

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

Virgil Moore, Director

Annual Statewide Report



WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

HABITAT MANAGEMENT	1
Summary	1
Objectives	2
Approach.....	2
Expected Benefits	3
STATEWIDE.....	5
Coordination and Administration	5
Operation and Maintenance	5
Habitat Development	6
Surveys and Inventory	6
Technical Guidance	7
Access Yes	7
PANHANDLE REGION	8
Coordination and Administration	8
Operations and Maintenance.....	8
Habitat Development	9
Surveys and Inventory	11
Technical Guidance	11
CLEARWATER REGION	13
Coordination and Administration	13
Operations and Maintenance.....	14
Habitat Development	16
Surveys and Inventory	16
Technical Guidance	17
SOUTHWEST REGION	19
Coordination and Administration	19
Operations and Maintenance.....	19
Habitat Development	20
Surveys and Inventory	21
Technical Guidance	22
MAGIC VALLEY REGION	23

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Coordination and Administration	23
Operations and Maintenance.....	23
Habitat Development	24
Surveys and Inventory	24
Technical Guidance	25
SOUTHEAST REGION	26
Coordination and Administration	26
Operations and Maintenance.....	26
Habitat Development	27
Surveys and Inventory	28
Technical Guidance	29
UPPER SNAKE REGION.....	30
Coordination and Administration	30
Operations and Maintenance.....	30
Habitat Development	33
Surveys and Inventory	35
Technical Guidance	36
SALMON REGION.....	38
Coordination and Administration	38
Operations and Maintenance.....	38
Habitat Development	38
Surveys and Inventory	39
Technical Guidance	39

List of Tables

Table 1. Statewide Habitat Personnel.	5
Table 2. Facilities to be operated and maintained by Department statewide.....	6
Table 3. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Panhandle Region.....	8
Table 4. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Clearwater Region.....	15
Table 5. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Southwest Region.....	20
Table 6. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Magic Valley Region.	23
Table 7. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Southeast Region.....	27
Table 8. Areas to be operated and maintained in the Upper Snake Region.....	31
Table 9. Facilities to be operated and maintained in the Upper Snake region.....	32
Table 10. Ongoing habitat maintenance activities in the Upper Snake region.....	34
Table 11. New habitat development activities in the Upper Snake region.....	34

STATEWIDE REPORT

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

JOB TITLE: Statewide Habitat Management

PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016

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.

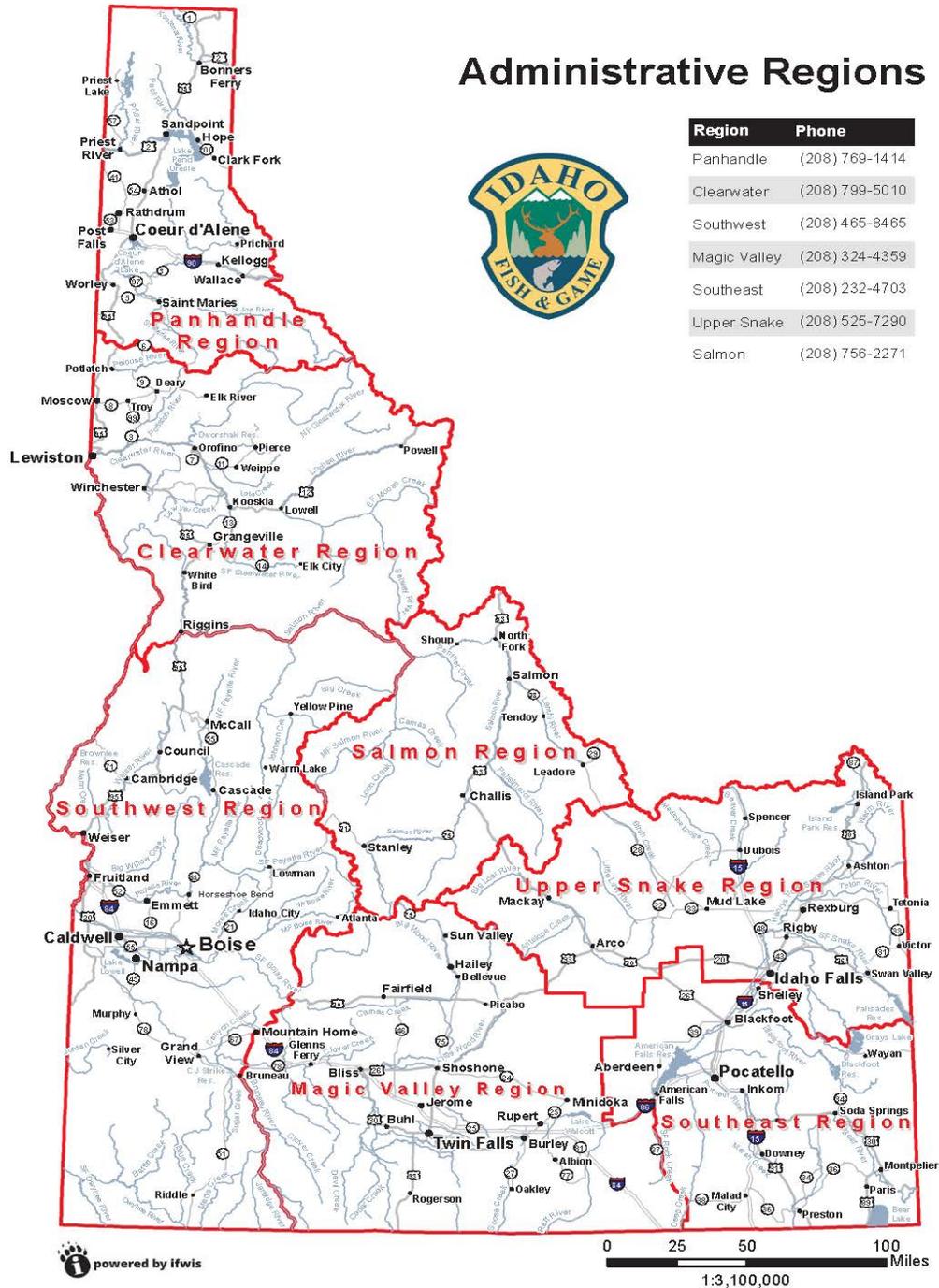


Figure 1. Administrative regions for Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

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 321 miles of roads, 82.5 miles of trails, 493 miles of fences, 169 parking areas, 118 buildings, 34 restrooms, 215 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.

