



# IDAHO BLM

# TECHNICAL BULLETIN

**Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas:  
Idaho Wildlife Isolated Tracts program**

by

**Allan E. Thomas**



**Technical Bulletin 85-2  
April 1985**

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Most of the information in this Technical Bulletin is from a briefing document for the BLM Director on August 12, 1983. The program was continued through FY 1984 with BLM contributions further reduced to \$30,000. Contributions from IDFG were about \$47,000 for this period. Estimated funding for FY 1985 will be \$30,000 from BLM and \$50,000 from IDFG. An increased emphasis this year will be the monitoring of hunter use utilizing aerial surveys, random hunter bag checks, and questionnaire boxes.

The winter of 1982-83 and 1983-84 were extreme as far as snowfall and cold temperatures. Game bird populations were reduced across most of southern Idaho. Winter cover provided in the Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas resulted in much better survivals of pheasants and other upland game populations than found in surrounding agricultural lands.

Information for this bulletin was applied by Alan Sands of the Boise District, Willis Bird and Linda Parsons of the Burley District, Larry Mangan of the Shoshone District, and Bill Gorgen of the Jerome Region, Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

## Table of Contents

- I. Introduction to Program
- II. Background of IDFG Involvement
- III. Boise District Isolated Tracts Program
- IV. Burley District Isolated Tracts Program
- V. Shoshone District Isolated Tracts Program
- VI. Cooperative Farming Agreements
- VII. Experimental Vegetation Work
- VIII. Costs and Benefits
- IX. Future Plans
- X. Summary

## Appendicies

1. Memorandum of Understanding with IDFG
2. Public Support Material
3. Brochure

## IDAHO COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

### (Isolated Tracts Wildlife Projects)

#### Scope of Program

The Idaho Isolated Tracts are managed cooperatively and involve the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), private landowners, and the Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station of the Forest Service. Over 240 tracts are present in the Boise, Burley, and Shoshone Districts and they vary in size from 14 to 2,050 acres. New tracts identified through BLM planning processes in the Boise and Idaho Falls Districts will bring the total area under cooperative management to about 51,000 acres.

#### I. BACKGROUND

The original 1960 Sikes Act applied only to cooperative work between Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Defense. It called for ".....effectual planning, development, maintenance, and coordination of wildlife, fish and game conservation, and rehabilitation in military reservations.

In late 1974, this Act was amended by Congress to include such work in cooperation with State wildlife agencies, on lands administered by BLM, FS, ERDA, and NASA. Cooperative agreements, together with a comprehensive plan between the State wildlife agency and BLM, are basic to full implementation of the amended Sikes Act.

Starting in 1975, the Region IV Supervisor of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and the Burley, Boise, and Shoshone District Managers of BLM, began to cooperatively develop comprehensive wildlife habitat management plans on 240 isolated tracts of public land located on the Snake River Plains. These tracts are surrounded by highly developed private agricultural land, and they provide important wildlife habitat. This is especially true in light of the clean farming practices prevalent on the surrounding private lands. The current habitat conditions on most of the isolated tracts are not optimum for wildlife. The degraded habitat is largely the result of the following long-term abuses:

1. Heavy overgrazing by domestic livestock;
2. Wildfires;
3. Extensive agricultural trespass; and
4. Unauthorized trash dumping.

The cooperative wildlife habitat management plans were completed and signed between 1976 and 1978 by each district. A master Sikes Act Cooperative Agreement, wherein various jobs and responsibilities are delineated, was signed by the Idaho State Director for BLM and the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, on January 25, 1977.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The primary objective is to protect and enhance upland gamebird habitat on specific public lands on the Snake River Plain with appropriate spinoffs accruing to other game and nongame species.

## III. HISTORY

The Snake River Plain has historically had one of the highest pheasant populations in the nation; however, in the past few years the bird population have undergone a drastic decline.

The drastic decline is primarily due to a loss of adequate wintering and nesting habitat. This habitat loss can be attributed to several causes:

- a. More native rangeland being brought under agriculture (primarily via sprinkler systems).
- b. Clean farming practices such as buried pipelines with sprinkler irrigation, cement ditches, burning fence rows and ditch banks, etc.
- c. Removal of natural shelter areas.
- d. Replacement of diverse native vegetation with large expanses of monotypic stands of crested wheatgrass or cheatgrass.

