

Healthy Lands Initiative



We must broaden our planning horizons to look ridgetop to ridgetop instead of acre by acre. And we must partner to achieve resource management, conservation, and restoration goals on a landscape-scale. Our Healthy Lands Initiative, launched in 2008, provides that holistic framework. The Initiative will help us protect sage grouse and maintain wildlife corridors while providing continued access to significant energy resources.

*Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the Interior*

The 2008 President's budget advanced the Healthy Lands Initiative to optimize land health and provide habitat for species on a landscape-scale, in concert with the multiple-use purposes of our public lands. The Initiative brings a holistic framework to managing public lands from ridge top to ridge top to assure conservation of wildlife habitat while providing continued access to public lands.

The 2009 budget includes a total of \$21.9 million to meet land health goals with integrated, landscape-scale habitat protections and resource management. The 2009 Healthy Lands Initiative builds on the investments made in 2007 and planned for 2008. The Bureau of Land Management made a \$3.0 million down payment on the initiative in 2007 to demonstrate the effectiveness of the healthy lands approach. The results from the 2007 funding affirmed the benefits of expanding the initiative in 2008 and 2009. The 2008 enacted budget includes \$7.9 million for the Initiative. Approximately \$8.2 million in base work is also occurring in Initiative areas and complements Healthy Lands Initiative funding.

With its landscape-level focus, the Healthy Lands Initiative allows land managers to accommodate important uses of the public lands, including development of energy resources, while preserving important habitat and vital wildlife corridors to ensure the health of species. While the initiative supports on-the-ground restoration efforts, its pioneering vision requires land use and resource management planning that coordinates across land units and integrates planning on a landscape-scale.

2007 HEALTHY LANDS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The \$3.0 million in 2007 Healthy Lands Initiative funding resulted in improvements to 72,000 acres of BLM land. The investments improved wildlife habitat conditions on 45,896 acres of shrubs, grass, and woodland; reduced woody fuels and improved the composition of herbaceous vegetation on 18,377 acres outside the wildland urban interface and 4,986 acres within the interface; and improved 580 acres of wetlands. This funding was leveraged to treat additional acres within the same critical watersheds on non-BLM lands.

For example, in New Mexico, BLM used their \$1.0 million Healthy Lands funding to successfully treat over 52,000 acres of Federal land and 9,043 acres of private and State lands using aerial herbicide applications to spray mesquite brush that is invading native grasslands. The treatments were conducted in a watershed that is home to the lesser prairie chicken, a Federal candidate species under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM used the \$1.0 million in Healthy Lands funding to leverage \$6.8 million from base activities and external partners to complete an additional 210,000 acres of landscape treatments. These treatments improved the habitat of the lesser prairie chicken and the sand dune lizard and restored watershed and rangeland health in the Jornada watershed northeast of Las Cruces.

The Healthy Lands Initiative is helping the Department to get out in front of, as well as respond to, a multitude of pressures on the public lands and adjacent State and private lands. The six emphasis areas, expanded to seven in the 2009 budget request, encompass important wildlife habitat. In all cases, the infusion of funds is enabling BLM and its partners to initiate or accelerate the implementation of habitat conservation plans. Federal activities are being coordinated with species priorities established in recently completed State Wildlife Action Plans. The U.S. Geological Survey and Fish and Wildlife Service funding enables Federal partners to provide critical scientific support that complements BLM's on-the-ground conservation and restoration efforts.

