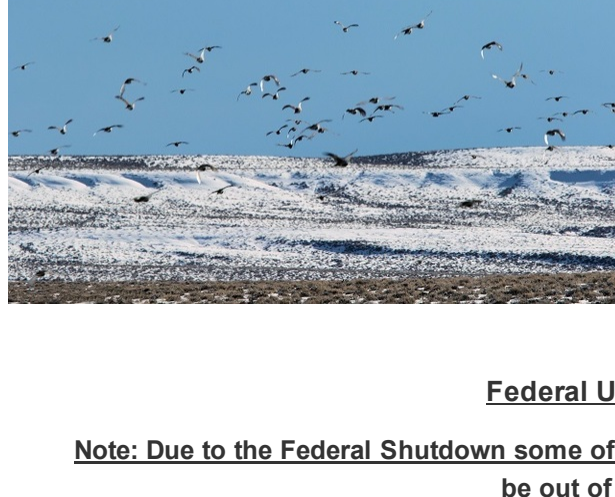




## Sage Grouse Conservation Partnership October-December 2018 News and Updates (Sent January 11, 2019)



### Federal Updates

**Note: Due to the Federal Shutdown some of the federal information listed below may be out of date.**

#### BLM

December 6, 2018 the BLM published a Final EIS and Proposed RMP Amendments for Oregon, concluding the public comment period and initiating a 30-day Protest period starting December 7, 2018 and closing on January 15, 2019. Details on filing a protest are available on the BLM Oregon website ([link](#)).

West-wide, each governor also has 60 days to review the proposed amendments for consistency with state and local laws and regulations. The process will conclude with a Record of Decision following resolution of the governors' consistency review and any protests received during the 30-day review period. More state-by-state information ([link](#)).

BLM released [JM 2019-018](#) on December 6, 2018, revising its policy on compensatory mitigation relevant to impacts from development projects on federal public lands. The policy clarifies that BLM will not engage in compensatory mitigation but may work with states who have developed state-based mitigation approaches ([link](#)).



#### NRCS

Maintaining an "emerald island" in the middle of the desert is no small task. Here's how the Fitzgeralds do it. Eleanor Fitzgerald, Joseph Utley, her son, and Colin McKenzie, her nephew, ranch in Lake County, Oregon. 12 Mile Creek paints a dark green ribbon across the dry landscape on their operation. Sights like this are rare in Oregon's sagebrush country. Wet meadows occupy less than 2 percent of the sage-steppe region, yet provide habitat for over 350 dependent species, and support cattle grazing. ([story map link](#))

The Sage Grouse Initiative led by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) partners with ranchers in Oregon and across the West to enhance habitat for sage grouse and improve working lands. By managing wet meadows, combating invasive species, and grazing strategically, sage grouse and other wildlife flourish. It just so happens these practices also benefit livestock by way of higher quality food and more variety throughout the year.

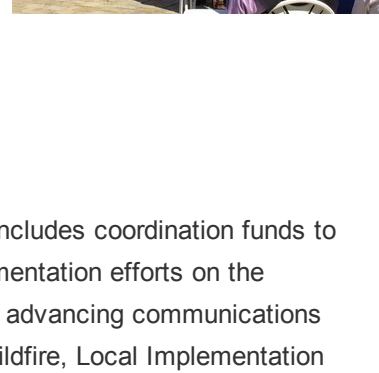
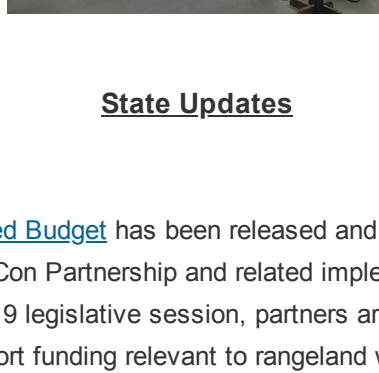
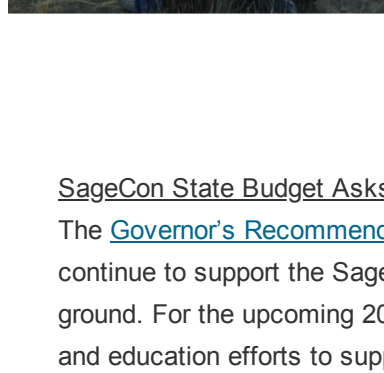
Oregon's 2019 Sage Grouse Initiative allocation (approximately \$4 million) has come through early and NRCS staff have hit the ground running alongside private landowners to obligate contracts ahead of schedule. 2019 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding opportunities and associated guidelines are posted here ([link](#)).

The [Rangeland Analysis Platform \(RAP\)](#) is a free online tool that empowers landowners and resource managers to track vegetation through time, equipping people with the information they need to improve America's grazing lands from the Great Plains to the Pacific Ocean. Check out the USDA Blog and Fact Sheet for more information about its application and why its revolutionary.

For more information on the Oregon NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative conservation strategy feel free to contact Lars Santana, USDA-NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist and Oregon's SGI Lead [lars.santana@or.usda.gov](mailto:lars.santana@or.usda.gov)

#### USFWS & USGS

The newest version (2.1) of the [Conservation Efforts Database](#) (CED) has been released. USFWS and USGS are encouraging users to explore the new and improved features which further simplify data collection. CED 2.1 has been designed to enhance efficiency and measuring effectiveness from the batch upload process to new options that better capture treatment objectives to a new footprint editor for uploading spatial information quicker. The CED's Interactive Map has also been updated to generate reports from user-defined queries. For more information, check out the following [quick guides](#) and [fact sheets](#). Trainings are being held January-March, view recordings and schedule here: [CED's Help Page](#).