FEATURE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
Roads (mi)	26	58	150	18	12	51	7	322
Trails (mi)	2	20	19	9	5	42.5		77.5
Maintained Fence (mi)	12	80	193	18	30	131	4	468
Parking Areas	33	10	34	7	27	26	32	169
Informational Signs	50	12	12	40	50	27	17	208
Buildings	20	20	36	9	4	31	5	125
Restrooms	6	1	2	7	5	5	9	35
Water Structures	29		54	33	12	73	3	204
Dikes (mi)	15		13	4	1.4	19	1	53.4
Irrigation Pipe and Ditches(mi)			2	8	2	35	1	47
Canal (mi)			7	10	1	13		30
Center Pivot				1		7		8
WMAs and WMUs	7	2	6	6	5	7		33
WHAs and other parcels	24	8	4	3	5	8	7	59
Acres administered	54,987	128,980	79,944	9,649	17,204	89,057	1,140	380,961

Habitat Development

Habitat development and enhancement activities are funded by WR and State License funds with assistance from other Federal grants. For projects on private land, Federal Aid funds were used only for personnel and administrative costs associated with habitat development. 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 WR 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 2015 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 WR 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 2015, the Access Yes! Program opened up 361,452 acres of private land and 472,845 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.

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 two 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-Smith 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..

- Maintained and replaced as necessary approximately 300 Canada goose nesting platforms and 500 wood duck nest boxes on the Boundary Creek (BSC), McArthur Lake, Pend Oreille (PO), and Coeur d'Alene River (CDAR) WMAs.
- Treated 700 acres and monitored 3000 acres for noxious weeds.
- Installed one mile of vinyl markers to reduce bird collisions with barbwire fences on the Thompson Lake segment of CDARWMA.
- Maintained and repaired two miles of fence damaged due to storms across all WMAs.
- Repair 0.10 miles of road to improve public access on the CDARWMA.
- Fabricated and installed water control structures improvements and accessories for water level management on Bare Marsh and Robinson Creek wetlands.
- Repaired, maintained and assessed dikes on WMA parcels in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin.
- Constructed a boat launch to improve public access and habitat management on Bare Marsh.
- Installed new or replaced existing property boundary markers on WMA parcels.
- Completed installation of fire sprinkler system at Trout Creek bunkhouse and constructed firewood shed at POWMA.
- Completed major structural repairs to the Derr Creek storage building, constructed a walk bridge over the marsh at Trout Creek to replace old unsafe bridge, and replaced two administrative access gates on POWMA.
- Completed Sunnyside parcel boundary survey and secured a Temporary Access through neighboring private lands for Timber Management on this POWMA parcel.
- Completed additional safety improvements to the Farragut Shooting Range. Completed the construction of Farragut Shooting Range administration/education building. Initiated archery developments at the range..

Habitat Development

Management activities on Department-administered lands located within the Panhandle included a variety of activities. With exclusion of Snow Peak WMA (SPWMA), 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. Additional habitat improvements included:

- Approximately 40 combined acres of grain food plots were planted on the BSCWMA, McArthur Lake WMA (MLWMA), POWMA, and CDARWMA to provide feed for upland game birds, wild turkeys, and migrating waterfowl.
- Planted 1,000 native trees and shrubs on BSCWMA adding to plants in a 5 acre enclosure.
- Approximately 25 acres of forb (broadleaf) forage plots were planted on the POWMA, BSCWMA, and CDRWMA.

- Approximately 30 acres of goose pasture on the MLWMA, POWMA, and CDARWMA were maintained through mowing and planting.
- Planned and administered reed canary grass control, followed by native wetland vegetation plantings at Robinson Creek wetland.
- Fertilized 10 acres of established rangeland to improve forage quality on the Thompson Lake segment of the CDARWMA.
- Planted 4000 herbaceous and 3000 woody plants and seeded 16 acres of wetland seed mix and 12 acres of upland perennial seed on the Robinson Creek Segment of the CDARWMA.
- Continued reed canarygrass and broadleaf weed control efforts on Clark Fork Delta project for the critical second growing season to achieve full establishment of native seeding and seedling plants.
- Expanded big game winter range and improved forage condition on POWMA by beginning the conversion of 32 acres of decadent hayfields to big game forage mixes and food plots to be completed in 2017.
- Planted an eight acre food plot of forage oats for big game forage on POWMA.
- Converted 11 acres of cattails on BSCWA to maintain hemi-marsh conditions.
- Shrub masticated 48 acres on three parcels to improve big game browse production and availability. The three parcels were; Tall Pines parcel at POWMA (16 acres) Sandaker parcel at CDARWMA(12 acres), and 10 acres at MLWMA. All disturbed sites were seeded to a big game grass/forb forage mix and treated for noxious weeds.
- Conducted post-harvest rehabilitation on the 2015 Salvage sale on Sunnyside parcel to include reseeded all disturbed areas, extensive noxious weed control, and planning for area reforestation efforts.
- Prepared for Red Cedar timber management activities to begin on Sunnyside parcel's 40 acre segment included completion of Draft Forest Management Plan and preliminary cruise.
- Completed the Cocolalla Wetland Restoration Project with excavation of six wetland cells restored Fish Creek channel and seeded excavated soil mounds. Coordinated with Ducks Unlimited Engineer to repair flood damage that occurred on site in spring 2016. Began reed canarygrass control efforts, set photo-point locations and monitored seeded areas.
- Completed the Western White Pine restoration planning on 70+ acres of the Farragut WMA (FWMA). Followed up with noxious weed control.
- Initiated a cedar salvage sale to finish up forest management activities on the Sunny Side segment of the POWMA.
- Continued a moist soil management strategy for the BSCWMA and MLWMA wetland complexes to enhance wetland productivity and maintain hemi-marsh conditions.
- Conducted comprehensive noxious weed control/eradication efforts on all of the Panhandle WMAs.
- Planned and administered a 70 acres grassland burn on the BSCWMA for grassland rejuvenation. Coordinate with Idaho Dept. of Lands. Inter-seed the burn area with native grasses.
- Continued reed canarygrass and broadleaf weed control on Clark Fork Delta.

