

Photo By CC Public Lands Ranching

# Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) Program Greater Sage-grouse

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Photo by Tatiana Gettelman

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Photo by Ken Miracle

# Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances

–History and Benefits–

# History

In anticipation of a final listing decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, various stakeholders requested assistance from USFWS to develop a sage-grouse conservation strategy for ranch and land management activities that could offer landowners assurances that their practices could continue in the event the species was listed under the ESA.

The Greater Sage-grouse Programmatic CCAA was finalized in 2014 for Harney County and 2015 for all other counties.



# Benefits to Landowners



## Conservation of species

Conservation efforts may eliminate the need for ESA-listing\* which could restrict various land uses.

## Assurances (species listing)

Landowner is not responsible to implement any additional conservation measures and will not incur additional, future regulatory obligations.

Landowners covered under EOS permit which permits incidental take.

## Offers flexibility

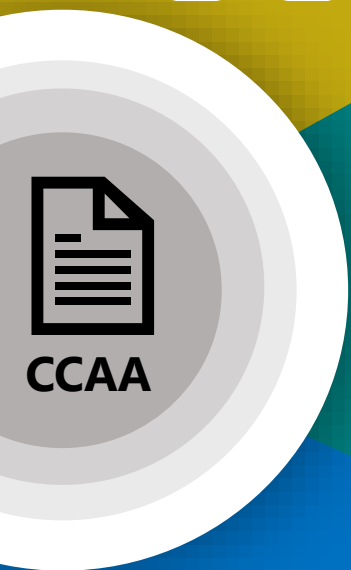
Accounts for species needs and landowner needs.

Voluntary agreement (discontinue at any time)

## Opens doors

By participating in a CCAA, property owners may have the opportunity for federal or state cost-share programs

# Benefits to Other Stakeholders



## Conservation of species

Conservation efforts may eliminate the need for ESA-listing

Improves habitat for other species dependent on sagebrush steppe systems.

## Overlap of other agency needs

Improves habitat that agencies may not have the access/time/funding/personnel

Can help make improvement of habitat contiguous (quilt of private/public)

CCAA inventory may help geospatial layers

## Trust and cooperation

Through the CCAA program building of landowner trust can lead to more conservation work (e.g., stream restoration).



Photo:USFWS

# Development of a CCAA

–Process and Current Status–

# Summary of the CCAA Process\*

\*Timeline can vary from county to county



Outreach and program education for landowners



Sign Letter of Intent (LOI). Non-binding agreement to list anticipated CMs, to schedule completion of baseline inventory, site specific plan (SSP) and signing of SSP/CI



Baseline inventory. Meet with landowner to discuss objectives, threats, and CMs



SWCD/WC gathers info for baseline inventory and SSP development



Agreements made, sent off to USFWS who has 60 days to review. If approved provide Letter of Concurrence



SWCD/WC and landowner sign the SSP/CI



Yearly annual report; Trend monitoring 5-10 years

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Photo:USFWS

## Writing an SSP for CCAAs

–Process of creating a site specific plan–

# Elements of Developing an SSP



Outreach to Landowners

Letter of Intent to enroll in the CCAA program



Mapping- fences, ecostates, water sources, roads, buildings

Meeting with landowners to gather basic ranch information



Field data collection

Develop site specific plan



Signatures!

# Elements of Developing an SSP



## Outreach to Landowners

- Rural Communities
- Farm Bureau
- Stockgrowers
- Friends and Neighbors
- Capitalizing on relationships and trust developed over years of cooperation



