

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

**Virgil Moore, Director**

**Annual Statewide Report**



**WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

Prepared by:

Jim Teare..... Panhandle Region  
Jim White ..... Clearwater Region  
Jerry Deal ..... Southwest Region  
Mark Fleming..... Magic Valley Region  
Paul Wackenhut ..... Southeast Region  
Terry Thomas ..... Upper Snake Region  
Greg Painter ..... Salmon Region  
David Smith ..... Wildlife Bureau

Compiled and edited by: Tom Hemker, State Habitat Manager

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## **Regional Staff Acknowledgments**

### **Panhandle Region**

Dave Leptich	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Colleen Trese	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Miles Benker	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
James Derrig	Senior Wildlife Technician

### **Clearwater Region**

Justin Barrett	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Clay Hayes	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Tiege Ulschmid	Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist
Zach Swearingen	Senior Wildlife Technician
Darrell Tonini	Senior Maintenance Craftsman

**Southwest Region**

Robin Holmquist Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Bruneau Habitat District  
Andy Ogden Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Nampa Habitat District  
Tyler Archibald Senior Wildlife Technician, Fort Boise WMA  
Tim Shelton Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Payette River Habitat District  
Clair Kofoed Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Payette River Habitat District  
Krista Muller Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Boise River Habitat District  
Steven Dempsey Senior Wildlife Technician, Boise River WMA  
Anna Owsiak Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Brownlee Habitat District  
Aaron Switalski Senior Wildlife Technician, Andrus WMA  
Dennis Hardy Recreation Site Maintenance Foreman

**Magic Valley Region**

Dennis Newman Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Hagerman Habitat District  
Brad Lowe Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Big Cottonwood Habitat District  
Terry Gregory Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Centennial Marsh Habitat District  
Dean Grissom Recreation Site Maintenance Foreman

**Southeast Region**

Dean Rose, Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, West District  
Don Jenkins, Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, East District  
Tyler Draney, Senior Wildlife Technician, Sterling WMA

**Upper Snake Region**

Eric Anderson Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Sand Creek Habitat District  
Paul Faulkner Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Cartier Habitat District  
Aaron McKarley Senior Wildlife Technician, Sand Creek WMA  
Curtis Hendricks Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Mud Lake Habitat District  
Shane Roberts Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Tex Creek Habitat District  
Matt Proett Senior Wildlife Technician, Tex Creek WMA  
Josh Rydalch Regional Wildlife Habitat Biologist, Market Lake Habitat District  
Mike Tomchak Recreation Site Maintenance Foreman

**Salmon Region**

Greg Painter Regional Habitat Manager

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## **STATEWIDE REPORT HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** Statewide Habitat Management

**PERIOD COVERED:** July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

### **Summary**

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Idaho Fish and Game Commission are charged with the preservation, protection, perpetuation, and management of all wildlife in Idaho. Maintaining adequate habitat to support big game, upland game, waterfowl, and furbearers is of great importance to those who hunt, trap, and view wildlife throughout the state. Nongame species, which are of great aesthetic, cultural, scientific, and educational value to the citizens of Idaho, also benefit from maintaining adequate habitat.

Thirty-two Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) located in Fish and Game regions have been established to protect wildlife habitat and are available for hunting, fishing and other public enjoyment of wildlife (Figure 1). Varying from 275 to 85,000 acres, each area is dedicated to primary purposes such as big game, waterfowl and upland game. Researchers from the University of Idaho and The Nature Conservancy evaluated the value of Idaho's WMAs to wildlife. They found the WMA network, created to support game species, "also conserves the full range of Idaho's wildlife and other ecological features" (Karl et al. 2005).

Each WMA is managed as part of a larger habitat district, which may also include other lands owned or operated by the Department for wildlife habitat or public access. Management of lands for wildlife habitat could not succeed without the cooperation and collaboration of many partners, with the Department as either a licensed tenant or a neighbor. Examples include Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDI Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USDA Forest Service (USFS), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Idaho Power Corporation, and other private landowners.

Personnel and operating funds for regional wildlife habitat programs are provided through a combination of hunting licenses and fees, federal aid from excise taxes under the Pittman-Robertson Act, and to some degree by BPA and BOR as mitigation for habitat losses resulting from construction of various dams in the region. Hunters fund a large portion of management costs, and they are rewarded with habitat management areas that sustain many of the region's big game herds and provide consistent waterfowl and upland game bird production and hunting opportunities. Non-hunters, who value the varied benefits provided by the Departments habitat management also benefit from the broad ranging conservation values associated with Department lands.

## **Objectives**

### **Project I - Coordination and Administration**

Establish and maintain an efficient and effective workforce organized to fulfill annual project objectives of the Wildlife Habitat Management Program.

### **Project II - Operations & Maintenance**

Operate and maintain buildings, structures, and infrastructure on about 370,000 acres of Department-owned or managed properties.

### **Project III - Habitat Development**

1. Improve key wildlife habitats such as crucial big game, waterfowl and upland game habitat gamebird production and migration areas, riparian areas, and native plant communities to meet existing wildlife habitat needs on lands managed by the Department.
2. Create additional habitat on Department-managed land lacking adequate habitat to support desired population levels of wildlife.
3. Work with private and public landowners to enhance wildlife habitat on their property.

### **Project IV - Surveys and Inventory**

1. Collect current public-use information on Department-managed lands including recreational use, opinions, hunting success, and harvest.
2. Collect current wildlife habitat and population characteristics information on Department-managed lands.
3. Collect current wildlife habitat and population characteristics information for statewide management recommendations.

### **Project V - Technical Guidance**

1. Provide current wildlife habitat and population information, express concerns, and provide recommendations to state, federal, and private parties considering projects that may affect wildlife.
2. Provide technical habitat and population management advice to public and private landowners and other agencies in order to sustain or enhance wildlife resources.

### **Project VI - Access Yes!**

Provide up to 300,000 acres statewide of sportsmen access to private land through lease agreements between the Department and private landowners at an estimated cost of \$1.25 per acre.

## **Approach**

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has management plans for each species or groups of species and for Wildlife Management Areas to provide guidance on habitat management. These plans provide information and input to other agencies-as well as help keep the public informed.



The Department uses public input and the information collected from past Federal Aid projects to adjust habitat management efforts to ensure wildlife population and habitat objectives are being met throughout the state.

### **Expected Benefits**

**Project I - Coordination and Administration:** This project will ensure that the Wildlife Habitat Management Program is adequately staffed, trained, and supervised so that program objectives are achieved and contract obligations are fulfilled.

**Project II - Operations & Maintenance:** Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Wildlife Management Units (WMUs), and Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) provide more than 700,000 visitor-use days for public hunting and other wildlife-related recreation.

**Project III - Habitat Development:** Lands managed by the Department provide habitat for a high percentage of the wildlife species that reside in Idaho. In 2002, Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit provided an assessment of habitats found on WMAs. Their findings indicated that WMAs collectively provide habitat for 98% of Idaho's wildlife species and all federal and state-listed threatened, endangered, or candidate terrestrial vertebrates. Maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat on these lands is important to Idaho's ecological diversity and sustains wildlife-related recreation. Protecting and restoring wildlife habitat on private land will complement this system of WMAs and significantly contribute to conservation of game, nongame, and species of special concern statewide.

**Project IV - Surveys and Inventories:** Visitor-use information collected on lands managed by the Department will complement statewide surveys (i.e., strategic planning survey, hunter activity surveys, etc.) and provide site-specific feedback necessary for a responsive management approach. Wildlife habitat and population information collected will help the Department evaluate management actions to see if the desired conditions were achieved on Department-managed lands. Statewide habitat and population information will be used to develop conceptual area plans, develop game harvest recommendations, and provide technical guidance based on current habitat and population characteristics.

**Project V - Technical Guidance:** The information and recommendations provided to developers, industries dependent on natural resources, and land managers are intended to reduce, eliminate, and/or mitigate impacts to wildlife populations, which could result from habitat changes associated with their actions. Providing technical advice about wildlife resources to other agencies and the public will result in improved wildlife habitat conditions and wildlife restoration. Providing technical assistance to develop an early detection and rapid response system for noxious weed control in Idaho will maintain wildlife habitat and reduce long-term statewide vegetation management costs. Providing information on Department management programs, policies, and positions to other agencies may result in decisions by those agencies that benefit wildlife resources. Providing information to private landowners on opportunities and financial programs to enhance private lands for wildlife will result in better stewardship of the 31% of the state that is in private ownership.

**Project VI - Access Yes!:** Additional acres of access for the hunters and anglers of Idaho will be made available. These acres may also maintain and improve wildlife habitat by keeping working lands undeveloped.

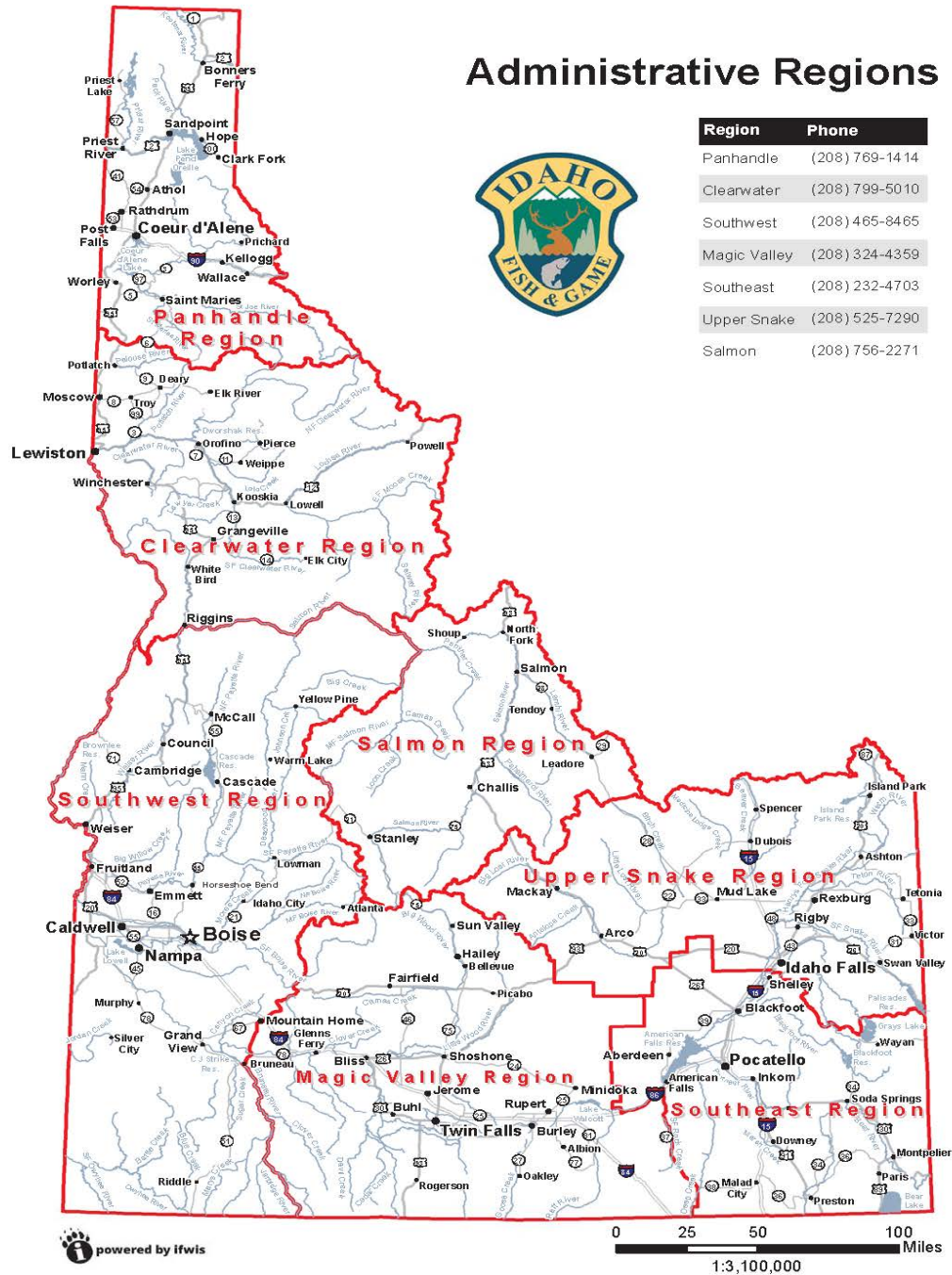


Figure 1. Administrative regions for Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

