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GOVERNOR GARY R. HERBERT TO DELIVER KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT 2016 SAGEBRUSH CONSERVATION CONFERENCE

The Great Basin Consortium, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and Utah State University are co-sponsoring the 2016 Sagebrush Ecosystem Conservation: All Lands All Hands Conference, to be held February 23-25, 2016, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The purpose of the conference is to continue sharing the latest information and to plan for the conservation, restoration, and maintenance of resilient sagebrush ecosystems. Recent unprecedented collaboration between management agencies, scientists, private landowners, industry, and others working to sustain healthy sagebrush ecosystems across all boundaries demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach. Western conservation efforts directed at sage-grouse, to a large degree, precluded the need for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to propose protection for the greater sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act.

The Honorable Gary R. Herbert, Governor of Utah, will deliver a keynote address at the conference at 8:00 AM on Thursday, February 25. Governor Herbert currently serves as Chair of the National Governors Association, where his chair's initiative focuses on highlighting state-based solutions while enhancing a collaborative state-federal partnership.



Gary R. Herbert, Governor of Utah

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Governor Herbert has led Utah's recovery from the Great Recession to a position of national economic prominence. His unwavering focus on economic development includes attracting businesses and investment to the state while helping homegrown businesses flourish. As Utah's 17th Governor, he took the Oath of Office on August 11, 2009. Prior to becoming the state's chief executive, Governor Herbert served as Lieutenant Governor for five years. He will be joining the conference after returning from a National Governor's Association meeting in Washington, D.C.

The conference will officially open at 1:00 PM, on Tuesday, February 23. Greg Sheehan, Director, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), will welcome conference participants on behalf of the state of Utah and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), a conference co-sponsor.

Sheehan was appointed UDWR director in 2012 by Governor Herbert. As a department employee with 20 years of experience. He has served in key advisory and administrative roles for some of the agency's most notable successes. Sheehan has been integrally involved in the sage-grouse planning efforts in Utah. Those efforts developed a strategy to protect and enhance the sage-grouse while also allowing private and public land users to thrive on those landscapes in meaningful ways. He has also championed the protection and conservation of other species through the recent development of the state Wildlife Action Plan.

SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM CONSERVATION: ALL LANDS, ALL HANDS

CONFERENCE TO BE HELD FEBRUARY 23-25 IN SALT LAKE CITY



*Greg Sheehan, Director,
Utah Division of Wildlife
Resources*

Janice M. Schneider, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), will represent DOI Secretary Sally Jewell. President Obama nominated Schneider for the position in November 2013. She was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and sworn into office on May 16, 2014. As Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, Schneider oversees four Interior Department bureaus – the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, including more than 12,000 employees and a combined budget of \$1.5 billion. In this capacity she guides the Department’s management and use of federal lands and waters and their associated mineral and non-mineral resources on about 245 million acres of federal surface lands, 700 million acres of federal mineral interests and the 1.7 billion acre Outer Continental Shelf.

Terrell Erickson, Director, Ecological Sciences Division, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service, will represent USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. As an Agency Senior Executive, she leads a Division of 24 people, including the Agency’s top science discipline leaders, such as the National Agronomist, National Grazinglands Specialist, National Forester, National Biologist, National Plant Materials Specialist, and National Environmental Compliance Leads. Her team creates and maintains national ecological science conservation practice standards, compliance policies, and the Agency’s Field Office Technical Guide. Her interests include connecting long-term sustainable agriculture with best conservation practices.

Other plenary session speakers will include Mike Haske, BLM, who will provide an overview of Secretarial Order 3336. On January 5, 2015, U. S. Department of the Interior Secretary Sally Jewell signed Secretarial Order Number 3336, Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management, and Restoration (“Order”). The Order sets in motion actions to enhance the protection, conservation, and restoration of a healthy sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, and to address important public safety, economic, cultural, and social concerns. Haske has 37 years of federal service and has worked at all levels of the Bureau of Land Management including field offices, the Oregon State Office and BLM’s national office in Washington D.C. He has a B.S degree in Forest Management and has worked in a wide variety of natural resource programs as both a field employee and a supervisor, and has experience in the policy and budget arena. Haske accepted the position as the Strategy Implementation Manager for the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy in January of 2106. As the implementation manager, Haske will be responsible for day-to-day status oversight and tracking, coordination and facilitation, identification of issues and resolving differences in support of the Action Plan developed to implement Secretarial Order 3336.

Ken Mayer, Ken Mayer and Associates, LLC, will discuss invasive plant management in the West and the results of 2015 WAFWA Western Invasive Weed Summit. Mayer is the former Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), where he served from 2007-2014. While Director, he served on the Governors Cabinet, as Executive Secretary of the Nevada Wildlife Commission and as a member of the Nevada Environmental Commission. While Director he served in various capacities with Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and other regional and national organizations. Most notably he served 4 years as the first Chairman of the National Sage-grouse Executive Oversight Committee. Prior to becoming Director he served for 25 years in various management and executive positions with the California Department of Fish and Game. Since leaving NDOW, Mayer has been the WAFWA Wildfire and Invasive Coordinator, consulting on sage-grouse conservation issues for the FWS and BLM. He holds a B.S. and M.S. degrees from Humboldt State University in Natural Resources Management.

