

From: [Abele, Susan](#)
To: [Matt Barry](#); [Matt Hamman](#); [Mike Edwards](#); [Ted Koch](#)
Subject: Fwd: Greater Sheldon Hart Mtn RLC Proposal
Date: Friday, April 17, 2015 11:44:18 AM
Attachments: [GSHMRLC_RLP_FY2015.zip](#)
[GSHMRLC Collaborative Area.pdf](#)

Hi,

FYI. Not sure of the probability this proposal has of getting funded, but addition of the private lands portion was a request by HQ (John Schmerfeld and Jeff Rupert) to Kathy Hollar because it was missing from the initial draft. If funded, we'll have some dollars for more private lands work in Nevada and/or NE California. We'd probably get \$250,000 that has to be obligated this FY so I have an idea of how that could happen and am prepping for it because I expect if it comes, we'll have negative hours to get it set up! :)

I've attached a map of the proposal area in case you don't want to dive into the attachments. Private lands work would focus on wet meadow restoration and inventory/treatment of invasive annual grasses.

cheers,
susan

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Sidles, Cyndi** <cyndi_sidles@fws.gov>
Date: Thu, Apr 16, 2015 at 1:31 PM
Subject: Greater Sheldon Hart Mtn RLC Proposal
To: Kim VanHemelryck <Kim_VanHemelryck@fws.gov>, John Segar <john_segar@fws.gov>, John Schmerfeld <john_schmerfeld@fws.gov>, Karen Prentice <kprentice@blm.gov>
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All,

Here is an updated zip file that includes the contact for the Summit Lake Tribe, Will Cowan, on the front page of the main proposal. From yesterday's zipped file, only the proposal was updated, but I re-zipped the entire package for ease. Delete yesterday's zipped file and replace with this one.

Again, I've only sent to those directly involved in input and editing. Once the Resource Team completes their review and passes it to OWF, I will forward to everyone involved. I have also updated this on the google drive <https://drive.google.com/drive/#folders/0B1m4C05mATh9X2ZiX3IWMUJIRTg>. Let me know if you don't have access to this google drive folder and wish that you did.

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Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative

Resilient Landscapes Proposal FY 2015

1. Include the agencies involved in preparing the proposal, along with contact information for all participating DOI agencies:

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2. Proposal Overview

The Pacific Region (R1) of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) requests \$5,683,800 (attachment b) to address the wildfire and invasive plant threat to the sage steppe ecosystem on Bureau of Land Management (BLM), FWS Lands, the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe (Tribe) reservation, and private lands within the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain landscape. The proposed FWS lead collaborative covers approximately four million acres of sagebrush steppe in south central Oregon, northern Nevada, and northeastern California which have been identified as high priority landscapes by the Conservation Objectives Team (USFWS, 2013) and by what is known as “The Strongholds Memo” (USFWS, 2014). The Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain landscape is one of the few large intact sagebrush-steppe ecosystems left in the West. Sagebrush ecosystems are critical to hundreds of species of wildlife and plants that depend on these habitats of the Great Basin high desert. Numerous collaborative projects are underway to increase resilience and resistance to fire and invasive weeds including feral horse and burro removal on Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), conifer removal, prescribed fire and strategic fuelbreaks in sagebrush steppe across the proposal area and jurisdictional boundaries. These projects are occurring on FWS, BLM, Forest System (USFS) and Tribal Lands; and on private lands through the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) funded through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (Partners Program). Together these projects work to restore and maintain the larger sage steppe and provide interconnectedness for species dependent on intact sagebrush landscapes across the Northern and Western Great Basin. This area is well defined in recent publications for greater sage-grouse (GRSG) conservation, including the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report (USFWS, 2013), the Fire and Invasives Assessment Team (FIAT; BLM, 2015) and is a Healthy Lands area under BLM (Northern Great

Basin, California, Oregon, and Idaho Focal Area (COIN)). This landscape lies in the Western Great Basin and Warm Springs Priority Areas for Conservation for GRSG.

2a. Proposal Purpose

The purpose of this Collaborative is to increase coordination between ongoing and future efforts of all partners to strategically identify and work to increase the resiliency of one of the last remaining large expanses of intact sage steppe habitat. This area of the northern Great Basin is a fire-adapted landscape that has experienced increasingly large wildland fires over the last few years. In 2012, nearly 2 million acres of sagebrush ecosystem burned north and east of the proposed area. Fires are expected to increase in frequency and size as the climate continues to change. The area described in this proposal has not yet experienced the damaging landscape-scale fires that have caused extensive conversion to invasive plants. Invasive plants are currently at low to moderate levels. A proactive and collaborative approach to managing these invasive plants will help ensure conservation of these lands for the future.

Initially, short term outputs will focus on completion of a comprehensive Landscape Conservation Design (LCD), reducing native juniper that has encroached on sagebrush ecosystems due largely to improper grazing and fire exclusion, and treatment of invasive grasses and noxious weeds. Juniper expansion drastically changes the structure of sagebrush habitats by modifying soil fertility, reducing forage production, reducing understory, altering wildlife habitat and increasing fire intensity (Young et al., 2015).

Because the GRSG is considered an umbrella species in this ecosystem and creating sagebrush ecosystems that are resilient to fire and resistant to exotic annual grass invasions benefits all sagebrush obligate species, work in this area will use the scientific methods described by Chambers et al (2014) to identify and prioritize habitats for treatment for GRSG. This method uses soil moisture and temperature regimes as a surrogate to measure resilience and resistance and dominant ecological types across the landscape. This approach was used by the FIAT teams to assess sagebrush landscapes and suggest priority project areas (PPAs) for treatment. The LCD will further refine this effort by creating detailed, spatially explicit vegetation and landscape maps.

2b. Outcomes, Objectives, and Metrics

The desired outcome for this collaborative is to reduce the risk of damaging wildland fire occurrence to diminish the risk of expansion of invasive plants into the area. Continued loss of sagebrush from damaging fires in adjacent areas increases the need to conserve this area for wildlife populations dependent on sagebrush as the climate continues to change and species seek more resilient areas. Hazardous fuels management activities on the Tribal reservation will help protect the Summit Lake Watershed and the largest lake-dwelling, self-sustaining population of federally threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout.

