

IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

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Annual Statewide Report



WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

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STATEWIDE REPORT

HABITAT MANAGEMENT

JOB TITLE: Statewide Habitat Management

PERIOD COVERED: July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

Summary

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) 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, that have important ecological, aesthetic, cultural, scientific, and educational value to the citizens of Idaho, also benefit from maintaining adequate habitat.

Thirty-one Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) (Fig. 1) located in six IDFG administrative regions (Fig. 2) have been established to protect wildlife habitat and are available for hunting, fishing and other public enjoyment of wildlife. Varying in size from 275 to 85,000 acres, each 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 IDFG for wildlife habitat or public access. Management of lands for wildlife habitat could not succeed without the cooperation and collaboration of many partners, with IDFG as either a licensed tenant or a neighbor. Examples include Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), USDI Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USDA Forest Service (USFS), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Idaho Power Company, 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 (PR), 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 benefit from 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 also benefit from the broad ranging conservation values associated with IDFG-managed 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 IDFG-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 IDFG.
2. Create additional habitat on IDFG-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 IDFG-managed lands including recreational use, opinions, hunting success, and harvest.
2. Collect current wildlife habitat and population characteristics information on IDFG-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 of private land access statewide for sportsmen through lease agreements between IDFG and private landowners at an estimated cost of \$1.25 per acre.

Approach

The IDFG has management plans for Idaho species or groups of species as well as for each WMA. These plans provide management guidance to IDFG, and information to other agencies and the public. The IDFG uses public input, wildlife surveys, and habitat monitoring information, including information collected from past Federal Aid projects, to adjust habitat management activities 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, 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 IDFG 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 IDFG 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 IDFG evaluate management actions to see if the desired conditions are being achieved on IDFG-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 IDFG 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.

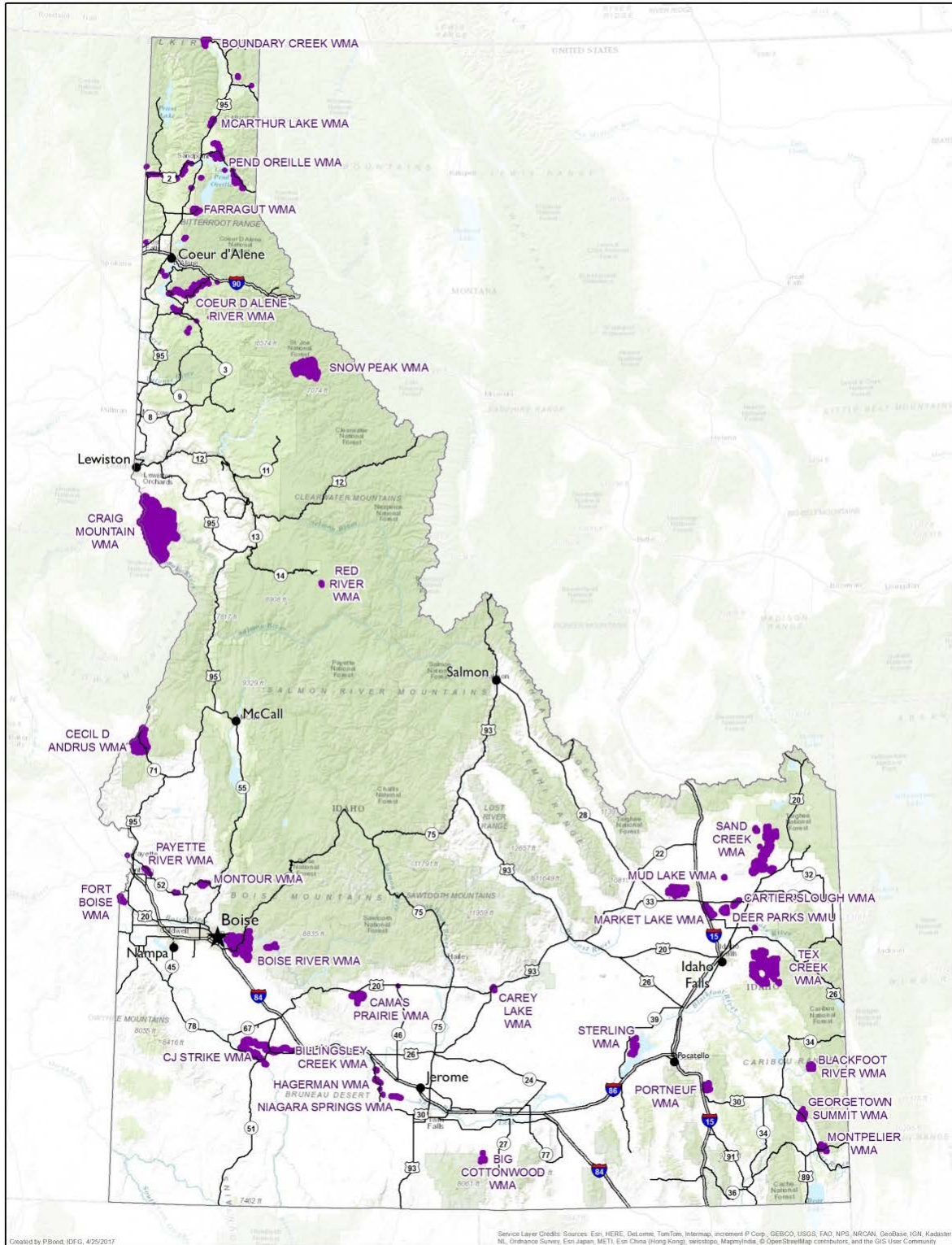


Figure 1. Idaho Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Management Areas.