- Completed the Cocolalla Wetland Restoration Project and implemented the Reed canarygrass control plan for the site.
- Completed Robinson Creek Wetland Restoration Project and most of the re-vegetation projects.
- Continued to engage and collaborate with the USFS St. Joe Ranger District staff to promote elk habitat improvement planning and development on the Snow Peak WMA. Elk habitat improvement project including prescribed burns, timber harvest, and fire breaks.

Additional habitat development projects were completed on privately-owned property. Development projects completed on private lands in FY16 involved the following:

Surveys and Inventory

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

- Regional wildlife habitat biologist assisted with elk mortality searches in North Fork CDA basin.
- Regional wildlife habitat biologist assisted with various amphibian wetland surveys.
- Approximately 1,400 ducks were banded on the BSCWMA, MLMWA, POWMA, and CDARWMA.
- 70 Mourning Doves were banded on the CDARWMA.
- Operated waterfowl hunter check stations on the BSCWMA, MLMWA, POWMA, and CDARWMA.
- Conducted waterfowl migration surveys during the spring and fall migrations on MLWMA and BSCWMA.
- Conducted waterfowl breeding pair/brood counts on the BSCWMA and MLMWA.
- Conducted goose nest platform and wood duck nest box surveys on the BSCWMA, MLMWA, POWMA, and CDARWMA.
- Monitored Western grebe colonies on the POMWA and CDARWMA.
- Monitored Black Tern colonies and heron rookeries at POWMA.
- Conducted pheasant crow counts on BSCWMA.
- Monitored stream flows and wetland water levels on the BSCWMA.
- Monitored active eagle nesting sites at eight locations on the POWMA and CDRWMA.
- Conducted photo-points on the habitat segments acquired through funds from the BPA, which include various habitat segments on the POWMA and BSCWMA.
- Monitored noxious weed infestations and evaluated treatment effectiveness on all WMAs.

Technical Guidance

Panhandle Habitat Section staff met regularly with the USFS, BLM, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NRCS, Farm Service Agency (FSA), Soil and Water Conservation Districts, IDL, Idaho

Department of Water Resources (IDWR), Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), and Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA). Additionally, contact was maintained with the major private landowners throughout the Panhandle region including timber companies, large farms and ranches, and hydropower operations. 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. Technical assistance specific accomplishments included:

- Worked with the USFS to conduct an elk habitat assessment and restoration project for SPWMA.
- Worked on the USFS Panhandle Forest Collaborative to better implement the Panhandle Forest Plan across northern Idaho.
- Worked with the Restoration Partnership to develop and implement the Coeur d' Alene Basin Restoration Plan as part of the HECLA and ASACO mining settlements and funding within the CDA Basin.
- Provided technical assistance on 10 USFS and 25 IDL forest and/or landuse planning management projects.

CLEARWATER REGION

Coordination and Administration

The Clearwater region's 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 coordinated with and provided technical assistance to the NRCS, ACOE, USFS, the Clearwater Basin Collaborative, and Selway Wilderness noxious weed managers (USFS, Idaho County, and Nez Perce Tribe). In addition, habitat staff offered outdoor recreational mentorship opportunities and shared information with internal and external constituents.

The Clearwater region implemented the Wildlife Habitat Program objectives through regional program personnel, including four 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 three WMAs comprised of 84,000 deeded acres and 40,000 acres under lease or cooperative management agreement, four WHAs encompassing 437 acres, and custodial management of five conservation easements. Habitat staff coordinated and managed budgets, including both state and federal funding. Additional accomplishments included:

- Provided Technical Service Provider (TSP) support to 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 and Wildlife Bureau Biologist Meetings.
- Participated on the IDLcommittee to evaluate potential habitat acquisitions in Idaho.
- Participated in the Craig Mountain/Joseph Plains Long-Range Fire Management Working Group.
- Participated in the implementation of the 2014 statewide Idaho Elk Plan.
- Participated on a statewide team to develop vegetation monitoring strategies and protocols for Department lands.
- Worked with adjacent landowners and members of the public on motorized and administrative access related issues on Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area (CMWMA).
- Coordinated with BPA, BLM, TNC, and Nex 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 (IFWF) 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.
- Trained two biologists and two technicians on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enhancements and Continuous CRP (CCRP) implementation techniques.
- Participated on a Clearwater Wildlife Habitat Restoration Team with USFS, 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 USFS, Clearwater-Nez Perce National Forest and BLM, Cottonwood Field Office Area.
- Provided technical assistance regarding ITD construction for Highway 95 south of Moscow, Idaho.
- Coordinated with USFS on Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project in the Clear Creek drainage east of Kooskia, Idaho.
- Coordinated with USFS regarding integrating Department wildlife staff into forest and zone planning efforts and increasing wildlife staff capacity.
- Coordinated with IDL on silvicultural projects throughout CMWMA.
- Worked with the Wildlife Bureau regarding a new commercial use policy on Department lands.
- Worked with Communication Bureau staff to create outreach material highlighting Department activities.
- Coordinated and commented on ACOE land use proposals for Dworshak Reservoir.
- Coordinated with the USFS, Idaho County, and NPT on noxious weed management in the Selway Wilderness.
- Served as a Department representative on the Clearwater Basin Collaborative team and, in this capacity, coordinated a region-wide monitoring project on elk.
- Coordinated with the Palouse Conservation District in Washington to administer RCPP funds in Idaho to promote wildlife friendly farming practices.
- Coordinated with the Panhandle Region Habitat Manager, Clearwater Region Habitat Manager, NRCS and local SWCDs to get a new shared partner position to work on Farm Bill programs.

Operations and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance activities provided quality habitat, public hunting and other wildlife-oriented recreation on approximately 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 ^a
Joseph Plains	1,300
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

^a 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 Red River Wildlife Management Area (RRWMA).
- Managed noxious weeds on over 100,000 acres. This included chemically treating over 85 acres and assessed and spot treating along over 150 miles of roads and trails on CMWMA. (No PR funds were used to purchase or apply herbicides).
- Received \$24,000 from BLM towards a cooperative grant for noxious weed control.
- Maintained facilities at RRWMA and at Billy Creek, Wapshilla Creek, Benton Meadows and four back-country cabins.
- Acquired a 141 acre property adjacent to the CMWMA. Began building a parking area, designing public information signs, and removing unnecessary fences.
- Rebuilt one back-country cabin (Hermit Springs) and began rebuilding a second (Frenchy Creek); both of which were lost in the 2014 Big Cougar Fire on CMWMA.
- Maintained 11 miles of roads specifically for mobility impaired sportsmen on CMWMA.
- Maintained seasonal motorized route on Redbird segment of CMWMA.
- Repaired 1,000 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.
- Began replacing property boundary fence on Redbird Canyon, CMWMA.

Habitat Development

By combining Department Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) funds, funds from outside grants, and NRCS Farm Bill funds, Clearwater staff was able to maximize enhancement of private lands for upland birds and other wildlife species. BPA 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 plantings and a grazing exclosure at Red River WMA with Bonneville Power Administration funds. Built an additional exclosure to protect shrubs from browsing. Goal is to establish riparian community where one historically occurred.
- Planted 5,200 conifer and 2,000 shrub seedlings on CMWMA.
- Replaced six wildlife guzzlers destroyed during the Big Cougar Fire. Replacement was funded by IFWF and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Improve wildlife habitat on private lands

- Began working with six landowners with lands adjacent to Thorn Creek. Designed and enrolled over eight miles of riparian forest buffers, over 100 acres of SAFE, and acres of non USDA program enhancements..
- Planted over 5,000 shrubs on six private land parcels in Nez Perce and Latah counties covering over 20 acres.
- Worked on approximately 50 private lands projects resulting in over 3000 acres of habitat development or enhancement.

Improve wildlife habitat on other public lands

- Placed 144 releases (7,200 weavils) of bio-control for spotted knapweed (*Cyphocleonus achates*) in the Selway Wilderness at 31 sites.

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 surveying and mapping noxious weeds across CMWMA.
- Inventoried 100 acres and mapped noxious weeds on RRWMA.
- Assessed resource conditions following the 65,200 acre Big Cougar Fire.

- 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 with the Latah Soil and Water Conservation District monitoring the effect of broadcast seeding post burn on Palouse Prairie Remnants.
- Monitored with USFS 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.
- Coordinated a project in cooperation with the Clearwater Basin Collaborative to monitor elk across the Clearwater Region.
- Developed survey methods and surveyed pheasant densities within the Thorn Creek habitat project area.
- Worked with the Clearwater Basin Collaborative to complete vegetation surveys in 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. Worked closely with the public, including private landowners to maintain and improve habitat on both public and private lands. Provided technical assistance to NRCS through the Technical Service Provider (TSP) program. Provided outdoor recreational opportunities. Shared information with internal and external customers.

Clearwater regional personnel have continued to act as TSPs for planning and implementing wildlife practices within the USDA Farm Bill, under the terms of a Contribution Agreement. NRCS provided funding or Contribution Agreement. The Department greatly expanded our landowner contacts and ability to affect large acres of habitat for upland birds and other wildlife species through the Contribution Agreement in combination with Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) and the Landowner Incentives Program (LIP) funds. The Department received funding from FSA 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 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.
- Continued implementing the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement project across 10 Idaho counties to improve and protect habitat for high priority wildlife species.
- Habitat Biologists assisted the Environmental Staff Biologist with Department input on proposed projects within respective habitat districts. Provided significant comments concerning USFS travel plans, USFS river recreation and development, ACOE Dworshak Travel and Recreation Plan, BLM Resource Management Plans, and outfitter issues.

- Participated on the Tri-State Weed Management Committee, the Salmon River Weed Management Committee, the Clearwater Weed Management Committee, Palouse Weed Cooperative Management Committee, 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.
- Began working with USFS to accomplish habitat objectives identified in the Statewide Elk Management Plan.
- Participated on the Clearwater Basin Collaborative and provided technical guidance on elk monitoring and vegetation surveys.
- Provided technical guidance to the Army Corps of Engineers on creation of a Wildlife Management Plan for Dworshak Reservoir.
- Provided technical guidance to noxious weed managers (USFS, Idaho County, NPT) in the Selway Wilderness.
- Provided technical assistance to the Palouse Conservation District on what farming practices are wildlife friendly and provided guidance on their project ranking.