It is well known that certain species of wildlife are largely the products of farmed areas. This is especially true of the pheasant and Hungarian partridge because of the food and nesting cover provided by some crops. However, once the crops have been harvested the agricultural lands are usually plowed and left barren until the following spring. This practice forces the wildlife to rely on perimeter lands and isolated tracts of public land for food and protective cover during the most critical time of the year.

Economic considerations also play an important part in the need for the development of the HMPs. Pheasant hunters from throughout the country converge on Southern Idaho each fall. Motels, cafes, service stations, sporting goods stores and many other businesses benefit economically because of the influx of hunters during the pheasant season.

As the number of people wanting to hunt increases, some serious landowner-sportsmen problems have resulted. More and more private land has been closed to hunting. This closure of private land places more hunting pressure on the isolated tracts of public land.

The loss of native sagebrush-grass habitat due to agricultural development has reduced the population of prey species for a wide variety of raptors. Raptors once hunted vast expanses of sagebrush in search of rabbits, ground squirrels, and other prey species. Since large portions of the sagebrush have been converted to

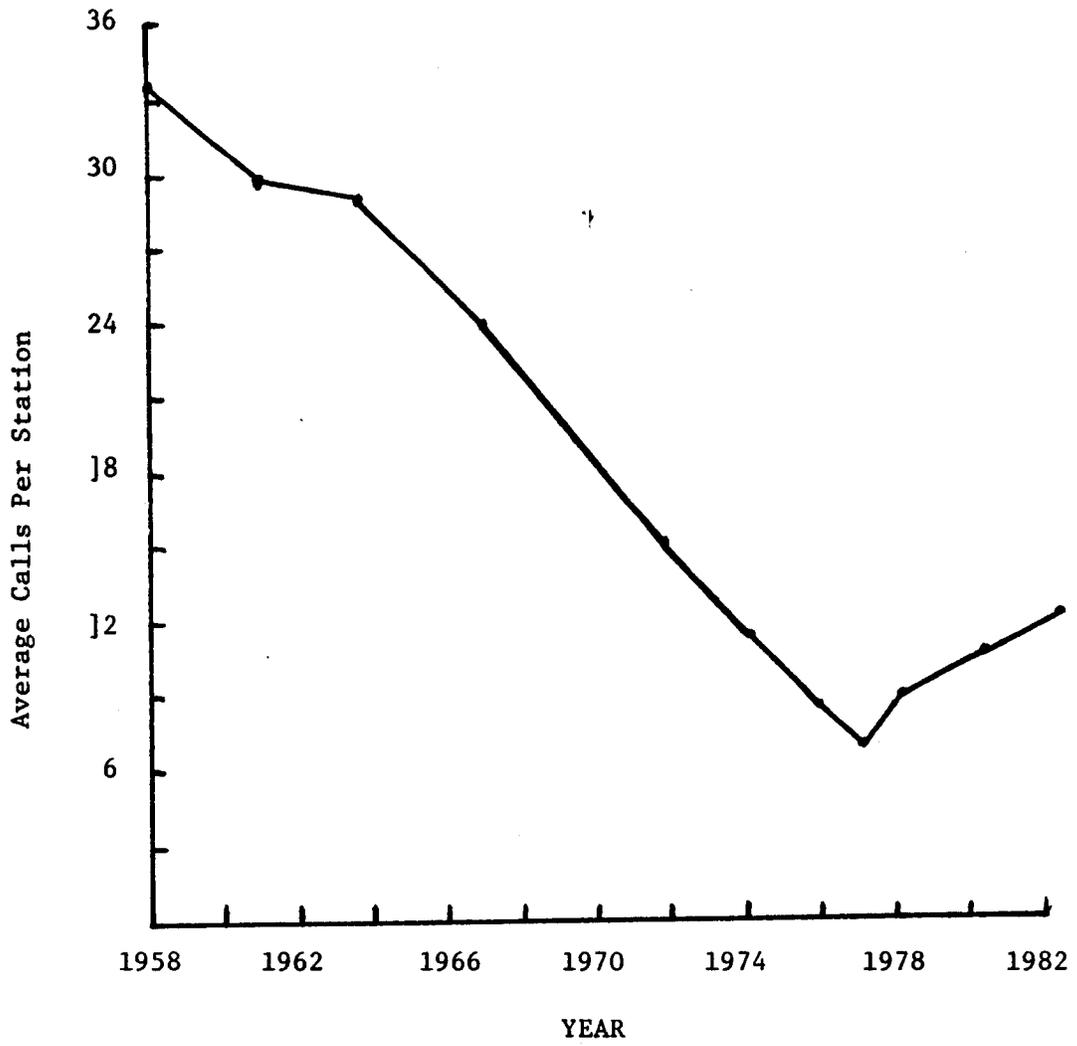
agricultural lands, the scattered tracts of public land provide essential habitat for prey species. The tracts along the Snake River are important for many raptors, including the threatened bald eagle and sensitive ferruginous hawk.

