

IDAHO FIRE RECOVERY & REHAB INFO, RESOURCES IDENTIFIED

BOISE - (Aug. 21, 2015) - A state and federal inter-agency group met on Wednesday in Boise to identify needs and available resources for lands, natural resources, and people affected by Idaho's recent spate of fires. More than 20 agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and associations attended the meeting.

The meeting was convened by Curtis Elke, state conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Participants were updated on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Soda Fire post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation efforts by team leader TJ Clifford, and agency representatives discussed existing and planned efforts in Owyhee County and elsewhere in the state. Elke's goal for the meeting was to coordinate multiple efforts to better serve those impacted.

The Conservation Commission serves as a point of contact for the inter-agency group, distributing information to members, newsletter subscribers, and the media. For information on individual agency programs, contact agencies directly. Previously published information on additional resources, appears at the end of this article. For information, contact Teri Murrison at 208-332-1790.

Recent resource information:

Conservation Commission The Commission has \$6 million available in low interest conservation loan funding for projects that result in a conservation benefit (fencing, purchasing some types of equipment, and possibly seeding, etc.). Interest rates range from 2 1/2 - 3 1/2% for 7-15 year terms. The maximum loan amount per project is \$200,000.

The Commission has technical assistance field staff working with local conservation districts and others on projects to address fire recovery and rehabilitation.

For information, contact 208-332-1790 or info@swc.idaho.gov.

Governor's Office of Species Conservation (OSC) coordinates and implements policies and programs related to species listed as threatened, endangered or candidate under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). They engage partners in collaborative conservation efforts to prelude the need for species listings and to maintain the appropriate balance between wildlife conservation and working landscapes.

Wildfires this year have impacted habitat for multiple species in Idaho, including sage grouse and anadromous fish. Over the past few years, the Idaho legislature has invested in sage-grouse conservation. OSC has funding available to assist in restoration actions for greater sage-grouse habitat on state and private lands. The agency will work this year with state, federal and private partners to match other sage-grouse habitat restoration funding.

OSC will also invest in fire suppression in "Core" and "Important" sage-grouse habitat through partnerships with Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs). A "Sage-grouse Actions Team" was recently formed amongst state and federal agencies to provide a coordinated effort in prioritizing and funding sage-grouse conservation actions in Idaho. Please contact Josh Uriarte at 208-334-2189 or joshua.uriarte@osc.idaho.gov for additional information.



Curtis Elke, state conservationist for NRCS, led the interagency meeting to coordinate fire recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

OSC will address impacts to steelhead habitat resulting from the Clearwater Complex and other fires with other agencies and partners. OSC will assess the extent of the damage done in areas of significant importance to steelhead there that will be in need of restoration. The Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund board, of which OSC is a voting member, will meet soon to review funding proposals for potential projects in anadromous fish watersheds. Please contact Mike Edmondson at 208-334-2189 or mike.edmondson@osc.idaho.gov for more information.

Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts 50 conservation districts across the state are available to serve as liaisons and set up meetings between federal and state agencies and landowners.

Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) The IDL has sage-grouse conservation project funds this year for use on state endowment trust lands only. IDL is a participant in the The Nature Conservancy's Idaho Greater Sage Grouse

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Action Group with other agencies, working to prioritize landscape-level projects and identify funding for Rangeland Fire Protection Associations, fire suppression/prevention, and enhancement of Greater Sage-grouse habitat. They are working with BLM and Idaho Department of Fish & Game to plan and implement landscape level sage-steppe habitat restoration and rehabilitation projects across state and federal ownerships including post-fire restoration, fuel-breaks, and habitat rehabilitation. Under this MOU, they'll implement post-fire reseeding on state endowment trust lands affected by the recent Soda Fire.

IDL staff will work with state grazing land leases affected by the Soda Fire during planning and implementation stages. For more information, contact Southwest Area, Resource Specialist AJ Mondor (208) 334-3488.

Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission (IRRC) The IRRC partners with agencies to do outreach and provide information. Their primary role is to educate and provide outreach via field tours and educational opportunities.

Idaho State Department of Agriculture serves as a clearinghouse for info. They are currently looking for pasture, hay, and cover crop info and stress the need for alternative allotments after fire, and grassbanks. See the fact sheet on available resources at: <http://www.agri.idaho.gov>. Brooke Jacobson, Range Program Specialist, can provide info regarding allotment status, grazing, and regulations on public lands. Contact Brooke at brooke.jacobson@agri.idaho.gov or 208-332-8561.