Alan Clark, Director, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Utah Department of Natural Resources will set the theme for the conference with a presentation entitled “Sagebrush Restoration: Thinking Like a Manager.” Now entering its tenth year of completing landscape-scale projects in Utah, the purpose of WRI is to restore and improve watershed health in priority areas across the state. In 2014, with support of \$3.95 million from the Utah Legislature, the WRI partnership (which included 91 partners) completed over 130 projects restoring 112,987 acres of uplands and 55 miles of stream and riparian areas. Since its inception, WRI partners have completed over 1,340 projects, treating over 1.15 million acres of habitat with an investment by all partners of over \$130 million. Clark spent 23 years with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife with a one year break to obtain an M.S. degree in Wildlife Management from Virginia Tech. In 1996, Clark took on a new challenge and crossed the Rockies with his wife and three daughters to join the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources as the Wildlife Planning Manager. Over the next 16 years he



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sistant Secretary for Land
and Minerals Management,
U.S. Dept. of Interior*



*Terrell Erickson, Director,
Ecological Science Division,
USDA NRCS*



held other positions with UDWR including Wildlife Chief and Assistant Director. In December of 2012, Clark transferred to the Department of Natural Resources as Director of the Watershed Restoration Program.

Jim Lyons, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management will deliver the 2016 Conference closing address at 5:00 PM on Thursday, February 25. Lyons joined the Department of the Interior in July 2013 as Counselor to the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. Earlier this year, Lyons became the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management where he focuses on issues associated with public lands management, energy development, forestry, wildlife and landscape-level conservation. During his tenure at Interior, Lyons has focused on efforts to develop a west wide strategy to conserve the Greater Sage-grouse. In addition, Lyons is heavily involved in developing and implementing Secretary Jewell's secretarial order on landscape-scale mitigation, which includes working closely with her on strategies to promote resource conservation and sustainable development, in addition to promoting commercial-scale wind, solar and geothermal on public lands.



Jim Lyons, Deputy Assistant, Secretary of Interior

Conference sessions will run throughout the day beginning at 8:00 AM on Wednesday and Thursday, February 24-25.

Session topics in Wednesday, February 24 will include:

- Brome Grasses: Impacts, Invasiveness, Socioeconomics, and Management Prospects
- Multi-species Management
- Conifer Expansion: Science and Management
- Engaging Stakeholders - What Works, What Doesn't and Why?
- Putting Resilience and Resistance Concepts into Practice
- Traditional Knowledges for Resource Managers
- Livestock Grazing and the Sagebrush Ecosystem: Policy and Management

On Thursday, February 25, concurrent sessions will run throughout the day beginning immediately after Governor Herbert's address at 8:00 AM. Topics will include;

- Hydrology of Sagebrush Ecosystems
- Native Plants
- Livestock Grazing and Sagebrush Ecosystems: Science and Management
- Seed Strategy
- Managing Wildfires
- Sagebrush Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessments for Managers
- Invasive Plant Species and Their Management
- Designing Landscape Conservation

For more information about the sessions and speaker, or to register to participate visit our website:

<http://www.sagebrushconference2016.org/>



Photo to left courtesy of SageSTEP. Center photo courtesy of Genie MontBlanc. Photo on right courtesy of Todd Hopkins.



If it's not good for communities, it's not good for wildlife.

THE WILDLIFE RESEARCH EDUCATION NETWORK SHOWS STUDENTS THE WONDERS OF NATURE

By Nicki Frey, Utah State University

In Fall 2015, two high schools participated in the Wildlife Research Education Program (WREN), a program designed to get high school students interested in wildlife and natural resources research. WREN lasts through the academic year, with projects and field trips in fall and spring. This fall, Kanab and Canyon View High Schools participated in the program, each for the 3rd year. Students from Kanab are taking a natural resources course; those in Canyon View are taking an advanced biology course. The program starts with classroom instruction on Greater sage-grouse ecology and an introduction to the scientific method. We follow the classroom instruction with a field day in the Fall. Once in the field, we teach how to collect vegetation data such as vegetation type, vegetation height, and vegetative community composition. Working through the scientific method, each group of students gets a question, and helps to formulate a hypothesis. Then they get to work collecting data! Getting students in the field is a great way to talk to them in a relaxed environment. While students are collecting data, we visit each group and simply chat with them about their likes and dislikes of being outside, looking for wildlife, and collecting data.

Once they've gathered their data – in a spreadsheet format – we work through how to conduct simple analyses. This brings us to whether or not to support or refute their hypotheses. We also discuss what other information we might want to help us make a better decision, and talk about what they discovered. Then it's time for a fun hike through the sagebrush to see what else we can find.

This fall, more than 40 students participated in our program. Many had never seen a sage-grouse and more than I would like had never hiked through sagebrush. They had a great time learning how to find telemetry locations with their GPS units. A couple of them had to hike quite a bit once they realized they were using their GPS units wrong, but really had a fun time with it. It's always fun to watch and see what students will do when confronted with a fence – most just go over it (no surprise!). Usually there are at least a

few students that comment on how much work is conducted just to get basic information such as “average shrub height.” But they all agree that it is better than being in school!

In the spring, we will begin the season with a trip to see sage-grouse lekking. It doesn't matter how many times you've seen Greater sage-grouse lek, it is always impressive. The students get a kick out of the males' display and are usually visibly impressed with the whole affair. In the spring, we'll also have another field trip to learn different types of data collection, such as track and sign, and compare that to the vegetation information we found in the fall. Then, we'll go for a hike and try to go find some grouse. Watching grouse flush from the field is the best way to conclude a great year of student education.

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program Mission

Utah's Community-Based Conservation Program is dedicated to promoting natural resource management education and facilitating cooperation between local communities and natural resource management organizations and agencies.

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

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www.utahcbcp.org



High school students looking for animal sign, Kanab, 2015
Photo courtesy of Nicki Frey.