The primary objective of the Resilient Landscapes Collaborative (RLC) is to enhance partnerships to collaboratively work across all jurisdictions to maintain and restore sagebrush-steppe habitat and conserve interconnectedness through the area over a 10-year period. Treatments in the proposed area will include removal of encroaching juniper, developing strategic fuelbreaks over the large landscape, reducing invasive plants (i.e. Western juniper) and exotic weeds (i.e. Medusahead), and restoration of wet meadow complexes on private lands. Together, all partners propose to treat approximately 126,000 acres across all jurisdictions over the 10-year period 2015-2024.

Treatment objectives for the proposal area are in alignment with objectives and treatments as described in the FIAT assessment for the Western Great Basin and Warm Springs Priority Areas for Conservation following the resilience and resistance concepts of Chambers et al. (2014).

Metrics to demonstrate achievement will include effectiveness monitoring for treatment objectives and continued monitoring of wildlife populations, including pronghorn antelope and GRSG.

2c. Planning Alignment

The area is identified by the national cohesive strategy as a high priority for broad scale fuels management and community planning and coordination to restore and maintain fire-adapted ecosystems and achieve fire-resilient landscapes. This collaborative will address both of these priorities.

The DOI strategic plan for 2014-2018 identifies Mission #1 as ‘Celebrating and Enhancing America’s Great Outdoors’. Specifically, Goal 1 is to Protect Americas Landscapes utilizing three strategies: improve land and water health; sustain fish, wildlife and plant species; and manage wildland fire for landscape resiliency. This Collaborative proposal will utilize all three strategies.

Secretarial Order 3336 directs Interior bureaus to immediately address the threat of rangeland fire to Western sagebrush-steppe landscapes and improve fire management efforts. Specifically the Secretary called for the development of a comprehensive, science based strategy to address fuels and fire management. This proposal will use the science-based strategy outlined by Chambers et al. (2014) and utilized by the FIAT assessments to proactively address fuels to reduce the threat of damaging wildland fire in sage steppe ecosystems. Secretarial Order 3335 reaffirms the Department’s obligations and demonstrates a continuing commitment to upholding the important federal trust responsibility for Indian country. Finally, Secretarial Order 3829, which established the both the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and the Climate Science Centers also speaks to the need for the use of best available science and traditional ecological knowledge to benefit American Indians and Alaska Natives. SO 3829 states: “Tribal values are critical to determining what is to be protected, why, and how to protect the interest of their communities.”

The COT report (USFWS, 2013) specifically addressed the Sheldon-Hart Mountain area as a Priority Area for Conservation (PAC). These areas were identified as highly important for long term viability of GRSG and should be a primary focus of collective conservation efforts. The FIAT (BLM, 2015) assessments were driven by PACs identified in the COT report (USFWS, 2013).

All land use and fire management plans for FWS, BLM, USFS, and Tribal lands will be adhered to.

The proposal is in alignment with Sheldon NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (2012) and Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge (NAR) Comprehensive Management Plan (1994). These land use plans direct both refuges to manage for sagebrush ecosystems and wildlife, all NEPA for management of these landscapes, including fuels management and use of fire, are covered by the land use plan. The Sheldon Hart National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC) Fire Management Plan outlines the areas for fire management as described in the land use plans.

The proposal area overlaps two of the FWS Partners Program Strategic Plan Focus Areas, the Region 1 Closed Basin Focus Area and the Region 8 Great Basin Focus Area.

This proposal would provide guidance for treatment activities on BLM-administered (i.e. Public) lands in the Proposal Area for the next 5 to 10 years, consistent with the management goals and direction contained in the Lakeview Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision RMP/ROD (BLM 2003b). NEPA is complete for the Warner projects.

3. Influencing Critical Resources and Watersheds:

The Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain ecosystem is one of the highest-density breeding grounds for GRSG in the nation. The dominance of Federal land ownership offers the opportunity to create a collaborative conservation plan that could have range-wide significance (National Wildlife Refuge Association, 2014). This proposal covers projects at Sheldon and Hart Mountain Refuges, the Warner Project on Lakeview BLM District lands, Summit Lake Paiute Tribe Reservation, and private lands. The FWS, BLM and adjacent private land areas are identified in the COT report (USFWS, 2013) and the “Strongholds Memo” (USFWS, 2014) as areas of highest breeding density with existing high quality sagebrush habitat. All material relating to these project areas identified in the COT report (USFWS, 2013), “Strongholds Memo” (USFWS, 2014) and the FIAT report (BLM, 2015) are incorporated into this proposal by reference.

Refuges

Hart Mountain NAR is located in the northwestern corner of the Great Basin, Lake County, Oregon. The lands adjacent to the Refuge are primarily managed by the BLM (Lakeview and Burns Districts). The total area within the Hart Mountain NAR is 277,893 acres and >75% of the Refuge is sagebrush-steppe. Within the Refuge, roughly 221,760 acres (80%) is GRSG habitat. Hart Mountain NAR lies within the Western Great Basin PAC and the entire Refuge has been designated a GRSG “core area” by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The entire Refuge has also been designated as Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH); PPH represents the habitat designated to maintain distribution and sustainable GRSG populations (Manier et al. 2013). The Refuge provides breeding, brood-rearing, and winter habitat for GRSG. There are currently 31 known lek (breeding area) complexes comprised of 72 individual leks distributed across the Refuge; roughly 61% of the known lek complexes are currently active. The GRSG population is sustaining and is a stronghold population.

Sheldon NWR is located in the northwestern corner of the Great Basin, located in Humboldt and Washoe Counties, Nevada. The lands adjacent to the Refuge are primarily managed by the BLM (Lakeview, Burns, Northern California, and Winnemucca Districts). The total area within the Refuge’s borders is 575,000 acres and >80% of the Refuge is sagebrush-steppe habitat and is considered GRSG habitat. Sheldon NWR lies within the Western Great Basin PAC and has been designated as a GRSG “core” (80%) or “priority” (12%) management areas by the State of Nevada’s GRSG conservation plan. Roughly 90% of the Refuge therefore falls as Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH). The Refuge provides breeding, brood rearing, and winter habitat for GRSG. There are currently 26 known lek sub-complexes comprised of 60 individual leks distributed across the Refuge; roughly 76% of the known lek sub-complexes are currently active. The GRSG population is sustaining and is a stronghold population.