# Elements of Developing an SSP

## Mapping Plans

**Taxlot layer-** identify property boundaries and adjacent public land

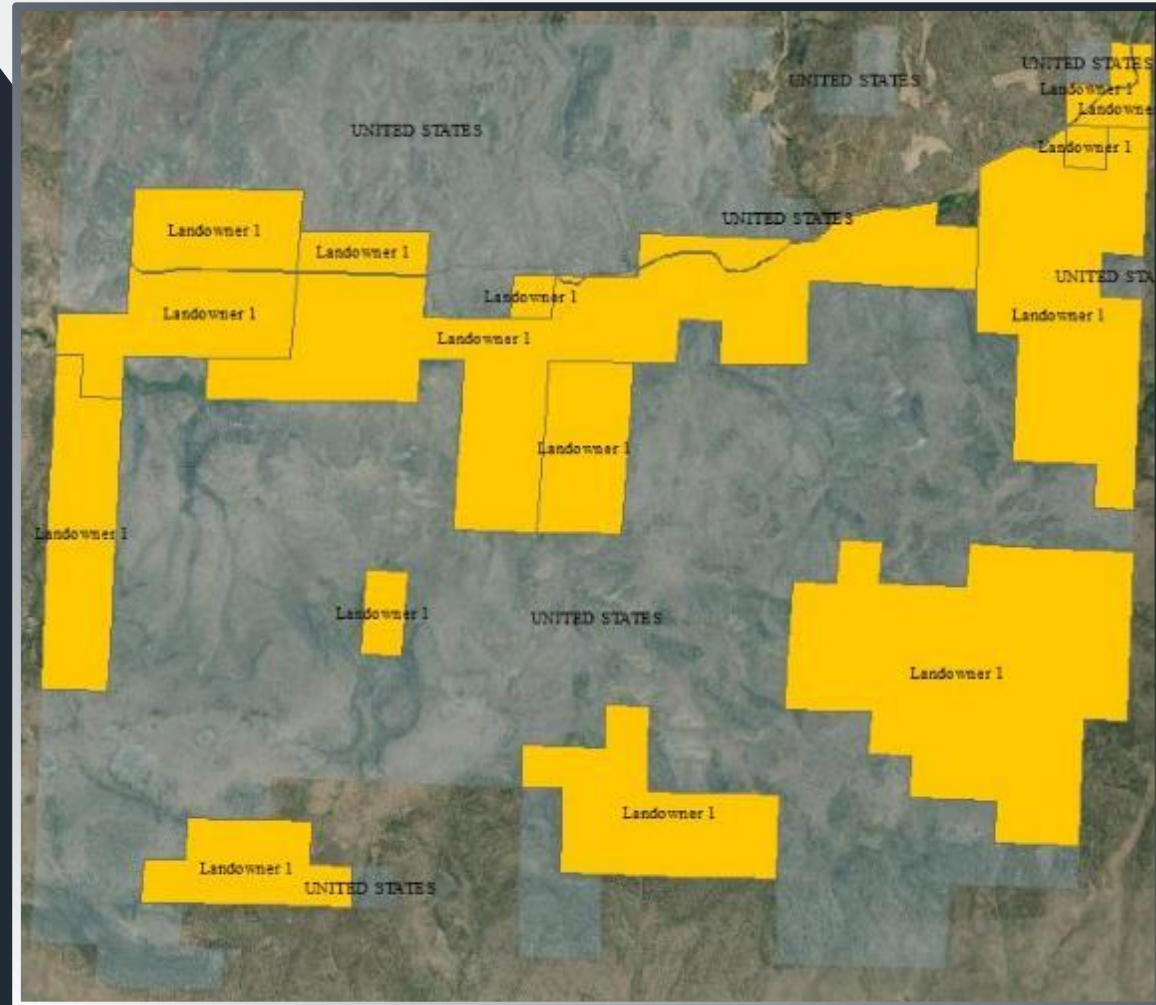
Sage-grouse habitat layer- Identify portion of the property that is habitat

Aerial Photo

- Ecostates
- Fences
- Roads
- Buildings

Previous Treatments

- Juniper cuts- NRCS, ODFW, OWEB
- Weed spraying- Weed district, landowners
- Riparian fencing- OWEB, Watershed councils