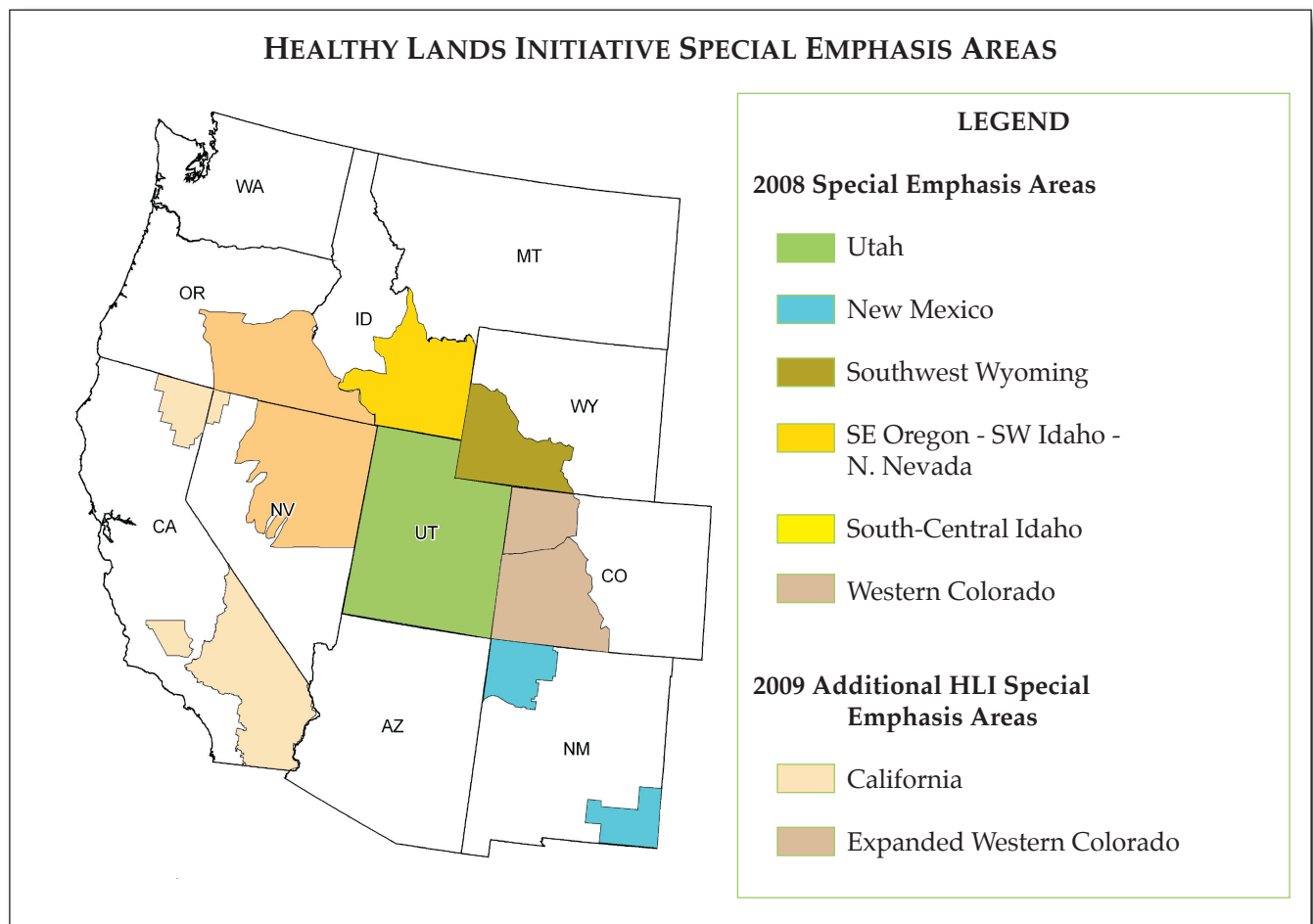
Landscape-level planning and restoration benefit habitat and assure access for nationally important energy development, mining, ranching, and recreation, with locally important economic benefits and improved quality of life. The Healthy Lands Initiative also fosters partnerships in cooperative conservation, leveraging funding and matching efforts provided by other Federal agencies, States, local and tribal governments, philanthropic orga-

nizations, advocacy groups, and energy industry partners. By conserving and restoring broad swaths of habitat vital for wildlife and conserving wildlife corridors, with particular attention focused on sage grouse habitat, the Healthy Lands Initiative will benefit many species and may help preclude the need to list some species under the Endangered Species Act.