BLM Warner Project

The total area within the BLM Warner Project is 330,914 acres and is largely sagebrush steppe. The Warner project area lies within the Western Great Basin PAC and over 22,000 acres has been designated as high to very high wildfire hazard potential. Within the Warner Project Area the GRSG population is stable. Available telemetry data shows that this area is used for all the life requisites including breeding, brood-rearing and winter habitat (BLM, 2015). There are currently 56 individual leks distributed across the Warner project area with 9 leks currently occupied and 21 leks occupied pending (BLM, 2015). An analysis of occupied and potential GRSG habitats was conducted at the third order (fine scale) level (Johnson 1980, Stiver et. al. 2010). Information from individually radio-marked GRSG from the Warner Mountain Sage-grouse Study along with habitat descriptions were used to determine current and potential habitat use areas (BLM 2011).

Private Lands

Approximately 14% of the proposal area is privately owned-lands with habitat conditions in varying stages of habitat quality. Approximately 85% of GRSG leks cluster within six miles of wet summer habitat sites (essential summer habitat for sage grouse to raise broods). These stream sides, wet meadows, and

wetlands compose less than two percent of the western landscape, yet more than 80% fall on private lands (Donnelly et al., in prep.). Working with private landowners is essential for the successful conservation of these systems. Wet meadow complexes may serve as barriers to fire spread and restored wet meadow systems will be more resilient to fire.

Landowners enrolling in Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) or Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) have existing or developing conservation plans that have prioritized areas for wet meadow restoration and/or annual invasive grass control.

Desired Conditions

The long-term conservation goal for GRSG and healthy sagebrush shrub and native perennial grass and forb communities is to maintain viable, connected, and well-distributed populations and habitat across their range, through threat amelioration, conservation of key habitats, and restoration activities (USFWS, 2013).

This RLC proposal includes important activities for both threat reduction and habitat restoration. The COT report (USFWS, 2013) recognizes that in some instances ‘it may be critical to not only remove or reduce anthropogenic threats... but additionally to improve population health through active habitat management (e.g., habitat restoration)’. In addition to habitat restoration, this RLC proposal specifically addresses two COT report (USFWS, 2013) conservation objectives; juniper expansion, and non-native invasive plants.

Juniper Expansion Objective: Remove pinyon-juniper from areas of sagebrush that are most likely to support GRSG at a rate that is at least equal to the rate of pinyon-juniper incursion.

In the Northern Great Basin, habitat loss and fragmentation due to wildfire and conifer encroachment have been identified as the primary threats to GRSG (Manier et al. 2013). Conifer expansion results in declines in sagebrush cover and reductions in perennial native grasses and forbs as conifer canopy cover increases (see summary by Chambers et al. 2014). The ability to maintain active leks is severely compromised when conifer canopy cover exceeds 4%, and habitats containing most active leks average <1% conifer canopy cover. By removing juniper, available GRSG habitats within the area would be greatly increased, including access to mesic meadows, and late brood-rearing habitats, as well as creating additional nesting habitats.

Much of the proposal area is in Phase I and Phase II juniper. Juniper treatment of Phases I and II has been shown to be highly effective at maintaining native shrubs and understories, while functionally restoring sagebrush landscapes on many ecological sites. Efforts are ongoing in the proposal area to quantify the extent of juniper encroachment and prioritize areas for treatment in relation to GRSG habitats. Recommended, ongoing and future treatments will continue to be conducted by BLM, NRCS, FWS and USFS within the RLC primarily via mechanical methods supported by prescribed fire (Chambers et al. 2014).

These treatments include:

- Use prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to remove conifers, decrease woody fuels, and release native understories in cool and moist big sagebrush ecosystems with relatively high resistance to annual invasive grasses that are in early to mid-phases of juniper expansion.
- Burning of debris piles resulting from cutting juniper.
- Actively manage post-treatment areas to minimize secondary weed infestation of invasive annual grasses and noxious weeds.

Treatments would avoid impacts to GRSG and migratory birds identified on the Birds of Conservation Concern list (USFWS, 2008) and the Focal Bird Species list (USFWS, 2005) during the breeding and nesting season by avoiding juniper treatments and designing and implementing appropriate mitigation measures for the action alternatives.

Non-native invasive plant objective: Maintain and restore healthy, native sagebrush plant communities.

Nonnative annual grasses and forbs reduce both habitat quality and quantity for GRSG. Further, due to repeated fires, some low- to mid-elevation native sagebrush communities can shift to annual grassland states resulting in habitat loss that may be irreversible with current technologies (see summary by Chambers et al. 2014). Most GRSG leks have very little annual grassland cover, and lek use becomes progressively less as the cover of invasive annual species increases. Reductions in GRSG recruitment and annual survival also occurs (see summary by Chambers et al. 2014).

Refuges

Sagebrush-steppe habitats within Hart Mountain NAR are currently in Good to High condition (as defined by Manier et al. 2013) with intact, native understories as a result of largely passive restoration following the elimination of feral horse and domestic livestock grazing. In the absence of feral horse and livestock grazing, substantial habitat recovery, particularly within severely deteriorated riparian habitats, has been documented on the Refuge in the roughly 20-years following livestock removal. For habitats in Good to High condition, minimal action is recommended: maintain status and protect intact shrub stands, monitor and treat invasive species, monitor productivity, and adjust management if condition decline is documented (Manier et al. 2013). Sagebrush-steppe habitats within Sheldon NWR are currently in Moderate to Good condition (as defined by Manier et al. 2013) with potentially under-represented native understories and invasive plants which are common but not dominant as such that natives have been entirely displaced as a result of past grazing pressure by feral equids. Feral horses and burros were removed from Sheldon NWR between 2013 and 2014 in accordance with existing policy, the mission of the Refuge System and the Service, and the purposes for Sheldon NWR. For habitats in Moderate to Good condition, passive restoration with small, localized treatments or restoration actions are recommended: rest from grazing to avoid a sudden change in disturbance regime and/or exotic species invasion, and consideration of increasing active restoration if habitat conditions are not improved (Manier et al. 2013). Recommended activities on both Refuges are (Chambers et al. 2014):

- Continued exclusion of feral horses and burros.
- Suppress fire in moderate to low resilience and resistance sagebrush and wooded shrublands to prevent an invasive annual grass-fire cycle. Large sagebrush patches are high priority for protection from wildfires.
- Implement strategic fuel break networks to provide anchor points for suppression and reduce losses when wildfires escape initial attack.
- Limit anthropogenic activities that can cause surface disturbance, exotic weed invasion, and fragmentation, e.g., road and utility corridors, OHV use.
- Detect and control new exotic weed infestations
- Promote health of perennial grasses and forbs to increase resistance to annual grass invasion.
- Use prescribed fire to remove trees, decrease woody fuels and release native grasses and forbs in cool and moist big sagebrush ecosystems with relatively high resistance to annual invasive grass.