# Elements of Developing an SSP

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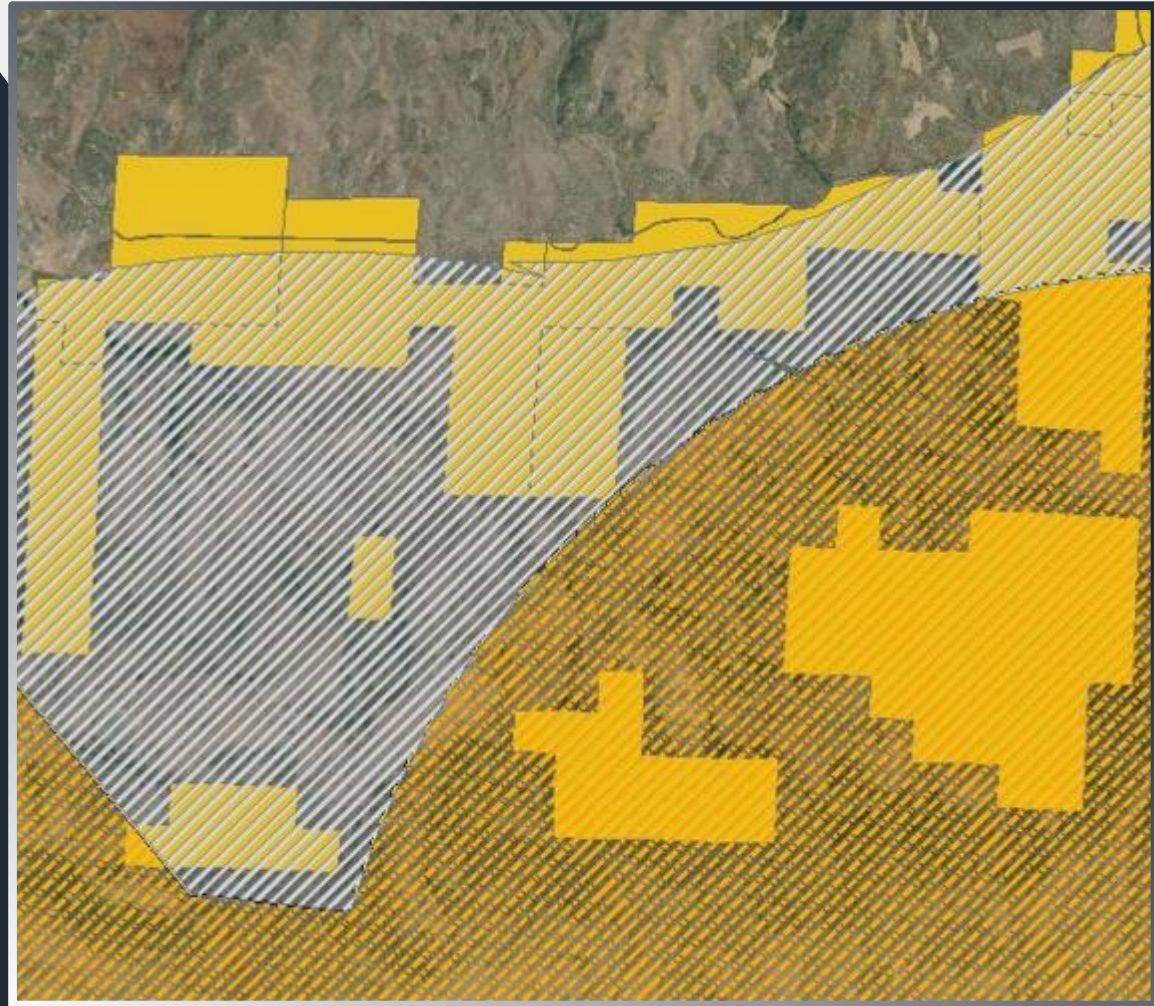
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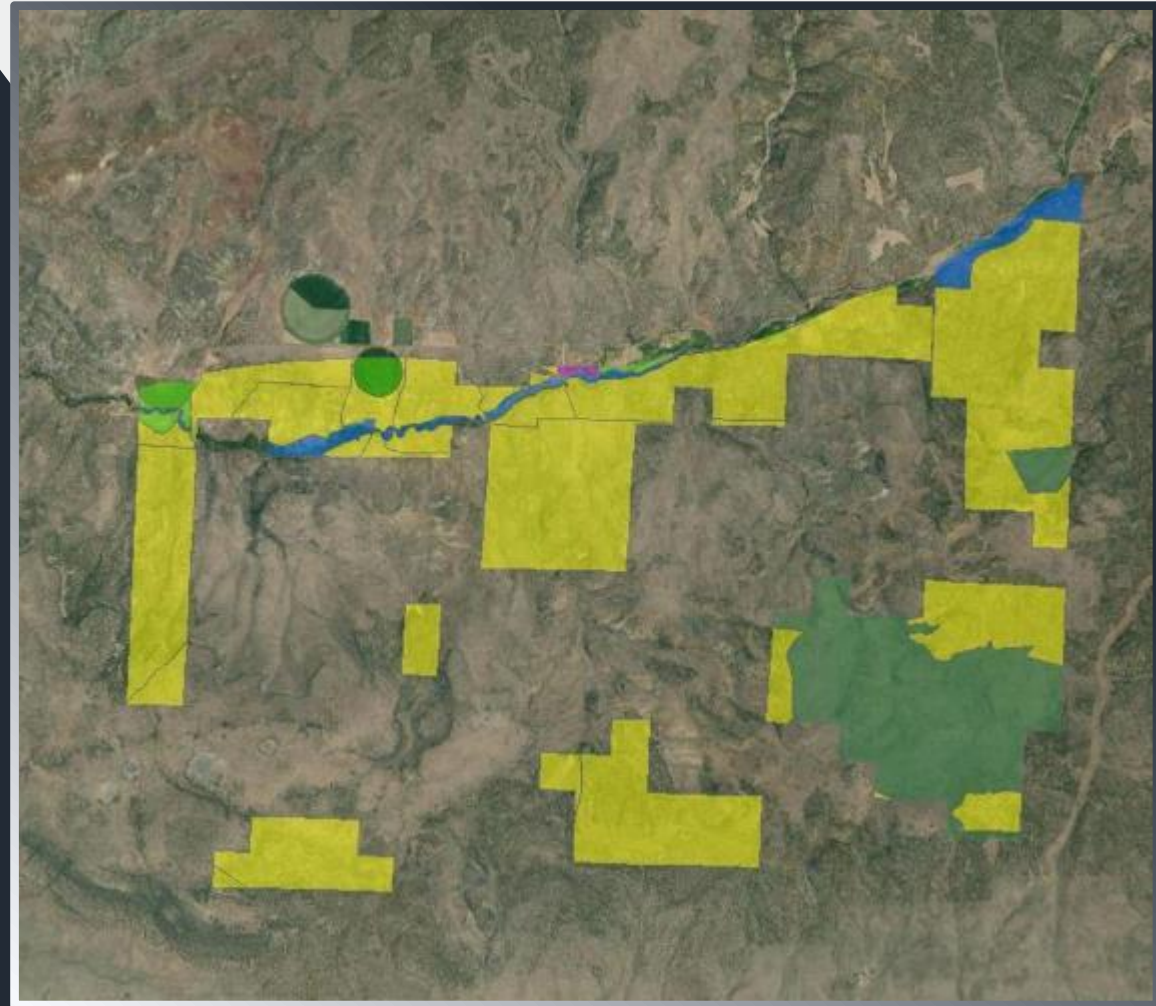
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### Aerial Photo