Administrative Regions



Region	Phone
Panhandle	(208) 769-1414
Clearwater	(208) 799-5010
Southwest	(208) 465-8465
Magic Valley	(208) 324-4359
Southeast	(208) 232-4703
Upper Snake	(208) 525-7290
Salmon	(208) 756-2271

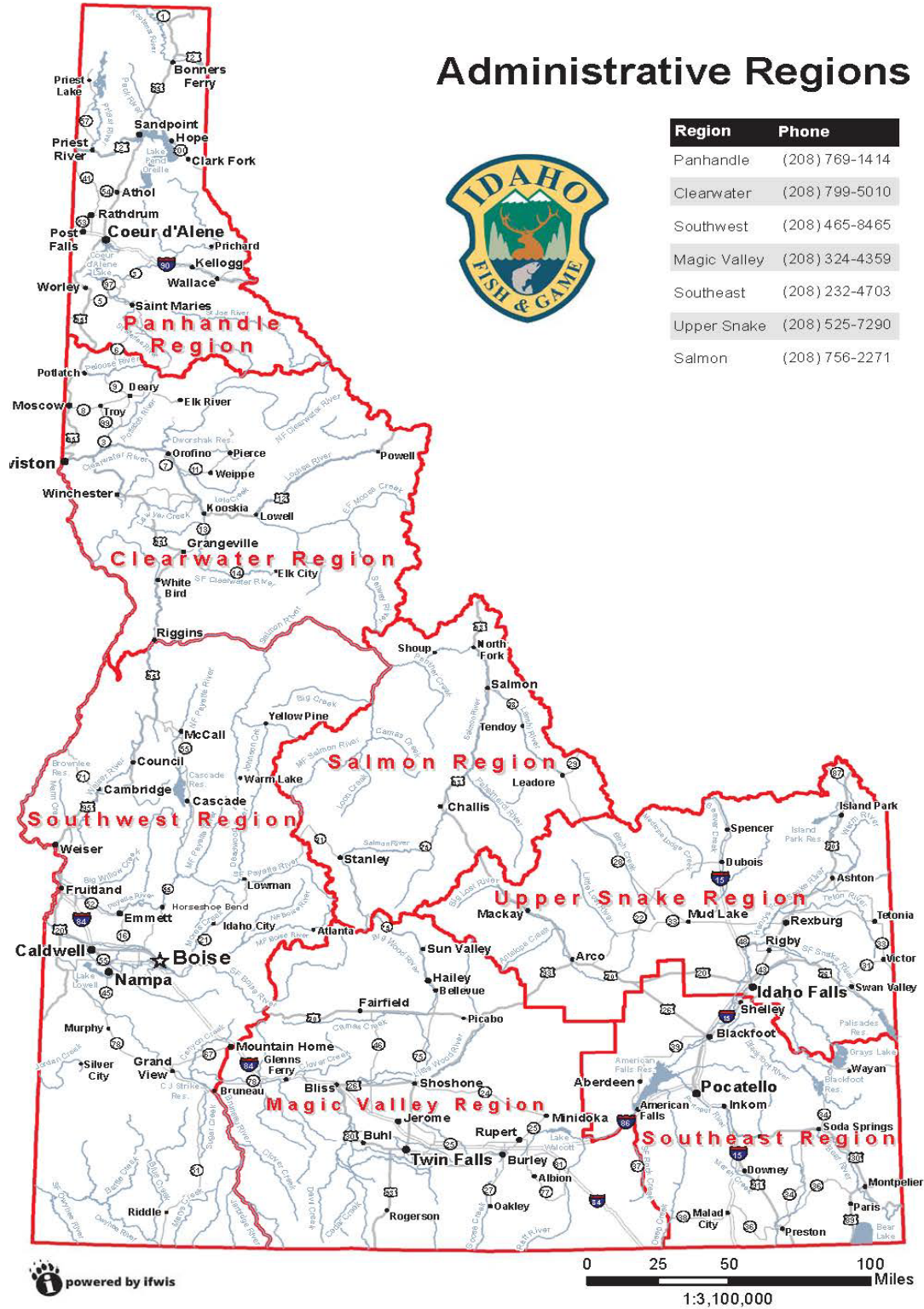


Figure 2. Idaho Department of Fish and Game administrative regions.

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 five Maintenance Foremen. Regional Wildlife Biologists administered all habitat program responsibilities within their designated Habitat District and supervised seven Wildlife Technicians assigned to specific WMAs or a portion of a Habitat District. Maintenance Foremen coordinated habitat maintenance activities region-wide. Biologists and Maintenance Foremen 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 Manager	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 IDFG 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.

Regional habitat program staff operate and maintain buildings, structures, and infrastructure on IDFG-owned or managed properties, totaling 370,000 acres, at current levels of use (Table 2).

In FY17, regional habitat personnel maintained approximately 307 miles of roads, 14 miles of trails, 566 miles of fences, 105 parking areas, 111 buildings, 19 restrooms, 232 water control structures, 28 miles of dikes, numerous signs, and equipment used for operation and maintenance.

Table 2. Facilities operated and maintained by IDFG statewide.

Feature	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Total
Roads (mi)	26	60	150	18	12	51	7	324
Trails (mi)	2	20	19	9	5	42		77
Maintained Fence (mi)	12	88	253	18	30	131	4	536
Parking Areas	33	10	34	7	27	26	32	169
Informational Signs	60	12	12	40	50	27	17	218
Buildings	20	30	38	9	4	31	5	137
Restrooms	6	1	2	7	5	5	9	35
Water Structures	29		66	33	12	73	3	216
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	54,179	126,304	91,506	10,857	17,204	91,801	1,140	392,991

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, and competitive conservation grants typically fund projects on private land.

Regional 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 IDFG.

A habitat program goal is to create additional habitat in areas lacking adequate habitat to support a desired population level. Habitat staff worked with private and public landowners to enhance wildlife habitat through projects that included:

- Wetland restoration
- Nesting cover development
- Native shrub-steppe habitat 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. IDFG staff collected visitor use

information at most WMAs using traffic counters, random visitor surveys, targeted field contacts, hunter participation check stations, and trailhead surveys.

Wildlife habitat and population information collected on IDFG-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 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 IDFG 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 (NGO). Examples of how these objectives were met include the following: Mule Deer Initiative (MDI), Clearwater Pheasant Initiative, Boise Forest Coalition, 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.