BLM Warner Project

Within the Warner Project invasive plants have been identified. The northern half of the Warner Project is considered one of the highest priorities for control and containment of annual grass species which include medusahead and cheatgrass. In the southern half of the Warner project there are scattered areas of concern with higher abundance of cheatgrass along a long strip of land along the base of the South Warner Rim and the western edges of the project area.

To minimize impacts to GRSG habitat and the potential conversion of ecological sites from shrub steppe to cheatgrass which can negatively affect GRSG habitats (Baker 2011, Miller et al. 2011), prescribed fire will only be conducted in areas with good ecological condition with little or no risk of cheatgrass dominance. Broadcast burning will only occur on limited acres, on steep (>30% slope) slopes and areas identified as unsuitable for GRSG use (Freese 2009, ODFW 2011). Single tree burning will be restricted to late fall, winter or early spring months to reduce the risk of spread. This form of burning will remove the slash left over from cutting juniper, but will leave most of the shrubs and grasses undisturbed and intact. Removing juniper while leaving shrubs, understory grasses and forbs intact would improve habitat conditions for GRSG nesting, brood-rearing, and wintering habitats. Long-term positive impacts in the form of higher quantity and quality of GRSG habitats would greatly outweigh any short term impacts. Sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing habitats would benefit the most from the proposed treatment activities.

The design of the project seeks to minimize disturbances, apply native seed where necessary to reduce the likelihood of non-native invasive plant establishment, and aggressively inventory and treat non-native plants when found.

Private and Tribal Lands

Working with Sage Grouse Initiative funding and science support, the NRCS has an active juniper removal program in place that works on private lands in synergy with BLM and FWS Refuge efforts. The FWS Partners Program is also working with private landowners in the proposal area and would build on those efforts to strategically select and implement high priority wet meadow restoration projects to improve fire resistance and landscape resilience across the proposal area. Conservation practices to improve these systems can include active restoration or more passive methods such as grazing management. Grazing management may entail development of a grazing plan and necessary infrastructure (e.g., fencing, off-site water systems).

Activities on the Reservation may include: completion of any NEPA requirements for the Tribe, mowing of Tribal roadsides and fence lines, and reducing native juniper that has encroached on sagebrush ecosystems due largely to improper grazing and fire exclusion.

4. Proposal Workplan

The workplan requests funding to continue project work on BLM, FWS, Tribal and private lands to protect and restore sagebrush habitat. FWS is also requesting funding to develop a Landscape Conservation Design (LCD) plan, which will further direct finer scale strategic landscape management through: (1) the acquisition, synthesis, analysis, and sharing of existing landscape-scale data; (2) an assessment of the current landscape and conservation activities in relation to terrestrial species, habitats, and connectivity; and (3) developing and/or continuing partnerships with conservation agencies and entities, Tribes, and other stakeholders to support LCD within the region. Requested FWS funding would also support project GIS work, contracting needs and administrative oversight, monitoring and reporting.

The total request for all partners for FY15 is \$5,683,800. This includes \$2.5M for BLM juniper treatments, \$2.2M for FWS juniper treatments, \$500k for Partners projects on private lands, \$200k for projects on Tribal lands, \$132k for the GBLCC for LCD planning, GIS support, contracting support and project oversight and \$36k for FWS Regional Office staff support.

The implementation of treatments would be conducted over a 5 to 10 year time period. This would result in treating multiple areas and utilizing multiple entries to meet resource objectives. All partners propose to use prescribed fire and mechanical methods within the RLC Proposal Area to maintain the integrity of sagebrush-steppe, bitterbrush, and aspen communities, and manage for intact native understory grass,

shrub, and forb components. These treatments would maintain a balance between juniper and sagebrush-steppe habitats, providing for habitat diversity and structure.

Together, all partners propose to treat approximately 126,000 acres on all jurisdictions over the 10-year period 2015-2024.

5. Partnerships and Interactions

Partnerships and interactions are occurring with FWS Refuges, FWS Ecological Services and FWS Partners Program R1 and R8, Oregon and Nevada BLM, NRCS, Summit Lake Tribe, Greater Hart-Sheldon Conservation Fund, Oregon State University, University of Nevada Reno, Brigham Young University, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, The Nature Conservancy, USFS – Fremont-Winema National Forest, Agricultural Research Services (USDA), Joint Fire Science, Order of the Antelope, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Oregon Hunters Association, Oregon Natural Desert Association, State of Oregon, State of Nevada, Great Basin LCC, Lake County, Humboldt County, Washoe County, Lake County Cooperative Weed Management Area, Sierra Club, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Ruby Pipeline Mitigation Fund, Lakeview District Fuels Account and also HLI South Warner – BPS 49269 dollars, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and private landowners and local ranching associations.

6. Describe extent of collaboration

The proposal area includes Sheldon and Hart Mountain Refuges; two FWS Ecological Service and Partners Program offices, Oregon and Nevada; four BLM Districts: Lakeview District, OR; Burns District, OR; Winnemucca District, NV and Northern California District, CA; the Lakeview Ranger District of the Fremont-Winema National Forest and a substantial amount of State and private lands.

Together, these entities are working to protect this last large intact expanse of sagebrush-steppe. Through proactive and reactive fire management principles all partners are focused on maintaining this landscape using consistent landscape goals and working to prevent large damaging wildland fire. Proactive goals include fuels management, developing and maintaining strategic fuelbreaks to limit fire size and provide for firefighter safety, reducing invasive plants, restoring wet meadows, and removal or reduction of feral horse grazing. Fire management in this area is a service first organization that will increase resources and suppression efforts during fire season operations. Under a common goal, this Collaborative is treating a larger landscape using an all hands, all lands approach.

The interagency team was assembled quickly to meet timeframes for a prospectus submittal to the FWS within the first week of the announcement. This required an effort on the part of BLM and FWS fuels managers to contact and engage numerous internal and external parties for involvement.