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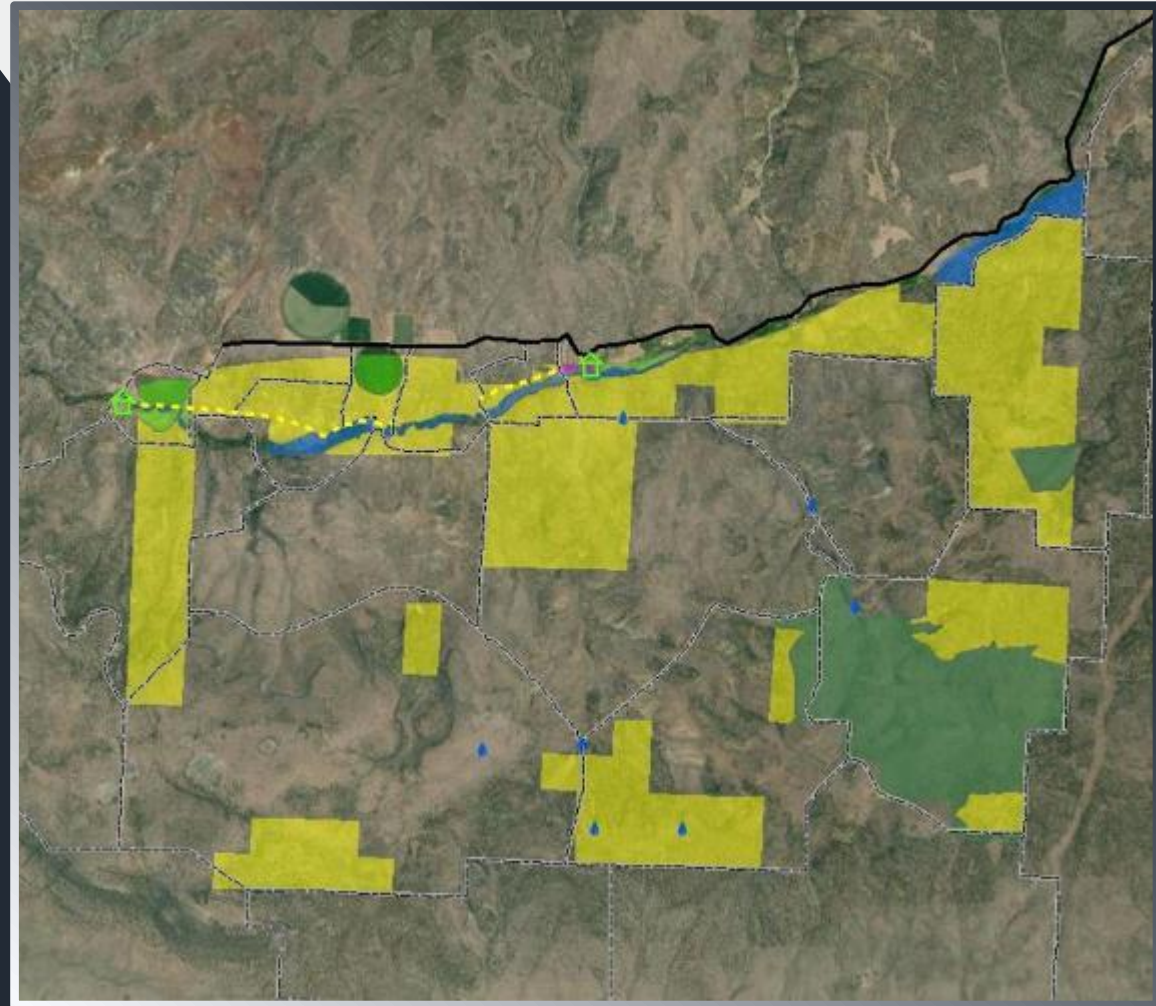
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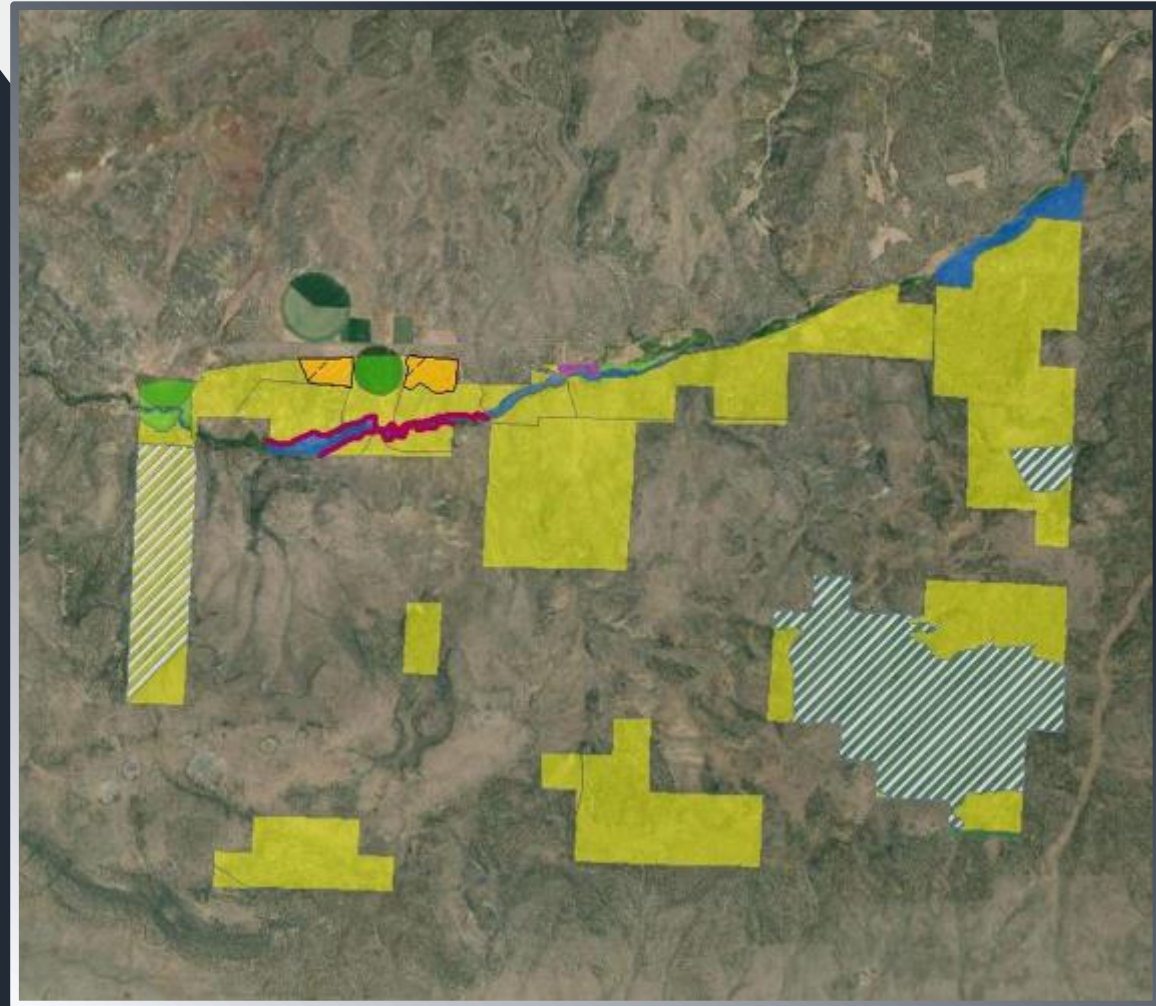
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# Elements of Developing an SSP