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. Wildlife Habitat Program responsibilities are structured as follows:

- One Regional Habitat Manager oversees program coordination and administration at the regional level and supervises Regional Habitat Biologists and other program personnel.
- Six Regional Habitat Biologists implement program activities at the district level and supervise Wildlife Technicians and seasonal staff.
- Three Senior Wildlife Technicians assist with district-level activities and supervise seasonal employees.
- One Maintenance Foremen assists with operation and maintenance on Habitat Program facilities when not working on Fish and Boating Access sites.

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 120 miles of roads and trails with associated gates, culverts, bridges, and signs.
- Maintained 193 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.)

Specific projects to maintain WMA infrastructure during this reporting period included:

- Replaced entrance signs at six WMAs.
- Maintained structures and other facilities at backcountry WHAs in the Southwest Region.
- Completed installing pipe and a head gate on the irrigation system at the Hot Springs Segment of CJ Strike WMA.

Habitat Development

Habitat development in the Southwest region included:

- Improved the quality of key wildlife habitats such as big game winter range, waterfowl and upland bird production areas, riparian areas, and native plant communities on Department managed lands.
- Developed additional wildlife habitat to support increased production on Department-managed lands..
- Assisted 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 land.
- 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.
- Planted 145 native shrubs and trees on Gold Island, surveyed areas for dryland seeding, installed new irrigation pump system and 1,000 feet of above ground drip irrigation line

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 five upland projects to develop 49 acres of wildlife habitat on private land, including cost-share agreements using Department HIP funds.
- Surveys and inventory 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.

Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory activities included:

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

Public use information collected included:

- 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.

Surveys on Department lands:

- Conducted annual brood pair counts on WMAs emphasizing waterfowl production.
- Collected herd composition data on Boise River WMA mule deer winter range.
- Measured livestock grazing forage utilization on Department lands under grazing management plans.
- Continued geographic information systems training and software support for WMA personnel so they may document and communicate wildlife habitat and population information about 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 CWMAAs 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 included:

- Provided technical assistance regarding wildlife impacts related to livestock management and motorized travel management to USFS, BLM, and University of Idaho Rangeland program.
- Advised six CWMAAs on noxious weed control issues relative to wildlife habitat.
- Participated in the interagency wetland review group.
- Participated in the interagency Boise Forest Coalition to develop consensus solutions to diverse forest management issues including natural resource, economic, social and recreation interests.
- Participated as a partner in the Boise River Wildlife Linkage Partnership to maintain habitat connectivity in a major transportation corridor.
- Provided technical assistance for planning and mitigation to City of Boise Open Space Management Plan for the Boise Foothills, Ridge to Rivers Partnership for recreational trails, Harris ranch Wildlife Mitigation Association, Idaho Foundation for Parks and Recreation, and the interagency Healthy Hills Initiative.

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 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 BLM and USFS regional staff to discuss issues and provide project updates. Regional staff attended County Commissioner meetings, NRCS and 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 regional staff, reservists, and volunteers on numerous projects in the Magic Valley Region. The majority of work conducted included habitat improvement, public access, and population monitoring projects..

Operations and Maintenance

Operated and maintained facilities, buildings, fences, gates, irrigation water delivery systems, roads, and infrastructure on six WMAs 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; 18 miles of unimproved roads; seven acres of vehicle parking areas; seven restrooms.
- Eight miles of gated, wheel, and hand-line irrigation pipe; 10 miles of irrigation canals and laterals.
- Maintained and repaired nine project buildings and equipment; operated and maintained 33 water structures, four dikes, six pumps, and one center pivot.

- Completed construction of Niagara Springs WMA restroom with toilet, sink, and baseboard heating system, along with accompanying septic system.
- Completed Carey Lake Irrigation Line Easement.
- Completed drilling and capping well at Niagara Springs WMA.

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 wetland vegetation on Hagerman and Billingsley Creek WMAs to provide thermal and escape cover for wintering upland birds.
- Maintained six miles of shelterbelts on Carey Lake and Hagerman WMAs to provide cover and food.
- Irrigated 710 acres of herbaceous cover for nesting habitat on Centennial Marsh, Hagerman, Niagara Springs, Big Cottonwood and Carey Lake WMAs.
- Maintained 170 artificial nesting platforms for waterfowl on Centennial Marsh, Carey Lake, and Hagerman WMAs.
- Inventoried and/or controlled weeds on 6,512 acres on WMAs.
- Maintained water levels for 1,200 acres of wetlands on Niagara Springs, Billingsley Creek, Hagerman, Carey Lake, and Centennial Marsh WMAs.
- Developed five HIP projects on private lands.
- Planted and irrigated 42 acres of food plots on Carey Lake and Niagara Springs WMAs.
- Improved cover and species composition on approximately 30 acres of irrigated nesting fields and shelterbelts at Niagara Springs WMA.
- Installed an additional 3,000 linear feet of shelterbelts at Carey Lake WMA.

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 conducted random field surveys to determine visitor use on WMAs. Conducted random field checks of hunters on opening day of specific hunts and on weekends.
- 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.

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

- Assisted regional population biologists, BLM and USFS biologists with the following field projects:
 - 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-tagged 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 percent survival of seedlings.
- Monitored habitat restoration plantings, and public response/acceptance, etc. to wildlife management programs and policies.

Technical Guidance

Staff provided 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. Technical assistance included:

- Provided 38 written comments regarding proposed land management practices to city, county, state, and federal agencies.
- Provided technical assistance to 14 private landowners wishing to improve habitat for wildlife resources.
- Worked with Department Mule Deer Initiative Coordinator and Sportsmen For Wildlife to plan and implement a habitat rehabilitation project in the Bennett Hills on big game winter range.