### State Updates

#### SageCon State Budget Asks

The [Governor's Recommended Budget](#) has been released and includes coordination funds to continue to support the SageCon Partnership and related implementation efforts on the ground. For the upcoming 2019 legislative session, partners are advancing communications and education efforts to support funding relevant to rangeland wildfire, Local Implementation Team support and habitat restoration. Partners have developed this [one-pager handout](#) with relevant budget needs and talking points to help spread the word in communities and with elected officials. Feel free to use it and contact Bruce Taylor [bruce.taylor.iwvj@gmail.com](mailto:bruce.taylor.iwvj@gmail.com) with Intermountain West Joint Venture with any input.

#### Interim Legislative Committee Hearings

On December 12, 2018 the [Senate Interim Committee on Environment and Natural Resources](#) heard a presentation from Kevin Blake the Wildlife Division Deputy Administrator for ODFW regarding the 10% population decline in sage-grouse populations statewide due to adverse drought and weather conditions and the need for continued collaboration. John O'Keefe with Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Bruce Taylor with Intermountain West Joint Venture also provided testimony as part of the hearing in support of SageCon efforts.

At the September 29, 2018 hearing of [House Interim Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources](#), a cross-section of partners came together to provide testimony about partner progress to date and where investments would leverage the biggest returns for sage-grouse and sagebrush communities in the next biennium. Speakers included Jason Miner-Governor's Natural Resource Policy Manager, John O'Keefe-Former President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Meta Loftsgaarden-Director of Oregon's Watershed Enhancement Board, Mark Bennett-Baker County Commissioner, John Keith-President of Oregon Association of Conservation Districts and Cathy Macdonald Director of Policy and External Affairs for The Nature Conservancy.

#### Oregon RFPA's Featured in Partners in the Sage Campaign

Oregon RFPA's and their use of technology and partnerships with BLM and others made headlines as part of the Partners in the Sage Campaign: ["The Modern Firefight-How Technology Enhances Oregon's Fire Response."](#) If you missed it, here are [fall highlights ODF published](#) on the efforts of RFPA's in the 2018 fire season

#### 3rd Annual SageCon Summit

The 3rd Annual SageCon Summit was held at the Four Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario on October 25-26. Thanks to everyone who contributed. Over 90 partners attended across the two days, and presentations included Senator Cliff Bentz, mitigation program and Calico Mine overview, sage-grouse status and action plan implementation review, a research roundtable panel linking research and on-the-ground management, and Nevada partners addressing collaboration across the Great Basin. Presentations, pictures and handouts from the Summit are posted to the [SageCon Google Drive](#) and recordings of the sessions are available on the [Oregon Solutions SageCon Website](#) under additional resources.



### Multimedia Communications, Reports and Research

- OSU's Sagebrush Habitat Team recently published ["Western Roots: Diving Into the Sagebrush Sea of Diversity."](#)
- Researchers from Montana State University Share New [Report: "Grazing Lands Grow More Bugs for Birds to Eat."](#)
- Washington State University also finding ["Sagebrush is a Good Home for Bugs."](#)
- The Sage Grouse Initiative featured content on ["How Emerging Technologies Help Conserve Rangeland."](#)
- Catch it while you can. [OPB's Sagebrush Sea](#) documentary expires January 31, 2019.

### Sage Grouse in the News\*

[Oregon's Sage Grouse Population Drops 10 Percent](#) (The Capital Press)

[Shutdown Could Complicate Grouse Plans](#) (The Daily Sentinel)

[Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke Resigning, Cites "Vicious" Attacks](#) (Denver Post)

[The Trump Administration is Scrapping a Collaborative Sage Grouse Protection Plan to Expand Oil and Gas Drilling](#) (WTOP)

[American West Sage Grouse-Sagebrush Sea Fate](#) (National Geographic)

[Feds Ordered to Let Public Speak Up for Sage Grouse](#) (Courthouse News)

[Off-road Vehicle Enthusiasts Sue Forest Service Over Sage-Grouse Protection Plan](#) (Columbian)

[Plans to Sell Oil and Gas Drilling Rights on Public Lands Canceled Because of Greater Sage Grouse](#) (NBC)

### Online Resources

The [SageCon website](#) provides information about the partnership, state Sage-Grouse Action Plan and other agency plans, tools built to aid in implementation and monitoring of the state Sage-Grouse Action Plan, and other resources. New tools have been developed by the SageCon Partnership to aid in coordinated planning throughout sage-grouse habitat in the state. [The Oregon Sage-Grouse Development Siting Tool](#) allows developers and planners to input potential project footprints and get information about the mitigation hierarchy and likely impacts to sage-grouse. [The Oregon Sage-Grouse Data Viewer](#) has also been recently updated with new vegetation maps and other spatial data for rangelands in the state. In 2019, the SageCon partnership will also launch the Oregon Sage-Grouse Conservation Planning Tool, which will allow users to create customized queries to identify areas for potential restoration, protection, or other priorities based on the best geospatial data available within the state.

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