



M E M O R A N D U M
OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Malheur Watershed District Office
Hines, Oregon

DATE: 7 August 2013
TO: SageCon Habitat Fragmentation Work Group
FROM: Dawn Davis, Sage-Grouse Conservation Coordinator
SUBJ: Sage-Grouse Local Implementation Teams (LIT)

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Habitat Fragmentation Working Group an overview of: (1) the role of Local Implementation Teams (LIT) in Oregon and (2) a description of the development of ODFW Action Areas for sage-grouse.

There are five Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy Implementation teams, one for each BLM District within the current distribution of sage-grouse in Oregon as well as one in the Baker Resource Area within the Vale District. The LITs are comprised of a mix of public and private entities, including land managers, county governments, ODFW, and landowners. The role and responsibilities of the LITs include: implementing voluntary conservation guidelines identified in the 2011 revised *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon* (hereafter referred to as Plan); ensuring that sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat conservation decisions occur at a local level; identifying the appropriate tools to meet the objectives identified in their Action Area; and implementation of conservation within the scope of existing policies. The LITs are also responsible for establishing appropriate timelines, overseeing treatments and monitoring, and facilitating the funding of projects.

Teams have been meeting since 2005 when the initial Plan was implemented and have continued to meet following the commission adoption of the 2011 revision of the updated Plan. The 2011 Plan adopted a Core Area approach to identify a set of conservation targets to maintain a viable and connected set of sage-grouse populations in Oregon. The Core Area approach and associated Action Area maps provide guidance to land use planners, land managers, and the public as to the areas of greatest biological importance to the persistence of sage-grouse populations. If conservation recommendations are fully implemented in Core Areas, they would protect approximately 90% of the breeding populations of sage-grouse in Oregon, but only 38% of the species' range. Alternatively, the associated Low Density habitats assist in identifying areas where impacts to sage-grouse populations may be of less risk, or for opportunities to mitigate for habitat loss.

In May 2011, each LIT reviewed and recommended changes to refine the boundaries of the Core Area maps using aerial imagery and local knowledge of sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats. In December 2011 and January 2012, LITs developed 32 Action Areas with the Core Area and

associated Low Density areas that identified locations that share common threats to sage-grouse and which will help to focus efforts for future habitat management actions. In addition, the Action Areas provide guidance on where to focus mitigation actions associated with impacts to sage-grouse habitat from renewable energy development, its associated infrastructure, or other large-scale industrial-commercial development projects consistent with ODFW's Mitigation Framework for Sage-Grouse Habitats.

To accomplish conservation recommendations and provide consistent recommendations, each LIT also adopted a set of prioritization guidelines (see below) to demonstrate how Action Areas could be utilized to support potential projects that may be implemented in the future.

Local Implementation Team's Prioritization Guidelines:

- 1) Is the project within an Action Area?
- 2) Does the project address an identified threat in that Action Area?
- 3) Is the project adjacent to a completed or planned project that benefits sage-grouse?
- 4) What is the level of positive impacts to sage-grouse related to all threats?

The descriptions of threats and issues for each Action Area are as follows:

BAKER RESOURCE AREA

The Baker Resource Area has substantial human activity. Thus, there is a need to be cautious and evaluate recreational activities as they pertain to sage-grouse habitat use. In particular, the area near Virtue Flat contains several leks and is under increasing pressure for OHV trail use. The preponderance of private land in this region will require additional efforts to identify willing landowners for participation in sage-grouse conservation. NRCS has provided funding, specifically for sage-grouse, and has identified this region as a priority for projects. Also, given the relatively small and isolated area of sagebrush habitat east of Baker City it is important for land managers to carefully consider the benefits and/or detriments to sage-grouse, as the population likely will be more sensitive to fragmentation or other disturbance.

The Baker Resource Area is comprised of three Action Areas. Justification for why an Action Area was chosen, the issues and threats identified by the LIT, and project ideas supported by the LIT are summarized below.