## STATEWIDE

### Coordination and Administration

One State Habitat Manager provided habitat program direction, coordinated work plan activities, administered budgets, facilitated recruiting efforts, and provided interagency coordination statewide. Six Regional Habitat Managers and one Regional Habitat Biologist coordinated and administered habitat program activities at the regional level and supervised 25 Regional Wildlife Biologists and 5 Maintenance Foreman. Regional Wildlife Biologists administered all habitat program responsibilities within their designated Habitat District and supervised 7 Wildlife Technicians assigned to specific Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) or a portion of a Habitat District. Maintenance Foreman coordinated habitat maintenance activities region wide. Biologists and Maintenance Foreman recruit, train, and supervise temporary employees hired to complete specific assignments (Table 1).

Table 1. Statewide Habitat Personnel.

Personnel	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	HQ	Total
State Habitat Manager								1	1
Program Coordinator								2	2
Regional Habitat Mgr	1	1	1	1	1	1			6
Staff Biologist								3	3
Reg. Wildlife Biologist	4	3	6	4	2	5	1	1	26
Farm Bill Biologist		1			1	1			3
Wildlife Technician		1	3	1		2		1	8
Maintenance Foreman	1	1	1	1		1			5
Maintenance Craftsman		1		1					2
Total	6	8	11	8	4	10	1	8	56

### Operation and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance activities on lands managed by the Department are funded by Wildlife Restoration (WR) and State License funds with assistance from other Federal grants. Federal Assistance funds (including Idaho’s funding match) accounted for a part of the combined expenditures associated with this larger undertaking, the Idaho Habitat Program.

Operate and maintain buildings, structures, and infrastructure on Department-owned or managed properties, totaling 370,000 acres, at current levels of use.

Habitat personnel maintained approximately 301 miles of roads, 82.5 miles of trails, 470 miles of fences, 169 parking areas, 117 buildings, 34 restrooms, 168 water control structures, 52 miles of dikes, numerous signs, and equipment used for operation and maintenance (Table 2).

Table 2. Facilities to be operated and maintained by Department statewide.

<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Roads (mi)	26	60	150	14	12	52	7	321
Trails (mi)	2	20	19	9	5	27.5		82.5
Maintained Fence (mi)	12	80	202	18	30	147	4	493
Parking Areas	33	10	34	7	27	26	32	169
Informational Signs	50	12	12	40	50	19	17	200
Buildings	20	20	36	8	4	25	5	118
Restrooms	6	1	2	6	5	5	9	34
Water Structures	29		54	33	12	84	3	215
Dikes (mi)	15		13	4	1.4	18	1	52.4
Irrigation Pipe and Ditches(mi)			2	8	2	20	1	33
Canal (mi)			7	10	1	13		31
Center Pivot				1		2		3
WMAs and WMUs	7	2	6	6	5	6		32
WHAs and other parcels	24	8	4	3	5	7	7	35
Acres administered	54,987	128,980	79,944	9,649	17,204	89,057	1,140	<b>380,961</b>

### **Habitat Development**

Habitat development and enhancement activities are funded by WR and State License funds with assistance from other Federal grants. Federal Aid funds were used only for personnel and administrative costs associated with habitat development projects on private land. Farm Bill conservation programs, federal and state conservation programs, competitive conservation grants typically fund projects on private land. Region habitat staff improved key wildlife habitats such as big game winter range, waterfowl and upland game production areas, riparian areas, and native plant communities to meet existing wildlife habitat needs on lands managed by the Department.

Another goal is to create additional habitat in areas lacking adequate habitat to support a desired population level. Working with private landowners to enhance wildlife habitat on private property projects include:

- Wetland restoration
- Nesting cover development
- Shrub plantings
- Juniper removal for shrub-steppe restoration
- Grain food plots

### **Surveys and Inventory**

Survey and inventory activities conducted by habitat personnel are funded by PR and State License funds, with assistance from other Federal grants. Department staff collected visitor use

information at most WMAs using traffic counters, random visitor surveys, targeted field contacts, hunter participation check stations, and trailhead surveys. For 2014 over 35% of visitor use can be attributed to hunting, fishing or trapping.

Wildlife habitat and population information collected on Department-managed lands is site-specific and designed to monitor the primary objectives of each parcel. Survey and inventory activities included vegetation transects on big game winter range and riparian habitats, stream flow and water table monitoring, noxious weed monitoring and mapping, breeding bird surveys, waterfowl brood and pair counts, sage-grouse lek counts, and aerial big game surveys. All Regions participated at the levels anticipated.

Habitat personnel were involved in survey and inventory activities within their area of responsibility (i.e., habitat district or region). Activities were similar to those listed above but included more collaborative work with outside agencies and Department personnel.

### **Technical Guidance**

Technical guidance provided by habitat personnel to outside entities is funded by WR and State License funds with assistance from other Federal grants.

Habitat personnel dedicated several hundred days to implement the technical guidance project. Objectives were often met by working cooperatively and collaboratively with other state and federal agencies, private parties, and non-governmental organizations. Examples of how these objectives were met include the following: Mule Deer Initiative, Clearwater Pheasant Initiative, hydropower relicensing, urban-wildland development, forest practices, livestock grazing management, range rehabilitation, wetland and riparian enhancement, transportation projects, wind-power development, and wildlife habitat improvements on private property using funding from the Federal Farm Bill in cooperation. This year's work included technical assistance on reenrollment on existing CRP land, including SAFE applications.

### **Access Yes**

*Access Yes!* is partially funded by PR and State License funds and other non-federal grants. Federal Assistance funds (including Idaho's funding match) accounted for part of the combined expenditures associated with this larger undertaking.

Actual expenditure of these funds was primarily for lease agreements between the Department and private landowners. In calendar year 2014, the *Access Yes!* Program opened up 437,177 acres of private land and 606,255 adjacent and land-locked public lands for sportsmen.

Our objective was to provide at least 300,000 acres in lease agreements to sportsmen using these funds and this goal was exceeded.

Every year, Outdoor Life Magazine acknowledges individuals, non-profits, corporations and state/government agencies with their "Open Country" awards. This year the award for a

state/government agency was given to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for the Access Yes! Program.

According to Outdoor Life, "Hunters and anglers across the nation consistently list one challenge as their primary obstacle to spending more time in the field: access." In giving the award to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the magazine praised Access Yes! as "one of the finest access programs..." To learn more about the "Open Country" awards go to <http://www.outdoorlife.com/blogs/open-country/open-country-congratulations-2014-award-winners>

## PANHANDLE REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Panhandle Habitat Section is funded by a variety of sources including state-generated license funds, WR, Sport Fish Restoration (SFR), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and Coeur d'Alene Basin Hecla Settlement funds. Funding sources are used in a coordinated fashion to attain similar, supporting objectives.

The Panhandle Region is divided into 3 habitat districts, each being assigned one regional wildlife habitat biologist. Each regional wildlife habitat biologist is provided a crew of seasonal employees and a series of budgets originating from multiple funding sources to implement the habitat program at the district level. Additionally, there is a shared Regional Habitat Biologist who splits their time between the wildlife habitat section work and population section work and helps establish a bridge between the 2 sections. This position includes a strong emphasis in federal lands conservation work, providing WMA project support, GIS support, regional waterfowl data and disease monitoring, coordination, and technical assistance to federal and state land management agencies and private landowners. One utility craftsman and associated crew is available to assist with the development, maintenance, and operation of Department facilities when not working on Fishing and Boating Access sites. One Regional Wildlife Habitat Manager (RWHM) supervises the referenced employees and provides regional oversight of program direction, budgeting, and planning.

### Operations and Maintenance

The Panhandle region operates and maintains buildings, structures, and infrastructure on 7 WMAs and 24 smaller parcels totaling 27,910 deeded acres and 27,077 acres managed under agreement, for a total of 54,987 acres. Panhandle WMAs include:

Table 3. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Panhandle Region.

Area	Acres
Boundary Creek WMA	2,072
McArthur Lake WMA	1,891
Pend Oreille WMA	7,432
Farragut WMA	1,418
Coeur d' Alene WMA	7,538
St. Maries WMA	2,344
Snow Peak WMA	32,292

Operation and maintenance activities during this reporting period included:

- A total of 26 miles of roads, 12 miles of fence, 33 parking areas, 20 buildings, 6 restrooms, 60 signs, 29 water control structures, and 15 miles of dikes were maintained.

- Maintain and replace as necessary approximately 300 Canada goose nesting platforms and 500 wood duck nest boxes on the Boundary Creek, McArthur Lake, Pend Oreille, and Coeur d'Alene River WMA's.
- The Farragut Shooting Range law suit was settled. The 100 and 200yd ranges' where opened and plans to develop the 50yd, shotgun stations and other facilities are being implemented. No limit on shooter numbers and range is open and in full use.
- Improvements to the access road and signage to Farragut WMA shooting range were completed.
- Ponderosa pine and Western white pine restoration project were planned on the Farragut WMA will be initiated throughout his upcoming year.
- A new access easement public parking area and signage was constructed at the Tall Pines habitat segment of the POWMA.
- Installed 7 newly constructed frames and signs at several POWMA segments parking access sites to instruct the public of property rules.
- Completed the wetland and stream restoration plan with Ducks Unlimited (DU) for the Cocolalla habitat segment and secure funding and collaborative partnerships with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and others to begin the restoration by fall 2015.
- Completed dike enhancements, water control structure maintenance, habitat plantings with protective fence enclosure, and gravel surface several administrative roads at the BSCWMA using the USDA WREP program funding.
- Reclaimed the old house site at Trout Creek segment with site cleanup, reseeding and construction of a small parking area.
- Removed remaining fence on the Robinson Creek property. Maintained the 1/2 mile south boundary fence to address livestock grazing on neighboring private landowners.
- Created and distributed a printable WMA Property Access Guide for the Southern Habitat District Department managed properties in efforts to improve public knowledge of Department properties, recreational opportunities, and property boundaries.