Existing habitat on many of the isolated tracts identified in the HMPs is not optimum. Serious overgrazing, unauthorized herbicide applications, wildfire, agricultural trespass, and unauthorized trash dumping have reduced the cover and food value for wildlife. Lack of permanent surface water over much of the area reduces wildlife numbers and dispersion. Nevertheless, these tracts still continue to provide important habitat values for wildlife and they all have a definite potential for excellent wildlife habitat development.

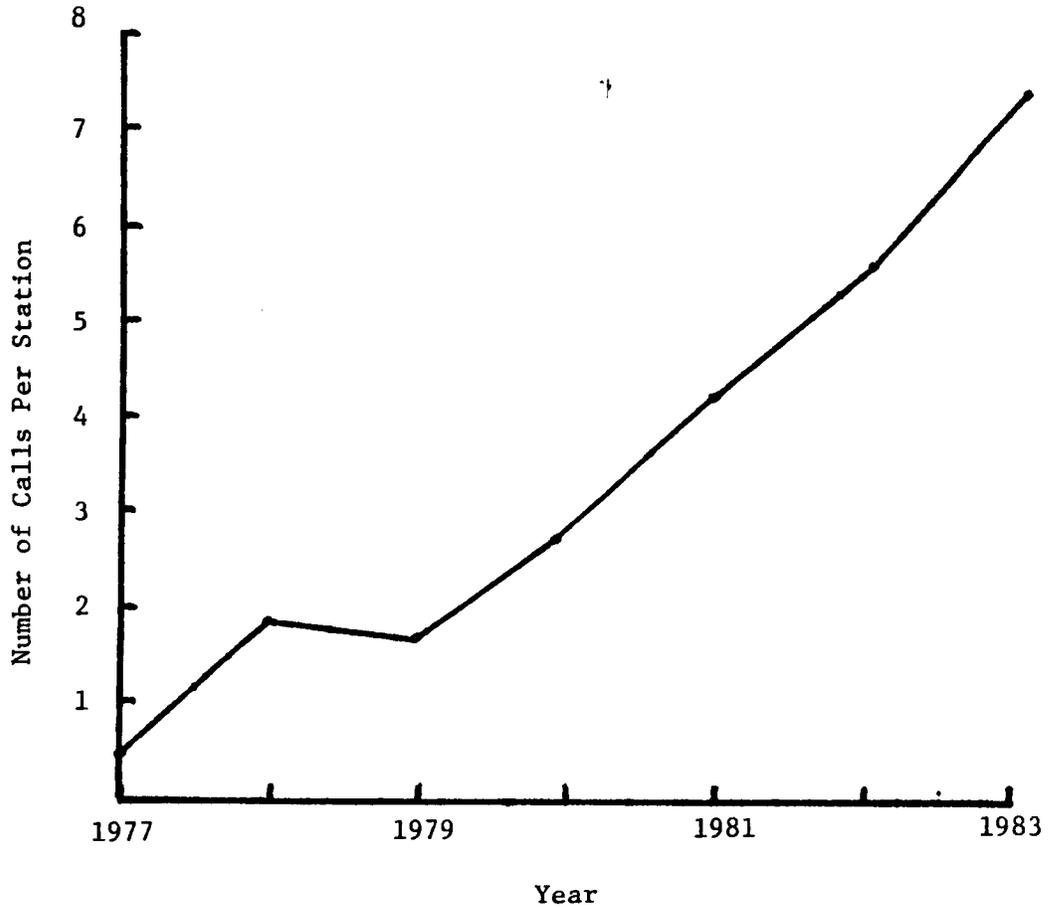
Another problem currently threatening the habitat areas is that some of the isolated tracts are potentially valuable for agricultural development. Disposal applications, either Carey Act or Desert Land Entry, have been filed on many isolated tracts. Public sale applications have been filed on other tracts. Disposal of these tracts would result in habitat reduction and loss of areas suitable for recreation. As previously mentioned increased demand for outdoor recreation, coupled with more posting of private lands will place more demand on isolated tracts of public land.

Some local farmers feel that the isolated tracts serve only as a weed source to infest their private lands. They would like to see the isolated tracts come into private ownership and become part of their agricultural development.