Meeting with landowners to gather basic ranch information

- What does the ranch do?
  - Cattle, hay, wildlife, hunting etc.
- Objectives
- Flexibility
- Past Management
- Future Plans



# Elements of Developing an SSP



## Field Data Collection

- Verify Ecostates
- Plant Species
  - Abundance
  - Condition
- Threats to Sage-grouse
- Indicators of Rangeland Health
  - Erosion
  - Weeds
  - Plant Communities
- Apparent Trend



# Elements of Developing an SSP

## Develop a Site Specific Plan



- Assign Conservation Measures
  - Must address every threat in every ecostate in every pasture
  - Must be tailored to landowner objectives
- Meet with landowners to discuss findings and proposed conservation actions
- Revise plan based on landowner feedback
- Send plan to USFWS service for 60 day review



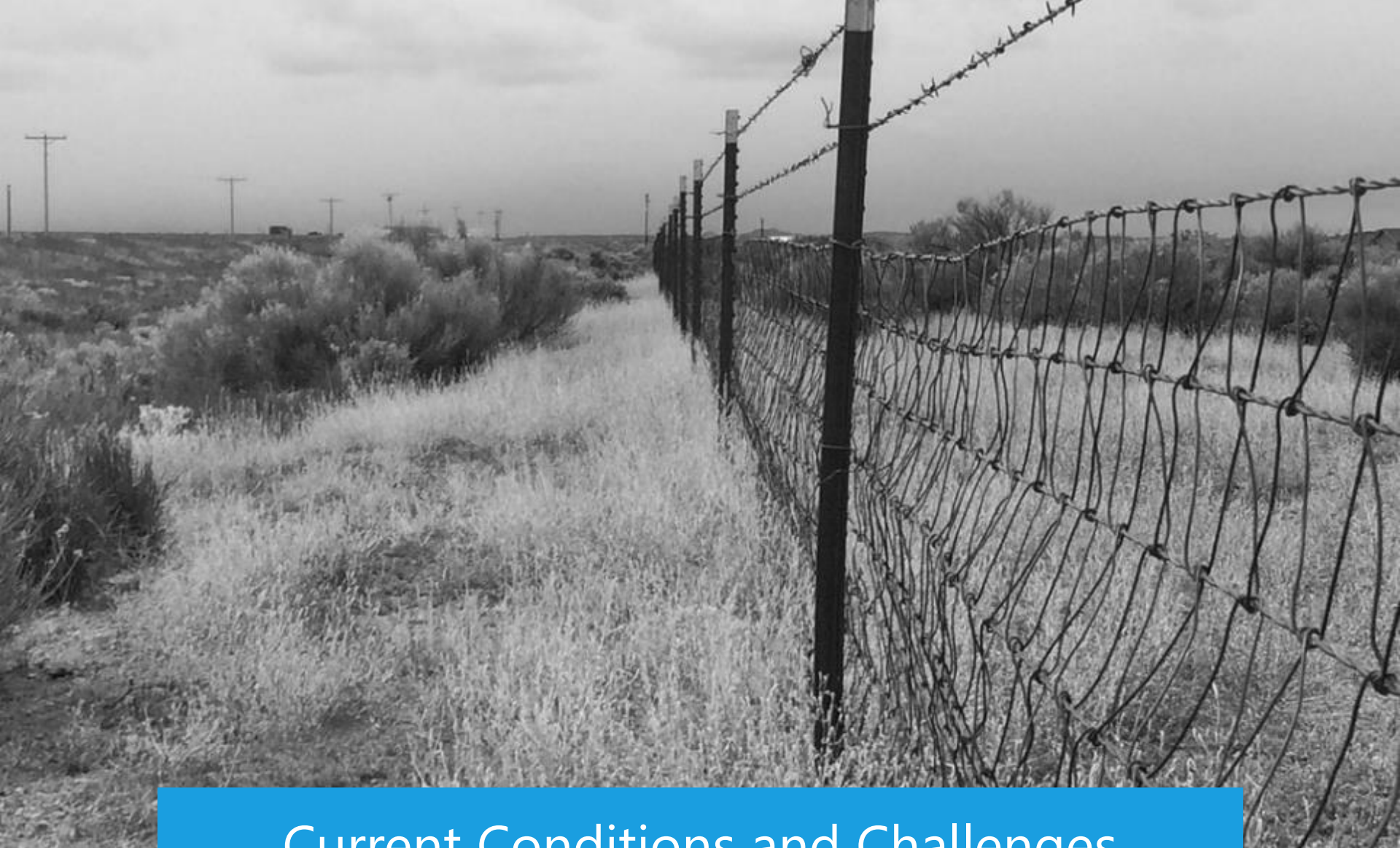
# Elements of Developing an SSP



## Signatures!

- This step is not a guarantee
- Could take years to get to this step
- Communication throughout the process is key to getting this done

