



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable, UW-ESM, and USDA Project to Partner with Western Ranchers to Develop Ranch Enterprise Budgets, Assess Economic Impact of Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation.

LARAMIE, WY. As part of an initiative through the Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable (SRR), a team of researchers at the University of Wyoming's Ecosystem Science and Management Department is leading a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funded project to assess the economic impact of greater sage-grouse conservation practices on ranching operations.

The research team is partnering with extension agents, ranchers' associations, NRCS, and others across the 9 Major Land Resource Areas (MLRAs) that have the majority of greater sage-grouse habitat in the western United States. Input and active participation from ranchers are key aspects of the project.

Sage-Grouse conservation practices. The greater sage-grouse are a sagebrush obligate species that has seen its population decline with the loss and fragmentation of sagebrush ecosystems. An unprecedented conservation partnership among State, Federal, and private landowners across the western United States has significantly reduced the threats to the greater sage-grouse in 90% of the species' breeding habitat. The successful conservation practices have resulted in conifer removal, creation of conservation easements, installation of marked fences and water sources, and exploration of mesic habitat benefits on millions of acres of land across the western United States. Many ranchers operate on that landscape. This SRR-UW-ESM project aims at assessing how the conservation policies affect these ranchers and the communities in which they operate.

Ranch enterprise budgets and rancher participation. The key to assessing the economic impact of greater sage-grouse conservation practices is to model representative ranching operations in the affected areas. The research team is developing enterprise budgets that document management practices, resources available, and technology employed in ranching operations in each of the MLRAs. In a series of focus groups, local ranchers will be involved in ensuring that the enterprise budgets are indeed representative of the "typical" cow-calf operation in each region.

Enterprise budgets. For each of the 9 MLRAs, enterprise budgets will be developed and disseminated among local producers who operate four types of ranches (up to 36 enterprise budgets in total):

- small private land only,
- small private and public land,
- large private land only, and
- large private and public land.

NRCS and the Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) science coordinator provide technical guidance to the research team to ensure the accurate representation of ecological conditions in ranch operation models. Upon completion, the University of Wyoming through its extension services will publish

the enterprise budgets as a tool for ranchers across the western United States to benchmark their operations.

Target areas. The focus groups, and resulting enterprise budgets, will cover 9 MLRAs in 6 states.

How to participate. Ranchers in the identified MLRAs interested in participating, please contact research scientists Anna Maher at **amaher@uwyo.edu** or Nicolas Quintana at **nquintan@uwyo.edu**.

The Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable (SRR). The SRR is a coalition of representatives from numerous governmental agencies, professors of range ecology, sociology, animal science and economics, and members of industry groups, environmental organizations, and professional societies. For more information on SRR and its initiatives, visit <http://sustainableangelands.org/>.

Project leadership:

Dr. Kristie Maczko
Sustainable Rangelands
Roundtable

Dr. John Ritten
Associate Professor
Agricultural and Applied
Economics

Dr. John Tanaka
Associate Director, WAES
Professor

Focus group task force:

Holly S. Dyer
Research Assistant
hsdyer@gmail.com

Tom Hilken
Research Assistant
tom.hilken@gmail.com

Holly R.
Kirkpatrick
Research Assistant
hkirkpat@uwyo.edu

Kendall Roberts
Research Assistant
kennylara@hotmail.com