Idaho Fish & Game Department (IDFG) IDFG is currently involved in the BLM Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Team efforts. They are working on enhancing seed mixes (can provide money to ranchers to enhance seeding mixtures for wildlife, covering costs above and beyond what ranchers would have otherwise seeded) and accomplishing restoration. For more info, go to: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/>

US Army Corp of Engineers (Silver Jackets) The Silver Jackets bring together federal and state agencies to work on public land and with private landowners to address post-wildfire flood risk mitigation and assist counties with flood management plans.

US Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

BLM provides emergency and stabilization funding on lands in their jurisdiction. They are currently meeting with affected permittees and assessing cultural resources impacted by the fires. They are also assessing threats and

hazards from abandoned mines. Initially BLM's highest priority is safety, thus there are restrictions from accessing fire areas. They encourage people to check with them before attempting to visit fire areas. <http://www.idahofireinfo.blm.gov/south/>

US Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) : The Service has 3 offices in Idaho, Boise, Spokane and Chubbuck with 60 people who have a variety of expertise and experience Idaho's ecosystems and species. They provide technical assistance on many issues, including restoration post fire. Potential funding programs that may be used to address fire recovery efforts are:

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program: provides funding to private and Tribal land owners to improve wildlife habitat on their lands. The program provides cost-share funding and technical expertise to landowners up to \$25,000 per project. Funding can be used to cost share on habitat improvement projects.

Recovery Fund: provides funds that go toward recovery of listed or at risk species. These funds can be used on any lands so are very flexible. They generally have one project ranking cycle annually (about January) but can accept potential proposals at any time. Staff can work with interested parties to develop proposals.

For more info: <http://www.fws.gov/idaho/what.htm>

USDA Farm Service Agency Emergency and Operation Loans - Idaho 208-378-5650 – The FSA has an Emergency Loan Program, Disaster Program covering livestock, forage, and other related issues, a Livestock Indemnity Program covering mortality, an Emergency Conservation Program, and more. For information regarding availability of FSA loans and qualification requirements go to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/index> .

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) NRCS has rangeland management, soil scientist, Farm Bill, resource conservationist, field office, and other specialists. They will provide recovery and rehabilitation assistance by contacting all producers in the affected areas, evaluating areas under fire duress, completing inventories, and developing conservation plans to address what can be done to assist. Producers will be matched with appropriate programs to address all resource concerns.

NRCS' fire recovery and rehabilitation will be provided via the Emergency Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), regular EQIP, and Sage Grouse Initiative funding.

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to producers through contracts up to ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices addressing natural resource concerns (including fire). For more info on EQIP, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/id/programs/financial/eqip/> and for general info on NRCS' services, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/id/home/>.

University of Idaho Extension is coordinating donations, cash pledges, hay, etc. Their primary role is education and research. They're currently in the 2nd phase of a study to determine the economic benefit of grazing to Owyhee County. For more info, contact Scott Jensen at scottj@uidaho.edu.

Previously published resources:

Idaho Cattle Association (ICA), Cover Crop Pasture Exchange - The ICA serves as a conduit for information distribution and gathering about impacts to producers. They stress the need for more participating producers in the Pasture Exchange Program, especially now. Contact the 208-343-1615. Web: idahocattle.org

Owyhee Cattlemen's Association's web site has info about how to donate hay, fencing, pasture, etc. Web address is <http://www.owyheecattlemen.com/>. U.S. Bank has set up an account to receive monetary donations. Checks should be made payable to the Owyhee Cattlemen's Heritage Foundation. Contributions can be received at any U.S. Bank branch.

Veterinarians - Local veterinarians can be contacted directly or through the Idaho Veterinary Medical Association (IVMA) 208-922-9431 <http://ivma.org/site/veterinarians/member-clinics/>

Volunteers - Citizens wishing to volunteer their time or resources should contact their county emergency manager or the American Red Cross of Greater Idaho who assist in tracking and assigning volunteers. Call 208-947-4357. Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) <http://idavoad.org>.

Road Conditions/Closures: <http://511.idaho.gov/> or call 1-888-432-7623

Wildfire information: Go to <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/state/13/>.

Officials caution the public to watch out for scam artists during this difficult time. Make sure the organizations that may be soliciting funds to help fire victims are legitimate. □