BAKER

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-19: Baker Valley)
- Issues are noxious weeds and invasive species, transmission lines, energy development, human impacts (motorized recreation at Virtue Flat), lack of understory in moderately deep rooted and deep rooted perennial grasses, lack of forb diversity, altered sagebrush habitat due to fire, mining, juniper encroachment at higher elevations, crested wheat seeding throughout

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Support juniper removal on private lands (NRCS-SGI)
- Support medusahead inventory, mapping, and treatment projects on all lands
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site

- Currently 90% sandberg bluegrass in the understory community
 - Need more native perennial diversity
- Support BLM Resource Management Plan amendments and comment on road designations
 - Address seasonal and emergency closures
 - Address lack of enforcement
- Support changes to grazing management plans on private ranches that address sage-grouse life history needs

COW VALLEY – North of Highway 26. Threats identified in portions of the Action Area which occur south of Highway 26 are covered by the Vale District LIT.

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-16: Bully Creek Area)
- Issues are juniper invasion at higher elevations, mining and renewable energy, noxious weeds and invasive species at lower elevations, connectivity, sagebrush canopy closure (>17%), transmission lines

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Medusahead on public lands
- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support
- Continuation of BLM and private land juniper removal
- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (6,824 acres)
- Protect meadows on Table Mountain (public and private)
- Fires from 2005 in need of reseeding efforts
- Potential for mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
 - Follow up with native seeding
- Support Conservation Easement option for mitigation
- Research opportunities to determine connectivity corridors (telemetry project)

UNITY

- Within Low Density
- Issues are human impacts (OHV recreation), juniper encroachment, isolated population and connectivity issues, noxious weeds

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- NRCS-SGI juniper removal (12,117 acres)
 - Almost all the juniper has been treated
 - Lots of follow-up and clean up needed
 - Potential reseeding on some of those project locations
- Denny Flat (public land) lek is currently abandoned due to weeds (whitetop and medusahead)
- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support

BURNS DISTRICT

Management practices within the Burns District should maintain connectivity of core sagebrush areas located between the Burns, Lakeview, and Prineville Districts to the west and Vale to the east. Several areas along the Highway 20 corridor between Hines and Hampton are in need of juniper removal to maintain connectivity of this core area. There are at least 200,000 ha (500,000 acres) of juniper that need to be evaluated for potential treatment throughout the District. Fire has altered >54,000 ha (133,000 acres) within which opportunities for habitat rehabilitation and restoration need to be identified. In addition, several large wildfires burned through sagebrush habitats in the summer of 2012 and significant habitat losses were sustained in Oregon. The full effects of these large-scale wildfires are unknown at this time. Acreages of grassland, seedings, and non-sagebrush shrublands also need to be evaluated for conservation projects. Specific opportunities will be identified by the LIT, but most of this work will need to be addressed by BLM.

The Burns District is comprised of eight Action Areas. Justification for why an Action Area was chosen, the issues and threats identified by the LIT, and project ideas supported by the LIT are summarized below. Also listed in red is if an Action Area was affected by a summer 2012 fire.

BURNS

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are connectivity, fragmentation from urbanization, transmission lines, and juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, Dalmatian toadflax, spotted knapweed, whitetop), and lack of sagebrush habitat in the lower elevations

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands (NRCS-SGI 3,608 acres, NRCS-MDI 71 acres, SWCD 1,314 acres)
- Continuation of Dalmatian toadflax treatments (SWCD)

DREWSEY

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-15: North Fork Malheur-Monument Rock area and BM-16: Bully Creek Area)
- Issues are juniper and pine encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead), mining development, and fires

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands (NRCS-SGI 11,829 acres, NRCS-MDI 1,580 acres, SWCD 3,902)
- Continuation of juniper removal on public lands (BLM Otis Mountain and Moffit Table)
- Continuation of medusahead treatments on private lands (NRCS 6,700 acres)

DRY VALLEY/JACK MOUNTAIN

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-5: Hart Mountain Area); within the Miller Homestead Fire boundary

- Issues are altered sagebrush habitat from fires, juniper encroachment (eastside), wind energy threats, and feral horses
- Lakeview LIT identified issues on the westside of DRY VALLEY to be noxious weeds, fire and sagebrush canopy closure

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire prevention/suppression and restoration recommendations
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site
 - Need successful seeding techniques
- Identify a funding pool for private landowners to acquire seed mix for planting this fall
- Potential telemetry project to study the fire effects on sage-grouse
 - Bird response to fire and response to different restoration techniques
 - BLM can potentially help with funding and capture efforts
- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
 - Approximately 3,700 acres have already been treated since 2007 (BLM)
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA
- Wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core