HEALTHY LANDS INITIATIVE THE DETAILS

The 2009 budget proposes \$21.9 million for the Healthy Lands Initiative, an increase of \$14.0 million over the 2008 enacted level.

Bureau of Land Management — The initiative includes \$14.9 million for BLM, a \$10.0 million increase over the 2008 enacted level. The additional funds will enable BLM to accelerate and expand treatments in the six original Healthy Lands Initiative emphasis areas: Utah, New Mexico, Southwest Wyoming, Southeast Oregon-Southwest Idaho-Northern Nevada, South-central Idaho, and Western Colorado.



MANAGING PUBLIC LANDS 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

The BLM manages about 258 million acres of land across the West, lands that contribute significantly to the economies of neighboring communities and the growing population in the West. These lands support traditional uses such as hunting, fishing, and livestock grazing. They also host energy exploration and development and a wide variety of ever-increasing recreation. Since 2001, applications for permits to drill on public lands have grown dramatically, increasing from 4,819 APDs received in 2001 to an estimated 9,100 in 2009—a nearly two fold increase. At the same time, recreation visits to BLM lands have increased from 51.6 million in 2001 to 57.3 million in 2007, an 11 percent increase. The BLM faces challenges in balancing the needs of wildlife for healthy habitat with the pressures caused by increasing public use of these lands.

The BLM employs a landscape-scale approach to planning to meet the needs of both local communities and the Nation as a whole. This approach helps BLM resolve issues and leverage Federal funds with a broad array of States, local governments, watershed groups, and private citizens. Landscape-scale environmental impact statements and environmental assessments guide BLM actions and require up-to-date land use plans. Land use plans are integral to the effective management of the Nation's public lands, serving as the basis for every action BLM implements, from weed treatments of sage grouse habitat in southeastern Idaho, to applications for permits to drill in New Mexico. The BLM adjusts plans in response to new issues and changing circumstances and amends plans based on ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities. The BLM is working in cooperation with USGS and FWS to develop adaptive management approaches that ensure the long-term viability of wildlife habitat and to conduct planning and consultation that ensures the effective mitigation of impacts to wildlife as energy resources are developed.



The Healthy Lands Initiative will restore and maintain habitat for many species such as the sage grouse, a species almost entirely dependent on sagebrush ecosystems. Some 72 percent of sage grouse habitat is under Federal management. The current range of the greater sage grouse has declined an estimated 45 percent from the historically occupied range, prompting recent petitions to list the species under the Endangered Species Act.

The Healthy Lands Initiative offers an effective way to enhance sage grouse habitat. Conservation of sagebrush habitat will protect significant numbers of plants and animals that depend on this ecosystem for all or part of their existence, including sage grouse and several species that are candidates for listing or are already federally listed threatened or endangered species. The BLM believes this approach can be replicated to protect both habitat and wildlife species across the West, while maintaining current and future access for energy development and other land uses.

We developed the Healthy Lands Initiative to get out in front of, as well as respond to, a multitude of pressures on the public lands—pressures that come in the form of increased urban-suburban development, increased outdoor recreational activity, rising demands for energy, impacts from large-scale wildfires, and the effects of an ongoing weed invasion. To deal with these public land pressures, our initiative takes an aggressive, landscape-level approach to land management, one that will facilitate needed energy development while protecting a myriad of resources on the public lands, including world-class wildlife habitat.

Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the Interior

**HEALTHY LANDS
INITIATIVE FUNDING**
(dollars in millions)

	2007	2008	2009
BLM	3.0	4.9	14.9
USGS	0.0	1.5	5.0
FWS	0.0	1.5	2.0
Total	3.0	7.9	21.9

The funding increase will also allow BLM to broaden the scope of the initiative by adding California as a new geographic emphasis area and expanding the current Colorado emphasis area.