Recognizing the important wildlife habitat potential these isolated tracts of public land possess, BLM and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game signed interim Sikes Act Agreements beginning in 1976. This agreement provided that a Cooperative Habitat Management Plan (HMP) on the isolated tracts of public land would be written. Isolated tracts of public land were inventoried to assess their potential for wildlife habitat development. Nearly all of these tracts are surrounded by highly developed private agricultural land and/or land that has the potential for future development. The HMP identifies wildlife problem areas and proposes a series of developments to enhance the habitat for a wide variety of wildlife and to identify the locations of the tracts for the general public use.



Pheasant Population Trends in Southern Idaho Based on Crowing Counts.



Pheasant Population trends on Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas Based on Spring Crowing Counts.

## COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The original 1960 Sikes Act provided for the participation of the Department of Defense and State Fish and Game agencies to jointly develop and carry out fish and wildlife programs on military reservations.

In 1974, Title II was added to the Act which directed the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture departments "to plan, develop, maintain, and coordinate comprehensive conservation and rehabilitation programs for fish and wildlife, in consultation with State Fish and Game agencies." It also authorized "the development of cooperative agreements with State Fish and Game agencies for carrying out these comprehensive plans."

In 1975, the State Director for the Bureau of Land Management and the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game signed the Sikes Act Comprehensive Plan for public lands in Idaho to be followed by individual cooperative agreements with the Boise, Burley, and Shoshone Districts of the BLM in 1976, 1977, and 1978 respectively. With these signings, over 27,000 acres of public land have come under management for the improvement of wildlife habitat.

This program now has two full-time Fish and Game Wildlife Land Managers stationed at Jerome who work in cooperation with BLM biologists. Together they are responsible for implementing wildlife management projects on tracts of BLM land. This land is comprised of over 240 parcels of land ranging from 14-2050 acres in size. Generally these are surrounded by privately owned agricultural ground. The increasing loss of upland game habitat has put a very high value on these tracts for the enhancement of Idaho's number one game bird--"the ring-necked pheasant." While the major impetus is to increase pheasant populations, other species of game as well as non-game birds and mammals are also being benefited.

Studies have shown that the pheasant is by and large a product of agricultural land. The majority of pheasant nesting occurs in alfalfa fields and idle areas which retain the appropriate height and density of vegetation necessary for good nesting cover. To attain an increase in nesting cover, cooperative agreements have been implemented between the agencies and landowners adjacent to the tracts. The farmer is allowed to farm, without charge, a portion of the land for his own profit while planting and maintaining a grass/legume mixture of equal acreage as pheasant nesting cover. This cover is left undisturbed throughout the nesting period and is also available as escape cover during other times of the year. In some instances, an agreement will include a portion of private land or the landowner is willing to allow public access to his land, thus increasing the amount of land open to the hunting public. To date, there have been 48 such agreements signed with a total of 1,162 acres of permanently irrigated pheasant nesting cover being planted. Three permanently irrigated shelterbelts have also been planted.

There are instances where agreements are not possible and dryland improvements are necessary. The U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Range and Forest Experiment Station in Boise was an original partner in the first cooperative agreement between the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Boise District of the BLM. They and the Plant Materials Center at Aberdeen have been instrumental in supplying help and advice on seed mixtures adapted to the arid conditions found in southern Idaho. Thus far, 1,580 acres of tracts have been planted to these grass and shrub mixtures.

Water is in short supply in these areas and 23 water developments consisting of check dams and bird watering devices have been installed. Thirty-one nesting structures which include sparrowhawk, burrowing owl, and wood duck nest boxes have been placed on various tracts. Some tracts are considered key raptor hunting and nesting areas, and platforms have been installed for these birds. Readily accessible tracts have been signed and fenced for ease of identification by the public. Seventy-one miles of fence have been installed so far. Fencing has been a necessary part of the program to identify boundaries and prevent agricultural and livestock trespass.

Studies designed to assess the impact of these practices on wildlife populations have been underway since the inception of the program. These studies are an integral part of the program and aid the land manager in decision making. Preliminary analysis indicates a favorable response by wildlife, especially pheasants, to the increase in available habitat. Many hunters who have used the areas will attest to this. Some areas have produced a 15-fold increase in the pheasant populations.

The future of the program looks bright. Cooperation between the BLM, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and private landowners both now and in the future will insure the existence and well being of wildlife populations and give those individuals who use the areas a memorable experience.

