



## How Nevada Landowners Can Help Greater Sage-Grouse



Each property is unique and may require creative thinking on your part to determine what practice or changes would have the most positive effect.



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- **Preserve the sagebrush plant communities you have. Large blocks of healthy sagebrush habitat are important for the survival of sage-grouse.**
- Protect patches of unburned sagebrush near burned areas from disturbance and manipulation. These areas may provide the only remaining habitat for sage-grouse.
- Immediately reestablish mixes of sagebrush, native grasses and forbs (photo right) following wildfires and other disturbances to prevent cheatgrass and other weeds from invading.
- Plant green strips (any non-invasive vegetation that does not burn easily) to protect unburned sagebrush habitat, new plantings and young sagebrush seedlings from the threat of recurrent fires.
- Consider sage-grouse food habits when selecting forb species for range seedings, giving special consideration to species with milky juice such as hawksbeard (photo bottom left), milkvetch (photo bottom center), dandelion (photo bottom right) and western yarrow.



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- Remove pinyon pine, juniper, and other conifers that are invading sagebrush habitat. Wherever possible, choose low impact vegetation control methods such as chain-sawing (photo right) instead of bulldozing.
- Sage-grouse courtship and mating grounds (leks) are specific areas where sage-grouse congregate to display and breed (March to June). Protect leks from disturbance or manipulation. If you have one on your property, please report it to [Nevada Department of Wildlife \(NDOW\)](#), which will help biologists better understand population numbers.



- Don't build fences through leks or on elevated rises near leks. Fences near leks can present problems because sage-grouse move to them in the dark, increasing the probability they will collide with fences. Woven wire fences are particularly restrictive to sage-grouse. Remove abandoned, unused fences.

- Fence markers (photo bottom right) can be placed on fence wires in problem areas to provide visual warning for unsuspecting grouse. The Sutton Avian Research Center has experimented with many designs and has developed a very effective and practical design available on their web site under [Fence Marking for Lesser Prairie-Chickens](#).
- Minimize the number of two-tracks and roads. Roads can disturb soil and fragment habitat, increasing opportunities for weeds to take over and predators to eat sage-grouse eggs and chicks.



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➤ Spraying chemicals in the spring and early summer for insect control impacts sage-grouse. Insects are essential for the survival and normal development of sage-grouse chicks up to 3 weeks of age. Don't use more than what is required to do the job and realize that broods eating insects could be adversely affected.

- Harvest crop fields from the inside out so chicks are forced to the outside rather than concentrated in the center and into the swather's path. Orient the harvesting routes to allow for dispersion of hens and broods to adjacent fields that have adequate cover for protection from predators.
- Install a [flushing bar](#) on tractors (photo below left) and other harvesting machinery to reduce all wildlife mortalities. These bars



scare wildlife out ahead of the swather, preventing injury or death.

- Whenever possible, modify developed springs and other water sources to restore natural free-flowing water and wet meadow habitats, which provide vital food and water resources for sage-grouse adults and chicks.

➤ Install [escape ramps](#) in stock tanks and other water developments to prevent birds and other small animals from drowning, while keeping stock water clean and disease-free.



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- Don't allow ravens (photo left) access to human or livestock food waste. Ravens are the #1 sage-grouse nest predators.
- Avoid building structures that provide perching or nesting sites for ravens.
- Remove unused culverts and outbuildings that attract use by predators such as badgers, gray foxes, and coyotes. Don't allow non-native

predators such as red fox to become established in sage-grouse habitats. Don't allow domestic cats or dogs to go feral.

- Thinning sagebrush to enhance forb and grass production while maintaining a minimum of 35% shrub cover will enhance sage-grouse habitat in areas where the sagebrush overstory is intact but the understory has been severely degraded.



- Give special attention to riparian and wetland areas (photos below). Areas that maintain soil moisture longer than the surrounding uplands are important for broods and adults alike. These areas provide large quantities of forbs and insects which are important foods for sage-grouse during spring and summer months. Quick "flash grazing" or short duration grazing are good grazing practices for these sites.



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- Graze livestock lightly or moderately for the benefit of the range and sage-grouse. Remember, residual cover (last year's growth) is very important for nesting cover and the health of range plants.



- For more information on how Nevada landowners can help greater sage-grouse, contact your local **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** (775.861.6300), **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (775.857.8500) or **Nevada Department of Wildlife** (775.688.1500) office.



Photo Credit: Gail Patricelli