



**By the Numbers**

**The Southern Idaho-Snake River Plain Emphasis Area**

- Percentage of population growth between 2000 and 2005: **10.6**
- Number of acres of vital sagebrush habitat in the Emphasis Area: **5.8 million**
- Number of acres burned by wildfire since 2001: **525,000**
- Estimated potential for increased wind energy production in southern Idaho by 2015: **125-635 megawatts.**
- Estimated potential for increased geothermal energy production in southern Idaho by 2015: **860 megawatts**

**T**he Southern Idaho-Snake River Plain Healthy Lands Initiative is a coordinated, landscape-level effort to maintain, improve, and restore the sagebrush-steppe rangelands of southern Idaho.

This initiative will accelerate implementation of the Idaho State Sage-grouse Conservation Plan and will expand ongoing partnerships among Idaho citizens, private landowners, and local, State and Federal governments.

Southern Idaho contains millions of acres of sagebrush-steppe rangelands that are vital habitat for sage-grouse and other wildlife and plant species. These species include pygmy rabbit, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, black-tailed jackrabbit and numerous sagebrush dependent non-game species. Their future is directly connected to the long-term integrity and health of Idaho's sagebrush-steppe.

This spacious landscape is also greatly valued by Idaho citizens. The lands of the sagebrush steppe are highly sought after for hunting, camping, fishing, and other recreational opportunities that constitute a key aspect of Idaho's quality of life.

This area is also important to the livelihood of local communities and the economic future of Idaho.

Livestock grazing and minerals production are important uses of these lands, while

energy transmission lines form a critical link in the Nation's energy supply system. Idaho also possesses abundant renewable energy resources – especially wind – that are essential to building a sustainable-energy future.

The Southern Idaho Healthy Lands Initiative is focused on ensuring that the wildlife, recreational, and traditional values provided by the sagebrush steppe can be restored and sustained in the face of increasing demand for energy and economic development. The health of the environment and our long-term quality

*Meeting both our energy and land health goals requires integrated, landscape-scale habitat protections and resource management. Our initiative combines investments in habitat protection with policy improvements that will protect 800 species, including the sage-grouse.*

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne  
February 5, 2007

**What is the Healthy Lands Initiative?**

The Healthy Lands Initiative represents a new concept for meeting emerging challenges in managing natural resources for continued multiple use with flexible, landscape-level approaches.

The Initiative will enable and encourage local BLM managers to set priorities across a broader scale and mitigate impacts to an array of resources in ways not previously available to them.

The President's 2008 budget requests a substantial increase of \$15 million in funding for the BLM to begin implementing the Initiative in six specific geographic areas to demonstrate the new approach. Projects will be located in Wyoming (\$4.5 million), New Mexico (\$3.5 million), Utah (\$2.0 million), Oregon/Idaho/Nevada (\$1.9 million), southern Idaho (\$1.8 million) and Colorado (\$1.3 million).



of life depend on meeting this critical challenge.

## Landscape Approach

With so much at stake, the BLM is proposing to implement a new model for land management in important wildlife areas. Instead of continuing a management approach that results in fragmented protection of species and habitat, the BLM will focus on habitat conservation on a landscape scale and emphasize cooperative conservation to maximize benefits to large areas of Federal, State, and private lands.

## What We Know

- Southern Idaho is experiencing large, catastrophic wildfires, due in part to flammable invasive species such as cheatgrass. Increasing wildfire is resulting in the loss of large areas of sagebrush and native grasses.
- Catastrophic wildfire will continue to occur without appropriate fuels management practices, control of invasive species, and habitat restoration efforts.
- Population increases and growing energy development will further strain the ecological health of native plant communities and wildlife.

- It is more effective and cost efficient to be proactive—to maintain healthy landscapes—than to restore depleted areas.

## Collaborative Effort

Wildfire, invasive species, drought, and other threats to the land operate on a vast scale and ignore land ownership boundaries. No single owner, jurisdiction or agency can tackle these threats on their own. The BLM and its partners in southern Idaho recognize this and have formed seven local working groups that are taking a broad-scale, collaborative approach to improving and restoring the land

This initiative will expand these partnerships to:

- Increase the amount of land treatments that can be completed in each geographic area.
- Facilitate best-management practices for all land uses.
- Conduct efficient science-based monitoring.
- Maintain and update habitat management plans based on new information and technologies.

## Current Successes

- The 7,600-acre **Carmen Creek project** near Salmon, Idaho maintained and enhanced sage-grouse habitat by using chemical treatments to reduce non-native and then seeding with native species.
- The 1,400-acre **Medicine Lodge project** near Idaho Falls, Idaho used chemical treatments and biological control to improve sagebrush cover in a key habitat area for sage-grouse.
- The **East Star Lake project** near Shoshone, Idaho used prescribed fire, chemical treatments, and aerial seeding to re-establish sagebrush on 4200 acres after large wildfires reduced habitat quality and connectivity.
- The **Cottonwood Basin Project** targeted 1,200 acres of juniper encroachment near Burley, Idaho. Juniper trees were thinned mechanically to reduce their competition with native shrubs, grasses and flowering plants.

For additional information contact:

Bureau of Land Management  
Idaho State Office

Cheryle Zwang

208-373-4016

Cheryle\_Zwang@blm.gov

