

**Idaho Sage Grouse Actions in FY16:**  
*Implementing the Governor's Strategy*

The 2015 Idaho legislature authorized \$750,000 for sage grouse conservation efforts, an unprecedented investment in keeping the bird off the endangered species list. With strategic planning and collaboration, the State of Idaho **leveraged** these funds with **\$2 for every state dollar spent**. To date, these efforts have resulted in **almost \$2 million** in on-the-ground conservation and wildfire prevention.



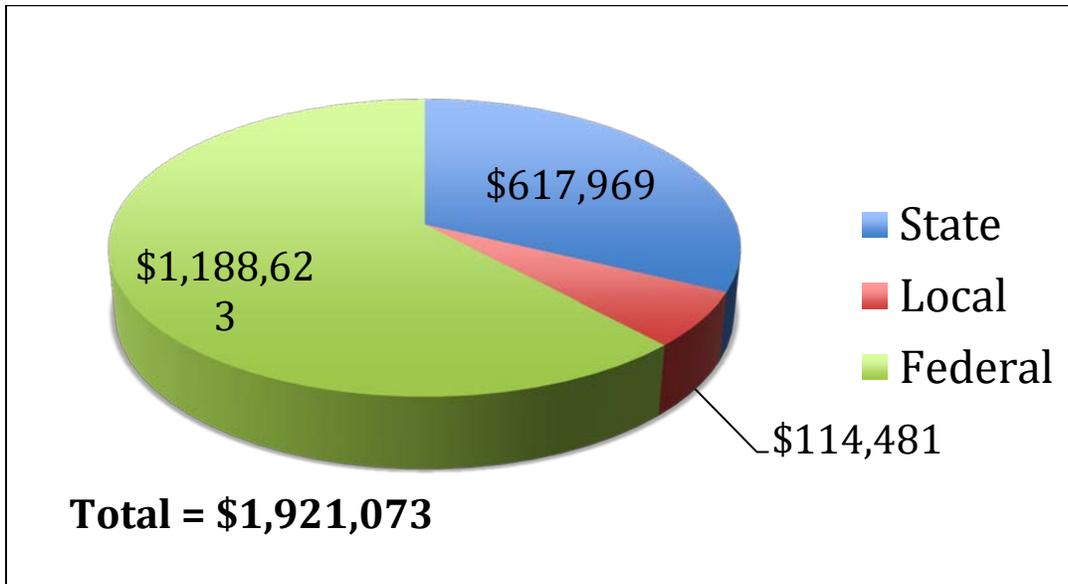
Scouts and other volunteers flagged fences near Riddle to prevent sage grouse collisions.

In May 2015, the state agencies in charge of implementing the Governor's Sage grouse Strategy – the Office of Species Conservation, Department of Lands, and Department of Fish and Game – formed the Sage Grouse Actions Team along with federal agency partners from US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Natural Resource Conservation Service. The Nature Conservancy, a private non-profit organization, helped facilitate team meetings.

**By the Numbers: FY16 Projects**

- 15,000 acres treated
- 14,000 fence flags used
- 1,245 leks counted – 172 above average
- 304 stock tanks made safe for sage grouse
- 250 miles of fuel break treatments
- 50 volunteers
- 5 Rangeland Fire Protection Assns.
- \$1.3 million leveraged**

The team set out to identify the best projects for sage grouse that could be implemented in the next twelve months. Much of this funding has been earmarked for actions needed to ameliorate the primary threats to sage grouse in Idaho, which are invasive species and wildfire. Priorities included helping equip Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, implementing strategic fuel breaks to slow the spread of wildfire, restoring key lands, and monitoring sage grouse activity and conservation practices.



FY16 contributions to sage grouse projects with a state funding nexus.

**Rangeland Fire Protection Associations** are a major asset in suppressing rangeland wildfires when they're small. Led by local volunteers, RFPAs can provide first response initial attack until agency resources arrive on the scene. In FY16, the State of Idaho and partners provided equipment and resources totaling almost \$200,000 to make five separate RFPAs more effective.

**Fuel Breaks** are another key tool in minimizing the impact of catastrophic wildfire on sage grouse habitat. In FY16, Idaho, along with federal partners and private landowners, reduced fuel loads by creating new strategically located fuel breaks and maintaining existing ones. These fuel-free strips of land provide a secure area for firefighters to work and a barrier to slow the spread of fire. This fiscal year, partners will treat more than 250 miles of fuel breaks on public, state, and private lands.

#### **Restoration and Stewardship**

In August 2015, some 12,000 acres of state land burned in the Soda Fire in Owyhee County. State agencies responded swiftly after the fire to prevent the spread of weeds and to replant desirable vegetation on virtually all of the state lands. They worked closely with federal and local partners to ensure a coordinated response across land ownerships. State, federal and other partners have worked collaboratively on many other habitat restoration efforts in sage grouse habitat this year, matching state funds with federal and private dollars and maximizing benefits to sage grouse.

#### **Research and Innovation**

The State continued to lead efforts in FY16 to monitor leks, the breeding grounds for sage grouse. With increased funding provided by the legislature, agency biologists and volunteers monitored 1,245 leks – 58% of the known leks in Idaho, an 8% increase from previous years. They also discovered 22 new leks. This season the increased efforts will continue.

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