Farm Bill biologists, working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided technical assistance on reenrollment on existing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land, including State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) applications. In FY17, they assisted 182 landowners with technical assistance to improve wildlife habitat on 300,000 acres of privately owned land.

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 IDFG and private landowners. In calendar year 2017, the *Access Yes!* Program opened up 353,752 acres of private land and 474,795 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), 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 three 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 IDFG facilities when not working on Fishing and Boating Access sites. One Regional Wildlife Habitat Manager 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 six WMAs and 24 smaller parcels totaling 27,905 deeded acres and 26,274 acres managed under agreement, for a total of 54,179 acres. Panhandle WMAs and acreages are included in Table 3.

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

Area	Acres
Boundary-Smith Creek WMA	2,072
McArthur Lake WMA	1,821
Pend Oreille WMA	7,432
Farragut WMA	1,418
Coeur d' Alene WMA	9,074
Snow Peak WMA	32,292

Operation and maintenance activities during this reporting period included:

- 1,402 acres of the St. Maries WMA (SMWMA) was sold to IDL. The remaining 139 acres were incorporated into the Coeur d'Alene River WMA (CDARWMA).
- The CDARWMA acreage and management responsibility was increased with the purchase of the 1,012 acre Blake Lake Ranch, the 385 acres Black Rock Slough, and the 139 acres remaining from SMWMA.

- A total of 26 miles of roads, 12 miles of fence, 33 parking areas, 20 buildings, six restrooms, 60 signs, 29 water control structures, and 15 miles of dikes were maintained.
- Maintained approximately 300 Canada goose nesting platforms and 500 wood duck nest boxes on Boundary-Smith Creek WMA (BSCWMA), McArthur Lake WMA (MLWMA), Pend Oreille WMA (POWMA), and CDARWMA.
- Treated 1,305 acres and monitored 3,857 acres for noxious weeds.
- Maintained and repaired two miles of fence damaged due to storms across all WMAs.
- Repaired 0.50 miles of road on the Sandaker segment to reduce erosion and improve public access on the CDARWMA.
- Repaired and improved the water control structure dike at Bare Marsh on the CDARWMA with placement of ecology blocks and rocking.
- Installed new or replaced existing property boundary markers on all WMA parcels.
- Replaced signs and kiosks on the Snow Peak WMA (SPWMA).
- Surveyed and assessed 36 miles of trails for future repair on the SPWMA. Cleared and improved four miles of trails to improve public access.
- Continued to manage operations at Farragut WMA (FWMA) Rifle Range – over 2,500 shooter days in FY17. Initiated archery developments at the range.
- Began water management and access development activities on the newly acquired Black Lake Ranch property.
- Conducted field assessments, restoration planning, and compliance and permitting on the Black Rock Slough wetland on the CDARWMA. Obtained a small North American Wetland Conservation Act grant to complete Phase One of the multi-year project.
- Installed an estimated one mile of green vegetative fire breaks on the BSCWMA to enable to conduct controlled burning projects more efficiently and safely.
- Repaired high water damage on the Rapid Lightning Creek access roads on the POWMA.
- Repaired and graveled three access sites on the POWMA to improve public access.

Habitat Development

Management activities on IDFG-administered lands located within the Panhandle Region included a variety of activities. With exclusion of SPWMA, the remaining 22,690 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, MLWMA, POWMA, and CDARWMA to provide feed for upland game birds, wild turkeys, and migrating waterfowl.
- Planted 1,250 native trees and shrubs on BSCWMA, adding to plants in a five-acre enclosure.
- Approximately 20 acres of forb (broadleaf) forage plots were planted on the POWMA, BSCWMA, and CDARWMA.

- 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 on the Robinson Creek, Cocolalla Lake, and Clark Fork Delta habitat segments.
- Fertilized 10 acres of established rangeland to improve forage quality on the Thompson Lake segment of the CDARWMA.
- Maintained 4,000 herbaceous and 3,000 woody plants and 16 acres of wetland seed mix and 12 acres of upland perennial seed on the Robinson Creek Segment of the CDARWMA.
- Continued reed canary grass and broadleaf weed control efforts on Clark Fork Delta project to achieve full establishment of native seeding and seedling plants.
- Continued to expand big game winter range and improve forage condition on POWMA by beginning the conversion of 40 acres of decadent hayfields to big game forage mixes.
- Continued with management efforts to establish the Cocolalla Wetland Restoration Project with excavation of six wetland cells restored Fish Creek channel.
- Completed post-sale slash management and weed control projects on the Western White Pine restoration planning on 70+ acres of the FWMA. 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.
- Continued to engage and collaborate with the USFS St. Joe Ranger District staff to promote elk habitat improvement planning and development on the SPWMA. Elk habitat improvement projects including prescribed burns, timber harvest, and fire breaks.

Surveys and Inventory

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

- Regional wildlife habitat biologist assisted with elk mortality searches in North Fork Coeur d'Alene basin.
- Regional wildlife habitat biologist assisted with various amphibian wetland surveys.
- Approximately 1,600 ducks were banded on BSCWMA, MLMWA, POWMA, and CDARWMA.
- 30 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 BSCWMA and MLMWA.
- Conducted goose nest platform and wood duck nest box surveys on BSCWMA, MLMWA, POWMA, and CDARWMA.
- Monitored Western grebe colonies on POMWA and CDARWMA.
- Monitored Black Tern colonies and heron rookeries at POWMA.
- Conducted pheasant crow counts on the BSCWMA.

- Monitored stream flows and wetland water levels on the BSCWMA.
- Monitored active eagle nesting sites at eight locations on POWMA and CDRWMA.
- Conducted photo-points on the habitat segments acquired through funds from the BPA, which include various habitat segments on POWMA and BSCWMA.
- Monitored noxious weed infestations and evaluated treatment effectiveness on all WMAs.