FOLLY FARM

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are wind energy threats, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed), fires, sagebrush conversion to crested wheat seeding monocultures, West Nile virus, and feral horses

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Continuation of juniper removal projects (DSL 300 acres, SWCD 3,787 acres)
- Continuation of medusahead treatment projects (DSL 35-40 miles of desert roads, BLM spot treatments)
 - DSL plans for another 30 miles of roads in 2013
 - Need to talk to the counties regarding spraying roads and grading practices
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments
 - Provide letter of support
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA

GLASS BUTTE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-08: Silver Creek-Emigrant Creek) and Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-01: Squaw Ridge area playas and sagebrush)
- Issues are geothermal and wind energy threats, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed), and potential seasonal human impact (OHV)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Geothermal and wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Support BLM plan amendments and comment on road designations
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments

- Provide letter of support

NORTH STEENS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are altered sagebrush habitat from fires, crested wheat seedings at lower elevations (north and west side), juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (thistle, medusahead), and feral horses

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands (NRCS-SGI 720 acres, NRCS-MDI 1306 acres, SWCD 568 acres)
- Continuation of juniper removal by BLM (Five Creeks Project, Dollar Lake 360 acres, Frazier Field 400 acres, Moon Hill 990 acres)
- Continuation of BLM medusahead projects (spot treatments)
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments
 - provide letter of support
- Continuation of medusahead projects on private lands SWCD
- Continuation of sagebrush seed head piles (500 acres within the Granddad fire boundary)

PUEBLOS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin and NBR-06: Basque Hills-Hawk Mountain area plains)
- Issues are fire and wind energy threats

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Discussion about taking wind energy off the threats list because the permit has been withdrawn
 - USFWS is still concerned about regulatory authority
 - What is protecting this area from future energy developments?
 - Maybe the County LUP Goal 5 revisions will address this?
- 2006 fire (40,000 acres)
 - Recovery at higher elevations is occurring
 - Lower elevations will take longer to recover
 - Potentially expand the sagebrush seed head piling efforts or add in sagebrush plugs on the north slope near Long Hollow

SOUTH STEENS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are wind energy threats, fire, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, ventanata), and feral horses

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal by BLM (3,700 acres Tombstone, 200 acres South Loop)
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments

- Provide letter of support
- Promote state assistance to more process forward
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA
- Wind Energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core

PRINEVILLE DISTRICT

Because the Prineville District includes a larger human population than most other districts in Oregon's sage-grouse range, there is an array of issues that likely will need action in the near future.

Juniper encroachment (130,000 ha [320,000 acres]) is a significant issue for this region as it may marginalize 30% of the habitat remaining in the district. Disturbances due to fire needs to be clarified through more thorough inventories. Maintaining the connectivity of habitat between this region and Burns and Lakeview Districts is critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the current population. Identifying partnerships to best maintain or rehabilitate these areas will be critical in this region where private land comprises a slight majority of sage-grouse habitat. Similar to Baker County, because of the preponderance of private land, this region will be a priority for NRCS projects. Because of declining sage-grouse population trends in this region aggressive management is needed to identify limiting factors and halt the decline.

Human impact is the greatest in this region, whether it is anthropogenic structures (power lines, OHV trails, residential developments) or activities (mountain biking, bird watching, horseback riding). These all occur in greater frequency on a relatively smaller area in comparison to the remainder of sage-grouse range in the state. Thus, management and mitigation of such activities will be necessary to reduce the impacts on sage-grouse. Managing the human activity may be the primary conservation action to assist in stabilizing populations. Habitat improvements should be pursued in concert with managing human activity.

Given the continued negative trends in sage-grouse populations in Prineville District, it may be necessary to augment populations in the future through intrastate translocations. It is recommended that such efforts should be pursued in conjunction with aggressive habitat management strategies to increase the likelihood that augmentations will succeed. Loss of the Prineville District population would not only reduce the range of the bird but, in effect, create a new peripheral range and the population susceptibility that often corresponds with populations at the fringe of the range. Several sagebrush areas > 1,000 ha (2,500 acre) were identified near Warm Springs Indian Reservation and further north into Wasco and Jefferson counties. These areas should be evaluated for their potential to support sage-grouse and future re-introductions considered if long-term sustainability is feasible. Thus an evaluation should consider the ability of birds from these isolated patches to disperse or interchange with populations further south in the district.