Once the prospectus was accepted, the networks continued to broaden. On April 1, a conference call to inform and gather information included all disciplines from BLM, FWS, USFS and the Great Basin LCC. This call prompted action with NRCS, the Fremont-Winema NF, The Oregon Natural Desert Association, Nevada and California BLM, the Summit Lake Paiute Tribe and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. In Lakeview, the Refuges and Lakeview BLM District had long established relationships that they were able to network for inclusion into this proposal. The collaborative has garnered widespread support for this proposal and together these groups are working across all jurisdictions, including private lands. With the development of the collaborative and completion of the LCD, work efforts can be more focused and strategic.

In the future, we plan for this collaborative to act as a sub-regional collaborative to the Great Basin LCC.

7. Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Monitoring for this collaborative will require both direct and indirect monitoring. Established direct monitoring practices for both the BLM and FWS utilize well established fire and fuels management monitoring protocols that are processed by the Feat-Firemon Integrated (FFI) monitoring system that utilizes statistical analysis over repeated outings to answer whether results are meeting objectives. This information feeds into the adaptive management process. These protocols consistently measure vegetation response, including natives, invasives plants and noxious weeds. These protocols can be used long term. This software system is free and easily available and graphs and reports are easily produced.

Landscape level monitoring that evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of FIAT management strategies will follow The Greater Sage-Grouse Monitoring Framework (BLM/USFS, 2014). The framework specifies monitoring for change in sagebrush availability due to fire, conifer encroachment, treatments and invasive species and gives the responsibility to the BLM and USFS utilizing criteria which are well defined in the framework.

Numerous studies are ongoing on GRSG, pronghorn antelope and other sagebrush obligate species across the project area. An Inventory and Monitoring Plan (IMP) will be developed for both refuges through the Inventory and Monitoring Program of the FWS. The IMP will define annual monitoring and protocols and will include monitoring of all priority species. NFPORS will be examined as a possible means to track dollars, acres and accomplishments.

8. Prior Accomplishments

Refuges

For the Refuges, the largest accomplishment toward sagebrush restoration has been the removal of domestic livestock and feral horses and burros. For Hart Mountain NAR, this occurred 1994-1999 and passive restoration of this high value, resilient landscape has been exceptional and is well documented. On Sheldon NWR, feral horses and burros were removed FY13-14. Work continues annually on both Refuges to control exotic weed infestations as they occur with herbicide and mechanical methods. Hazardous fuels accomplishments for both refuges from 2010-2014 were 5,500 acres.

Oregon BLM

Initial implementation of projects to address conifer encroachment began in February of 2012. By the end of Fiscal Year 2012, over 7,508 acres of juniper had been cut. Stands selected for initial cutting were selected based in importance to GRSG, their rest-rotation period, and by treatment type. Most stands where juniper was to be cut and left unburned were selected for treatment in 2012. Stands closest to GRSG lek sites were also selected for immediate treatment. Treatment types implemented in 2012 were cut and leave, cut and single tree burn, and cut and hand pile.

Cutting was accomplished utilizing contract cutting crews. Hand piling was accomplished using Youth Conservation Corps crews from the local community and other youth crews from other parts of Oregon. No burn treatments were carried out in FY-2012.

BLM fire crews began prescribed burning the single tree treatments and hand piling units in October of 2012. An unusually heavy snowstorm combined with high winds drifted snow into the hand piles in early November, closing the window on hand pile and most of the single tree burning until early 2013. When burning commenced in late winter, fire crews were able to make fast work of 3,249 acres of juniper. Approximately 30% of these acres were hand piles and 70% were single tree burned.

Contract juniper cutting crews resumed cutting as the snow melted. After a 2 month shut down for migratory birds, the crews set back to work cutting and piling juniper. At one point in 2013, five cutting

and piling crews from three companies were working simultaneously within the project area. At the close of the fiscal year, an additional 9,580 acres had been cut.

Monitoring of cut treatments began in 2013. Vegetative measurements had been collected prior to treatment and were collected again after treatment on monitoring plots established in several different treatment types and treatment areas. Monitoring consisted of collecting measurements on structure and composition of trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs present on each monitoring plot as well as photo points.

Private Lands

NRCS: Since 2010, the Warner landscape has been a primary focal area for SGI strategic investments in conifer removal on non-federal lands. To date through SGI alone, about 5,000 acres have been cut with an additional 10,000 acres contracted to be removed in coming years. Recently, Oregon NRCS reaffirmed its commitment to prioritizing the Warners as a focal project area for future SGI investment with the objective of addressing 95% of the Phase I and II encroachment on private lands by fiscal year 2018.

NRCS, BLM, and other SGI partners have also invested in long-term outcome based evaluations in this landscape to monitor biological benefits of conservation efforts. Specifically, a 10-year investigation of sage-grouse response to conifer encroachment and removal is being conducted by scientists at University of Idaho and Oregon State University. Additionally, partners have supported an evaluation of sagebrush-obligate songbird response to conifer removal. Findings of these studies help quantify outcomes of collective conservation investments and guide adaptive management long term.

FWS Partners: Since 2004, the FWS Partners Program has worked with private landowners to restore or enhance over 4,000 acres of habitat in the area of the RLC. An additional 1,500 acres is currently in process.

Summit Lake Paiute Tribe

The Summit Lake Paiute Tribe (Tribe) initiated a Noxious Weed Management Program in 2008 with the goal of controlling noxious weed infestations that threatened floral biodiversity on the Summit Lake Paiute Reservation (Reservation). The Tribe utilized a Tribal Wildlife Grant from FWS to fund initial program costs. Additional grants from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the United States Department of Agriculture provided supplementary funding that enabled the Tribe to treat noxious weeds for six consecutive years (2008 – 2013). Under a grant from the BIA, the Tribe continued noxious weed management in 2014. The Tribe is working with the Partners Program to initiate and implement native plant revegetation in the areas that have been treated for noxious weeds.

