

Other Influences on Sage-grouse Population

- ❖ Cold late spring weather kills chicks because of hypothermia and not enough insects to eat
- ❖ Drought means more fires, and grouse have to travel to find food
- ❖ West Nile Virus mosquitoes breed in standing water and the virus kills Grouse
- ❖ Hunting is restricted, but may still affect small populations

Taking Action



- ❖ Anyone can join Local Working Groups to meet and decide on a local plan
- ❖ Encourage early spring grazing to reduce annual grasses, reduce fuel load
- ❖ Sage Grouse Initiative funds for habitat improvement
- ❖ Volunteer to plant in burned areas, or collect sagebrush seed.

For More Information

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- ❖ <http://greatbasin.wr.usgs.gov/LWG/Statedetail.asp?State=ID>
- ❖ <http://lewis-clark.org/content/content-article.asp?ArticleID=1904>
- ❖ http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/wildlife/plans/sage_grouse/
- ❖ <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/about/volunteer/southwest.cfm>

Sage-grouse

A Snapshot





Facts

- ☞ *Centrocercus urophasianus*
"Pointed tailed pheasant"
- ☞ Big, chicken-sized birds (2 to 7 pounds, up to 2 feet long)
- ☞ Populations are down, and recovery will not be quick
- ☞ Called an "umbrella species", "indicator species" and "landscape species" – they indicate significant changes in their environment



Habitat Requirements

Sagebrush Steppe

- ☞ 15-25% sagebrush cover
- ☞ Understory of forbs and grass
- ☞ Riparian areas for chicks
- ☞ Leks – historic places to meet and breed

Concerns

Habitat Loss

- ☞ Development for petroleum, agriculture, business, housing
- ☞ 99% of their food in winter is sagebrush buds and leaves
- ☞ Sage-grouse are sagebrush obligates
- ☞ "Sage-hens stand or fall with the sagebrush" – R.E. Thomas, chief game warden for Idaho 1923-1930



Habitat Quality

- ☞ Recreation, fire, invasive plants all have an impact
- ☞ Invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass provide poor cover and fuel more intense fires
- ☞ Invasive plants out-compete healthy native plants
- ☞ Late spring grazing and overly intense grazing can reduce perennial grass nesting cover



Predators

- ☞ Coyotes, foxes, golden eagles, ravens, stray dogs
- ☞ Power lines, wind turbines, and fences provide perches for birds of prey
- ☞ Less sagebrush means shorter cover, and fewer hiding places from predators
- ☞ About 1/3 of all adult sage-grouse deaths are due to predators