## SAYLOR CREEK WILDLIFE TRACTS

### Area Description.

The Saylor Creek Wildlife Tracts are located southeast of Glenns Ferry, Idaho, in portions of Elmore, Owyhee, and Twin Falls Counties. The tracts are strategically located 40-160 acre parcels that were withheld from desert land entry (DLE). These "leave areas" were specifically designed to provide cover for upland game in the Bell Rapids, Grindstone Butte, and Blue Gulch DLEs. The wildlife tracts comprise approximately 9,900 acres, which is about five (5) percent of the total agricultural acreage. The cover on these wildlife tracts ranges from dense sage/grass to sparse cheatgrass and in some instances crested wheatgrass.

### Objectives of Habitat Management Plan (HMP).

The HMP for the Saylor Creek Habitat Management Plan was completed in 1976. Its basic objective will be to improve present nesting and winter cover adjacent to the agricultural areas within the Bell Rapids, Grindstone Butte, and Blue Gulch DLEs. These improvements will enhance gamebird hunting opportunities and provide areas open to the public. This will enhance both BLM and the DLE farmer's image to the general public.

### Wildlife Species Affected.

While pheasants are the primary target species, other wildlife species which inhabit the area and would probably benefit from this program include: Hungarian partridge, valley quail, cottontails, limited chukar, occasional deer, mourning doves, golden eagles, prairie falcons, occasional bobcat, jack rabbits, and various species of songbirds.

Saylor Creek Habitat Management Costs  
(FY 76 - FY 83)

	<u>BLM</u>	<u>IDFG</u>	<u>FS</u>
<u>Habitat Improvement:</u>			
Seedings (1,740 acres)	78.3	7.6	0
Water Developments			
Guzzlers (13)	6.5	6.0	0
Ponds (2)	1.0	0	0
Fencing (29 miles)		10.0	0
Cattleguards (2)	2.2	1.2	0
Shelter Belts	6.0	2.0	0
<u>Habitat Maintenance:</u>			
Fencing		5.0	
Water Developments		1.0	
<u>Habitat Management/Coordination:</u>	77.4	19.0	0
<u>Wildlife Studies:</u>	6.3	31.0	0
<u>Vegetation Studies:</u>	<u>41.1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>53.0</u>
Total	218.8	93.6*	53.0

\*Amount spent by IDFG on statewide isolated tracts work in addition to BLM contract funds.

## Cassia-Twin Falls Wildlife Tracts

### Past and Present Situations.

The Cassia-Twin Falls Sikes Act Isolated Tracts HMP originally included 57 isolated tracts in 1977, for a total of 5,657.29 acres. In 1983, there are 59 isolated tracts comprising a total of 6,137.29 acres. This shows an increase of 2 tracts and 480 acres. These tracts range in size from 20 to 360 acres.

Gamebird habitat has been and is being improved and maintained on these isolated tracts of public land located in the midst of intensively used agricultural lands. This work is being accomplished under a Sikes Act Cooperative Agreement with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

See Figure 1 for a list of projects and their status.

The amount of dollars and work months which BLM and IDFG have put into the program are as follows:

	<u>BLM</u>		<u>IDFG</u>	
	<u>Work Months</u>	<u>Dollars*</u>	<u>Work Months</u>	<u>Dollars</u>
1976	10	5,000	3	-
1977	13	15,000	2	-
1978	32	75,000	Under the Sikes Act Agreement for 3 Districts	20,000
1979	24	90,000		20,000
1980	18	70,000		50,000
1981	16	60,000		?
1982	10	40,000		?
1983	6	15,000		?

\*Does not include work month dollars.

### Public Interest.

Sportsman organizations, Audubon Clubs, business groups, and most farmers have supported the program. Some opposition has come from land developers and farmers who would like to acquire these tracts.

### Future.

Intensive wildlife habitat management of isolated tracts in southern Idaho will continue. Land use planning will continue. Land use planning will identify additional tracts which will be incorporated into the program.