9. Attachments – included in zipped folder as separate files

- Bibliography

- Workplan

- The GSHMRLC Geodatabase

- Letters of support:

 - USFWS committing RO staff, Refuges, Ecological Services and Partners for Fish and Wildlife

 - Oregon State BLM

 - The Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative

 - Summit Lake Paiute Tribe

 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

 - Nevada State BLM

 - US Forest Service R6

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Jim Douglas
Director, Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 2660
Washington DC 20240

April 14, 2015

Dear Mr. Douglas:

The Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GB LCC) is pleased to provide this Letter of Commitment as a partner for the *Greater Sheldon Hart Resilient Landscape Collaborative* proposal. This Resilient Landscapes program proposal is essential to the efforts that members of the Greater Sheldon Hart Resilient Landscape Collaborative are making to help conserve and restore sustainable, resilient wildlife habitats, by implementing actions to counter threats from invasive annual grasses, wildfire, conifer encroachment, and climate change. Particular emphasis is given to the restoration and protection of sagebrush associated ecological systems at the landscape-scale after wildfire or to accelerate the ecological role fire plays in fire-adapted ecosystems.

The GB LCC helps promote and coordinate science-based actions to enable human and natural communities to respond and adapt to a changing climate and other impacts such as fire and invasive weeds. GB LCC priorities include sagebrush habitat, sagebrush-dependent species (e.g., sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, pronghorn antelope), invasive weeds, and wildfire. Since our inception in 2011, we have provided \$900,000 towards these four priorities with a 1:1 or greater match. Additionally, as a partner in this collaborative, we will also provide 30% of our geospatial analyst's time (approximately \$17,300/year) toward the creation of a Landscape Conservation Design to assist with strategic implementation and for effectiveness tracking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Todd E. Hopkins".

Todd E. Hopkins
Science Coordinator,
Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Tel: (775) 861-6492
Email: todd_hopkins@fws.gov
www.greatbasinlcc.org

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
2316 South 6th, Suite C
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

Telephone: (541) 883-6932

FAX: (541) 882-9044

April 14, 2015

Jim Douglas
Director, Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 2660
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Douglas:

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is pleased to continue our collaborative relationship with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon/Washington Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service to further address resilient landscapes within the sagebrush ecosystems of Oregon.

Since 2010, the Warner landscape has been a primary focal area for the Sage Grouse Initiative's strategic investments in conifer removal on non-federal lands. To date through SGI alone, about 5,000 acres have been cut with an additional 10,000 acres contracted to be removed in coming years. Recently, Oregon NRCS reaffirmed its commitment to prioritizing the Warners as a focal project area for future SGI investment with the objective of addressing 95% of the Phase I and II encroachment on private lands by fiscal year 2018.

NRCS, BLM, and other SGI partners have also invested in long-term outcome based evaluations in this landscape to monitor biological benefits of conservation efforts. Specifically, a 10-year investigation of sage-grouse response to conifer encroachment and removal is being conducted by scientists at University of Idaho and Oregon State University. The first phase of research is nearing completion while phase two has just recently commenced. Additionally, partners have supported an evaluation of sagebrush-obligate songbird response to conifer removal. Findings of these studies help quantify outcomes of collective conservation investments and guide adaptive management long term

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Conroy", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kevin A Conroy
Team Leader Deschutes / High Desert Basins
USDA-NRCS
Office: (541) 883-6932, 115
Cell: (541) 778-4487



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Nevada State Office
1340 Financial Boulevard
Reno, Nevada 89502-7147
<http://www.blm.gov/nv>

APR 10 2015

In Reply Refer To:
9210 (NV 913)

Jim Douglas
Director, Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 2660
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Douglas:

The Nevada Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is pleased to partner on the Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain (GSHM) Resilient Landscape Collaborative. This Resilient Landscapes program proposal is very valuable to the efforts that Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain partners are making to help conserve and restore sustainable, resilient wildlife habitats. This will be accomplished by implementing actions to counter the primary threats from invasive annual grasses, wildfire, conifer encroachment, and climate change. Particular emphasis is given to the restoration and protection of sagebrush associated ecological systems at the landscape scale after wildfire and/or to accelerate the ecological role fire plays in fire-adapted ecosystems.

Nevada BLM is committed to the Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain Resilient Landscape Collaborative as a partner working across state lines to strengthen relationships with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Oregon BLM, Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and non-governmental organizations such as the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the Greater Hart Sheldon Conservation Fund. Our partners are fully engaged with us in the conservation of the greater sagebrush steppe. With this effort, we will leverage prior investments and partnerships to benefit wildlife and fire-dependent ecosystems.

If you have any questions, please free to contact Sandy Gregory, Fuels Management Program Lead, at s50grego@blm.gov and 775-861-6514, or John Wilson, Healthy Lands Lead, at jwilson@blm.gov and 775-861-6613.

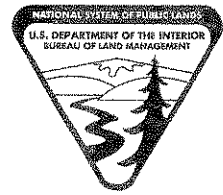
Sincerely,

Amy L. Lueders
State Director



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Oregon State Office
P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208
<http://www.blm.gov/or>



APR 13 2015

Mr. Jim Douglas
Director
Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW MS 2660
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Douglas:

I am pleased to inform you of the commitment of the Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as an active partner in the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative (RLC) under the leadership of the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 1.

This Resilient Landscapes program proposal is imperative to the efforts this RLC is making to restore and maintain the larger sage steppe landscapes across all jurisdictions. These efforts will make the area more resilient to fire-related disturbances and provide interconnectedness for species dependent on intact sagebrush landscapes across the Northern and Western Great Basin. This area has been identified by the USFWS as a highly important landscape because it is a "stronghold" for the Greater Sage-grouse (GRSG). As a stronghold, the area is considered to be "most vital" to the persistence of the GRSG (memo from USFWS Director, Don Ashe, October 27, 2014).

The OR/WA BLM will contribute to the RLC by providing both labor and operational funding to treat the BLM-administered lands within the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC proposal area. In addition, personnel would be committed to participating in partnership outreach, communication, and planning meetings to ensure the continued and future success of the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC.

Table 1 displays the current Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 funding allocated, including partner contributions and acres accomplished, and the funding the OR/WA BLM is requesting through the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC proposal with total acres to be accomplished in FY2015.

Table 1	Total Allocation and Acres Accomplished			FY2015 RLC Requested	
Program	Funding	Treatment	Acres	Directed	Acres
Wildlife	\$50,000	Monitoring	1,000		
Fuels	\$795,000	Juniper removal/burning	6,300	\$2,538,0000	5,000*
Cultural	\$5,000	Monitoring/clearances	500		
Range	\$5,000	Monitoring	500		
Botany/Weeds	\$5,000	Monitoring/clearances	500		
HLI	\$85,000	Thinning/burning	640		
Ruby Pipeline Mitigation-Contributed	\$100,000	Juniper removal/burning	1,000 (BLM Lands)		
NRCS - Contributed	\$694,000	Juniper removal/burning	4,400 (Private Lands)		

* The \$2.538 million will provide capacity to treat acres in out years, reducing our expected request for RLC funding in FY2016-2018, as reflected in Table 2.