## **Habitat Development**

Management activities on Department-administered lands located within the Panhandle included a variety of activities. With exclusion of Snow Peak WMA, the remaining 25,695 acres were evaluated for noxious weed infestations, and control actions were implemented as appropriate. Approximately 8,910 acres of wetlands were managed to maintain important hydrologic functions, maximize waterfowl production, maintain nongame species habitat, and provide waterfowl hunting opportunities. Approximately 44,528 acres of a variety of wildlife habitats were managed to promote critical habitat features for both game species and overall species diversity including winter range, forest management, shrub management and to provide big and small game hunting opportunities. On the remaining 1,549 acres, habitat improvement activities were completed in a fashion peripheral to facility development and operation. Habitat development projects completed on Department-managed lands in FY14 include the following:



- Approximately 5 acres were fenced with deer proof fence and 2 acres were planted to native tree and shrub species on the BSCMWA.
- Approximately 80 combined acres of grain food plots were planted on the BSCWMA, MLWMA, POWMA, and CDARWMA to provide feed for upland game birds, wild turkeys, and migrating waterfowl.
- Approximately 25 acres of forb (broadleaf) forage plots were planted on the POWMA, BSCWMA, and CDRWMA.
- Completed 2nd year phases of the drawdown on McArthur Lake for vegetation management and to enhance wetland productivity and maintain hemi-marsh conditions.
- Moist soil management strategies were continued on the BSCWMA wetland complexes to enhance wetland productivity and maintain hemi-marsh conditions.
- Cattails were controlled via mowing and label-approved herbicide application methods on 10 acres of BSCWMA wetlands to maintain desired hemi-marsh conditions.
- Emergent wetland vegetation on drawdown wetland soils on MLWMA and BSCWMA were planted.
- Approximately 30 acres of goose pasture on the BSCWMA, MLWMA, POWMA, and CDARWMA were maintained through mowing and planting.
- Supplement restoration efforts were completed on the Pack River Delta habitat segment of the POWMA with enhancements to island 8 to better protect and expand the island.
- Collaboration with multiple agencies was completed and initiation of the restoration efforts at the Clark Fork Delta of the POWMA began to protect delta shorelines and islands from erosion with vegetated riprap, engineered structures and protective “barrier” island areas. Project is also planned to increase wetland habitat diversity and expand wetland islands along with implementing Reeds Canary grass control at the restoration sites. Sites will be restored with native emergent and riparian vegetation.
- Collaboration was completed with the DU, US Forest Service (USFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), IDEQ, and Avista Utilities to restore approximately 1.5 miles (approx.. 160acres) of the St. Joe River floodplain near the USFS Shadowy St. Joe Boat Launch. Vegetation control and reseeding phase to restore wetland vegetation on the constructed wetlands and upland sites was completed.
- Collaboration was completed with IDEQ and CDA Restoration Partnership to develop a restoration plan and to begin implementing vegetation control treatments for the Robinson Creek habitat segment of the CDRWMA to provide safe Tundra Swan foraging wetlands in the lower CDA River watershed. Project design planning is currently under way and initial veg treatments completed.
- Collaboration was completed with DU, IDEQ, NRCS and Avista Utilities to implement the Water Quality Improvement and Erosion Control Plan, pursuant to Article 401, utilizing the Shadowy St. Joe habitat segment as a pilot project for St Joe River bank stabilization efforts. Bank stabilization project was completed this past year.
- Collaborative efforts began and official MOA and Statements of Work were developed with the USFS St Joe Ranger District to promote elk habitat on the Snow Peak WMA (SPWMA) through the current development of a landscape level Elk Habitat Improvement Project EA. Forest stand, habitat and wildlife assessments have begun.

- A comprehensive noxious weed control/eradication effort on all of the Panhandle WMAs was completed.

Additional habitat development projects were completed on privately-owned property. Development projects completed on private lands in FY14 involved the following:

- Wood duck boxes and goose platforms were installed.
- Shallow water wetland areas were constructed.
- Grass plantings were completed.
- Native trees and shrubs were planted.
- Emergent wetland vegetation was planted.
- Grain food plots were established.

### **Surveys and Inventory**

Survey and inventory work completed on Department-managed lands in the Panhandle included the following:

- The Department completed several public survey and scoping efforts in relation to the development of the new WMA Management Plans.
- A western grebe colony was monitored on Pend Oreille WMA and the Coeur d'Alene River WMA.
- Water right use and diversion was monitored on Boundary Creek WMA.
- Completed pheasant crow count on BSCWMA.
- Completed Aerial photo monitoring on BSCWMA and MLMWA.
- Stream flows were monitored on Boundary Creek WMA.
- Waterfowl breeding pair/brood counts were completed on BSCWMA.
- Waterfowl banding occurred on 4 WMAs and ~1,500 ducks were banded.
- Goose nest platform and wood duck nest box surveys were conducted on the Boundary Creek, McArthur Lake, Pend Oreille, and Coeur d'Alene River WMAs.
- Osprey nests were surveyed on the Coeur d'Alene River WMA.
- Hunter check stations were operated on 3 WMAs during opening weekend of waterfowl season.
- Photo-points were monitored on 3 WMAs.
- Noxious weed infestations were monitored and the success of treatment was evaluated on 5 WMAs.
- Completed cow elk calving area and calf search in the CDA River drainage, CDA National forest.

In addition to activities on Department-managed lands, the following survey and inventory work was completed on alternate areas to assist with the collection of regional data utilized by the Wildlife Population Management Section.

- Bald eagle productivity was monitored throughout Panhandle Region.
- White-pelican surveys were completed on four WMA's.

- Regional wildlife habitat biologists assisted with the operation of deer and elk hunter check stations.
- Regional wildlife habitat biologists assisted with winter aerial surveys for big game.

### **Technical Guidance**

Panhandle Habitat Section staff met regularly with the USFS, BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NRCS, FSA, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, IDL, Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, and Idaho Department of Agriculture. Additionally, contact was maintained with the major private landowners throughout the Panhandle including primarily timber companies, large farmers/ranchers, and hydropower operators. As requested by private entities and as deemed prudent with public entities, Panhandle Habitat Section staff reviewed project proposals and provided input to reduce, eliminate, and/or mitigate for potential wildlife impacts associated with land management activities.

## CLEARWATER REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Clearwater region goal was to develop and maintain an effective work force to implement habitat program objectives. This included working closely with agencies, NGOs, and the public, including private landowners, to maintain and improve habitat on both public and private lands. Habitat staff provided technical assistance to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program and a Contribution Agreement. In addition, habitat staff offered outdoor recreational opportunities and shared information with internal and external customers.

The Clearwater region implemented the Wildlife Habitat Program objectives through regional program personnel, including 4 Habitat Biologists, one Senior Wildlife Technician, one Recreation Site Maintenance Foreman, one Senior Maintenance Craftsman, one Habitat Manager, and numerous seasonal support personnel. Personnel were involved with habitat management activities on 3 WMAs comprised of 84,000 deeded acres and 40,000 acres under lease or cooperative management agreement, 4 WHAs encompassing 437 acres, and custodial management of 5 conservation easements. Habitat staff coordinated and managed budgets, including both state and federal funding. Additional accomplishments included:

- Provided Technical Service Provider (TSP) support to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- Coordinated with Latah Soil and Water Conservation District on private land wildlife habitat projects.
- Participated on the Tri-State, Palouse, Clearwater, and Salmon River Weed Management Committees.
- Participated in training including, Herbicide Safety and Training, ATV operation and safety, supervision, NRCS-TSP, Defensive Driving, Idaho Chapter Wildlife Society, Wildlife Bureau Biologist Meetings.
- Participated on the Department's Lands Committee to evaluate potential habitat acquisitions in Idaho.
- Participated on the development of a new statewide Idaho Elk Plan.
- Participated on a statewide team to develop vegetation monitoring strategies and protocols for IDFG lands.
- Participated on a statewide team to develop a Global Information System-based noxious weed database.
- Worked with adjacent landowners and members of the public on motorized and administrative access related issues on Craig Mountain WMA (CMWMA).
- Coordinated with Bonneville Power Administration, BLM, TNC, and the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) on CMWMA management, including the Dworshak Advisory Committee.
- Coordinated with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation and private landowners on Joseph Plains WMA management.

- Authored or participated in newspaper articles and county newsletter articles on wildlife related issues.
- Coordinated with other regional and headquarters personnel and individual outfitters and guides regarding permits outfitting on CMWMA.
- Provided presentations on habitat related issues during sportsman’s breakfasts or as requested by other groups.
- Coordinated with Avista Corporation on forestry and access related issues with transmission lines on CMWMA.
- Conducted training on CRP enhancement and CCRP implementation techniques for 2 biologists and 2 technicians with IDFG in Idaho.
- Participated on a Clearwater Wildlife Habitat Restoration Team with the Clearwater Nez Perce National Forest.
- Participated in Forest Plan meetings with the Clearwater Nez Perce National Forest.
- Provided technical assistance regarding the new Travel Plan for the Clearwater Nez Perce National Forest.
- Provided technical assistance regarding new Idaho Department of Transportation construction for Highway 95, south of Moscow, Idaho.
- Coordinated with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project in the Clear Creek drainage east of Kooskia, ID.
- Coordinated with USFS regarding integrating IDFG wildlife staff into forest and zone planning efforts and increasing wildlife staff capacity.
- Coordinated with Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) on silvicultural projects throughout CMWMA.
- Worked with the IDFG Wildlife Bureau regarding a new commercial use policy on Department lands.
- Worked with I&E staff to create outreach material highlighting IDFG activities.
- Coordinated and commented on Army Corp of Engineer land use proposals on Dworshak Reservoir.
- Served as an Department representative for IDFG on the Clearwater Basin Collaborative team and, in this capacity, coordinated a region-wide monitoring project on elk.

## Operations and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance activities provided quality habitat, public hunting and other wildlife-oriented recreation on over 128,000 acres of WMAs, WHAs, and conservation easements in the Clearwater Region. Buildings, structures and other necessary infrastructure included:

Table 4. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Clearwater Region.

Area	Acres
Red River WMA	314
Craig Mountain WMA	124,224 <sup>a</sup>
Joseph Plains	1,300

Area	Acres
South Fork Clearwater	330
Aspendale WHA	13
Fir Island WHA	38
Paradise WHA	19
Anderson (White Bird Crk) Easement	21
Henderson (Lawyers Crk) Easement	29
Koehler (Tolo Lake) Easement	16

<sup>a</sup> Includes 81,400 deeded acres, balance cooperatively managed with BLM and IDL, and 5,500 acres cooperatively managed with the Nez Perce Tribe.

