

Drewsey Field Ranch wins national Public Lands Council award

In case you missed it...At the September 9, 2016 annual Public Lands Council (PLC) meeting in Boise, Idaho, Drewsey Field Ranch received one of only four awards across the country for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permittees. Their award – “Sage-Grouse Habitat Stewardship Permittee” – recognizes their excellent work and cooperative efforts in grazing management on the Upton Mountain Allotment.

Drewsey Field Ranch became the Upton Mountain Allotment permittee in 2009. In 2011, just four years after a wildfire burned through the area, the allotment was again a tinder box of dead fine fuels, heavily interspaced with Medusahead rye and cheatgrass. Concerned about the prime burning conditions, Drewsey Field Ranch reached out to Dr. Barry Perryman at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) for expert advice. Together with the BLM, Drewsey Field Ranch and UNR established a portion of the allotment as a demonstration project for winter grazing to manage invasive annual grasses.

Most often, pasture grazing is done spring through fall. Winter grazing, when most perennials are dormant, leaves invasive annual grasses like Medusahead and cheatgrass as a target for foraging livestock. Invasive annual grasses grazed during winter are prevented from producing seed, which leads to a dramatically reduced spread rate in the spring and summer. After four years of late season grazing in the Upton Mountain Allotment, results are proving excellent: desirable perennial bunchgrasses are replacing the Medusahead and cheatgrass; part of the Buzzard Fire burned into the project area and went out; and livestock production and health continue to be acceptable.

Drewsey Field Ranch was nominated for this award by the Burns District BLM. The permittee has consistently shown a dedication to managing livestock to reduce fuel loading and invasive annual grasses, and to improve Sage-Grouse habitat. In addition, Drewsey Field Ranch has been a willing partner with the BLM on multiple-use management and is committed to continuing innovate grazing management practices in the future. Public land grazing allotments are not owned by any one member of the public. Use is a privilege and granted through a permit system with public land management agencies. Drewsey Field Ranch has regularly shown exemplary commitment as a permittee to both rangeland health and stability and livestock production.

Public land ranching is essential to independent, family businesses that contribute to the economic and social sustainability of America’s rural communities. Today, these ranchers are widely recognized for their work to protect the environment in which they live and operate – safeguarding open spaces, maintaining water sources and sustaining plant and wildlife populations.

Since 1968, the PLC has actively represented the cattle and sheep producers who hold public lands grazing permits. The PLC advocates for these western ranchers who preserve our nation’s natural resources while providing vital food and fiber to the nation and the world.

