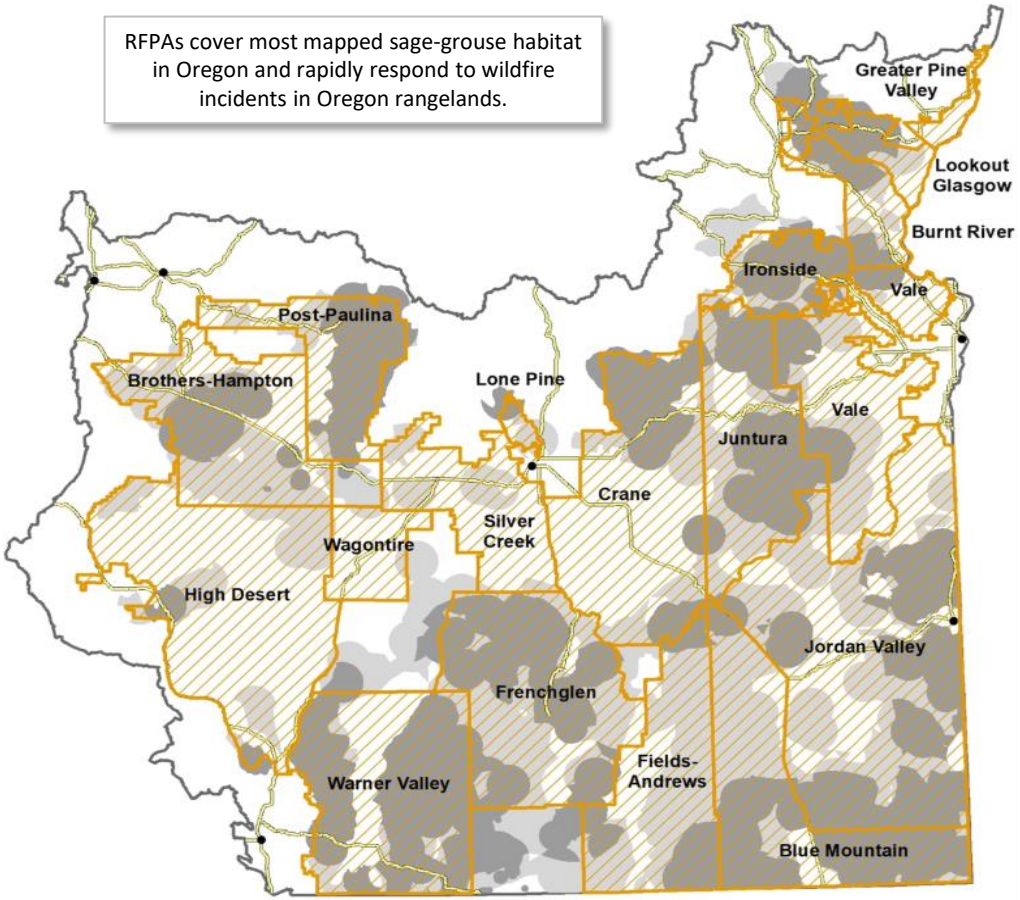
91% of sage-grouse core habitat protected by Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) form the front lines in the effort to reduce wildfire damage. Through a collaboration between the Oregon Department of Forestry, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service and local landowners, RFPAs have helped prevent large wildfires in sage-grouse habitat over the past several years.

RFPAs cover most mapped sage-grouse habitat in Oregon and rapidly respond to wildfire incidents in Oregon rangelands.



Oregon's 24 RFPAs primarily consist of local landowners who volunteer and respond rapidly to incidents during fire season. Oregon RFPAs have demonstrated success in fire response across public and private land and protecting sage-grouse habitat. In recent years, a coordinated response has quickly extinguished many rangeland fires (see page 5 for wildfire trends).

RFPAs are coordinated by the Oregon Department of Forestry. RFPAs also have agreements with BLM and liaison support from USFWS.

