



BLM Director Kornze Announces Availability of Great Basin Science Tool

BOISE, ID – In opening remarks today at the conference, “The Next Steppe: Sage Grouse and Wildland Fire,” Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Director Neil Kornze announced the release of the Northern Great Basin Rapid Ecoregional Assessment (REA), a next-generation tool for looking at the ecological health of this important geographic region.

“The BLM is using these regional assessments to identify the key challenges and opportunities that exist across the West,” Kornze said. “By providing good, current science and looking across broad landscapes we can help ensure that decisions are being made with the best available information.”

The Northern Great Basin REA summarizes ecological conditions of the Northern Basin and Range and Snake River Plain Ecoregions. It spans portions of Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, California and Utah and involves an area of 75,708 square miles that includes land managed by 24 BLM field offices. Sagebrush communities, which are the focus of today's fire conference in Boise, are the most common plant community in the Northern Great Basin/Snake River Plain ecoregion.

This REA joins eight others already released by the BLM that are aimed at sustaining the health and productivity of our public lands. REAs use existing scientific information to identify resource conditions and trends within an ecoregion, providing an area-wide look at entire regions of the West. This large-scale approach is designed to help identify patterns of environmental changes that may not be evident when managing smaller, local land areas. The REAs provide science-based information and tools for land managers and stakeholders to consider in subsequent resource planning and decision-making processes, such as resource management plans and environmental impact statements. Data from previously issued REAs is already being used in such innovative land management proposals as the recently released California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

The BLM is working with its many partners who participated in developing these REAs to ensure that this information is used as the BLM develops management strategies to deal with broad-scale issues such as wildfire management.

Kornze's announcement of the REA's release set the stage for the participants of the three-day conference to forge a clear path forward across jurisdictions to share and use the best scientific knowledge and tools available that will improve and restore sagebrush ecosystems, particularly in areas affected by wildfires, invasive species, climate change, and urban and energy development.

The conference, held in Boise, Idaho, features leading rangeland and sage-steppe scientists, top fire managers, policy officials, public land stakeholders, and others. Participants will develop recommendations for a comprehensive fire management policy and program for federal agencies with sagebrush-steppe management responsibilities. The BLM will use these recommendations to forge a new path toward improved conservation and protection of sagebrush-steppe habitat in the Great Basin.

The conference website is <http://fireandsagegrouse.nifc.gov>. This website contains information about several ways people can participate in the conference remotely, using live streaming video from the conference and other internet platforms.

The Northern Great Basin REA is available on the internet at: <http://blm.gov/21kd>. For more information on this assessment, please contact Nika Lepak at (dlepak@blm.gov) in Idaho, John Wilson in Nevada (johnwilson@blm.gov), Todd Thompson in Oregon (tthomps@blm.gov), Bruce Sillitoe in Utah (bsillitoe@blm.gov) or Russell Scofield in California (ascofiel@blm.gov).