

Guide to Stakeholder Groups for Great Basin Sagebrush Steppe Restoration

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Using this guide

This guide is intended to provide information on active stakeholder interest groups focused on restoration of sagebrush ecosystems in the Great Basin region. It is based on a comprehensive search of internet websites, recently filed litigation records, previous interviews, and discussions with land managers in the region. The information contained in the guide is representative of the general environment in which restoration activities are conducted in the six states comprising the SageSTEP project, and is not meant to be an all-inclusive listing of groups. All efforts were made to identify groups most active and thus most pertinent to land managers and researchers in the region. There undoubtedly exist additional groups active on a more local level, which are equally as significant to restoration activities as those identified here. The guide, as developed, is intended to be particularly useful for those working in fuels treatments and NEPA issues.

Online version of the guide

The information provided in this guide is also available on the SageSTEP website at www.sagestep.org/pubs/stakeholderguide/intro.html.

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Introduction

As efforts are made to restore the health and functioning of sagebrush ecosystems within the Great Basin, various stakeholder interest groups have the potential to offer partnerships as well as adversarial involvement with land managers tasked with restoration. Given that greater than 60% of the Great Basin is publicly owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management and other federal agencies, it is critical for those working in restoration to understand the views held by key stakeholder groups that may enhance or impair such efforts (Brunson and Peterson 2007). Gaining knowledge about and familiarity with those interest groups active in their respective regions, land managers can begin to identify the needs and priorities of individual stakeholders, and can integrate those positions into restoration planning to more effectively predict and avoid contention and conflict (Brunson and Peterson 2007). While the issues facing the Great Basin ecosystem increasingly become more complex and difficult to manage, it has been shown that stakeholder interest groups and land managers tend to agree on the needed use of restoration treatments by management agencies to address the current threats to public rangelands. Thus, it is vital for land managers to cultivate a thorough understanding of stakeholder groups most likely to assume an active role in public lands restoration.

Section 1: Issues facing Great Basin sagebrush restoration

Issues confronting sagebrush restoration efforts in the Great Basin can be classified as ecological, social, political, and economic in nature (Brunson and Peterson 2007). Public land managers and citizen stakeholders both perceive lack of proper funding as a critical impediment to effective management, financing litigation and appeals, implementing restoration treatments, and conducting monitoring and follow-up of post-treatment sites. Various stakeholder groups may focus on issues relating to their own environmental interests and involvements on rangeland landscapes. Environmental interest groups traditionally focus on issues relating to livestock grazing, land degradation from recreational activities, surface development by extractive industries, and what may be described as a lack of clarity and accountability within federal agencies. Livestock and ranching stakeholders focus on issues that relate to regular interactions with federally employed range conservationists and technicians, as well as governmental interference within agencies, more widespread surface development of rangelands, and lack of the use of local knowledge by agencies in rangeland management and planning. User groups representing recreationists on rangelands tend to focus on issues such as loss of access, increase in surface development, and lack of clarity within management institutions at various scales. Finally, groups such as research institutions and university extension offices focus on training of federal employees, lack of incentive and accountability within federal agencies, and decreased programs within universities focusing on rangeland ecology (compiled from Brunson and Peterson 2007).

Section 2: Identified interest groups

The following section contains a listing of stakeholder groups identified as active in the Great Basin region. Some of these groups focus specifically on the Great Basin ecosystem, while others are additionally active at a national or even international scale. For each identified group, the following information is provided:

- Group name
- A color-coded categorization of perspective and strategic position, from the following:



Conservation

Groups that seek to protect the habitats of plants and animals, and whose interests are grounded in the ethic of conserving and protecting natural resources



Information

Groups that provide information or participate in education or outreach activities for stakeholder groups or the general public



Management

Groups charged with the administration and management of lands or resources



Research

Groups that pursue scientific research with the aim of generating data



Utilization

Groups that support economic and recreational uses of rangelands including livestock grazing, agricultural production, hunting, ATV use, etc.

- A brief summary of each group's stated position or mission
- Website information
- Identified geographic focal area of interest

It should again be noted this list is not intended to provide a complete listing of active groups in the Great Basin region. Rather, a general understanding of the environment in which land managers operate can inform planning for current and future restoration activities.