Technical Guidance

Panhandle habitat staff met regularly with the USFS, BLM, ACOE, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), NRCS, FSA, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), IDL, Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, 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 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:

Provide technical assistance to private landowners to improve wildlife habitat:

- Panhandle habitat staff provided technical assistance to private landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat on their lands. Some efforts are coordinated through the USDA agencies. Funding assistance using IDFG's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) was used if warranted by project need. Assistance will primarily occur across five northern counties within agriculture areas.
- In FY17, habitat staff provided technical assistance to approximately 10 private landowners to help improve wildlife habitat on 60 acres.

Provide technical habitat and population management advice to public and private landowners and other agencies in order to sustain or enhance wildlife resources:

- Panhandle habitat staff completed 32 technical assistance contacts and consultations that provided benefits to fish and wildlife on 45,000 acres.
- The Panhandle habitat staff provided technical assistance to private industry, local, city, county, state, and federal agencies and representatives, NGOs, soil and water conservation districts, resource collaborative groups and restoration partnerships. Staff provided technical assistance and comments on 10 USFS, two ACOE, three IDWR, and 25 IDL forest and/or land use planning management projects.
- Habitat staff are actively involved in two county-based resource groups, which are the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative and the Shoshone-Benewah Forest Health Collaborative. Both groups review land use and environmental-based project's in their counties (Boundary, Shoshone, and Benewah counties) and provide recommendations back to the land agency or organization. Habitat staff provided information to the groups to make informed decisions.

- Habitat staff actively participate in Inland Empire and Selkirk Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) activities. This included several collaborative meetings and group noxious weed control projects. CWMA's cover most of the five northern counties and facilitates information and funding exchange between County Weed Superintendents, habitat staff, and other participating members.
- Habitat and diversity program staff provided assistance to Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) to specifically include one annual coordination meeting and planning on three highway-related habitat and wildlife passage projects. Projects include a timber removal project to improve wildlife and public safety on the MLWMA; roadside pollinator habitat improvements across the Panhandle; and planning to improve wildlife passage within the McArthur Corridor through development of new bridge.
- The Panhandle regional habitat staff worked with the USFS St. Joe Ranger District to conduct elk habitat assessments, an environmental assessment (EA) report, and Habitat Restoration Plan (Plan) for the 33,000 acres SPWMA. The EA and plan is scheduled to be complete in FY18 and over half of the WMA will receive vegetation treatments (timber harvest and controlled burns) to improve elk habitat over the next 10 years. Cooperative efforts will allow landscape vegetation management projects to occur across land ownerships.
- The habitat staff worked on the USFS Panhandle Forest Collaborative to better implement the Panhandle Forest Plan across North Idaho.
- The habitat staff worked with the Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration Partnership to develop and implement the Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration Plan as part of the Hecla and Asarco mining settlements and funding within the Coeur d'Alene River Basin. The EA and Plan will be completed in FY18 and project implementation will begin.

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 (CBC), 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 SWCD 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, field first aid and evacuation training, supervision, NRCS-TSP, Defensive Driving, Idaho Chapter Wildlife and Fisheries Society joint meetings, Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Deer and Elk Workshop, and IDFG In-Service Training School.
- 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 IDFG lands.
- Worked with adjacent landowners and members of the public on motorized and administrative access related issues on Craig Mountain WMA (CMWMA).
- Facilitated snow machine travel on CMWMA by designating routes.
- Coordinated with BPA, BLM, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) on CMWMA management, including the Dworshak Advisory Committee.
- Coordinated with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF), the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation (IFWF), and private landowners on Joseph Plains WHA 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 and line repairs on CMWMA.
- Trained three new biologists and a senior technician to duties and responsibilities.
- Trained two biologists and two technicians on CRP enhancements and Continuous CRP 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 IDFG wildlife staff into forest and zone planning efforts and increasing wildlife staff capacity.
- Coordinated with IDL on silvicultural projects throughout CMWMA.
- Worked with Communication Bureau staff to create outreach material highlighting IDFG 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 and participated in the bio-control disbursement.
- Coordinated with the Clearwater Nez Perce National Forest on opening trails for sportsman access.
- Served as an IDFG representative on the CBC team and, in this capacity, coordinated a region-wide monitoring project on elk and supervised and assisted the vegetation monitoring crew and project.
- Coordinated with the Palouse Conservation District in Washington to administer Resource Conservation Partnership Program 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.
- Coordinated with IDL, BLM, and NPT to hold annual Craig Mountain Cooperative Management meeting regarding cooperative fire management on the CMWMA and surrounding areas.

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 (Table 4).

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 WHA	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 60 miles of road.
- Maintained 88 miles of fence and boundary markers.
- Maintained 30 buildings associated with WMAs.
- Maintained six parking areas associated with WMAs.
- Maintained five water developments associated with WMAs.
- Maintained 5,000 tree, shrub, and grass plantings along 1.5 miles of stream on Red River WMA (RRWMA).
- Managed noxious weeds on over 100,000 acres. This included chemically treating over 300 acres and assessing and spot treating along over 150 miles of roads and trails on CMWMA (no PR funds were used to purchase or apply herbicides).
- Assisted Clearwater Region access program crew with noxious weed control treatments at four fishing and boating access sites (Spring Valley Reservoir, Deyo Reservoir, Campbell Ponds, and Winchester Reservoir).
- Received \$24,000 from BLM towards a cooperative grant for noxious weed control.
- Maintained facilities at RRWMA and at Billy Creek, Wapshilla Creek, and Benton Meadows administrative facilities and six back-country cabins.
- Rebuilt two back-country cabins (Hermit Springs and Frenchy Creek) for public use that were lost in the 2014 Big Cougar fire on CMWMA.
- Began building a parking area, installing public information signs, and removing unnecessary fences and created a youth-only hunting area on the recently acquired Gaiser property.
- Maintained 11 miles of roads specifically for mobility-impaired sportsmen on CMWMA.