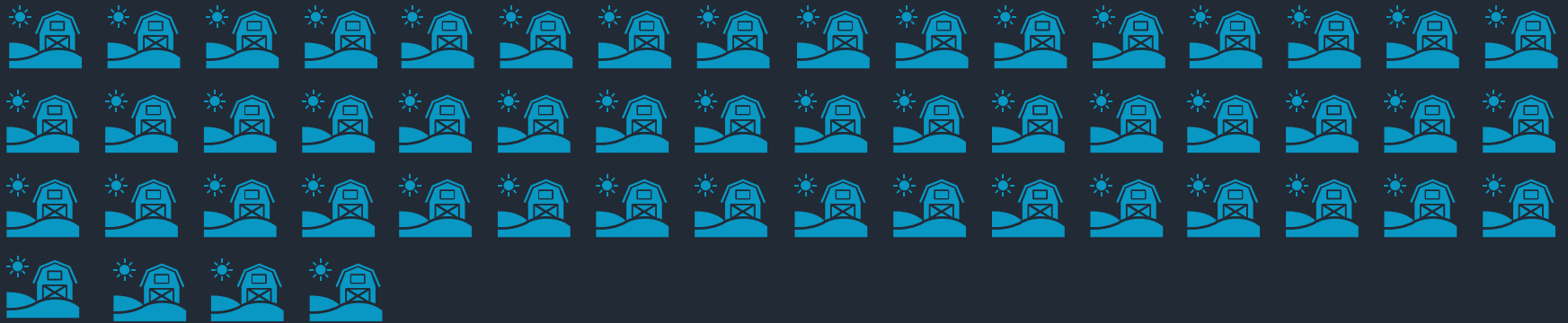




## Current Conditions and Challenges

–Current and Future Enrollment, Challenges, and Solutions–

# Current Conditions of the CCAA Program



**54** properties currently enrolled

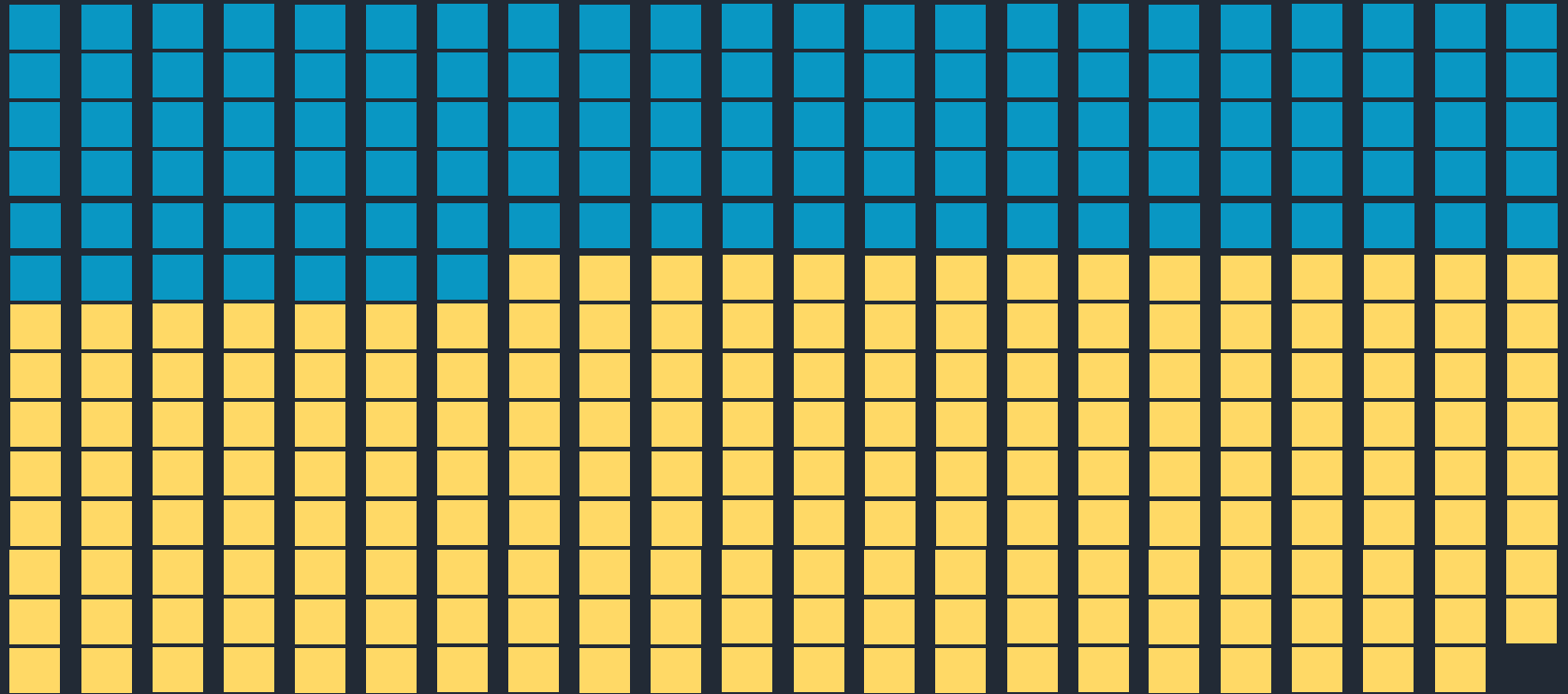
# Current Conditions of the CCAA Program