The groups listed on the following pages are those considered noteworthy to this type of work.

American Forage and Grassland Council



Utilization: To promote and develop the forage industry

URL: <http://www.afgc.org>

Focal area: National

The Andrus Center for Public Policy



Information: Dedicated to independent, non-partisan policy formation on critical issues

URL: <http://www.andruscenter.org>

Focal area: Idaho, regional, national

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers



Utilization: To ensure America's outdoor heritage in a natural setting, through education and work in behalf of clean water and wilderness

URL: <http://www.backcountryhunters.org>

Focal area: National

Blue Ribbon Coalition



Utilization: Dedicated to preserving responsible recreational access to public lands

URL: <http://www.sharetrails.org>

Focal area: National

Bureau of Indian Affairs



Management: To provide services to American Indians and Alaska Natives

URL: <http://www.doi.gov/bia>

Focal area: National

Bureau of Land Management



Management: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

URL: <http://www.blm.gov>

Focal area: National

Center for Biological Diversity



Conservation: To secure a future for all species through science, law, and creative media

URL: <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>

Focal area: Regional, national, international

Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative



Conservation: Cooperative conservation through partnerships, science, and incentives

URL: <http://sandcounty.net/programs/cbcn/sagewise>

Focal area: Western region

Defenders of Wildlife



Conservation: Work to protect and restore America's native wildlife, safeguard habitat, resolve conflicts, work across international borders and educate and mobilize the public

URL: <http://www.defenders.org>

Focal area: National, international

Earth Justice



Conservation: A non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to protecting the magnificent places, natural resources, and wildlife of this earth, and to defending the right of all people to a healthy environment

URL: <http://www.earthjustice.org>

Focal area: National

Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition



Conservation: To restore the Great basin ecosystem through collaborative efforts

URL: <http://www.envlc.org>

Focal area: Eastern Nevada, Great Basin

Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center



Research: A cooperative research effort between Oregon State University and USDA-ARS focusing on rangeland ecology and restoration of wildlands, environmentally compatible livestock systems, forage crops, and alternative livestock systems

URL: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/eoarc>

Focal area: Great Basin, Pacific Northwest

Environmental Council of the States



Conservation, Information: To improve the capability of state environmental agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment

URL: <http://www.ecos.org>

Focal area: National

The Environmental Science and Public Policy Institute at Boise State University



Research, Conservation: Independent and objective resource for public policy development and decision making

URL: <http://www.espri.org>

Focal area: National

Friends of the Earth



Conservation: To protect the rights of all people to live in a safe and healthy environment

URL: <http://www.foe.org>

Focal area: International

Great Basin Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit



Information: To provide research, technical assistance and education to federal land management, with emphasis on working collaboration

URL: <http://www.cabnr.unr.edu/GBCESU>

Focal area: Great Basin

Great Basin Ecosystem Management Project (USDA-FS)



Research: A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to increase understanding of Great Basin ecosystems

URL: <http://www.cabnr.unr.edu/gbem>

Focal area: Great Basin

Great Basin Information Project



Information: To provide consolidated and efficient access to information about the Great Basin and Columbia Plateau regions of the Intermountain West

URL: <http://greatbasin.nbii.gov>

Focal area: Great Basin, Columbia Plateau

Great Basin Institute



Research, Information, Conservation: An interdisciplinary field studies organization promoting environmental research, education, and conservation

URL: <http://www.thegreatbasininstitute.org>

Focal area: Great Basin

Great Basin Integrated Landscape Monitoring (USGS)



Research: To improve the understanding of land conditions and impacts of land use, to evaluate management actions, and to provide knowledge for informed decision making

URL: <http://nevada.usgs.gov/water/projects/gbilm.htm>

Focal area: Great Basin

Great Basin Research Center (Utah DWR)



Research: To develop DWR capability to restore poor-condition big game winter ranges

URL: <http://wildlife.utah.gov/gbrc>

Focal area: Great Basin

Great Basin Restoration Initiative (BLM)



Information: To provide technical assistance and guidance, obtain funding, and keep the issue of the failing Great Basin ecosystem in the public's vision