- Maintained seasonal motorized route on Redbird segment of CMWMA.
- Restored and maintained 23 miles of road specifically for sportsmen, BLM, emergency, and administrative access to the Salmon River from the CMWMA.
- 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 IDFG 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. IDFG license funds and BPA funds were utilized to accomplish the majority of habitat developments on IDFG lands.

Improved wildlife habitat on IDFG lands:

- Continued maintenance of shrub plantings and a grazing exclosure at RRWMA with BPA funds. Built an additional exclosure to protect shrubs from browsing. Goal is to establish riparian community where one historically occurred.
- Monitored 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 (NWTf).
- Maintained grazing exclosures on CMWMA.
- Chemical-fallowed and reseeded 10 acres of noxious weed infestations on the Billy Creek segment. The goal was to experiment with different ways of addressing noxious weed infestations, specifically considering an adaptation of those areas to wildlife food plots.

Improved wildlife habitat on private lands:

- Continued 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 nine 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 3,000 acres of habitat development or enhancement.
- Lead SAFE contract development on over 3,000 acres in six counties.

Improved wildlife habitat on other public lands:

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

Surveys and Inventory

The objective of this project was to collect current public use information on IDFG-managed lands, including public use levels, activities and harvest information; collect current information on wildlife habitat and population characteristics on lands managed by IDFG; 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 brood route surveys.
- Assisted research staff with placing elk monitoring cameras.
- Assisted population staff with wolf rendezvous site surveys.
- Assisted botanist with Spalding's Catchfly rare plant species weeding project in Ten Mile Canyon on CMWMA.
- Assisted population staff with placing wolf monitoring cameras.
- Assisted population staff with retrieving elk monitoring collars.
- Continued surveying and mapping noxious weeds across CMWMA.
- Conducted 12 photopoint surveys.
- Conducted one vegetation survey on CMWMA.
- Assisted with 12 big game/upland game surveys.
- Inventoried 100 acres and mapped noxious weeds on RRWMA.
- Monitored resource conditions following the 65,200 acre Big Cougar Fire.
- Assisted in monitoring bighorn sheep associated with CMWMA.
- Assisted non-game biologist in conducting Hells Canyon snail surveys on CMWMA.
- Continued surveys for potential Palouse Prairie remnant parcels for the presence of native vegetation plant communities.
- Monitored with USFS post burn habitats across national forestlands in relation to habitat effectiveness for elk. Conducted preliminary assessments.
- Coordinated a project in cooperation with the CBC to monitor elk across the Clearwater Region.
- Developed survey methods and surveyed pheasant densities within the Thorn Creek habitat project area.
- Worked with the CBC to supervise crews, assist with, and complete numerous 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. Technical assistance includes the following:

- Working closely with the public, including private landowners to maintain and improve habitat on both public and private lands.
- Providing technical assistance to NRCS through the TSP program.

- Providing outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Sharing 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 IDFG 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 HIP and the Landowner Incentives Program funds. The IDFG 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 SAFE project across 10 Idaho counties to improve and protect habitat for high priority wildlife species.
- Habitat Biologists assisted the Environmental Staff Biologist with IDFG 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, IDL timber sales and grazing leases, and outfitter and guide 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 Animal Feeding Operation and Environmental Quality Incentives Program technical committees.
- Worked on local committees for the RMEF, NWTF, Pheasants Forever (PF), and the Latah Wildlife Association.
- Provided technical guidance to the Idaho Outfitter and Guides Board on outfitter issues on CMWMA.
- Continued working with USFS to accomplish habitat objectives identified in the Statewide Elk Management Plan.
- Participated on the CBC and provided technical guidance on elk monitoring, vegetation surveys, wild and scenic rivers designations, and forest health.
- Provided technical guidance to the ACOE 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, share information with internal and external customers, and manage 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 WMA (FBWMA), Boise River WMA (BRWMA), Cecil D. Andrus WMA (AWMA), C.J. Strike WMA (CJWMA), Montour WMA (MWMA), and Payette River WMA (PRWMA). 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 Sub-region, 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 Foreman assists with operation and maintenance on Habitat Program facilities when not working on Fishing and Boating Access sites.
- One Volunteer Services Coordinator utilizes a volunteer work force to implement habitat improvement projects throughout the region.

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 includes acreages of the region's WMAs, WHAs and easements.

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 142 miles of roads and trails with associated gates, culverts, bridges, and signs.
- Maintained 253 miles of fences and boundary markers.
- Maintained 38 buildings, restrooms, and other structures.
- Maintained seven gravel parking areas and associated signs.
- Maintained 66 water control structures.
- Maintained 13 miles of dikes.
- Treated 2,310 acres of weeds on lands owned or managed by IDFG (no project funds were used to purchase or apply herbicides).

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

- Replaced signs at two WMAs.
- Maintained structures and other facilities at backcountry WHAs in the Southwest Region.
- Completed installing two head gates on the irrigation system at MWMA.

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 IDFG-managed lands.
- Developed additional wildlife habitat to support increased production on IDFG-managed lands.
- Assisted private landowners to enhance wildlife habitat on their lands.
- 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 2,310 acres of IDFG-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 15 acres of food plots.
- Restored 184 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.
- Initiated 25 upland projects to establish 880 acres of wildlife habitat on private land, including cost-share agreements using IDFG HIP funds.

Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory activities included:

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

Public use information collected included:

- Quantified visitor use on IDFG-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 FBWMA.
- Monitored use and success of hunters on AWMA using season-long hunter check-in procedures.

Surveys on IDFG lands:

- Conducted annual brood pair counts on WMAs prioritizing waterfowl production.
- Conducted herd composition counts on BRWMA mule deer winter range.
- Measured livestock grazing forage utilization on IDFG 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 IDFG 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 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 CWMA's 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 Region 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 10,857 acres of IDFG-managed lands. Magic Valley Region WMAs are listed in Table 6.