The BLM has been working with partners in the geographic emphasis areas. As successful long-standing partnerships in southern Idaho, Utah, and southwestern Colorado continue to produce impressive results, new partnerships are forming. In 2006, for example, BLM began a large-scale, cross-jurisdictional program to restore New Mexico's landscape. Creosote, mesquite, and juniper trees now dominate landscapes once covered with grasslands, and saltcedar has replaced native riparian vegetation along streams and rivers. To restore rangeland and watershed health and reclaim land impacted by historic oil and gas development, BLM has partnered with FWS, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Mexico Department of Fish and Game, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, New Mexico State Land Office, Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, local ranchers, the oil and gas industry, researchers, and conservation organizations.

In Southwest Wyoming BLM has established a multi-agency collaborative process to accomplish the goals of the Healthy Lands Initiative. Southwest Wyoming is home to world-class wildlife populations, including deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, moose, big horn sheep, and other non-game species. The area also contains an estimated 83 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The BLM has established an on-site coordination team with representatives from all partners, including the USGS, FWS, and State agencies. This team, in consultation with local groups, has implemented and accomplished a number of restoration and habitat improvement actions in southwest Wyoming using a science-based landscape approach.



In California, a new 2009 Healthy Lands Initiative area of emphasis, new partnerships are advancing on three fronts:

- In the San Joaquin Valley, California, BLM is working with FWS, the California Department of Fish and Game, California Energy Commission, California Department of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources, and Kern County under a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a comprehensive multi-agency, public-private program to protect and conserve species of concern. The partners have agreed to develop a permitting program that standardizes and integrates Federal, State, and local regulatory mechanisms for habitat conservation, habitat compensation, mitigation measures, and cumulative effects.
- In the Modoc Plateau, BLM is forming partnerships with Modoc County, the

Modoc National Forest, California's Department of Fish and Game and State Office of Historic Preservation, the Pit River Tribe, Klamath Tribes, Alturas Rancheria, and FWS to address the encroachment of western juniper into the sagebrush steppe ecosystem.

- In the California Desert Conservation Area, BLM is working with the Desert Managers Group on landscape-level conservation to mitigate and restore wildlife habitats and preserve cultural resource sites while facilitating the processing of appropriate solar, geothermal, and wind energy facilities.

Increased funding will encourage greater contributions from Healthy Lands Initiative partners, which will further increase restoration and conservation efforts on public and non-public lands. In 2007, the Initiative generated over \$2.0 million in partnership contributions, and \$3.4 million in contributions are expected to leverage the \$4.9 million in BLM funding in 2008.

The BLM estimates that a total of 170,717 acres of BLM lands in 2008 and 952,964 acres in 2009 will be treated, maintained, or monitored in the Initiative emphasis areas. The BLM also plans to implement 5,147 management actions and treat, maintain, or monitor 175 miles of streams.

Since BLM does not yet have data to estimate partner contributions in 2009, the budget assumes partner contributions in 2009 will be at the same level as 2008.

For 2009, Healthy Lands priorities for BLM include treatments designed to increase the functioning or the restoration of sage grouse habitat; treatments designed to mitigate impacts associated with development of energy resources; and treatments designed to restore resiliency to vegetative communities after natural events like wildfire and the invasion of noxious weeds.

Land-health assessments and planning are critical to the success of the Healthy Lands Initiative. The BLM is collaborating with USGS and FWS to refine and institutionalize the process for conducting regional assessments and related information on land health required for project implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management, and to complete any required planning, environmental assessments, and

clearances needed to implement HLI restoration and conservation projects.

U.S. Geological Survey — The 2009 Healthy Lands Initiative includes \$5.0 million for USGS, a \$3.5 million increase over the 2008 enacted level, to continue and expand efforts in Southwest Wyoming. The USGS will build on 2008 accomplishments, such as inventorying species and habitats, monitoring and assessing water resources, integrating energy resources and habitat data, and providing a robust models and data inventory to inform land-use decisions for Southwest Wyoming that can be transferred to other Healthy Lands emphasis areas.