The Prineville District is comprised of seven Action Areas. Justification for why an Action Area was chosen, the issues and threats identified by the LIT, and project ideas supported by the LIT are summarized below. Also listed in red is if an Action Area was affected by a summer 2012 fire.

BROTHERS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-1: Squaw Ridge area playas and sagebrush) and Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-02: Badlands)
- Issues are human disturbance (Millican OHV recreation) in the northwest corner, roads, transmission lines, fire, juniper encroachment, cheat grass, sagebrush canopy closure and wind energy threats (West Butte and Pine Mountain)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (3,344 acres)
- Continuation of cost share weed work on private lands
- Supportive of ongoing changes to grazing management plans on private ranches that address sage-grouse life history needs
- Support capturing this type of management on public lands via the OCA/CCA
- Potentially create better grazing management through private land CCAAs
 - need prescribed grazing standards (balance supply and demand)
- Revisit the Sage-Grouse Habitat Objective Project Implementation
 - The LIT group worked on this back in 2008
- Continuation of the Pine Mountain Service First Project (BLM/USFS/USFWS)
- Promote mosaic sagebrush canopy manipulation (mowing, roller, aerator) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
- Continuation of the Playa Restoration Project (BLM)
- Wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core

MISERY FLAT

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are human impact (roads, transmission lines, and year round recreation, i.e., OHV), rabbitbrush conversion due to disturbance, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead), lack of nesting habitat, crested wheat seedings at lower elevations, fires, raven predation and geothermal/wind energy threats in the south (Glass Butte)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Geothermal and wind energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site
 - Need successful seeding techniques
- Utilize appropriate grazing management techniques to keep areas rested for sage-grouse nesting habitat
- Support BLM plan amendments and comment on road designations
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments
 - Provide letter of support

NORTH WAGONTIRE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-09: Steens Mountain-Alvord Basin)
- Issues are sagebrush conversion to agricultural/dry land and fires, cheatgrass, wind energy potential, and raven predation

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions
- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
- Continued juniper removal projects on public land
- Address OHV issues and lack of enforcement

PAULINA

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are juniper (Phase 1), invasive weeds on the west side (medusahead, whitetop, knapweed, scotch thistle), fragmentation (highways and transmission lines), raven predation, potential feral horses

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support
- Continuation of Crooked River Weed Management and private landowners efforts
- Support the Wolf Creek Collaborative (USFS/USFWS) juniper thinning projects on scabland flats
 - Potential to work on private lands in the future
 - Support the connection of federal land and private land projects
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site
- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (14,065 acres)
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA

POST

- Within Low Density
- Issues are fragmentation (urbanization, human development, subdivisions), connectivity (isolated area), juniper encroachment (Phase 2 and 3), invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed, Russian knapweed, whitetop, Mediterranean sage), fire threats, feral horses, and research needs

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of SWCD juniper and weed control projects on private land
- Continuation of Mule Deer Initiative juniper removal
- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (100 acres)

- Propose potential opportunities to expand juniper removal projects to treat Phase II and Phase III juniper
- Need to treat existing slash pile (fire threat)
 - Jackpot burning during winter months
 - Concerned about firewood cutting and spread of invasive weeds
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA

TACKMAN

- Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-06: South Fork Crooked River Area)
- Issues are loss of sagebrush habitat, juniper encroachment, invasive weeds (medusahead, spotted knapweed, Russian knapweed, whitetop), research needs

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (276 acres)
- Continuation of cost sharing projects between the local weed board and private landowners
- Support the High Desert Shrub Steppe Programmatic EA
 - Continuation of juniper removal and reseeding of native species

TWELVE MILE

- Within Core and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-06: South Fork Crooked River Area); **within the Buck Creek Fire boundary**
- Issues are juniper encroachment, low density of sagebrush on the north end, wind energy potential on the south end, feral horses, and raven predation