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

Area	Acres
Hagerman WMA	1,024
Billingsley Creek WMA	277
Centennial Marsh WMA	6,190
Carey Lake WMA	759
Big Cottonwood WMA	1,444
Niagara Springs WMA	1,163

Operation and Maintenance activities in the Magic Valley Region included:

- Nine miles of hiking and horseback riding trails for public access to IDFG-managed lands.
- 18 miles of fence.
- 18 miles of unimproved roads.
- Seven acres of vehicle parking areas.
- Seven restrooms.
- Nine 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.

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 (HWMA) to provide refuge for 30,000 wintering waterfowl.
- Maintained 190 acres of wetlands vegetation on HWMA and Billingsley Creek WMA (BCWMA) to provide thermal and escape cover for wintering upland birds.
- Maintained 6.2 miles of shelterbelts on Carey Lake WMA (CLWMA), Big Cottonwood WMA (BgCWMA), and HWMA to provide cover and food.
- Irrigated 750 acres of herbaceous cover for nesting habitat on Centennial Marsh WMA (CPCMWMA), HWMA, Niagara Springs WMA (NSWMA), BgCWMA and CLWMA.
- Maintained 170 artificial nesting platforms for waterfowl on CPCMWMA, CLWMA, and HWMA.
- Inventoried and/or controlled weeds on 10,305 acres on WMAs.
- Maintained water levels for 1,200 acres of wetlands on NSWMA, BCWMA, HWMA, CLWMA, and CPCMWMA.
- Developed five HIP projects on private lands.
- Planted and irrigated 33 acres of food plots on CLWMA and NSWMA.
- Improved cover and species composition on approximately 30 acres of irrigated nesting fields and shelterbelts at NSWMA.
- Installed 2,400 linear feet of shelterbelts at BgCWMA and an additional 1,000 linear feet at CLWMA.

Surveys and Inventory

The following work projects were completed to collect current public-use information on IDFG-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 IDFG-owned lands.
- Assisted regional IDFG 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 BgCWMA.
- Conducted surveys for bighorn sheep on the BgCWMA and adjacent drainages prior to domestic sheep trailing periods.
- Participated in conducting mid-winter waterfowl counts at the HWMA.
- Collected harvest and other data at big game check stations.
- Conducted pronghorn surveys.
- Picked up inactive big game collars.
- Conducted sage-grouse lek counts.
- Flew aerial surveys for big game and sage-grouse.
- Conducted Sandhill crane counts.
- Maintained user survey boxes on WMAs.
- Monitored transects in rehab areas to determine percent survival of planted 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 18 private landowners wishing to improve habitat for wildlife resources.
- Worked with IDFG MDI Coordinator and the Mule Deer Foundation 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's Wildlife Habitat Management Program. In the Southeast Region this includes three full time permanent employees, all of whom have salaries partially funded by Federal Aid. Temporary employees included up to four seasonal bio-aides during the summer months, one seasonal technician, and one part time year round technician for general habitat management. Habitat biologists directly supervised temporary employees. Habitat staff accomplished the following:

- Reviewed four potential habitat projects on federal lands.
- Participated in management of the BPA Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area including coordination meetings, one field tour with BLM to discuss access, vegetative treatments, and grazing management and construction of new fence to control grazing. Field tour with BLM and MDI staff of Pleasant Views Area to discuss implementation of large-scale aspen/mule deer habitat restoration projects.
- Represented IDFG in an eastern Idaho aspen project coordination meeting to identify ongoing and potential restoration projects.
- 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 IDFG.
- Represented the region on the statewide Lands Committee, attending five meetings/conference calls. The region is continuing to investigate a potential property disposal/reorganization of the Horsch property on Sterling WMA (SWMA) with a private landowner and the BOR. The region is working in partnership with the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust and private landowners to acquire conservation easements on the Thomas and Fitch properties, and is in the process of completing a land exchange to clean up an ownership boundary with a private landowner adjacent to the Springfield Access Area.
- Handled several technical assistance requests.
- Participated in the Highlands CWMA spray day events.

Operations and Maintenance

The Southeast Region operated and maintained buildings, structures, and infrastructure on five WMAs, one Nature Area, and five conservation easements. Of the 17,000 acres involved, the majority are managed as WMAs. The IDFG is also directly responsible for assisting with the administration of the Soda Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area and private property enrolled in the HIP and the MDI. Southeast Region WMAs and acreages are provided in Table 7.

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 five 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 Shoshone Bannock Tribe.
- Maintained all structures as needed.
- Evaluated and maintained directional and informational signs pertaining to all sites.
- Began updating property boundary markers.
- Maintained seven road vehicles, two ATVs, one UTV, two farm tractors, implements and trailers.

Habitat Development

Habitat development projects in the Southeast Region included:

- Coordinated one habitat project with a private landowner.
- Monitored water levels on SWMA to maximize nesting and brooding habitat and to prevent disease outbreak.
- Maintained or replaced artificial nesting structures (goose-12) at SWMA.
- 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 IDFG acreages from grazing, early mowing, and wildfire to maximize vegetation structure for cover.
- Grew approximately 300 acres of high-energy grains on IDFG-administered properties to serve as food for upland game and/or waterfowl. Developed two acres of forb plots on SWMA for forage and cover.
- Attended field tours and meetings and provided written and verbal comments on four 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 (Greater Sage-grouse Planning Areas/Local Working Groups, Soda Springs Hills Wildlife Mitigation Area).
- Inspected and treated approximately 6,300 acres for noxious weeds, and in cooperation with county weed departments and CWMA's. Renewed the lease of 760 acres managed as part of Georgetown Summit WMA (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.
- Assisted with monitoring of highway mortality and maintenance of existing highway fencing. Represented southeast Idaho on a coordinating wildlife overpass/underpass tour with multiple state agencies and NGOs to work towards options for eastern Idaho to address wildlife crossing concerns and needs.

Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory activities included:

- Conducted waterfowl pair counts and brood surveys on SWMA 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.
- Assisted with biological check stations and research projects to monitor movements and population trends of upland game, waterfowl, and big game as requested.
- Worked closely with other agencies, NGOs and publics to identify and address concerns, and ongoing and potential projects within aspen communities.