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. Habitat staff accomplished the following:

- Reviewed eight potential habitat projects mostly on state and federal lands.
- 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.
- Represented the Department on the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group. Habitat personnel were actively involved in the Science and Technology subcommittee.
- Facilitated the Curlew and East Idaho Uplands greater sage-grouse local working groups. Participation centered on review and renewal of annual goals and compiling information for the annual report. The local working groups developed recommendation for hunting seasons and submitted to the Department.
- Represented the region on the statewide Lands Committee, attending five meetings/conference calls. The Region is investigating a potential property disposal/reorganization of the Horsch property with a private landowner and the Bureau of Reclamation.
- Handled several technical assistance requests.

Operations and Maintenance

The Southeast region operated and maintained buildings, structures, and infrastructure on five Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), one Nature Area, and five conservation easements. 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:

- Maintained approximately 12 miles of roads and 5 miles of trails and 27 parking areas by mowing, spraying, graveling and grading to provide good quality and controlled access. Maintained information centers and sign-in stations at all parking areas. Maintained signs, gates, and stiles to control access on the Soda Springs Mitigation Area in cooperation with BLM and SBT.
- Maintained all structures as needed. Replaced 1,320 feet of fence on the Georgetown Summit WMA (GSWMA).
- Evaluated and maintained directional and informational signs pertaining to all sites. Began updating property boundary markers. Installed 11 new WMA entrance signs.
- Maintained seven road vehicles, three ATVs, two farm tractors, implements and trailers (generally through other funding).
- Completed additional pond maintenance (excavation to maintain open water) on Sterling WMA (SWMA).

Habitat Development

Habitat development projects in the Southeast region included:

- Coordinated 17 habitat projects with private landowners, three habitat projects with BLM (seedling planting and field restorations), one habitat project with USFWS (Oxford Slough).
- Monitored water levels on SWMA to maximize nesting and brooding habitat and to prevent disease outbreak.
- Maintained or replaced artificial nesting structures (goose-300) at SWMA, Blackfoot River WMA (BRWMA), and throughout the region.
- Treated approximately 600 acres to maintain high-quality nesting and brooding areas.
- Methods included grazing, mowing, disking, and some cutting and chemical treatment of Russian olives. Protected all other Department acreages from grazing, early mowing, and wildfire to maximize vegetation structure for cover.
- Grew approximately 300 acres of high-energy grains on Department-administered properties to serve as food for upland game and/or waterfowl.
- Attended field tours and meetings and provided written comments on eight project proposals or inquiries from other land management agencies or interested parties. 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).

- Treated approximately 1,500 acres for noxious weeds in cooperation with county weed departments and Cooperative Weed Management Areas. Three cooperative farming agreements were renewed on SWMA.
- Renewed the lease of 760 acres managed as part of GSWMA. Renewed the land use trade to prevent trespass grazing on GSWMA riparian areas and to relieve grazing pressure on private land riparian areas.
- Reviewed aspen restoration projects. Considered planning for future projects by participating on the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group.
- Assisted with monitoring of highway mortality and maintenance of existing highway fencing.

Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory activities included:

- Employed design-in stations to collect data to determine the level and type of public use throughout the year on all WMAs. Completed the systematic randomized user survey and data analysis on SWMA.
- Conducted waterfowl pair counts, brood surveys and nest searches on Sterling WMA to continue monitoring of nesting success. Banded approximately 200 doves on SWMA as part of statewide effort.
- Monitored nest structure use on SWMA.
- Coordinated greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys in 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.
- Assisted with biological check stations and research projects to monitor movements and population trends of upland game, waterfowl, and big game as requested. Assisted with lek monitoring for sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse as part of an effort to provide brood stock for Nevada. Staff also assisted with regional pica survey.
- Worked closely with other agencies, NGOs and publics to identify and address concerns with aspen communities. This effort has included participation in the Eastern Idaho Aspen Working Group and particularly the Science and Technology Subcommittee.
- Surveyed for Ute's Ladies Tresses and iodine plant on SWMA in conjunction with Diversity Program Botany staff.
- Completed comprehensive plant surveys of SWMA for development of a comprehensive plant list available for app download.

Technical Guidance

Habitat staff technical assistance work included:

- Worked closely with the regional environmental staff biologist and other staff to gather information and provide written comments, attend tours, meetings, or otherwise represent the Department on 17 projects or topics. 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.
- Corresponded with the BLM, Caribou County, and the Shoshone Bannock tribes regarding the Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area Management Plan, including BLM vegetation projects, a grazing plan and a travel management plan. These efforts included meetings and tours with particular focus on aspen/mountain brush restoration projects, weed control and public access.
- Provided direct technical assistance to private landowners or other land management agencies for the improvement or development of wildlife habitat.
- Served on two Department species management plan revision committees (elk, sharp-tailed grouse).
- Served on the State Wildlife Action Plan revision team and led the development and revision of the Northwest Basin and Range section.
- Worked with BLM and a mining company regarding impacts to wildlife and BRWMA from the Rasmussen Valley phosphate mine. Worked with Bonneville Power Administration regarding impacts to wildlife and the BRWMA WMA from the Hooper Springs Transmission Line.

UPPER SNAKE REGION

Coordination and Administration

The Upper Snake Region Habitat Management Program is administered by one Regional Wildlife Habitat Manager (RWHM) and includes approximately 7.4 million acres of the Upper Snake River watershed. This land base is 68% public lands (USFS, BLM, Idaho National Laboratory, IDL, and 32% private lands. The Region is organized into five Habitat Districts. One Regional Habitat Biologist (RHB) is responsible for administering Department-managed properties and collaborating with public and private landowners within their respective Habitat District to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat quality.