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (17,396 acres)
- Continuation of whitetop invasive weed cost share on the north end
- Wind Energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Provide letter of support to BLM to control feral horse HMA
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions

LAKEVIEW DISTRICT

At least 76,000 ha (190,000 acres) of juniper needs to be evaluated for potential treatment (especially the area west of Warner Valley) within the Lakeview District. Rehabilitation projects need to be identified for areas planted to crested wheatgrass, and trying to bring portions of those stands into sagebrush classes 3, 4, or 5. Most of these plantings occurred in the northern portion of the District. Rehabilitation of at least 40,000 ha (100,000 acres) in transition from fire needs to be assessed.

The Lakeview District is comprised of eight Action Areas. Justification for why an Action Area was chosen, the issues and threats identified by the LIT, and project ideas supported by the LIT are summarized below. Also listed in red is if an Action Area was affected by a summer 2012 fire.

BEATY

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-05: Hart Mountain Area)
- Issues are juniper (west side), cheat grass, fire, human impacts (southeast side), sagebrush canopy closure (Guano Valley)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of efforts by USFWS (11,000 acres of juniper removal on Hart Mountain)
- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands NRCS-SGI (641 acres)
- Fire prevention/suppression recommendations
- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory

CABIN LAKE

- Within Low Density
- Issues are pine encroachment, limited veg component, soil quality (sandy), mule deer winter range, recreation issues (ATV use)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire prevention/suppression recommendations
- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands NRCS-SGI (861 acres)

COGLAN BUTTES

- Within Low Density
- Issues are annual grasses, restoration of sagebrush, and other noxious weeds

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Support implementation of sagebrush seedlings planting efforts

DRY VALLEY/JACK MOUNTAIN

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-05: Hart Mountain Area); within the Miller Homestead Fire boundary
- Issues are noxious weeds, fire threats, and sagebrush canopy closure

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire prevention/suppression and restoration recommendations
- Potential telemetry project to study the fire effects on sage-grouse
 - Bird response to fire and response to different restoration techniques
 - BLM can potentially help with funding and capture efforts

NORTH WAGONTIRE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-01: Squaw Ridge area playas and sagebrush)
- Issues are juniper invasion, sagebrush canopy closure (>17%), recreation issues (ATV), raven predation

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory
- Continued juniper removal projects on public land
- Address OHV issues in Prineville District portion of this Action Area
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions

PICTURE ROCK

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are connectivity, juniper invasion (west side), medusahead, and other noxious weeds

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Need to control medusahead east of HWY 31
- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support

TUCKER HILL

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are medusahead and juniper invasion

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands NRCS-SGI (3,762 acres)
- Continuation of medusahead spraying (SWCD)
- Potential dovetail with NRCS for more invasive weed control
- Potential ARS precision restoration test site

WARNERS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-03: Lake Abert-Honey Creek Area)
- Issues are wind energy, juniper encroachment, noxious weeds, human impacts (recreation, ATVs)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- 24,000 acres of juniper removal by BLM (17-18,000 acres by 2014)
- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands NRCS-SGI (3,518 acres)
- BLM needs authorization to utilize appropriate chemicals for weed treatments

- Provide letter of support
- Landowners with medusahead issues work with NRCS-SGI
- Wind Energy: recommendation to avoid all impacts within Core Area
- Recreation: need regulatory aspect of OHV use (S of Picture Rock Pass is legal except during fire season)
 - Provide letter requesting better enforcement

VALE DISTRICT

Fire has altered > 62,000 ha (154,000 acres) of sagebrush in the Vale District in recent years. As with the Burns District, several large wildfires burned through sagebrush habitats in the summer of 2012 resulting in significant habitat losses. In addition, thousands of sagebrush hectares were converted to crested wheatgrass in the 1960s-70s. This has produced significant grasslands throughout the southern portion of the District. Some of these areas have been recolonized by sagebrush. However, it is recommended that experimental work to rehabilitate those areas not in sagebrush should be conducted. Similarly, much work is needed to identify the best methods for rehabilitating areas lost to fire, so that cheatgrass invasions are minimized. Contrary to other districts, juniper does not pose as great a threat as fire and invasion of cheatgrass. Higher elevation sites especially in the Malheur watershed should be evaluated for areas of juniper (235,000 acres) which threaten the connectivity of sagebrush habitat. Much of this area is administered by BLM and these actions will need to be facilitated through that agency.

