



# News Release

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For Immediate Release

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## **BLM, USGS Publish Data and Visualization Site for Sagebrush Geospatial Data**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have published a hub to enable easy visualization and access to geospatial data about the west's "sagebrush sea." This will help guide sagebrush conservation efforts during the 2016 fire season and beyond.

"We have the benefit of a tremendous amount of scientific information to help us conserve the sagebrush ecosystem that hasn't always been organized in a way that makes it easy to find," said Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management Janice Schneider. "This hub provides a simple way to reach the most definitive information from the USGS, the BLM, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, all in one place. It will provide the many groups working to conserve the sagebrush sea and Greater Sage-Grouse with a shared understanding of this landscape to help facilitate coordination in setting priorities for conservation and fire prevention at all levels."

The sagebrush geospatial framework includes a catalogue of geospatial data for the entire sagebrush ecosystem, as well as a series of visualization tools. The hub allows users to view or create printable maps, download Geographic Information System (GIS) data, and compare local data sets with larger regional data sets. The wildland fire community can, for example, use the free online tools to help select areas for preventative actions that will reduce the potential for future fires in sagebrush habitat.

The new common access point for this sagebrush data is the Secretarial Order 3336 tab at <https://www.landscape.blm.gov/geoportal>. Additional entries to the data catalogue and analysis and decision support tools will be added to the framework as they become available.

"Geospatial data is critical for understanding how local conditions fit into the overall landscape," said Steve Hanser, USGS Sage-Grouse Specialist. "The data access, visualization, and decision support tools developed through this effort will help provide a landscape-scale understanding and context for decision makers, which are important when dealing with the vast area of the sagebrush biome."

This geospatial framework is a component of the comprehensive, science-based strategy announced by Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell in January 2015 to address the more frequent

and intense wildfires that are damaging vital sagebrush landscapes and productive rangelands in the Great Basin. The goals of this strategy include reducing the size, severity and cost of rangeland fires, addressing the spread of cheatgrass and other invasive species, and positioning wildland fire management resources for more effective rangeland fire response.

Schneider noted that the hub will provide access to the data used to develop the Conservation and Restoration Strategy, another element of the Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy called for by Secretary Jewell in 2015. This strategy is intended to inform a multi-year plan for conservation and restoration actions across the sagebrush ecosystem.

The accelerated invasion of non-native grasses and the spread of pinyon-juniper, along with drought and the effects of climate change, increased the threat of rangeland fires to the sagebrush landscape and the more than 350 species of plants and animals, such as Greater Sage-Grouse, mule deer and pronghorn antelope, which rely on this critically important ecosystem. The increasing frequency and intensity of rangeland fire in sagebrush ecosystems has significantly damaged the landscape on which ranchers, livestock managers, hunters and outdoor recreation enthusiasts rely. This unnatural fire cycle puts at risk their economic contributions across this landscape that support and maintain the Western way of life in America.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLM generated \$5.2 billion in receipts from public lands.

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