Operation and Maintenance activities in the Clearwater region included:

- Maintained 58 miles of road.
- Maintained 80 miles of fence and boundary markers.
- Maintained 5,000 tree, shrub, and grass plantings along 1.5 miles of stream on RRWMA.
- Managed noxious weeds on over 100,000 acres. Chemically treated 140 acres and assessed and spot treated along 325 miles of roads and trails on CMWMA. All other areas combined include 23 total acres chemically treated.
- Procured \$48,458 in grants from Idaho State Department of Agriculture, \$10,000 from the Bureau of Land Management.
- Maintained facilities at Red River WMA and Billy Creek, Wapshilla Creek, Benton Meadows and six backcountry cabins on CMWMA.
- Maintained 11 miles of roads specifically for mobility impaired sportsmen on CMWMA.
- Maintained seasonal motorized route on Redbird segment of CMWMA.
- Completed forest thinning across over 300 acres on CMWMA to enhance wildlife habitat and fire breaks as part of the 160,000 grant from IDL.
- Continued a salvage sale on 200 acres to address a mountain pine beetle outbreak.
- Repaired 1000 feet of fence at RRWMA
- Removed 1 mile of fence at RRWMA
- Inventoried 100 acres for noxious weeds on RRWMA
- Spot treated noxious weeds on RRWMA
- Inventoried and managed noxious weeds on all listed easements.
- Repaired, replaced, and built new property boundary fencing on Joseph Plains WMA to keep cattle out per easement requirements.
- Maintained 1000 aspen and willow plantings at Deyo reservoir and wetland.

### **Habitat Development**

By combining IDFG HIP funds, funds from outside grants, and NRCS farm bill funds, Clearwater staff are able to maximize enhancement of private lands for upland birds and other wildlife species. Bonneville Power Administration funds, Trust funds, and Department license funds are utilized to accomplish the majority of habitat developments on Department lands.

### Improved wildlife habitat on Department lands

- Continued maintenance of shrub planting and grazing enclosure project at Red River WMA with Bonneville Power Administration funds. Goal is to establish riparian community where one historically occurred. Build an additional enclosure to protect shrubs from browsing.
- Planted 10,000 conifer trees on CMWMA in areas that were logged.
- Aided with planning and construction of new Deyo Reservoir.
- Designed and constructed 4.0 acre Deyo Wetland.
- Planted over 1000 aspen and willow surrounding the Deyo wetland.

### Improve wildlife habitat on private lands

- Planted over 6,800 shrubs on 6 private land parcels in Nez Perce and Latah Counties sites covering over 20 acres in the Clearwater Region.
- Enhanced > 1,000 acres of existing CRP land by planting several thousand trees and shrubs, and interseeding diverse forb mixes.
- Completed work with landowner to begin work on two off-channel livestock watering troughs associated with the FMHA Henderson Riparian Easement Area. Goal was better spacing and management of livestock on adjoining lands. Work was coordinated with NRCS.
- Designed and constructed a 2 acre wetland and established adjacent wildlife plantings.
- Worked on 66 private lands projects resulting in over 4000 acres of habitat development or enhancement, including 17 SAFE contracts.
- Developed mid-contract management plans on >20 CRP contracts to improve the capacity of conservation cover to support wildlife. Work entailed developing reseeding plans, prescribed burn plans, and other stand invigoration techniques.
- Reviewed and approved/rejected >20 Integrated Wildlife Management Plans developed by NRCS staff for CRP contracts in Nez Perce, Latah, Lewis, Idaho, Washington and Benewah Counties.

### Improve wildlife habitat on other public lands.

- Assist local sportsman's Habitat Group on brush cutting projects to improve elk winter range on the Clearwater Nez Perce National Forest.

## **Surveys and Inventory**

The objective of this projects was to collect current public use information on Department managed lands, including public use levels, activities and harvest information; collect current information on wildlife habitat and population characteristics on lands managed by the Department; assist in collecting regional wildlife population information for statewide population management decisions; monitor upland game populations in reference to new habitat improvements and from programs including HIP, Clearwater Pheasant Initiative, and the NRCS

Farm Bill implementation; and to assess wildlife habitat distributions and conditions on private and public lands in the Clearwater Region. Accomplishments included:

- Assisted population staff in conducting road-side upland game bird surveys.
- Continued vegetation monitoring on CMWMA by assessing conditions across 200 acres of high mountain meadow habitat and along 37 miles of riparian habitat.
- Completed pre-commercial thinning across 232 acres of forested habitat on CMWMA to improve habitat for wildlife.
- Continued conducting outreach and soliciting input from the public regarding the long-range management plans of both CMWMA and RRWMA.
- Continued surveying and mapping noxious weeds across CMWMA.
- Completed a study to assess demographic parameters of elk on CMWMA.
- Inventoried 100 acres and mapped noxious weeds on RRWMA.
- Worked with the “Habitat Group” to develop a monitoring strategy for brush cutting projects on the Clearwater National Forest.
- Assisted in monitoring bighorn sheep associated with CMWMA.
- Continued surveys for potential Palouse Prairie remnant parcels for the presence of native vegetation plant communities.
- Conducted post fall burn vegetation surveys monitoring with the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District the effect of broadcast seeding post burn on Palouse Prairie Remnants.
- In coordination with USFS, monitored post burn habitats across national forestlands in relation to habitat effectiveness for elk. Conducted preliminary assessments.
- Continued bird surveys at new Deyo wetland site to observe changes in species.
- Worked with Fisheries staff and U of I post doc on re-evaluation of stream condition/fish habitat and population responses to restoration work on RRWMA.
- Worked with the Rocky Mountain Research Station and USFS to develop monitoring project to investigate the development and longevity of early successional habitat.
- Coordinated a project in cooperation with the Clearwater Basin Collaborative to monitor elk across the Clearwater Region.

## **Technical Guidance**

Habitat staff provide current and past information on wildlife populations and habitat and provide recommendations to federal, state and local government agencies, industry and private parties regarding potential wildlife impacts and mitigation actions related to potential and ongoing projects within the Clearwater Region. They work closely with the public, including private landowners to maintain and improve habitat on both public and private lands; provide technical assistance to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program; provide outdoor recreational opportunities; and share information with internal and external customers.

During the last year, Clearwater regional personnel have continued to act as Technical Service Providers for planning and implementation of the wildlife practices within the USDA Farm Bill,



under the terms of a Contribution Agreement. Funding to implement the Contribution Agreement was provided by NRCS. Implementation of the Contribution Agreement, in combination with the Department's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) and the Landowner Incentives Program (LIP) greatly expanded the Department's landowner contacts and our ability to affect large acreages of habitat for upland game and other wildlife species. The Department received funding from USDA Farm Service Agency to install over 25,000 new acres of dense nesting cover for upland game birds in 10 counties along western Idaho. Technical guidance activities included:

- Provided Technical Service Provider (TSP) services to NRCS. Worked with landowners to enhance existing CRP fields for wildlife.
- Provided TSP services to the USFS in the development of a Forest Management Plan for the Clearwater/Nez Perce Forest..
- Began implementing State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement project across 10 Idaho counties to improve and protect habitat for high priority wildlife species.
- Assisted Environmental Staff Biologist when requested to respond to requests for Department input on proposed projects within respective habitat districts in the Clearwater Region. Provided significant comments concerning USFS Travel Plans, USFS river recreation and development, USCOE Dworshak Travel/Recreation Plan, BLM Resource Management Plans, and BLM Outfitter issues.
- Participated on the Tri-State Weed Management Committee, the Salmon River Weed Management Committee, the Clearwater Weed Management Committee, The Palouse Weed Cooperative Management Committee, the Dworshak Master Planning Committee, and Nez Perce and Latah County AFO and EQUIP Technical Committees.
- Worked on local committees for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever, and the Latah Wildlife Association.
- Provided technical guidance to the Idaho Outfitter and Guides Board on Outfitter issues on CMWMA.
- Participated in RMEF horseback tour of CMWMA, providing technical information on habitat conditions, habitat projects, and elk populations.
- Worked closely with USFS on the development of action alternatives for the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project in the Clear Creek drainage east of Kooskia, ID.

## SOUTHWEST REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Southwest region developed and maintained an effective and efficient work force to implement habitat program objectives; administer project resources; coordinate project activities and share information with internal and external customers; and managed the disposal of dead wildlife and control of predators.

Additional license funds were budgeted for this project to provide for operations, maintenance, capital improvements and a portion of personnel costs throughout the Southwest Region, including Fort Boise, Boise River, Cecil D. Andrus, C.J. Strike, Montour and Payette River WMAs. Federal project funds provided a portion of personnel funds for administration and implementation of project objectives, including the Nampa Habitat District. The Southwest Region habitat management program also includes the McCall Subregion, and various habitat areas which are funded entirely through other sources.

Southwest Region Wildlife Habitat Program objectives were met through regional program personnel. Six biologists, 3 senior wildlife technicians, 1 maintenance foreman, and a variable number of seasonal support personnel in 6 habitat districts were supervised by the RWHM. A total of 46.3 months of permanent personnel salaries and 2.5 months of temporary personnel salaries were supported with this project.

### Operations and Maintenance

The Southwest region operates and maintains buildings, structures, and other infrastructure on the following regional WMAs, WHAs, and conservation easements, totaling 95,000 acres, to provide wildlife habitat, public hunting, and other wildlife-oriented recreation:

Table 5. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Southwest Region.

Area	Acres
Payette River WMA	996
Montour WMA	1,110
Fort Boise WMA	1,608
C.J. Strike WMA	10,065
Boise River WMA	36,000
Cecil D. Andrus WMA	23,928
Mann Creek WHA	325
Roswell Marsh WHA	676
Ted Trueblood WHA	292
Rocking M CE Easement	16,506

Operation and Maintenance activities in the Southwest region included:

- Maintained 150 miles of roads and trails with associated gates, culverts, bridges, and signs.
- Maintained 202 miles of fences and boundary markers.
- Maintained 36 buildings, restrooms, and other structures.
- Maintained 34 gravel parking areas and associated signs.
- Maintained 54 water control structures.
- Maintained 13 miles of dikes.
- Treated 942 acres of weeds on lands owned or managed by the Department. (No project funds were used to purchase or apply herbicides.)

### **Habitat Development**

Habitat development in the Southwest region included:

- Improve the quality of key wildlife habitats such as big game winter range, waterfowl and upland bird production areas, riparian areas, and native plant communities to provide for existing wildlife habitat needs on lands managed by the Department in the Southwest Region.
- Develop additional quantity of wildlife habitat to support increased production on Department-managed lands in the Southwest Region.
- Assist private landowners to enhance wildlife habitat on their lands.
- Improved wildlife habitat quality on Department lands by the following:
- Managed livestock grazing on 48,000 acres of big game winter range to improve rangeland plant communities.
- Treated noxious weeds and invasive plant species on 942 acres of Department-managed wildlife habitat.
- Managed water levels on 1,360 acres of ponds and wetlands to improve waterfowl nesting and brood-rearing habitat.
- Maintained, replaced, or installed 1,300 waterfowl nest structures.
- Planted and maintained 160 acres of food plots.
- Restored 180 acres of fire affected winter range by planting or seeding grasses, shrubs, and forbs.
- Revegetated 67 acres of permanent nesting cover.

Developed wildlife habitat on private lands by the following:

- Coordinated with federal, state, and nongovernmental agencies to develop wildlife habitat on private lands within respective habitat districts through the Farm Bill, competitive grants, and other conservation programs as opportunities became available and varying degrees of partnership occurred throughout the region.
- Developed 5 upland projects to develop 49 acres of wildlife habitat on private land, including cost-share agreements using Department HIP funds.

## Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory activities included:

- Collect current public use information on Department-managed lands including public use levels, activities, and harvest information.
- Collect current information on wildlife habitat and population characteristics on lands managed by the Department.
- Assist in collecting regional wildlife population information for statewide population management decisions.

Work accomplished under this grant was done, in part, in support of regional and statewide wildlife population and habitat survey and inventory projects funded from non-project sources.

Public use information:

- Quantified visitor use on Department-managed areas using car counters and random surveys.
- Collected on-line and in-person user feedback on WMA operations and expectations using standardized surveys
- Monitored indices of hunter participation and success using annual check stations on opening days of upland and waterfowl seasons on Fort Boise WMA.
- Monitored use and success of hunters on Cecil D. Andrus WMA using season-long hunter check-in procedures.

Wildlife on Department lands:

- Conducted annual brood pair counts on WMAs with waterfowl production.
- Conducted herd composition data on Boise River WMA mule deer winter range
- Measured forage utilization using standard techniques on Department lands with livestock grazing management.
- Continued progress in the area of developing geographic information systems application skills through training, practice, and software support for WMA personnel to document and communicate wildlife habitat and population information on Department lands.

Regional wildlife surveys:

- Trapped and banded migratory birds, including mourning doves and ducks.
- Conducted counts of sage-grouse leks and roadside counts for other game birds, including pheasants, quail and mourning doves.
- Conducted aerial surveys of big game.
- Collected and analyzed condition and location information for big game traffic mortalities.
- Coordinated with CWMA's to inventory and map noxious weed infestations in respective habitat districts.

- Assisted in capture operations for regional mule deer winter survival studies and sage grouse movement studies.

## **Technical Guidance**

Technical guidance in the Southwest region included:

- Provide current wildlife population and habitat information, express concerns, and provide recommendations to federal, state, and local government agencies; industry; and private parties regarding potential wildlife impacts of projects which they are planning within the Southwest Region.
- Provide technical advice on wildlife habitat and species information to private parties and public entities to assist them in decisions on management activities that will sustain or enhance wildlife resources.  
Regional habitat personnel responded to requests for technical assistance regarding potential wildlife impacts of proposed projects as requested either through individual evaluations and comment or participation in cooperative groups:
- In response to approximately 100 requests for comment on proposed projects within the Southwest Region, biologists provided information on wildlife habitat, probable species impacts, and recommended mitigation measures using current available sources resulting in 90 written responses.
- Participated in interagency and intradepartmental technical and advisory groups for species recovery, hydropower development, and regional planning.
- Wildlife habitat program personnel responded as requested in person, via telephone, or letter to approximately 400 direct inquiries regarding methods and recommendations for management of wildlife habitat on private and public lands within the Southwest Region.

## MAGIC VALLEY REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Magic Valley maintained contact and liaison with federal, state, and local government and private entities within the region regarding fish and wildlife habitat modifications plus population monitoring. Habitat staff worked with intra-regional staff, reservists, etc., on WMA habitat projects, access sites, isolated tracts, or other public lands projects as needed.

Regional habitat staff held coordination meetings with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regional staff to discuss issues and provide project updates. Regional staff attended County Commissioner meetings, NRCS/Farm Service Agency (FSA) meetings, and sportsmen organizational meetings and banquets to discuss fish and wildlife habitat modifications and population monitoring in the Magic Valley Region. Regional habitat staff worked with intra-regional staff, reservists, and volunteers on numerous projects in the Magic Valley Region. Population monitoring, habitat improvement, and public access projects comprised the majority of work performed.

### Operations and Maintenance

Operate and maintain facilities, buildings, fences, gates, irrigation water delivery systems, roads, and infrastructure on 6 WMAs in the Magic Valley Region to provide wildlife habitat, public hunting, wildlife viewing, wildlife conservation education, and other wildlife-related recreational opportunities on 11,141 acres of Department managed lands. Magic Valley Region WMAs include:

Table 6. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Magic Valley Region.

Area	Acres
Hagerman WMA	880
Billingsley Creek WMA	275
Centennial Marsh WMA	6,240
Carey Lake WMA	750
Big Cottonwood WMA	814
Niagara Springs WMA	976

Operation and Maintenance activities in the Magic Valley region included:

- Nine miles of hiking and horseback riding trails for public access to Department-managed lands
- Eighteen miles of fence; 14 miles of unimproved roads; 7 acres of vehicle parking areas; 6 restrooms
- Eight miles of gated, wheel, and hand-line irrigation pipe; 10 miles of irrigation canals and laterals

- Maintained and repaired 9 project buildings and equipment; operated and maintained 33 water structures, 4 dikes, 6 pumps, and 1 center pivot
- Completed construction of Carey Lake WMA storage building

## **Habitat Development**

Habitat development projects in the Magic Valley included:

- Managed water levels throughout winter on 25 acres of water impoundment areas at Hagerman WMA to provide refuge for 30,000 wintering waterfowl.
- Maintained 190 acres of wetlands vegetation on Hagerman and Billingsley Creek WMAs to provide thermal and escape cover for wintering upland birds.
- Maintained 6 miles of shelterbelts on Carey Lake and Hagerman WMAs to provide cover and food.
- Irrigated 705 acres of herbaceous cover for nesting habitat on Centennial Marsh, Hagerman, Niagara Springs, Big Cottonwood and Carey Lake WMAs.
- Maintained 350 artificial nesting platforms for waterfowl on Centennial Marsh, Carey Lake, and Hagerman WMAs.
- Inventoried and/or controlled weeds on 6,512 acres of regional WMAs.
- Maintained water levels for 4,200 acres of wetlands on Niagara Springs, Billingsley Creek, Hagerman, Carey Lake, and Centennial Marsh WMAs.
- Developed 6 HIP projects on private lands in the Magic Valley Region.
- Planted and irrigated 110 acres of food plots on Carey Lake and Niagara Springs WMAs.
- Improved cover and species composition on approximately 50 acres of irrigated nesting fields and shelterbelts at Niagara Springs WMA.
- Installed an additional 2,000 linear feet of shelterbelts at Carey Lake WMA.
- Managed water levels in Hagerman WMA impoundments to reduce carp populations.
- Planted trees and shrubs along Big Cottonwood Creek at the Big Cottonwood Creek WMA to rehabilitate riparian habitat burned in wildfire.

## **Surveys and Inventory**

The following work projects were completed to collect current public-use information on Department-managed lands including recreational uses, opinions, hunting success, and harvest:

- Installed and collected trailhead sign-in registers, survey boxes, and random field surveys were conducted to determine visitor use on WMAs. Conducted random field checks of hunters on opening day of specific hunts and on weekends. Worked with local Conservation Officers to enforce motorized closures on WMAs.
- Mapped noxious weed infestations and treatment areas using GPS and ArcView software on Department-owned lands.
- Assisted regional Department population biologists, and BLM and USFS biologists with various field projects to determine fish and wildlife presence/absence, distribution, relative abundance, hunter or angler harvest information, and public response/acceptance,

etc. to wildlife management programs and policies. Conducted surveys to detect presence of West Nile Virus in bird populations on WMAs in the Magic Valley Region.

The following work projects were completed to collect and obtain current fish and wildlife habitat and population characteristics information throughout the Magic Valley Region for statewide management recommendations:

- Assisted regional IDFG population biologists, BLM, and USFS biologists with the following field projects to determine fish and wildlife presence/absence, distribution, or relative abundance:
  - Conducted winter flock counts of turkeys on Big Cottonwood WMA.
  - Conducted surveys for Bighorn sheep on the Big Cottonwood WMA and adjacent drainages prior to domestic sheep trailing periods.
  - Participated in conducting mid-winter waterfowl counts at the Hagerman WMA.
  - Collected harvest and other data at big game check stations.
  - Conducted pronghorn surveys
  - Conducted roadside counts for upland game.
  - Trapped & radio sage-grouse.
  - Picked up inactive big game collars.
  - Conducted lek counts.
  - Flew aerial surveys for big game and sage-grouse.
  - Conducted Sandhill crane counts.
  - Maintained user survey boxes on WMAs.
  - Operated sage-grouse check stations.
  - Monitored transects in rehab areas to determine survival percentages of seedlings.
- Monitored habitat restoration plantings, and public response/acceptance, etc. to wildlife management programs and policies.

## **Technical Guidance**

Provide current wildlife habitat and population information, concerns, and recommendations to state, federal, and private parties contemplating projects with the potential to affect fish and wildlife resources in the Magic Valley Region.

- Worked with BLM, USFS, FSA, NRCS, and similar entities by providing information regarding resident and migratory wildlife populations within Magic Valley Region and how proposed land management practices or treatments may affect those resources directly and indirectly.
- Provided written comments regarding proposed land management practices to city, county, state, and federal agencies.
- Provided technical assistance to 10 private landowners in Magic Valley Region wishing to improve habitat for wildlife resources.



## SOUTHEAST REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Southeast region worked to establish and maintain an efficient workforce organized to fulfill annual project objectives of the region Wildlife Habitat Management Program. In the Southeast Region this includes 3 full time permanent employees, all of whom have salaries partially funded by Federal Aid. Temporary employees included up to 4 seasonal bio-aides during the summer months and one part time year round technician for general habitat management. Habitat biologists directly supervised temporary employees.

- Twenty seven potential habitat projects were reviewed, mostly dealing with private lands. This led to seventeen approved projects geared toward upland game/waterfowl (Habitat Improvement Program) including pond/stream work at Sterling WMA, one riparian fence project, two food plot projects with private landowners, and nine brush seedling plantings to benefit upland and big game (Mule Deer Initiative) on Conservation Reserve Program enrollments and rehabilitation of 2013 wildfires on public lands. These included direct involvement in seedling plantings (11,000 seedlings) with volunteers, coordinated entirely by Department personnel or in cooperation with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) personnel. A \$10,000 contribution was coordinated to an aerial seeding of a BLM project (2013 Stateline Fire). Annual brush seed collection has begun, and through coordination with MDI and the BLM, 40,000 seedlings are being prepared for additional rehab in late 2014-2015.
- Habitat staff participated in management of the Bonneville Power Administration Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area including coordination meetings, one field work day and one field tour with BLM and Shoshone Bannock Tribes (SBT) to address access facilities and control, vegetative treatments, and grazing management. The Department was represented as part of the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group, and habitat personnel were actively involved with the Science and Technology subcommittee. Seven subcommittee meetings, one general meeting and one field tour were attended.
- Regional personnel continued leading roles in the Curlew and East Idaho Uplands greater sage-grouse working groups. Four meetings were attended. Participation especially centered on review and renewal of annual goals and compiling information for the annual report. Recommendation for hunting seasons were also developed and forwarded to appropriate Department personnel.
- Represented the region on the statewide Lands Committee, attending five meetings/conference calls. Three previous acquisition proposals received continued attention, including three field tours and numerous correspondences. One of these also involved renewal of a short term lease (Walker). Expansion of a long term lease with the Bureau of Reclamation (McTucker) is still being considered.
- Handled several technical assistance requests and delegated others to regional habitat biologists (See below).