Technical Guidance

Habitat staff technical guidance 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 IDFG on four projects or topics. Of particular note were lead roles in the sage-grouse local working groups (3 in the Southeast Region).
- Coordinated with the BLM 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 a tour with particular focus on habitat quality, public access and livestock fence additions.
- Provided direct technical assistance to private landowners or other land management agencies for the improvement or development of wildlife habitat.
- 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 Blackfoot River WMA (BRWMA) from the Rasmussen Valley phosphate mine. Worked with BPA regarding impacts to wildlife and the BRWMA 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 and includes approximately 7.4 million acres of the Upper Snake River watershed. This land base is 68% public lands (primarily USFS, BLM, Idaho National Laboratory, and IDL) and 32% private lands. The Region is organized into five Habitat Districts. One Regional Habitat Biologist is responsible for administering IDFG-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 IDFG-managed properties to assist the Regional Habitat Biologists. Seasonal employees are assigned to work under the oversight of the wildlife technicians and Regional Habitat Biologists on IDFG-managed properties. An Access Manager assists all five habitat districts with construction and maintenance projects on IDFG-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. Specifically, the habitat program is leading efforts to provide technical service input on an ongoing BLM travel management plan to ensure adequate protections for crucial fish and wildlife habitats. We are contributing to the forest plan revision for the Salmon-Challis National Forest, working collaboratively with the Targhee National Forest to ensure adequate consideration of fish and wildlife in proposed forest actions (timber sales and recreational developments), and we communicate regularly with the USFWS on issues related to ESA-listed species and migratory birds. We are also working with the ITD to maintain or enhance wildlife connectivity as ITD pursues planned Highway 20 transportation improvements.
- 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. We worked with Madison, Teton, and Fremont counties providing technical input related to planning and wildlife. We hosted public habitat presentations on sharp-tailed grouse ecology, winter wildlife survival strategies, wind energy and wildlife, wildlife and transportation, etc. We led field-based habitat/wildlife tours to the public and for NGO partners related to National Forest Planning and BLM travel management. The habitat staff has worked with a variety of landowners to enhance wildlife habitat quality or reduce conflicts. One highlight is construction of a fence around a fen wetland where cattle were repeatedly becoming mired and then preyed on by grizzly bears. We worked with the landowner to build a jack fence around the wetland. Since construction we have had no grizzly conflicts. This project also protects sensitive wetland habitat. We have also enhanced habitat for

numerous Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including Sandhill crane, white-faced ibis, trumpeter swan, northern leopard frog and yellow-billed cuckoo.

- Worked with other regional staff and volunteers on numerous projects in the Upper Snake Region, particularly, population monitoring of deer, elk and waterfowl, habitat improvements, and technical service projects comprised the majority of work performed.
- The Regional Habitat Manager participated at the state level on the IDFG Lands Committee identifying and prioritizing properties for easement or acquisition. We have advanced several projects that will result in over 1,500 acres of permanent protection for key wetland and upland habitats.
- Provided training opportunities for employees including attendance of professional conferences, society meetings and specific technical training sessions and safety training.
- Habitat staff presented at the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society, Jackson Hole Wildlife Symposium, Trumpeter Swan Society annual conference and others.

Operations and Maintenance

The Upper Snake Region habitat management program consists of 90,000 acres of IDFG-managed lands (Table 8). These managed areas are a mixture of land ownership including IDFG, 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 (CSWMA) 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 IDFG owns lands at MKWMA, Mud Lake WMA (MDWMA), Chilly Slough WCA, Sand Creek WMA (SCWMA), and TCWMA. Other properties are managed by IDFG 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 IDFG 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	Mud Lake	Market Lake and Chilly Slough	Tex Creek	Sand Creek	Cartier HD and Access Areas	TOTAL
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	1	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 habitat staff provided technical assistance to the Salmon Challis National Forest, the Caribou-Targhee national Forest, Idaho Falls District BLM and East Idaho Office USFWS. Staff worked on a variety of private lands habitat improvement projects that will benefit game animals, trout, and Idaho SGCN. Habitat development projects in the Upper Snake Region included:

- Providing technical input on proposed large-scale sage-grouse projects in the Big and Little Lost River Valleys and the Sand Creek Desert.
- Providing technical support to key private land conservation partners including the High Divide Partnership, TNC and Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT).
- Improved and maintained high-quality waterfowl and upland game habitat, including significant enhancements on MKWMA and MDWMA.
- Improved and maintained high-quality big game transition, migration, and winter range habitats, including thousands of acres on the TCWMA.
- Inventoried IDFG-managed properties for SGCN wildlife species.
- Restored or replaced in-kind habitat on mitigation properties.
- Provided high-quality habitat for wildlife species at risk (T&E, sensitive, etc.) including Ute ladies' tresses orchid, yellow-billed cuckoo and grizzly bear.
- Provided custodial management of federally threatened Ute's Ladies Tresses on SCWMA.
- Managed habitat on IDFG-administered properties to provide diverse wildlife-based recreational opportunities.
- Pursued habitat developments on IDFG-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.
- Administered HIP on private lands.
- Helped establish an interagency beaver restoration cooperative.
- 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.
- Administered vehicle and human entry restrictions.
- Coordinated fence maintenance and/or removals 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 IDFG labor and equipment.
- Lead participant in a Sandhill crane habitat management initiative.
- Continued Wetland Reserve Program restoration project on Marty Segment of MDWMA.
- Administered motorized use plans on WMAs to regulate motorized use.
- Monitored existing habitat improvement agreements, conservation easements, and leases.
- Participated in management activities of CWMA's.
- Actively participated in the local Weed Warrior Workshop and IDFG-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		13,000
Wetlands (ac)	125	400	0	200	1,100	1,825
Forest Management (ac)	0	0	2,500	0	0	2,500
Shelterbelts (ft.)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shelterbelts (ac)	0	0	0	0	10	10
Artificial Nest Structures	101	0	0	30	150	281
Food Plots (ac)	110	220	110	40	157	637
Nest Cover (ac)	40	0	115	32,000	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	80	80
Riparian (mi)	.5	0	.25	4.33	5	10.08
Controlled Burn (ac)	0	0	0	450	0	450
Weed Control (ac)	450	500	8,000	300	1,500	10,750
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	3,100	0	0	10,000
Wetlands (ac)	150		0	10	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	0	0
Nesting Cover (ac)	0	0	0	0	0	0
HIP Projects (#)	1	1	1	0	4	7
Shrub Planting (ac)	0	0	3,100	0	0	2,000
Shrub Planting (#)	0	0	(seeding)	0	0	0
Forb Plantings (ac)	0	0	3,100	0	0	0
Livestock water (#)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Riparian (mi)	0	0	0	0	0	0
New/rebuilt Fence (mi)	0	1	4	1	0	5
Fence Removed (mi)	0	0	6	0	0	6