In 2008, USGS is developing partnerships with BLM, FWS, the National Park Service, Forest Service, States, and non-governmental organizations. Habitat restoration strategies and models are being developed that will benefit endangered species. These strategies are based on previously completed eco-regional analyses of these species and their habitats within the study area.



In 2009, USGS will conduct a landscape-level ecological assessment to build on the baseline of scientific information related to wildlife habitat and development activities occurring or planned for Initiative areas. The scientific tools, models and protocols to be developed in Southwest Wyoming in 2008 will be transferred to other Healthy Lands Initiative areas and applied to assist land management agencies to determine best management practices in other initiative areas and to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders. Additionally, development of strategic integrated monitoring protocols will provide more scientifically based information to support management decisions and implement an adaptive management process. All data and information col-

lected will be organized into an integrated geospatial database and made available to all partners within these areas. The USGS will organize and conduct additional science workshops to identify partner needs and the appropriate science to apply to meet short and long-term needs and goals.

Fish and Wildlife Service — The 2009 budget request includes \$2.0 for FWS to continue and expand its ongoing Healthy Lands Initiative efforts in the Southwest Wyoming emphasis area. This represents an increase of \$492,000 above the 2008 enacted level. The \$1.5 million in 2008 funds is being used by

FWS to provide timely planning and consultation expertise to BLM to ensure that energy development impacts to wildlife and habitat are effectively mitigated; undertake species conservation activities on Federal and non-federal lands; enable FWS to provide increased assistance to private landowners in the area to improve habitat and protect species on private lands to complement the BLM efforts on public lands; and conduct fish habitat restoration projects on Federal and non-federal lands. The \$492,000 increase requested for 2009 will expand assistance to private landowners through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program.

THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM

Established in 1999, the 26 million acres of land conserved by BLM's National Landscape Conservation System offer some of the most remarkable landscapes found on public lands in the American West, boasting outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values. Each of the 870 areas within the system was designated for conservation purposes by legislation or by Presidential proclamation. These special designations include national monuments, national scenic and historic trails, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness and wilderness study areas, national conservation areas, and other similar conservation areas.

The NLCS is home to a variety of ecosystems, from cactus deserts and redwood groves to coastal zones and arctic tundra. This diversity of landscapes hosts a wide range of plant and animal communities, including federally listed threatened and endangered species. The NLCS protects 30 percent of the BLM range for the desert tortoise, ten percent of the sage grouse habitat, 73 percent of the BLM's critical habitat for Peninsular Desert bighorn sheep, and 54 percent of the BLM range for the California condor.



The BLM brings its culture of cooperative conservation to the management of these units. In the last six years, the NLCS has established more than 600 successful collaborative relationships with local communities, States, Tribes, nonprofits, and supportive citizens to conduct planning, conservation, restoration, and education. As focal points for collaborative partnerships and landscape-scale habitat, these areas offer outstanding opportunities for conservation, protection, and restoration, and will play an important role in advancing the goals of the Healthy Lands Initiative.

In response to partners and stakeholders who wanted more visibility into the budget for NLCS units, the 2009 budget for BLM consolidates funding for the NLCS units into two new budget line items. Base funding for national monuments and national conservation areas will be shifted from a number of other subactivities to the new National Monuments and National Conservation Areas subactivities. The new line items will include annually recurring costs, or base budgets, for permanently-assigned personnel and operations at each unit. One-time or annually assigned project funding for health assessments, special projects, or land use planning will be allocated to NLCS units in addition to the annual base funding.

A total of \$22.3 million is included in the 2009 budget for NLCS, including \$21.8 million in Management of Lands and Resources and \$486,000 in the Oregon and California Grant Lands accounts. The 2009 budget for the NLCS sustains \$3.0 million of the \$4.9 million operating increase provided by the Congress in 2008 for the NLCS system.