## Operations and Maintenance

The Southeast region operated and maintained buildings, structures, and infrastructure on 5 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), one Nature Area, and 5 conservation easement areas. Of the 17,000 acres involved, the majority is managed as WMAs. The Department is also directly responsible for assisting with the administration of the Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area and private property enrolled in the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) and the Mule Deer Initiative (MDI). Southeast region WMAs include:

Table 7. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Southeast Region.

Area	Acres
Sterling WMA	4,106
Portneuf WMA	3,950
Blackfoot River WMA	2,400
Georgetown Summit WMA	4,353
Montpelier WMA	2,137

Operation and Maintenance activities in the Southeast region included:

- Approximately 12 miles of roads or trails and 27 parking areas were maintained through mowing, spraying, graveling and grading to provide good quality and controlled access. Information centers and sign-in stations were maintained at all parking areas. Signs, gates, and stiles to control access on the Soda Springs Mitigation Area were maintained in cooperation with BLM and SBT.
- All structures received maintenance as needed, but two parking areas on the Blackfoot River WMA were refurbished with new rail fencing and 1.25 miles of fencing on Georgetown Summit WMA was replaced.
- Directional and informational signing pertaining to all sites was evaluated and maintained seasonally. Property boundary markers were acquired and improved marking boundaries is currently underway. Additional WMA entrance signs are being ordered.
- Seven road vehicles, three ATVs, two farm tractors, implements and trailers were maintained (generally through other funding).
- The footbridge on Portneuf WMA across Robbers Roost Creek was completed
- Additional pond maintenance and stream development was completed on Sterling WMA
- Anticipated roadwork on Georgetown Summit WMA was not accomplished
- 1.25 mile fence reconstructed (contracted) on Georgetown Summit WMA

## Habitat Development

Habitat development projects in the Southeast region included:

- Water levels were monitored and controlled on 1 waterfowl production area to maximize nesting and brooding habitat and to prevent disease outbreak. Particular effort was made to regulate and/or monitor levels in all ponds on Sterling WMA. This included

excavation work to create additional open water in one pond complex. Revegetation of the new stream course on Sterling WMA was completed.

- The HIP program funded two upland habitat projects with private landowners, a wetland improvement project on Sterling WMA. Artificial nesting structures (goose-300, wood duck-25, various nongame) at Sterling WMA, Blackfoot River WMA, and throughout the region were maintained or replacements installed as necessary.
- Approximately 600 acres were treated to maintain high-quality nesting and brooding areas. Methods included grazing, mowing, disking, and some cutting and chemical treatment of Russian olives. All other Department acreages were protected from grazing, early mowing, and wildfire to maximize vegetation structure for cover.
- Approximately 300 acres of high-energy grains were provided on Department-administered properties to serve as food for upland game and/or waterfowl. Woody cover plantings were established at numerous locations on 30 acres of private property or BLM land to improve habitat for big game, upland game, and nongame. This included establishment of 11,000 seedlings of highly palatable forage species (bitterbrush, Hobble Creek sage, and Bonneville sage planted on BLM lands or other native range sites. Funding (\$10,000) was coordinated to assist with aerial seeding of the 2013 BLM Stateline Fire (3,000 acres).
- Field tours and meetings were attended and/or written comments provided pertaining to 29 project proposals or inquiries from other land management agencies or interested parties (See Subproject V below). Some projects involved considerable time commitments from all habitat staff and continue as ongoing projects (Sage Grouse Planning Areas/Local Working Groups, Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group, Soda Springs Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area).
- Approximately 1,500 acres were directly treated for noxious weeds in cooperation with county weed departments and Cooperative Weed Management Areas. Inmate crews from the Pocatello Women's Correctional Facility and Bannock County Skills Crew were contracted to assist with weed control on the Portneuf WMA. Three cooperative farming agreements on Sterling and Georgetown Summit WMAs include provisions for assistance with noxious weed control.
- The lease on 760 acres of property adding to the Georgetown Summit WMA was renewed. The land use trade to prevent trespass grazing on WMA riparian areas and relieve grazing pressure on private land riparian areas was also renewed.
- Aspen restoration projects throughout the region were reviewed. Planning procedures for future projects were considered through participation in the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group. Additional acreage of aspen was treated on the Blackfoot River WMA for conifer encroachment.
- Continued assistance was provided with monitoring of highway mortality and maintenance of existing highway fencing.

## **Surveys and Inventory**

Survey and inventory activities included:

- Data from sign-in stations were employed to determine the level and type of public use throughout the year on all WMAs.
- The systematic randomized user survey on Portneuf WMA was completed with final analysis underway.
- Waterfowl pair counts and brood surveys were conducted on Sterling WMA to continue monitoring of nesting success.
- Nest structure use was monitored on Sterling WMA.
- Both greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys were coordinated within the Curlew and East Idaho Uplands Sage Grouse Planning Areas, particularly in the vicinity of WMAs, historical locations and areas of priority for SAFE program enrollments. Particular effort was also focused on areas to be potentially impacted by a proposed transmission line installation in Caribou County.
- Habitat personnel assisted with biological check stations, and research projects to monitor movements and population trends of upland game, waterfowl, and big game as requested. Habitat staff assisted with lek monitoring for sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse and a trapping effort to provide brood stock for Nevada.
- Regional personnel have been working closely with other agencies, NGOs and publics to identify and address concerns with aspen communities. This has included participation in the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group and particularly the Science and Technology Subcommittee. Numerous meetings and one field tour were attended by regional personnel. A particular focus was the organization of a tour held in FY 14.
- Due to time constraints and personnel shortages no vegetation transects were surveyed on the big game winter ranges.
- Due to time constraints and personnel shortages systematic monitoring of MDI plantings did not occur.
- Due to time constraints the waterfowl nest search/nesting success evaluation has not occurred on Sterling WMA since 2002.

## **Technical Guidance**

- Habitat staff worked closely with the regional environmental staff biologist and other staff to gather and provide written comment, attend tours, meetings, or otherwise represent the Department in providing comment on 29 projects or topics (23 meetings, 16 tours, 8 documents). Of particular note were lead roles in the sage grouse local working groups (3 in the Southeast Region) and ongoing participation in the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group.
- We continued correspondence with the BLM, Caribou County, and the Shoshone Bannock tribes regarding the Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area Management Plan, including BLM vegetation projects, grazing plan and travel management plan. This included meetings and tours with particular focus on aspen/mountain brush restoration projects, weed control and public access. .
- Provided direct technical assistance to 27 private landowners or other land management agencies for the improvement or development of wildlife habitat through the habitat management program. This included field contacts, project designs/cooperative

agreements and the coordination of necessary equipment, materials and personnel, resulting in 17 actual projects. Many of these projects that occurred on public land or privately owned CRP were funded at no cost to the actual landowner. Most projects were designed to primarily benefit mule deer and upland game or waterfowl. Several projects were in close coordination with the National Wild Turkey Federation.

- Habitat staff have been serving on two Department species management plan revision committees (elk, sharp-tailed grouse)

## UPPER SNAKE REGION

### Coordination and Administration

The Upper Snake Region Habitat Management Program is administered by 1 Regional Wildlife Habitat Manager (RWHM) and includes all of Idaho Fish and Game's Upper Snake Region. The Region is divided into 5 Habitat Districts. One Regional Habitat Biologist (RHB) is responsible for administering Department-managed properties within each Habitat District as well as other programs within the Habitat District. Two of 5 Habitat Districts have permanent wildlife technicians assigned to Department-managed properties to assist the RHBs. Seasonal employees are assigned to work under the oversight of the wildlife technicians and RHBs on Department-managed properties. An Access Manager assists all 5 Habitat Districts with construction and maintenance projects on Department-managed properties. Each of the 5 Habitat Districts has a mixture of funding sources including PR funds and state license funds. Habitat Districts receive federal or other mitigation funding as well. Activities are charged to appropriate funding sources.

- Regional habitat staff held coordination meetings with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) regional staff to discuss issues and coordinate activities and provide project updates.
- Regional habitat staff attended County Commissioner meetings, NRCS/Farm Service Agency (FSA) meetings, project open houses, Smart Growth Solutions and sportsmen organizational meetings and banquets to discuss fish and wildlife habitat modifications and population monitoring in the Upper Snake Region.
- Regional habitat staff worked with other regional staff and volunteers on numerous projects in the Upper Snake Region. Population monitoring, habitat improvements, and public access projects comprised the majority of work performed.
- The RWHM and RHBs participated at the state level to select habitat section members.
- The RWHM participated at the state level on the Lands Committee identifying and prioritizing properties for easement or acquisition.
- Training opportunities were provided for employees including attendance at professional society meetings.

### Operations and Maintenance

The Upper Snake Habitat Management Program consists of 5 Habitat Districts comprising about 85,000 acres. These management areas are a mixture of land ownership including IDFG, IDL, BLM, and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR).

Table 8. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Upper Snake Region.

Area	Acres
Cartier Slough WMA	1,028
Deer Parks WMU	3,054
Twin Bridges (Allen) WMU	81

Area	Acres
Cartier Habitat Access Areas	600
Market Lake WMA	5,067
Gem State WHA	70
Mud Lake WMA	11,468
Chilly Slough WCA	1,800
Sand Creek WMA	32,489
Tex Creek WMA	34,000
Winterfeld/Hamilton Easement	422
Birch Creek Ranches Easement	300

Cartier Slough WMA and a portion of TCWMA are BOR mitigation projects for the Ririe Dam and Teton Dam projects. Gem State WHA is a City of Idaho Falls mitigation project that is now included in Market Lake WMA and will no longer be reported separately. Deer Parks WMU, Beaver Dick WMU and Twin Bridges WMU are BPA mitigation projects. The Department owns lands at Market Lake WMA, Mud Lake WMA, Chilly Slough WCA, Sand Creek WMA (SCWMA), and TCWMA. Other properties are managed by the Department via agreements and management plans. Operation and Maintenance activities in the Southwest region included:

- Implemented the Upper Snake Region Habitat Management Program objectives as defined in existing long-range Department plans through Regional personnel.
- The Access Manager engineered and helped construct and maintain projects on all management areas as needed. The Access Manager is designated as the Habitat section's safety officer and, as such, periodically inspected equipment and provided safety training.
- Volunteers were utilized to accomplish projects when feasible.