**54** properties currently enrolled

**103** to enroll

# Current Conditions of the CCAA Program



**585,103** acres currently enrolled

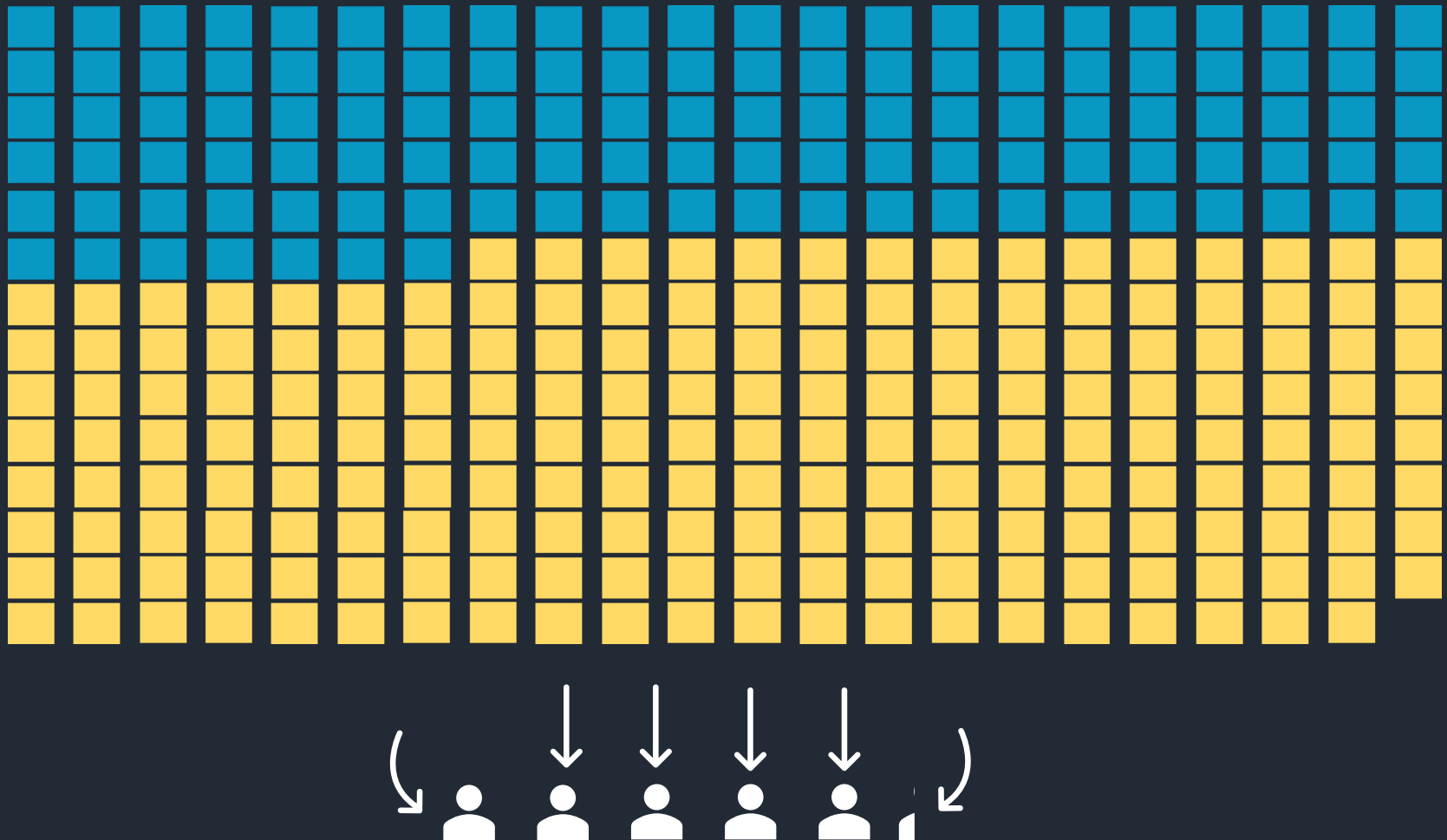
**950,314** future enrollment

■ = 5,000 acres



# Current Conditions of the CCAA Program

That's 5.25 employees to currently manage **585,103 acres** and eventually over **1.5 million acres**



# Current Conditions of the CCAA Program

Not all CCAA programs are equal



Lakeview  
SWCD



Harney  
SWCD



Crook  
County  
SWCD



Powder Basin  
Watershed  
Council (Baker  
County)



Malheur  
County  
SWCD

5.25 full-time  
equivalent CCAA  
Coordinators

# FTEs Needed for Enrollment and Monitoring

## Enrollment

## Monitoring

Lakeview  
SWCD



Harney  
SWCD



Crook  
County  
SWCD



Powder Basin  
Watershed  
Council (Baker  
County)



Malheur  
County  
SWCD



We have 5.25 FTEs for enrollment, but need 10.25 FTEs.

We have 5 FTEs for monitoring, but need 8 FTEs.