URL: <http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/gbri.html>

Focal area: Great Basin

The Great Basin Research and Management Partnership



Research, Management, Information: To promote comprehensive and complementary research and management collaborations to sustain ecosystems, resources and communities across the Great Basin

URL: <http://greatbasin.wr.usgs.gov/gbrmp>

Focal area: Great Basin

Hawk Watch International



Conservation, Research: To conserve our environment through education, long-term monitoring, and scientific research on raptors as indicators of ecosystem health

URL: <http://www.hawkwatch.org/home>

Focal area: International

Idaho ATV Association



Utilization: To foster, promote and enhance the use of ATVs for recreational purposes, and to educate, encourage and promote the safe and responsible use of ATVs

URL: <http://www.idahoatv.org>

Focal area: Idaho

Idaho Conservation League



Conservation: To preserve Idaho's clean water, wilderness and quality of life through citizen action, public education, and professional advocacy

URL: <http://www.wildidaho.org>

Focal area: Idaho

Idaho Fish and Game



Management: To preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all wildlife within the state of Idaho

URL: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>

Focal area: Idaho

Idaho Wildlife Federation



Conservation: To promote the conservation and protection of our natural resources, wildlife, and wildlife habitat

URL: <http://www.idahowildlife.org>

Focal area: Idaho

Joint Fire Science Program



Research: An interagency research, development, and applications partnership between the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

URL: <http://www.firescience.gov>

Focal area: National

LaGrande Forestry and Range Sciences Laboratory (USDA-FS)



Research: To conduct research on habitats for species of conservation concern in the sagebrush ecosystem

URL: <http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/lagrande>

Focal area: Sagebrush-dominated ecoregions in the western United States

National Park Service



Management: To preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

URL: <http://www.nps.gov>

Focal area: National

National Wildfire Coordinating Group (USDA and state agencies)



Management: To coordinate programs of the participating wildfire management agencies to provide more effective execution of each agency's fire management program

URL: <http://www.nwccg.gov>

Focal area: National

National Wildlife Federation



Conservation: To inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future

URL: <http://www.nwf.org>

Focal area: National

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society



Information: To develop a national communications network for the exchange of information and management techniques related to self-determined tribal fish and wildlife management

URL: <http://www.nafws.org>

Focal area: National

Natural Resource Conservation Service



Information, Research: To provide leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources

URL: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

Focal area: National

Natural Resources Defense Council



Conservation: Works to protect wildlife and wild places and to ensure a healthy environment for all life on earth

URL: <http://www.nrdc.org>

Focal area: National, International

The Nature Conservancy



Conservation, Management: To preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive

URL: <http://www.nature.org>

Focal area: National

Nevada Cattlemen's Association



Utilization: To promote a dynamic and profitable Nevada Beef Industry

URL: <http://www.nevadacattlemen.org>

Focal area: Nevada

Nevada Department of Wildlife



Management: To safeguard our natural heritage through conservation of sage-grouse by means of cooperation and collaboration

URL: <http://www.ndow.org>

Focal area: Nevada and Eastern California

Nevada Farm Bureau



Utilization: To promote the interests of Nevada farm and ranch families by seeking to implement Farm Bureau policy positions

URL: <http://nvfb.fb.org>

Focal area: Nevada

Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association



Research: Dedicated to the preservation and management of BLM public lands and unappropriated government lands worldwide

Focal area: Nevada

Nevada Rangeland Resources Commission



Conservation: To educate about the value of public land grazing

URL: <http://www.nevadarangelands.org>

Focal area: Nevada

Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group



Conservation, Information: To provide a collaborative forum for science-based resolution of issues related to resource stewardship and informed management of our public lands

URL: <http://www.nnsg.org>

Focal area: Northeast Nevada

Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides



Conservation, Information: To protect the health of people and the environment by advancing alternatives to pesticides

URL: <http://www.pesticide.org>

Focal area: Oregon, Pacific Northwest

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



Management: To protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats

URL: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us>

Focal area: Oregon

Oregon Natural Desert Association



Conservation: To protect, defend, and restore the health of Oregon's native deserts