RFPA boundary
Priority Area for Conservation (PAC)
Low density habitat
Highway
Town

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Habitat Protection – Voluntary Conservation

557,000 acres of private lands enrolled in CCAAs

713,000 acres of state lands enrolled in CCAAs

589,000 acres of BLM lands enrolled in CCAs

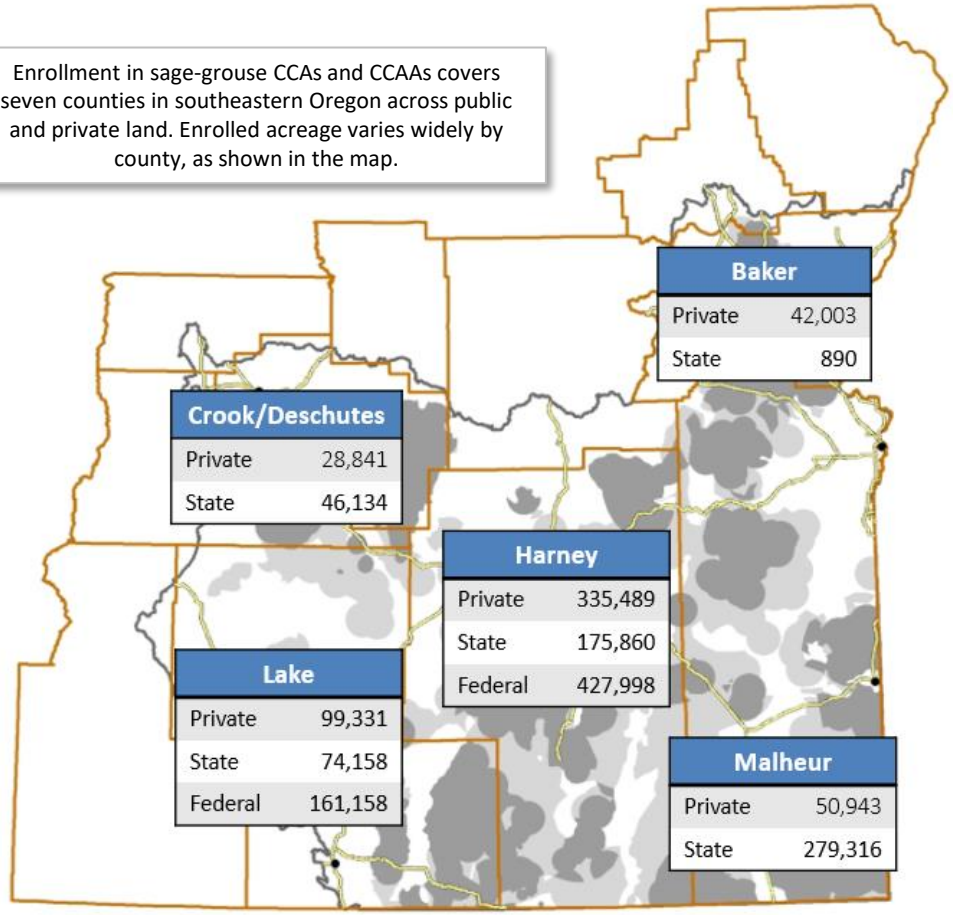
✿ Voluntary conservation agreements through CCAs (Candidate Conservation Agreements) and CCAAs (Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances) provide an incentive to proactively manage for the benefit of sage-grouse.

In these 30-year agreements between USFWS and a local entity (Soil & Water Conservation District or agency), enrolled properties are assessed for threats to sage-grouse and actions are identified to address those threats. Enrollees agree to certain development restrictions and are often prioritized for funding assistance to complete conservation actions on enrolled lands. CCAAs provide regulatory protections in the event of a future Endangered Species Act listing.

CCAs and CCAAs cover over 1.8 million acres of private, state (common school fund) and federal lands throughout southeastern Oregon, and letters of intent to enroll over 600,000 additional acres in CCAAs are pending. A summary of conservation actions taken across all lands, including properties enrolled in a CCA or CCAA, are summarized on page 9.

Find out more about CCAs and CCAAs in this USFWS fact sheet.

Enrollment in sage-grouse CCAs and CCAAs covers seven counties in southeastern Oregon across public and private land. Enrolled acreage varies widely by county, as shown in the map.



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