



PRESS RELEASE

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“Sage-grouse in the Schools” Program Teaches Idaho Students Real-life Conservation Lessons

For Immediate Release

Contact:

Jason Pyron, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 208-685-6958

Art Talsma, The Nature Conservancy, 208-350-2204

BOISE – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy in Idaho recently released “Sage-grouse in the Schools” – a 9-part video series following Idaho high school students as they discover the people and places behind sage-grouse conservation in the state.

Now in its fourth year, the program brings together local ranchers and conservation managers to give students a real-life look at what it takes to conserve sage-grouse and the habitats they depend on. Fewer youth are spending time outdoors today, so the program provides outdoor experiences with hands-on engagement in rangeland stewardship and biological science.

The “Sage-grouse in the Schools” Program is led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but was cooperatively developed and implemented by many partners, including The Nature Conservancy, Local Sage-grouse Working Group members, and federal and state agencies. Students attend tours of sage-grouse leks (breeding grounds) to observe breeding season behavior, and they also work on conservation projects on private landowners’ property.

The Service’s Idaho State Supervisor, Brian Kelly, said, “The lessons these students learn in this program transcend the classroom. They experience nature outdoors and they learn how to work collaboratively to solve problems. We thank those who are working together to develop our next generation of conservation leaders.”

The Nature Conservancy’s Idaho State Director, Toni Hardesty, said, “By protecting sage grouse, we protect the land and water that all of us – from hunters and hikers to anglers and ranchers – value and enjoy. This program shows our students how people from different walks of life can work together, with common-sense approaches, to protect our wildlife and economy.”

For many of these students, the field trips are their first-ever encounter with the birds. After watching male sage-grouse puff and strut on the leks, the students visit a working ranch and help implement habitat improvement projects. Ranging from fence flagging to habitat reseeding, the projects teach students about range management and habitat improvement, but more importantly, the projects help students learn about the interconnectedness of Idaho’s working ranch lands and conservation.

The video series spreads the word about the benefits of this outdoor learning program to both youth and conservation. Hopefully, more schools will be encouraged to participate in “Sage-grouse in the Schools,” and more partners will join the efforts.

The videos may be viewed on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's YouTube Channel. The YouTube Links for each part of the "Sage-grouse in the Schools" videos are:

- Part 1 - <http://youtu.be/na4nDJE038E>
- Part 2 - http://youtu.be/j5jA_hLvsXw
- Part 3 - <http://youtu.be/a23xQjfg4qg>
- Part 4 - <http://youtu.be/J5oVZAQ7EQw>
- Part 5 - <http://youtu.be/w9wXbGZvHtw>
- Part 6- http://youtu.be/HOsb4_2Vj7E
- Part 7 - <http://youtu.be/lSXbfT76ZP0>
- Part 8 - <http://youtu.be/P8Z8gl5tmgY>
- Part 9 - <http://youtu.be/vMIqyHNgI5U>

Please visit The Nature Conservancy in Idaho at <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/idaho/index.htm> and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Idaho website at <http://www.fws.gov/idaho>. DVD copies may be requested by contacting Meggan Laxalt Mackey at margaret_laxalt_mackey@fws.gov, 208-378-5796.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy are proud partners in conservation. Contact us for more information about the conservation of sage-grouse and other species, and what can be done to improve sagebrush-steppe habitat throughout Idaho.