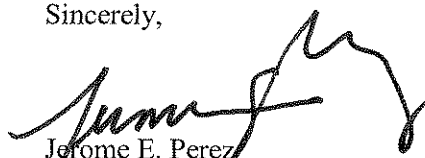
Project implementation would be conducted over a 5- to 10-year period of time. This would result in treating multiple units and utilizing multiple entries to meet resource objectives. In general, most units would either be entered only once to cut juniper trees or twice, once to cut the juniper trees and again after 1-3 years to burn the cut juniper. The BLM proposes to use prescribed fire and juniper cutting methods within the proposal area to maintain the integrity of sagebrush-steppe, bitterbrush, and aspen communities and to manage for intact, understory grass, shrub, and forb components. These treatments would maintain a balance between juniper habitats and sagebrush steppe habitats, thus providing for habitat diversity and structure.

Table 2 estimates the continued FY2016 to FY2018 financial commitment of labor and operational (basic) funding, expected partner contributed funding, and total requested Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC directed funds with planned treatment acres.

Table 2	FY2016			FY2017			FY2018		
Program	Basic	Project Funds	Acres	Basic	Project Funds	Acres	Basic	Project Funds	Acres
Wildlife	\$50,000		5,000	\$50,000		5,000	\$50,000		5,000
Fuels	\$600,000		8,000	\$400,000		6,000	\$300,000		6,000
Cultural	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500
Range	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500
Botany/Weeds	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500	\$5,000		500
HLI		\$250,000	1,000		\$250,000	1,000		\$250,000	1,000
Ruby Pipeline Mitigation-Contributed		\$100,000	1,000 (BLM Lands)		\$100,000	1,000 (BLM Lands)		\$100,000	1,000 (BLM Lands)
NRCS-Contributed		\$650,000	4,000 (Private Lands)		\$500,000	3,000 (Private Lands)		\$500,000	3,000 (Private Lands)
RLC Directed Request by FY		\$300,000	8,000		\$450,000	6,000		\$450,000	6,000

The Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC is an opportunity to emphasize the importance and the many opportunities that can come from all stakeholders working collaboratively across all landscapes. We look forward to working on the resilient landscape project with our partners and appreciate your consideration of the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC proposal.

Sincerely,



Jerome E. Perez
State Director
Oregon/Washington



File Code: 2020
Date: April 13, 2015

Mr. Jim Douglas, Director
Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS-2660
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Douglas:

I am pleased to announce that the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service will be participating as a partner in support of the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative under the leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 1. This Resilient Landscapes proposal is important to the efforts that the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative (RLC) is making to restore and maintain the larger sage steppe landscapes across all jurisdictions so they are more resilient to fire-related disturbances and provide interconnectedness for species dependent on intact sagebrush landscapes across the Northern and Western Great Basin.

A portion of the Fremont-Winema National Forest (FWNF), which is also a Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project (CFLRP), is located within and immediately adjacent to the RLC. Within the Lakeview CFLRP and RLC, the FWNF is currently planning a landscape level accelerated restoration project and partnering with the Lakeview Bureau of Land Management and adjacent private landowners. This partnership is expected to result in the ability to complete restoration across ownerships and the ability to leverage funding for restoration. These partnership efforts contribute to the overall goals and objectives of the RLC. In addition, Forest Service personnel would be committed to participating in partnership outreach, communication, and planning meetings to ensure the continued and future success of the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC. Connie Cummins, Forest Supervisor will be the lead for the Region's involvement and Amy Markus, Forest Wildlife Biologist will be the point of contact for the FWNF.

The Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC is an opportunity to emphasize the importance and the many opportunities that can come from all stakeholders working collaboratively across large landscapes. We look forward to working on the resilient landscape project with our partners and appreciate your consideration of the Greater Sheldon-Hart Mountain RLC proposal.

Sincerely,

JAMES M. PEÑA
Regional Forester

cc: Constance Cummins, Amy Markus





SUMMIT LAKE PAIUTE TRIBE

Primary Administrative Office
1708 H Street, Sparks, NV 89431-4337
(775) 827-9670 • (775) 827-9678 (Fax)

SUMMIT LAKE PAIUTE COUNCIL

Chairperson: Randi DeSoto • Vice-Chairperson: Delgadina Gonzalez
Secretary/Treasurer: Elizabeth DeLaLuz • Council Member: Jerry L. Barr • Council Member: Page Linton

April 13, 2015

Jim Douglas
Director, Office of Wildland Fire
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS 2660
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Douglas:

The Summit Lake Paiute Tribe (Tribe) would like to express its desire to be part of the *Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative* proposal. Due to drought, climate change, and fuel buildup, the danger of catastrophic wildland fire on the Summit Lake Indian Reservation (located about 3 miles from the southeast portion of the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern Humboldt County, Nevada) has been increasing over the past decade. By being a member of this collaborative the Tribe will work to mitigate potential wildland fire threats to wildlife habitat on the Reservation, particularly Greater sage-grouse, as well as to protect Reservation waters and the endemic Lahontan cutthroat trout from the negative effects of wildland fire. Work that can be accomplished on our Reservation, amounting to \$200,000, will help ensure the resilience of culturally important wildlife and their habitats. If funded the Tribe could provide in-kind contributions amounting to \$22,000 to implement fuels reduction, noxious weed treatment, and fuel load inventory.

If you would like to discuss this proposition in more detail you can contact me by email at: William.Cowan@summitlaketribe.org, or by telephone (775-827-9670).