Table 9. Facilities to be operated and maintained in the Upper Snake region.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Mud Lake and Chilly Slough</b>	<b>Market Lake</b>	<b>Tex Creek</b>	<b>Sand Creek</b>	<b>Cartier HD and Access Areas</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Roads (mi)	18	13	7	10	4	<b>52</b>
Trails (mi)	4	2.5	15	5	1	<b>27.5</b>
Maintained Fence (mi)	12	35	9	57	12	<b>147</b>
Parking Areas	12	6	0	0	8	<b>26</b>
Informational Signs	5	3	9	0	2	<b>19</b>
Buildings	7	7	1	9	0	<b>25</b>
Restrooms	2	2	0	1	0	<b>5</b>
Water Structures	15	21	0	0	1	<b>84</b>
Irrigation						
Wells/pumps	6	0	0	0	0	<b>6</b>
Dikes (mi)	5	8	0	5	0	<b>18</b>
Irrigation Pipe (mi)	5.08*	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Irrigation Ditch (mi)	14.78	3	0	1	1	<b>20</b>
Canal (mi)	4	6	0	2	1	<b>13</b>
Center Pivot	2	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
WMAs and WMUs	2	2	1	0	1	<b>6</b>
WHAs and other parcels	0	0	2	0	5	<b>7</b>
Acres administered	13,470	5,071	22,130	32,000	1,628	<b>74,299</b>

**\*Note** – 11 wheel lines (371 sections x 40 ft./section), 300 sections of hand line (at 40 ft./section).



## Habitat Development

Upper Snake Region is responding to a new, priority mule deer management plan, as directed by the Commission and IDFG leadership. The Idaho Governor's office through the Office of Species Conservation has also identified sage-grouse habitat conservation as a high priority issue. Habitat development projects in the Upper Snake region included:

- Improve and maintain high-quality waterfowl and upland game habitat.
- Improve and maintain high-quality big game transition, migration, and winter range habitats.
- Inventory Department managed properties for non-game wildlife species.
- Focus efforts to improve habitat for mule deer as per MDI and the MDI action plan.
- Pursue projects that benefit greater sage-grouse.
- Restore or replace in-kind habitat on mitigation properties.
- Provide high-quality habitat for wildlife species at risk (T&E, sensitive, etc.).
- Provide custodial management of federally threatened Ute's Ladies Tresses on SCWMA.
- Manage habitat on Department-administered properties to provide diverse recreational opportunities.
- Pursue habitat developments on Department-administered properties within the context of healthy ecosystems and landscape management.
- Assist private landowners in efforts to improve or develop wildlife habitat on private land.
- Collaborate with public land managers to improve or develop wildlife habitat on public land.
- Investigated opportunities to secure wildlife habitat on private and public lands.
- Administered HIP and Adopt-A-Wetland programs on private and public lands.
- Region participated in the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group to address concerns about aspen decline in Eastern Idaho.
- Established Regional programs, priorities, and policies regarding habitat development.
- Reviewed and approved habitat improvement plans.
- Administered Regional budgets and resources toward habitat development.
- Administered management agreements and leases including 4 sharecrop or use/trade agreements.
- Reviewed and developed land acquisition proposals. Evaluated and supported conservation easements proposed by Land Trusts in the region. Actively pursuing acquisition of critical winter range, wetlands and wildlife corridors.
- Participated in the High Divide Collaborative proposal to acquire LWCF funds for landscape level conservation projects.
- Attended a tour of the South Fork of the Snake River with congressional staff.
- Manipulated existing habitat via prescribed fire, mowing, and harvest techniques.
- Monitored for West Nile Virus, Avian Cholera, Avian Botulism, and Avian Influenza.
- Supported Forest Service in Fire Use areas.
- Administered vehicle and human entry restrictions.

- Coordinated fence maintenance with neighbors.
- Rebuilt fence to improve wildlife permeability.
- Monitored area closures to protect habitats and wildlife.
- Monitored and protected sensitive plant species.
- Coordinated with other agencies to treat more acres on public and private lands.
- Monitored water rights and coordinated water delivery to WMAs.
- Protected nesting habitats for T&E species.
- Established food plots on WMAs via sharecrop agreements, volunteer support from NGOs, and through IDFG labor and equipment.
- Replaced water delivery structures to provide better water level control in marshes and ponds.
- Initiated WRP restoration project on Marty Segment of Mud Lake.
- Administered motorized use plans on WMAs to regulate motorized use.
- Monitored existing habitat improvement agreements, conservation easements, and leases.
- Participated in management activities of Coordinated Weed Management Areas.
- Continued with annual goat grazing project on Cartier WMA to control leafy spurge.

Table 10. Ongoing habitat maintenance activities in the Upper Snake region.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Mud Lake</b>	<b>Market Lake</b>	<b>Tex Creek</b>	<b>Sand Creek</b>	<b>Cartier HD and Access Areas</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Winter Range (ac)	0	0	10,000	3,000	0	<b>13,000</b>
Wetlands (ac)	0	1,710	0	1500	1400	<b>4,610</b>
Forest Mgmt (ac)	0	0	2,000	2,000	0	<b>0</b>
Shelterbelts (ft.)	650	3300	0	0	0	<b>3,950</b>
Shelterbelts (ac)	3	0	0	0	3	<b>6</b>
Artificial Nest Struc.	101	23	0	30	56	<b>154</b>
Food Plots (ac)	110	220	179	105	0	<b>614</b>
Nest Cover (ac)	100	0	115	0	0	<b>315</b>
Shrub Planting (ac)	0	0	87	0	0	<b>15</b>
Water Mgmt (ac)	100	50	0	700	3	<b>853</b>
Grazing Lands (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Riparian (mi)	0	0	1/4	0	5	<b>5.25</b>
Controlled Burn (ac)	12	250	0	15	0	<b>277</b>
Weed Control (ac)	600	400	780	200	1100	<b>3,080</b>
Guzzlers (#)	0	0	4	7	0	<b>11</b>
Ponds/marshes (#)	2	6	2	40	1	<b>51</b>

Table 11. New habitat development activities in the Upper Snake region.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Mud Lake</b>	<b>Market Lake</b>	<b>Tex Creek</b>	<b>Sand Creek</b>	<b>Cartier HD and Access Areas</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Winter Range (ac)	0	0	14	15	0	<b>15</b>
Wetlands (ac)	0	165	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Forest Mgmt (ac)	0	0	70	0	0	<b>10</b>
Shelterbelts (mi)	0	0	.1	0	0	<b>0</b>
Artificial Nests (#)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Nesting Cover (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>75</b>
HIP Projects (#)	0	2	1	0	2	<b>5</b>
Shrub Planting (ac)	0	0	5	0	0	<b>75</b>
Shrub Planting (#)	0	0	375	0	0	<b>2,600</b>
Forb Plantings (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>32</b>
Livestock water (#)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Riparian (mi)	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
New/rebuilt Fence (mi)	0	1	1	9.5	0	<b>11.5</b>
Fence Removed (mi)	1.0	0.5	0	0	0	<b>1.5</b>

## Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory projects included:

- Sand Creek personnel developed an intensive sage-grouse lek survey on a portion of the Sand Creek Desert to verify whether or not historic leks were still active and to document new leks. Many new leks were found.
- Tex Creek personnel initiated a Masters Level study on sharp-tailed grouse habitat use in relation to wind farm projects and hunting pressure. Over 80 birds were marked with tracking devices, making it one of the largest sample sizes ever reported.
- Staff partnered with PF in a wild pheasant relocation, production, survival, and habitat use project on Mud Lake WMA. This project will answer questions related to wild pheasant population concerns and habitat use of the Mud Lake area and will continue on in 2015.
- Wildlife habitat was monitored on managed properties with permanent vegetation transects, photo points, spotlight surveys and GIS mapping. An emphasis was placed on mapping noxious weeds and control operations.
- Wildlife populations were monitored by habitat personnel through a wide variety of methods. Some of those methods included lek survey routes, hunter harvest reports; aerial surveys, goose pair counts, point count surveys, wing barrels, brood counts, spotlight counts, capture and marking of doves, ducks, sharptails, deer, elk, and moose, small mammal live trapping, and direct observations of individuals and groups of animals.

- Piezometers were monitored at SCWMA to monitor water tables in order to determine effects on federally threatened Ute's Ladies Tresses.
- Piezometers were monitored at Market Lake WMA to build a profile of ground water levels and establish a baseline there.
- Piezometers were monitored at Mud Lake to measure ground water flows.
- RHBs monitored habitat on public land via field tours with federal and state agency personnel and through independent inspections of grazing allotments and proposed timber and range projects.
- Ducks were banded at Mud Lake WMA and Sand Creek WMA and geese were banded at Market Lake WMA.
- RHBs inspected sites for proposed subdivisions and reported findings in comment letters to county planning and zoning officials.
- RHBs inspected proposed conservation easements submitted by the Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT) as requested and reported findings to TRLT personnel.
- Habitat staff took the lead on trapping and banding of mourning doves.
- Habitat staff assisted with trapping and radio-collaring deer, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats and elk.
- Habitat staff assisted with monitoring of bighorn sheep lamb production.
- Research continued to determine the best methods for converting sodforming grasses to native cover.
- Research continued to determine the most effective ways to plant shrubs into native range.

## **Technical Guidance**

Technical assistance is provided to the public and other agencies from a variety of employees in Upper Snake Region. The Habitat Section is responsible for providing technical assistance to private landowners who wish to improve their property for wildlife. The Habitat Section is also responsible for projects that are proposed at the Habitat District level, which may affect wildlife habitat. These would include subdivisions, timber sales, range allotment plans, prescribed fires, and other projects submitted by area agency representatives. The Region's Environmental Staff Biologist handles programs and projects that will impact the entire Upper Snake Region or a significant portion thereof. The Environmental Staff Biologist is also responsible for projects that deal with water issues and most fisheries issues. The Region's Landowner Sportsmen Coordinator is responsible for responding to landowners with wildlife depredation complaints and public access issues.

- Requests for technical assistance were routed through the Regional Supervisor who assigned them to the RWHM, Environmental Staff Biologist, or Landowner Sportsman Coordinator.
- The RWHM assigned technical assistance projects to the appropriate RHB.
- The RHB prepared draft comment letters for subsequent approval by the RWHM and the Regional Supervisor.

- The Habitat section did its best to respond to all requests for technical assistance and to provide some technical guidance independent of whether cost-sharing was available from the Department.
- Of note, the Habitat Section continues to be involved in three sage-grouse local working groups and the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group.
- The Tex Creek HB served on the Interdisciplinary Team of the USFS Rainey Creek Vegetation Enhancement Project, helped develop a proposal and participated in public meetings regarding the proposed project.
- Regional habitat personnel helped organize, plan and execute a successful Aspen Management Workshop.
- RHBs have been instrumental in providing comments on conservation easement proposals. In many instances IDFG comments have been critical in obtaining the easements.
- RHBs were encouraged to become familiar with and maintain current knowledge of habitats, issues, and projects within their Habitat Districts.
- Regional Habitat staff was encouraged to develop and maintain close working relationships with field-level personnel of local, state, and federal agencies as well as key members of non-governmental organizations operating within their Habitat District.
- All RHBs actively participate with their corresponding CWMA.
- Personnel gave presentations to elementary, high school and college classes, civic organizations and offered workshops and mentored young hunters.
- Technical assistance is provided in written form, verbally, and often in person and onsite.

## **SALMON REGION**

### **Coordination and Administration**

The Salmon Region is comprised of one habitat district divided into thirds and administered by three wildlife biologists. Each wildlife biologist is assigned two budgets (one PR and one License) from the Wildlife Habitat Program. One wildlife biologist acts as the regional habitat manager/Lands Committee regional representative and is supervised by the regional wildlife manager. One non-benefited wildlife technician assists with management of the Pahsimeroi River Access Area. Six volunteers were used on projects contributing 28 hours of their time.