Two of five 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 five 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. Habitat staff accomplished the following:

- Coordinated with the BLM and USFS staffs to enable collaboration, discuss issues, initiate partnering opportunities and provide project updates.
- Conducted outreach and provided technical service through direct contact with private landowners, county planning staff, NRCS/FSA meetings, sporting organizational meetings and banquets to discuss fish and wildlife habitat modifications and population monitoring in the Upper Snake Region.
- Worked with other regional staff and volunteers on numerous projects in the Upper Snake Region. Population monitoring, habitat improvements, and technical service projects comprised the majority of work performed.
- The RWHM participated at the state level on the Lands Committee identifying and prioritizing properties for easement or acquisition.
- Provided training opportunities for employees including attendance of professional conferences, society meetings and specific technical training sessions and safety training.
- Attended/presented at the Sage-grouse and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Conference

Operations and Maintenance

The Upper Snake Habitat Management Program consists of 90,000 acres of Department-managed lands. These managed areas are a mixture of land ownership including the Department, IDL, BLM, and BOR.

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

Area	Acres
Cartier Slough WMA	1,628
Deer Parks WMU	3,054
Twin Bridges (Allen) WMU	81
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	34,822
Winterfeld/Hamilton Easement	422
Birch Creek Ranches Easement	300

Cartier Slough WMA (CWMA) and a portion of Tex Creek WMA (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 (MKWMA) 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 MKWMA, Mud Lake WMA (MDWMA), 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 Upper Snake 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.
- Utilized volunteers to accomplish projects when feasible.

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

Feature	Market Lake and Chilly				Sand Creek	Cartier HD and Access Areas	TOTAL
	Mud Lake	Slough	Tex Creek				
Roads (mi)	18	13	7		10	2.75	50.75
Trails (mi)	4	2.5	15		5	15.25	41.75
Maintained Fence (mi)	12	35	9		57	18	131
Parking Areas	12	6	0		0	8	26
Informational Signs	4	3	9		8	3	27
Buildings	7	7	1		9	7	31
Restrooms	2	2	0		1	0	5
Water Structures	15	21	0		36	1	73
Irrigation							
Wells/pumps	6	0	0		0	8	14
Dikes (mi)	5	8	0		5	1	19
Irrigation Pipe (mi)	5.08*	0	0		0	2.7	7.78
Irrigation Ditch (mi)	13	3	0		10	1.6	27.6
Canal (mi)	4	6	0		2	0	13
Center Pivot	2	0	0		0	5	7
WMAs and WMUs	1	2	1		1	2	7
WHAs and other parcels	0	1	2		0	5	8
Acres administered	11,468	6,871	34,822		32,489	1,628	86,789

*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 Department 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:

- Focused efforts to improve habitat for mule deer as per MDI and the MDI action plan.
- Pursued projects that benefit greater sage-grouse.
- Improved and maintained high-quality waterfowl and upland game habitat.
- Improved and maintained high-quality big game transition, migration, and winter range habitats.
- Inventoried Department managed properties for non-game wildlife species.
- Restored or replaced in-kind habitat on mitigation properties.
- Provided high-quality habitat for wildlife species at risk (T&E, sensitive, etc.).
- Provided custodial management of federally threatened Ute's Ladies Tresses on SCWMA.
- Managed habitat on Department-administered properties to provide diverse recreational opportunities.
- Pursued habitat developments on Department-administered properties within the context of healthy ecosystems and landscape management.
- Assisted private landowners in efforts to improve or develop wildlife habitat on private land.
- Collaborated 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.
- 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 budgets and resources toward habitat development.
- Administered management agreements and leases including four 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 USFS in Fire Use areas.
- Administered vehicle and human entry restrictions.
- Coordinated fence maintenance with neighbors.

- Rebuilt fence to improve wildlife movement.
- 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 Department 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.
- Actively participated in the local Weed Warrior Workshop and Department-only noxious weed trainings.

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

Feature	Mud Lake	Market Lake	Tex Creek	Sand Creek	Cartier HD and Access Areas	TOTAL
Winter Range (ac)	0	0	10,000	3,000 *(300,000)	280	13,280
Wetlands (ac)	0	1,710	0	1,500	1,963	5,173
Forest Mgmt (ac)	0	0	2,000	2,040 *(4,000)	0 *(500)	4,040
Shelterbelts (ft.)	0	42	0	0	0	42
Shelterbelts (ac)	3	0	0	0	3	6
Artificial Nest Struc.	101	0	0	30	150	281
Food Plots (ac)	110	220	110	40	157	637
Nest Cover (ac)	40	0	115	32,000 *(320,000)	1,020	33,175
Shrub Planting (ac)	0	0	87	0	.1	87.1
Water Mgmt (ac)	60	50	0	700	542	1,352
Grazing Lands (ac)	0	0	0	0 *(360)	80	80
Riparian (mi)	.5	0	.25	4.33	5	10.08
Controlled Burn (ac)	12	0	0	450	0	450
Weed Control (ac)	600	400	780	200	1,500 *(600)	3,480
Guzzlers (#)	0	0	4	7	0	11
Ponds/marshes (#)	2	6	2	20	2	32

*Work within the habitat district to enhance habitat conditions (comment letters, cost share, closures etc.