The Vale District is comprised of nine Action Areas. Justification for why an Action Area was chosen, the issues and threats identified by the LIT, and project ideas supported by the LIT are summarized below. Also listed in red is if an Action Area was affected by a summer 2012 fire.

BOWDEN HILLS

- Within Low Density; within the Long Draw Fire boundary
- Issues are fire and weeds

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- NRCS-SGI program work with Tree Top Ranches

BULLY CREEK

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-16: Bully Creek Area and BM-15: North Fork Malheur-Monument Rock area); within the Bonita Fire boundary
- Issues are juniper, invasive weeds (medusahead and whitetop), potential wind energy and geothermal

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire suppression efforts
- Continuation of BLM juniper removal efforts
- Continuation of NRCS-SGI juniper removal (5,890 acres)

COW LAKE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-13: Middle Owyhee River Area)
- Issues are fire, annual grass, weeds (whitetop), crested wheat seeding/lack of sagebrush, West Nile virus, population level concerns, human impacts (ATV-Succor Creek), and raven predation

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Reestablishment of sagebrush
- Support grant application for WNV vector control (private lands)
- Allowing BLM to utilize the appropriate chemicals to treat invasive weeds (injunction)
 - Provide letter of support
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions

COW VALLEY - South of Highway 26

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Blue Mountains Ecoregion (BM-16: Bully Creek Area)
- Issues are juniper invasion, mining and renewable energy, noxious weeds (whitetop), connectivity for the birds, sagebrush canopy closure (>17%)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Continuation of juniper removal on public lands (BLM)
- Continuation of juniper removal on private lands (NRCS-SGI 6,824 acres)

CROWLEY

- Within Core and Low Density
- Issues are fire and annual grass, juniper (at highest elevations)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire suppression recommendations
- Continuation of private land juniper removal

LOUSE CANYON

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-14: Upper Owyhee); [within the Long Draw Fire boundary and the Ten Mile Fire boundary](#)
- Issues are wind energy threats, invasives at low elevation, and sagebrush canopy closure
- Protect existing continuous sagebrush habitats

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Fire suppression recommendations

SADDLE BUTTE

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-12: Saddle Butte Area)
- Issues are fire, lack of sagebrush/decadent sagebrush, protect low sage and wet meadows

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- DSL green stripping
- Promote mosaic brush mowing (tall) where canopy closure is dense (>20%) and has an existing good native understory

SOLDIER CREEK

- Within Core and Low Density; [within the Long Draw Fire boundary](#)
- Issues are medusahead (talk to DSL), juniper (east end), fire risk, lack on sagebrush (west side), raven predation, west nile virus (north side), human impacts (snowmobile use on the south end)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Private land invasive weeds treatment (medusahead) possibly work with NRCS program
- Public land invasive weeds, focus on key areas (road ways)
- West Nile Virus vector control is good in this area (provide letter of support to continue efforts)
- Raven population control
 - Create salvage operation to clean up road kill carcasses
 - Clean up recreation sites that act as artificial food sources
 - Utilize Wildlife Services to assist with population control (short term fix)
 - Support projects such as juniper removal, and improvements of sage-grouse nesting cover to address long term solutions

TROUT CREEKS

- Within Core and Low Density and Conservation Opportunity Area (COA); Northern Basin and Range Ecoregion (NBR-11: Trout Creek Mountains); [within the Holloway Fire boundary](#)
- Issues are uranium mining, sagebrush canopy closure, possible weed issue (lower east side), possible grazing impacts on lower elevations (Trout Creek Working Group)

Project ideas or issues supported by the LIT for this Action Area:

- Uranium mine: recommendation to avoid all impacts in Core
- Encourage more grazing at higher elevations to reduce sagebrush density/decadence
 - 70 acres/AUM right now, propose 2 year use with 1 year rest
- Letter of support from LIT to Trout Creek Working Group/Ranchers to change season of use and forward to BLM
- Address the biological opinion (USFWS)