### **Operations and Maintenance**

Operations and maintenance of Salmon region habitat included:

- At the PRAA, maintain the 14 ac food plots and upgrade the storage building
- Implement the annual Flying B Coop Weed Spraying project
- Mustang Fire Sagebrush Monitoring
- Assist Mark Hurley mule deer research project, 1 day/wk
- Regional Lands Review
- Hayden Pond disabled access development
- Carmen Access disabled access development
- Kids Ck. Pond water control structure upgrades
- Install Colston Ck. Access CXT
- Bobcat Gulch Access boat ramp replacement
- Supervised and maintained the region's seven backcountry WHA's, 7 miles of roads and trails, 4 miles of fence, 62 parking areas, 5 buildings, nine restrooms, signs, 3 water control structures and equipment used for operation and maintenance. Also, 1/8 mile new jack fence was built on one access
- At the PRAA, the 14 ac food plots were maintained and upgrades completed in the storage building
- The annual Flying B Coop Weed Spraying project was implemented as planned
- Mustang Fire Sagebrush Monitoring was completed
- Assistance provided to the Mark Hurley mule deer research project
- A Salmon Region Regional Lands Review was completed and two land parcels removed from the Department's land disposal list
- Hayden Pond disabled access development was not completed
- The Carmen Access disabled access fishing ramp was completed
- The Kids Ck. Pond water control structure upgrades not completed
- The Colston Ck. Access CXT was installed
- The Bobcat Gulch Access boat ramp replacement not completed
- Hayden Pond disabled access development was deferred due to unresolved administrative access issues

- The Kids Ck. Pond water control structure upgrades were deferred to 2015 due to work scheduling conflicts
- The Bobcat Gulch Access boat ramp replacement was deferred to 2015 to allow for completion of all required permits

## **Habitat Development**

Improve key wildlife habitats such as big game winter range, waterfowl and upland game production areas, riparian areas and native plant communities to meet existing wildlife habitat needs on lands managed by the Salmon region. Habitat development projects on department lands include:

- Plant 300 Rocky Mountain Junipers at the PRAA
- Construct a storage building to house irrigation equipment and an OHV at the PRAA
- IFG/Hood Ranch weed spray project

Enhance habitat conditions on public lands to support desired wildlife population levels as opportunities arise.

- Aspen renovation treatments are planned on 150 acres

Work with private landowners to enhance wildlife habitat on private property:

- Establish HIP tree and shrub plantings on 2 private ownerships

Management activities in the Salmon Region included implementing the noxious weed control program on the region's access areas and WHAs (1,140 acres), coordinating with the Lemhi, Custer, and Frank Church CWMAs, and tree and shrub plantings and other practices designed to improve riparian, rangeland, grassland, and forestland plant communities. Habitat personnel also worked within the region to help develop and implement conservation programs and grants that are designed to restore wildlife habitat on private lands. Farm Bill conservation programs, federal and state conservation programs, and competitive conservation grants funded projects on private land provided the funding. In addition:

- Planned upgrades on the PRAA storage building were completed and 300 Rocky Mountain Junipers planted on the field perimeters
- Aspen treatments were completed on 80 acres of federal land
- The Cooperative IFG/FS Weed Spray Project on the Hood Ranch backcountry property was completed
- Two HIP tree and shrub plantings were completed on two private properties

## **Surveys and Inventory**

This work was completed in conjunction with the region's Wildlife Population Management Program and budgeted with additional funding from the USDA-FS on mule deer work.

- A database system was updated to store the region's elk, deer and sage grouse survey data. Regional habitat personnel continued mapping noxious weed infestations and treatment areas using GPS and ArcView 10.2 software.
- Regional habitat personnel assisted CWMA's with regional noxious weed inventory and mapping projects. Regional habitat personnel assisted with all aerial big game surveys, fawn mortality studies, sage grouse lek counts, and trapping/banding studies.
- The Sage-grouse lek route database was updated June 2014. These data are kept in ArcView 10.2 shapefiles
- The BLM/IDFG Sage grouse monitoring effort was started in March with data collected and incorporated into the seasonal mapping project for Custer county
- The fawn habitat model was developed for the region and presented at a workshop May 2014
- Monitoring was completed and report provided to partners on the Mustang fire winter range sagebrush rehabilitation project
- A statewide elk habitat landscape productivity map was developed and integrated into the Department Elk Management Plan

## **Technical Guidance**

- Coordinate with Tom Bassista, provide current wildlife habitat and population information, concerns, and recommendations to state, federal, NGO and private parties contemplating projects with the potential to affect wildlife on a year-round basis
- Provide technical habitat and population management advice to public and private landowners and other agencies in order to sustain or enhance wildlife resources on a year-round basis
- Participate as a steering committee member for the Challis Local Sage-grouse Working Group, Lemhi, Custer, and Frank Church CWMA, Challis Experimental Stewardship Area and Broken Wing Ranch (BLM acquisition team)
- Current wildlife habitat and population information was provided upon request (7 letters, 9 meetings attended) on proposed projects and activities within the Salmon Habitat District. Technical advice and information on Department management programs and policies was provided to the public and personnel of the USFWS, BOR, BLM (Broken Wing), USFS, NRCS, FSA, Lemhi and Custer SWCD's, Challis Local Sage-grouse Working Group, Lemhi and Frank Church CWMA's and the Lemhi and Custer Counties Planning and Zoning Commissions. All responses were coordinated with Tom Bassista.
- Wildlife population and habitat information was also provided to the Idaho Departments of Water Resources, Transportation, and Agriculture; Challis Experimental Stewardship Group, Salmon Valley Stewardship, BLM Broken Wing Acquisition, and other local groups by telephone, letter, person-to-person, and through participation in inter-agency technical and advisory committees.



Submitted by:

Jim Teare  
Panhandle Wildlife Habitat Manager

Jim White  
Clearwater Wildlife Habitat Manager

Jerry Deal  
Southwest Wildlife Habitat Manager

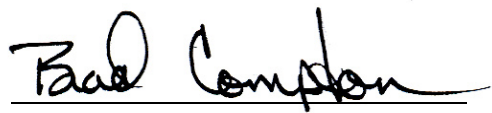
Mark Fleming  
Magic Valley Wildlife Habitat Manager

Paul Wackenhut  
Southeast Wildlife Habitat Manager

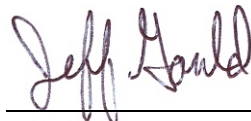
Terry Thomas  
Upper Snake Wildlife Habitat Manager

Greg Painter  
Salmon Wildlife Habitat Manager

Approved by: IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME



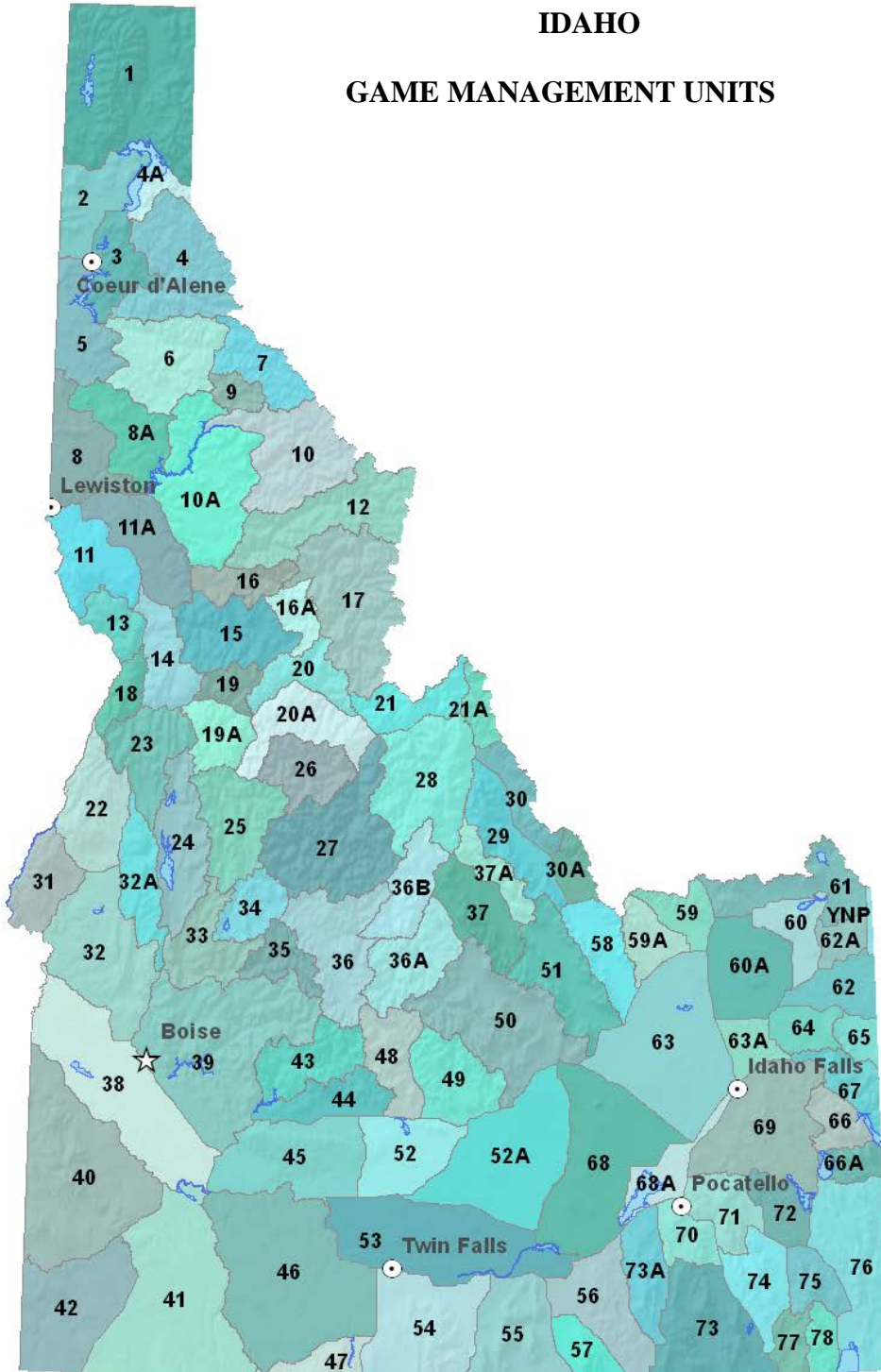
Brad Compton  
Asst. Chief, Wildlife Bureau  
Federal Aid Coordinator



Jeff Gould, Chief  
Bureau of Wildlife

# IDAHO

## GAME MANAGEMENT UNITS



## FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program consists of funds from a 10% to 11% manufacturer's excise tax collected from the sale of handguns, sporting rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and archery equipment. The Federal Aid program then allots the funds back to states through a

formula based on each state's geographic area and the number of paid hunting license holders in the state. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game uses the funds to help restore, conserve, manage, and enhance wild birds and mammals for the public benefit. These funds are also used to educate hunters to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be responsible, ethical hunters. Seventy-five percent of the funds for this project are from Federal Aid. The other 25% comes from license-generated funds.



Aid.