Sincerely,

William Cowan
Natural Resources Department Director
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181

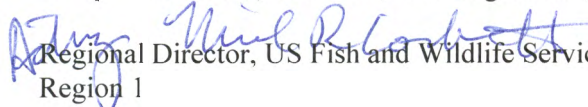


In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R1/NWRS/Fire

APR 15 2015

Memorandum

To: Jim Douglas, Office of Wildland Fire, Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, MS 2660, Washington DC, 20240

From:  Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 1

Subject: Resilient Landscape Prospectus for US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1

Enclosed for your consideration is the Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain (GSHM) Resilient Landscapes proposal. With this effort, we will leverage prior investments and partnerships to benefit wildlife and fire-dependent ecosystems. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to strengthen relationships with the Bureau of Land Management and the Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative and lead the development of the proposed Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain Resilient Landscapes Collaborative (RLC). Additionally, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and our non-governmental organizations, such as the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the Greater Hart Sheldon Conservation Fund are fully engaged with us in the conservation of the greater sagebrush steppe. The primary objective of this proposal is to foster and enhance resiliency in sagebrush steppe across jurisdictional boundaries within the Greater Sheldon Hart Mountain area now and into the future.

The GSHM area is one of the few large intact sagebrush-steppe ecosystems left in the West. These ecosystems are critical to hundreds of species of wildlife and plants that depend on habitats of the Great Basin high desert, including pronghorn antelope, pygmy rabbit and the greater sage-grouse. However, this area is threatened by wildfire, invasive plants, and encroaching conifers: climate change is intensifying the effects of these stressors.

The Service is committed to ensuring the GSHM RLC is successful, and have dedicated our staff from the Sheldon-Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Refuge Complex) and numerous Regional Office staff from Refuges, Ecological Services and Partners for Fish and Wildlife to this effort. The Refuge Complex contributed over \$200,000 in Refuge dollars in FY15 to reduce juniper encroachment in priority sage-grouse habitats. In FY13 and 14, working closely with partners, the Service removed and excluded feral horses and burros from Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) at a cost of \$2.5M. The Service removed horses on Hart Mountain NWR in the mid-1990s. Over the next five years the Refuge Complex will work to remove encroaching juniper on over 20,000 acres and continue efforts to reduce cheatgrass and repopulate with native seeding and planting.

We look forward to working on the resilient landscape project with our partners and appreciate your consideration of our proposal. If you have additional questions please contact Cyndi Sidles, Regional Fire Ecologist at 503 231-6234.

Table 1: Proposed Workload and Funding

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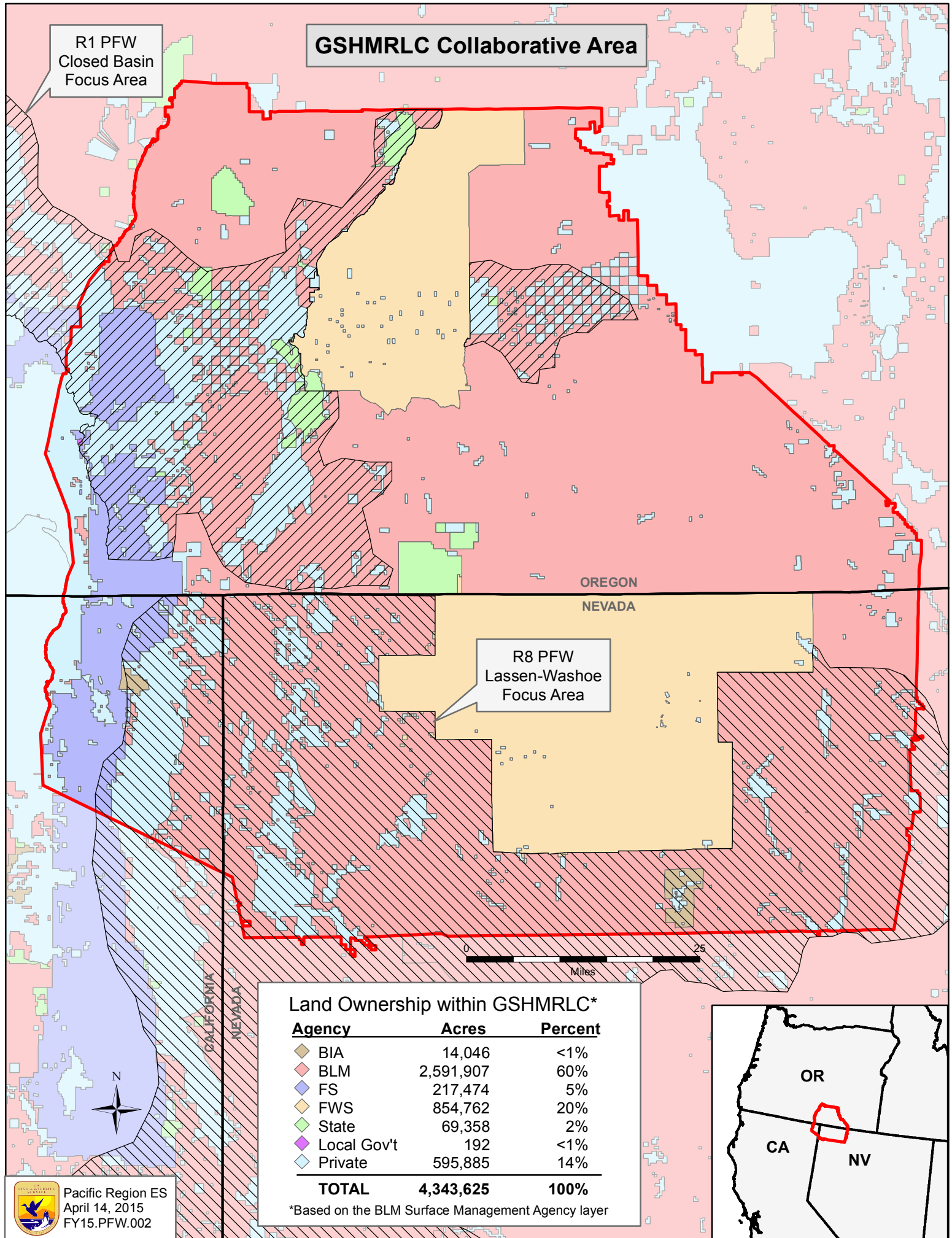
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R1 PFW
Closed Basin
Focus Area

GSHMRLC Collaborative Area

OREGON

NEVADA

R8 PFW
Lassen-Washoe
Focus Area



Land Ownership within GSHMRLC*

Agency	Acres	Percent
BIA	14,046	<1%
BLM	2,591,907	60%
FS	217,474	5%
FWS	854,762	20%
State	69,358	2%
Local Gov't	192	<1%
Private	595,885	14%
TOTAL	4,343,625	100%

*Based on the BLM Surface Management Agency layer



Pacific Region ES
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