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

Feature	Mud Lake	Market Lake	Tex Creek	Sand Creek	Cartier HD and Access Areas	TOTAL
Winter Range (ac)	0	0	210	0	0	210
Wetlands (ac)	100		0	60	0	160
Forest Mgmt (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shelterbelts (mi)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Artificial Nests (#)	0	0	0	0	00	0
Nesting Cover (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	0
HIP Projects (#)	1	1	1	0	2	5
Shrub Planting (ac)	0	0	3	0	0	3
Shrub Planting (#)	0	170	1,500	0	1,400	3,070
Forb Plantings (ac)	0	0	180	40	0	220
Livestock water (#)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Riparian (mi)	0	0	0	0	0	0
New/rebuilt Fence (mi)	0	1	4	5	0	10
Fence Removed (mi)	1	0	0	0	0	1

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 wild pheasant relocation, production, survival, and habitat use project on MDWMA. 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.
- Monitored wildlife habitat on managed properties with permanent vegetation transects, photo points, spotlight surveys and GIS mapping. Emphasized mapping noxious weeds and control operations.
- Monitored wildlife populations including; 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 mammals, and direct observations of individuals and groups of animals..
- Monitored piezometers at SCWMA to monitor water tables in order to determine effects on federally threatened Ute's Ladies Tresses.

- Monitored piezometers at MKWMA to build a profile of ground water levels and establish a baseline there.
- Monitored piezometers at MDWMA to measure ground water flows.
- 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.
- Banded ducks at MDWMA and SCWMA. Banded geese at MKWMA.
- 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.
- Led the effort to trap and band mourning doves.
- Assisted with trapping and radio-collaring deer, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats and elk.
- Assisted with monitoring of bighorn sheep lamb production.
- Assisted a Research project to determine the best methods for converting sodforming grasses to native cover.
- Assisted Research to determine the most effective ways to plant shrubs into native range.
- Started a project to identify important transition range for migrating mule deer and elk in the Tex Creek Landscape based on existing radio-collar data.
- Started developing a tablet-based aerial survey application for use in winter big-game surveys.

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 (ESB) handles programs and projects that will impact the entire Upper Snake Region or a significant portion thereof. The ESB is also responsible for projects that deal with water issues and most fisheries issues. The Region's Landowner Sportsmen Coordinator (LSC) 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, ESB, or LSC.
- 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 continued 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 Department 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.
- Gave presentations to elementary, high school and college classes, civic organizations and offered workshops and mentored young hunters.
- Provided technical assistance in written or verbal form, 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 shares two budgets (one PR and one License from the Wildlife Habitat Program). One wildlife biologist acts as the regional habitat manager and serves as the Lands Committee regional representative. This lead-habitat biologist is supervised by the regional wildlife manager. One non-benefited wildlife technician assists with management of the Pahsimeroi River Access Area.

The Salmon Region maintained contact and liaison with federal, state, and local government and private entities within the region regarding fish and wildlife habitat modifications and population monitoring. Regional staff attended sportsmen organizational and local working group meetings and banquets to discuss fish and wildlife habitat modifications and population monitoring.

Operations and Maintenance

Operations and maintenance of Salmon region habitat included:

- Supervised and maintained the region's seven backcountry WHAs; rebuilt the outhouse at Cougar Ranch and replaced 300 feet of jack-fence at Loon Creek
- Maintained 14 acres of food plots at PRAA
- Compiled plans for a well and maintained the outhouse and parking area at PRAA.
- The PRAA well development was deferred because the local well driller was not able to schedule the job before the end of the fiscal year.
- Training opportunities were provided for employees including attendance at professional society meetings.
- A Salmon Region Regional Lands Review was completed
- Irrigated and treated weeds at the Outdoor Classroom

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 included:

- Maintained 10 acre food plot at PRAAIFGLCWMA weed spray project on backcountry properties
- Administered management agreement and lease on one backcountry property.
- Reviewed and developed land acquisition proposals. Evaluated and supported conservation easements proposed by land trusts in the region.

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

- 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.
- Completed restoration in five aspen plots on public land totaling 50 acres

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

- Established HIP tree and shrub plantings on three private ownerships
- Participated in the High Divide Collaborative.

Management activities in the Salmon Region included implementing the noxious weed control program on the region's WHAs, 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 to help develop and implement conservation programs and grants that are designed to restore wildlife habitat on private lands.

Surveys and Inventory

This work was completed in conjunction with the region's Wildlife Population Management Program.

- Regional habitat personnel assisted CWMA's with regional noxious weed inventory and mapping projects.
- Regional habitat personnel assisted with all aerial big game surveys, deer, elk, and bighorn sheep mortality studies, sage grouse lek counts, and trapping/banding studies.
- Updated the statewide elk habitat landscape productivity map as part of the Department
- Elk Management Plan
- Conducted aspen stand photo points in treatment areas
- Compiled location data from GPS collared elk to look at winter habitat use and address depredation issues
- Assisted with a bighorn sheep research project involving capture, monitoring, vegetation surveys and lamb production.

Technical Guidance

- Coordinated with Tom Bassista and Jeff Richards to 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.
- Provided technical habitat and population management advice to public and private landowners and agencies in order to sustain or enhance wildlife resources on a year-round basis.
- Participated as a committee member for the Lemhi, Custer, and Frank Church CWMAs.

- Participated as a member on the Salmon-Challis Forest Plan Revision Collaborative.
- Provided current wildlife habitat and population information upon request (4 letters, 5 meetings attended) on proposed projects and activities within the Salmon Habitat District.
- Provided technical advice and information on Department management programs and policies to the public and personnel of the USFWS, BLM, USFS, NRCS, FSA, 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 or Jeff Richards.
- Provided wildlife population and habitat information to ITD and ISDA, Salmon Valley Stewardship, and other local groups by telephone, letter, person-to-person, and through participation in inter-agency technical and advisory committees.

Submitted by:

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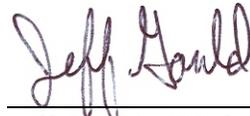
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