# CCAA Estimated Program Costs

Let's assume the cost per full-time employee is \$80,000/year (includes all associated costs)

With 585,103 acres currently enrolled, that is the cost of **\$0.72/acre/year** for CCAA management.

If we hire 5 more FTEs to complete the 950,314 acres that need enrolling that cost would only increase to \$0.86/acre/year.

Monitoring costs with 8 FTEs for 1,535,417 acres will eventually only cost \$0.42/acre/year.

# Past Challenges

Original baseline inventory methods were time consuming and not practical.

Each county independent/non-consistent

Short trend monitoring timeline 3-5 years resulted in too high of workload. Treatments may also be multiple year projects and difficult to conclude treatment efficacy.

Inconsistent funding



# Solutions

Streamlined protocol and data collection with new database development\*

Collaboration between all counties to have consistency.\*

Trend monitoring changed to every 5-10 years

Some counties were able to find funding through a Focused Investment Partnership, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Conservation Partners Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Technical Assistance Grants, NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife



\*ongoing

# Current Challenges



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Difficult to keep up communication with partners



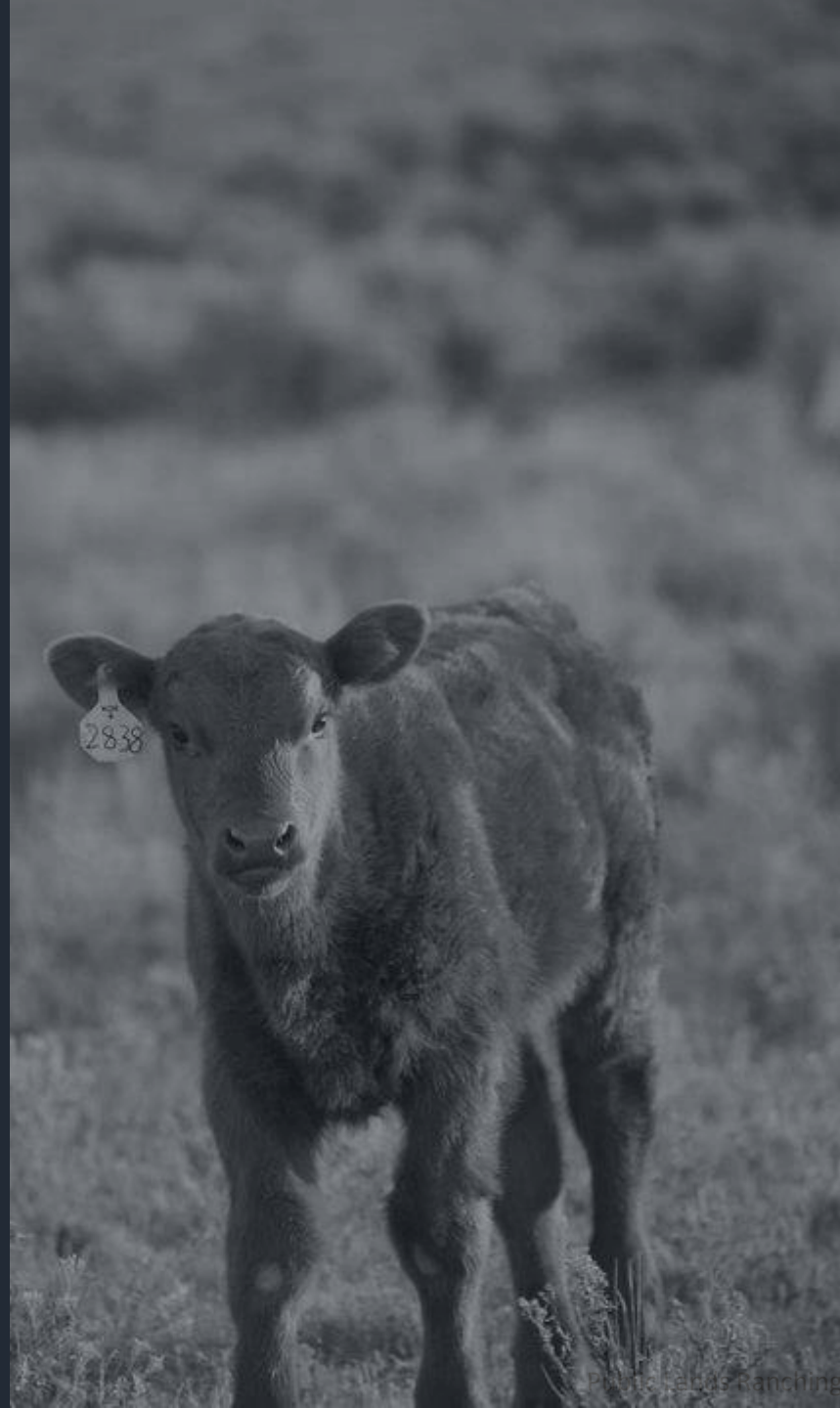
"Easy" to make a site specific plan, difficult to provide continuous support. Without support of the program CCAA can lead to uncertainty among landowners.

# Potential Solutions

Consistent funding from partners who are invested in the success of the program.

Increasing the number of full-time employees

Open and consistent communication from partners (e.g., Bureau of Land Management regarding planning CCAs)



# Thank you

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Local landowners
- Crook, Malheur, Lakeview, Harney SWCDs
- Powder Basin Watershed Council
- Sage-grouse Local Implementation Teams
- Oregon Department Of Fish Wildlife
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Sage-Grouse Initiative
- Oregon State University
- Department of State Lands
- Bureau of Land Management
- SageCon