URL: <http://www.onda.org>

Focal area: Oregon

Oregon State University Extension Service



Information: To engage the people of Oregon with research-based knowledge and education focusing on strengthening communities and economies, sustaining natural resources, and promoting healthy families and individuals

URL: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu>

Focal area: Oregon

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board



Conservation, Information: To support Oregon's efforts to restore salmon runs, improve water quality, and strengthen ecosystems

URL: <http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB>

Focal area: Oregon

Pacific Legal Foundation



Utilization: To introduce litigation focusing on three major projects: to defend the fundamental human right of private property; to promote sensible environmental policies; and to create a nation in which people are judged by the content of their character

URL: <http://community.pacificlegal.org>

Focal area: National

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility



Conservation: An alliance of local, state and federal scientists, law enforcement officers, land managers and other professionals dedicated to upholding environmental laws and values

URL: <http://www.peer.org>

Focal area: National

The Quivira Coalition



Utilization, Information, Conservation: To offer “common sense” solutions to the grazing debate through collaboration, outreach, education, restoration demonstration projects, and funding to achieve progressive land management

URL: <http://www.quiviracoalition.org>

Focal area: Western United States

Rangelands West



Information: An effort to bring a broad range of agricultural information, resources, and tools to the web

URL: <http://rangelandswest.arid.arizona.edu/rangelandswest/>

Focal Area: Western United States

Red Rock Audubon Society



Conservation: To protect, restore, and improve natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife, and to educate the public about our unique Nevada environment

URL: <http://www.redrockaudubon.org>

Focal area: Nevada

The Sagebrush Sea Campaign



Conservation, Research, Information: Focuses public attention and conservation resources on protecting and restoring the vast sagebrush-steppe landscape in the American West

URL: <http://www.sagebrushsea.org>

Focal area: Western United States

Sand County Foundation



Conservation, Management: Works with private landholders to improve the quality of their lands through science, ethics, and incentives

URL: <http://www.sandcounty.net>

Focal area: International

Sierra Club



Conservation: A grassroots environmental organization working to protect our communities and the planet

URL: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

Focal area: International

Society for Ecological Restoration



Conservation, Research, Information: Engaged in ecologically-sensitive repair and management of ecosystems through an unusually broad array of experience, knowledge sets and cultural perspectives

URL: <http://www.ser.org>

Focal area: International

Society for Range Management



Conservation, Management, Information: To promote the professional development and continuing education of members and the public and the stewardship of rangeland resources

URL: <http://www.rangelands.org>

Focal area: National

Southern Nevada Water Authority



Management: Charged with managing the region's water resources and providing for Las Vegas Valley area residents' and businesses' present and future water needs

URL: <http://www.snwa.com>

Focal area: Southern Nevada

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance



Conservation: For the preservation of the wilderness at the heart of the Colorado Plateau, and the management of these lands in their natural state for the benefit of all Americans

URL: <http://www.suwa.org>

Focal area: Colorado Plateau Region

Trout Unlimited



Conservation: To conserve, protect and restore North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds

URL: <http://www.tu.org>

Focal Area: North America

University of Idaho Extension



Information: To address agricultural, natural resource, youth, family, community and environmental issues

URL: <http://www.extension.uidaho.edu>

Focal area: Idaho

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension



Information: To discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of people

URL: <http://www.unce.unr.edu>

Focal area: Nevada

USDA-ARS Forage and Range Research Laboratory



Research: To provide improved plant materials and management alternatives for sustainable stewardship of rangelands and pastures in the Western U.S

URL: http://ars.usda.gov/main/site_main.htm?modecode=54-28-10-00

Focal area: Western United States

USDA-Forest Service



Management: To manage public lands in national forests and grasslands to provide the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people in the long run

URL: <http://www.fs.fed.us>

Focal area: National

US Fish and Wildlife Service



Management: A government agency dedicated to the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife and plants, and their habitats

URL: <http://www.fws.gov>

Focal area: National

Utah ATV Association



Utilization: To preserve the trail rider's access to National Forest, State Parks and BLM Lands, and to protect the resources of these lands

URL: <http://utahatv.com>

Focal area: Utah

Utah Cattlemen's Association



Utilization: To protect the interests of livestock producers

URL: <http://www.utahcattlemen.org>

Focal area: Utah

Utah Conservation Forum



Conservation: A non-partisan resource for people and organizations interested in preserving and enhancing Utah's land and water through maintaining and increasing public funding for conservation projects