Surveys and Inventory

Survey and inventory projects included:

- SCWMA 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.
- TCWMA personnel completed 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 collaborated with PF in a 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 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, sharp-tailed grouse, 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 MLWMA 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 MLWMA and SCWMA. Banded geese at MKWMA.
- Habitat biologists inspected sites for proposed subdivisions and reported findings in comment letters to county planning and zoning officials.
- Habitat biologists inspected proposed conservation easements submitted by the 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.
- Continued 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 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 and Regional Habitat Manager who assigned them to the habitat staff as appropriate.
- Habitat biologists prepared draft comment letters for subsequent approvals.
- 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 IDFG.
- The TCWMA Habitat Biologist 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.
- The Regional Habitat Manager served on the High Divide Advisory Committee, Sandhill Crane Habitat Management Initiative, and Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society Conservation Affairs Committee.
- The Regional Habitat Manager served on an interagency group striving to maintain wildlife connectivity across US 20 (Yellowstone Highway).
- Habitat biologists were instrumental in providing comments on conservation easement proposals. In many instances IDFG support is critical in obtaining the easements.

- Habitat biologists were encouraged to become familiar with and maintain current knowledge of habitats, issues, and projects within their Habitat Districts.
- Regional habitat staff develops ongoing close working relationships with field-level personnel of local, state, and federal agencies as well as key members of NGOs operating within their habitat district.
- All habitat biologists actively participate with their corresponding CWMA.
- Habitat staff gave presentations to elementary, high school and college classes, civic organizations, and offered workshops and mentored young hunters.
- Habitat staff provided technical assistance on timber sales, recreational developments, proposed rural residential subdivision, grazing allotment reviews, travel management planning, forest land updates and revisions and proposed infrastructure projects including highway and airport.

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 habitat program budgets (one PR and one License). One wildlife biologist acts as the regional habitat manager and serves as the IDFG Lands Committee regional representative. This lead-habitat biologist is supervised by the regional wildlife manager. One non-benefited wildlife technician assists part-time with management of the Pahsimeroi River Access Area (PRAA).

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 and graded the airstrip at Loon Creek.
- Maintained 14 acres of food plots at PRAA.
- 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 (well plans cancelled).
- Training opportunities were provided for employees including attendance at professional society meetings.
- 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 IDFG lands included:

- Planted 14-acre food plot at PRAA.
- IDFG and Lemhi CWMA 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.

- Collaborated with public land managers to improve or develop wildlife habitat on public land.

Complete restoration in five aspen plots on public land totaling 50 acres:

- Funded and attended aspen workshop for government agencies and the public to look at aspen projects in the area, discuss aspen ecology, and determine future priorities for aspen restoration in the Salmon-Challis areas.
- Provided comments to BLM and USFS on general range condition concerns in the Salmon-Challis areas.
- Provided funding and technical assistance with conifer removal for aspen restoration on BLM lands in the Salmon and Challis field districts.

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

- Collaborated with NWTF to plant shrubs and trees in Tower Creek turkey release area.
- Provided technical guidance on fence dimensions needed to prevent Bighorn sheep from jumping in with domestic sheep on Garden Creek, Challis.
- Provided technical assistance to landowners wanting dimensions for wildlife-friendly fencing.
- 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.

Surveys and Inventory

This work was completed in conjunction with the region's wildlife population management program:

- Regional habitat personnel assisted CWMAs with regional noxious weed inventory, mapping projects, and labor for weed treatment on IDFG property.
- Regional habitat personnel assisted with all aerial big game surveys, deer, elk, and bighorn sheep mortality studies, sage-grouse lek counts, pronghorn ground surveys, and trapping/banding studies.
- Updated the statewide elk habitat landscape productivity map as part of the IDFG 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 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 (four letters, five meetings attended) on proposed projects and activities within the Salmon Region.
- Provided technical advice and information on IDFG management programs and policies to the public and personnel of the USFWS, BLM, USFS, NRCS, FSA, Challis Local Greater Sage-grouse Working Group, Lemhi and Frank Church CWMAs and the Lemhi and Custer counties planning and zoning commissions. All responses were coordinated with 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.
- Provided comments and technical assistance for the Boulder White Cloud, Jerry Peak, and Jim McClure Wilderness Plans.
- Participated in the Salmon Municipal Watershed Restoration Project.
- Provided comments on 15 USFS fuels reduction, wildlife habitat restoration, and thinning projects in the Salmon-Challis National Forest.
- Provided comments on five BLM fuels reduction, wildlife habitat restoration, and thinning projects in the Salmon-Challis Field Districts.
- Provided comments on Panther Creek Geothermal Development.
- Provided funding and technical guidance on restoring backcountry access in and near the Frank Church Wilderness.

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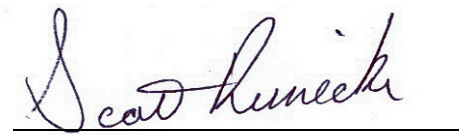
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