Focal area: Utah

Utah Environmental Congress



Conservation: To engage in genuine protection of living forest systems that provide islands of refuge in Utah's desert country

URL: <http://www.uec-utah.org>

Focal area: Utah

Utah State University Extension



Information: An integration of teaching, research, and public service to enable response to critical and emerging issues with research-based, unbiased information

URL: <http://extension.usu.edu>

Focal area: Utah

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



Management: To provide sound stewardship of fish and wildlife

URL: <http://wdfw.wa.gov>

Focal area: Washington

Washington State University Cooperative Extension



Information: Engages people, organizations and communities to advance knowledge, economic well-being and quality of life by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research

URL: <http://ext.wsu.edu>

Focal area: Washington

Western Environmental Law Center



Conservation: A nonprofit public interest law firm that works to protect and restore western wildlands

URL: <http://www.westernlaw.org>

Focal area: Western United States

Western Watersheds Project



Conservation, Information: To protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives and litigation

URL: <http://www.westernwatersheds.org>

Focal area: Western United States

Wild Utah Project



Research, Conservation, Information: To provide scientific research and technical support using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to land managers, citizen activists and other conservation partners

URL: <http://wildutahproject.org>

Focal area: Utah

WildEarth Guardians



Conservation: To protect and restore wildlife, wild rivers, and wild places in the American West

URL: <http://www.wildearthguardians.org>

Focal area: Western United States

Wilderness Society



Conservation: To protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places

URL: <http://wilderness.org>

Focal area: National

The Xerces Society



Conservation: An international nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting biological diversity through invertebrate conservation

URL: <http://www.xerces.org>

Focal area: International

Section 3: Notable partners and adversaries

Each of the groups listed in Section 2 may provide potential partnerships to managers, as well as potential adversarial relationships, as rangeland restoration planning and management is undertaken. Partnerships may exist more commonly among stakeholder groups and local management field offices than at national offices, because of a perception that too large a political influence and agenda may exist at the upper hierarchical level. There may also be geographic variation in stakeholder group-land manager interactions, as management offices in certain locations are perceived to have more experience in dealing with and involving the public. Stakeholder groups may generally consider these offices more progressive, and this attitude may be based on the level of coordination within the management office as well as desired and perceived personality characteristics of land managers. Some recommendations made by interviewed stakeholders for improving working relationships with land managers include:

- The inclusion of local expert knowledge into future management planning
- Increased clarity and consistency in management objectives and goals
- A shift in focus from post-disturbance restoration to recognizing and addressing the root causes of rangeland degradation

Adversarial relationships often manifest as legal opposition to planned restoration activities and management. Stakeholder groups who pursue this course have indicated that decisions to do so may be driven by:

- The need for environmental protection
- Perceptions that federal management often “cuts corners” in administrative and public participation processes
- The belief that restoration treatments are applied at too broad or too large a scale
- The suppressing of relevant information
- Non-consideration of the entire set of restoration treatment alternatives by managers (compiled from Brunson and Peterson 2007).

While not all litigation can be averted, being aware of the local or regional environment in which restoration management takes place can inform and potentially improve the planning process. Knowing which groups are prone to or likely to file litigation to prevent certain restoration treatments from occurring allows land managers to recognize and plan for contentious situations that may arise. The following stakeholder groups have filed such preventative litigation in the past five-year period; once again, this is not a comprehensive list. It is meant to be a regional guide to help managers identify potential adversarial interest groups that may become active in their respective areas.

- Blue Ribbon Coalition
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Earth Justice
- Forest Guardians
- Friends of the Earth
- Idaho Conservation League
- Idaho Wildlife Federation
- National Audubon Society
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Resource Defense Council
- Oregon Natural Desert Association
- Sierra Club
- Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
- Western Watersheds Project
- Wilderness Society

References

Brunson, M. and J. Peterson. 2007. Comparing Citizens’ and Managers’ Concerns about Sagebrush Management and Restoration in the Great Basin. Utah State University, Unpublished Manuscript.