Cassia-Twin Falls Isolated Tracts Fact Sheet

Figure 1

There are currently 59 tracts in the program totaling 6,137.29 acres.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Status</u>
Cadastral	45 tracts surveyed.
Fences	25 tracts fenced totaling 30.45 miles of fence. Of the remaining tracts, 6 were previously fenced, 11 are partly fenced, and 17 are unfenced.
Signs	40 Sikes Act signs have been placed on 31 tracts. Numerous "Public Land" signs have been placed on fences.
Trend Studies	12 have been established.
Wildlife Transects	15 transects are currently run quarterly by the IDFG.
Water Filings	13 water permits have been filed. Water rights have been received for most of these.
Checkdams	6 have been constructed.
Bird Guzzlers	7 have been installed. 3 of these use the "apron" catchment, the remainder are filled periodically by the fire crew.
Raptor Platforms	18 platforms have been erected.
Kestrel Nest Boxes	54 boxes have been placed on 24 tracts. In 1981, 3 adults and 18 young birds, which used some of the boxes, were banded.
Burrowing Owl Nest Boxes	4 boxes have been installed.
Wood Duck Nest Box	1 box has been erected.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Status</u>
Cattleguard	1 has been installed.
Seedings	361 acres of dryland seeding have been done.
Cooperative Farm Agreements	20 agreements. 513.06 acres of permanent irrigated wildlife habitat.
Noxious Weed Control	Continuous on all problem areas.

All of the above projects are under maintenance cycles. In the future, additional projects, like those noted above, will be done as the need arises. In addition, the following projects will be done: floating islands, raptor perches, and easements.

## Shoshone District Isolated Tracts Habitat Management Plan

### Background

Historically Southern Idaho has been one of the Nation's leading upland game bird hunting areas. As farms were cut out of the sagebrush plain, ring neck pheasants thrived in the mosaic pattern of agriculture and native range. The birds depended upon agriculture for most of their nesting and feeding needs but took refuge in the dense stands of sagebrush during the winter when there was no cover in the agricultural lands. As Reclamation's projects proliferated, more land was put under the plow and the native winter cover began to decline. This coupled with more efficient farming methods lead to a drastic decline in the pheasant numbers during the seventies.

The Isolated Tract Program was conceived to provide the upland game birds critical winter habitat and provide undisturbed nesting habitat. This has been accomplished by managing a relatively small number of strategically located tracts to support stands of brush for winter cover and by entering into cooperative farming agreements with adjacent landowners to provide prime, undisturbed, nesting habitat on public lands.

### Present Situation

In the Shoshone District there are 88 tracts totalling 10,600 acres being managed in the Isolated Tracts Program. The tracts provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including several sensitive species, big game and birds of prey. Riparian vegetation which provides excellent winter cover, occurs on many of the tracts.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has been cooperating with the Bureau of Land Management in this Habitat Management Plan. Whereas in the past the Bureau of Land Management has covered a majority of the expenses, the Idaho Fish and Game has recently become more financially involved, funding two full-time positions for the program.

The Idaho Fish and Game is responsible for negotiating cooperative agreements and ensuring that the participating farmer is complying with the terms of the agreement. The Bureau of Land Management has been minimally involved with the tracts under cooperative agreement.

The Bureau of Land Management has taken the lead in management of the remaining tracts. Roughly one-half of these tracts have required fencing, seedings, plantings, and other developments to enhance the habitat values. The other tracts have not required improvements and minimum expense has been incurred in managing these lands.

Public support for the program has been high. The tracts receive heavy use during the hunting season. In addition to Idaho residents, large numbers of out-of-state hunters travel to the area to hunt pheasants. Two sportsman groups have planned improvements on isolated tracts. Volunteers have devoted many hours to help manage and improve the isolated tracts. Pressures to keep these wildlife tracts in public ownership would be expected to be high.

SHOSHONE DISTRICT  
ISOLATED TRACTS  
HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

FACT SHEET

Shoshone District Isolated HMP Approved: August 1978  
Cooperative Agreement for Shoshone Tracts with IDF&G Signed: Sept 1978

	FY 78	FY 79	FY 80	FY 81	FY 82	FY 83	Total
Estimated Funding Levels for I.T. HMP (\$)	6,000	8,000	40,000	58,500	46,000	10,000	168,500
Acres in HMP Area	8,971	8,971	9,946	10,350	10,600	10,600	10,600
Number of Tracts	82	82	85	87	88	88	88
Number of Cooperative Agreements Negotiated	0	2	12	6	6	3	28

ISOLATED TRACTS  
WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS

Irrigated Wildlife Habitat	505 acres
Fencing	11.5 miles
Dryland Seeding	660 acres
Hunting Access Gained on Private Land	670 acres
Tree Planting	50 acres
Bird Shrub Planting	12 acres
Nesting Structures	19
Check Dams	4
Ponds	3

### Future Plans

The Isolated Tracts HMP is roughly 85% implemented. There will still be some fencing, shrub and tree planting projects but most work will be limited to maintenance and monitoring.

The Monument RMP, which is scheduled for completion in 1985, addresses the question of Isolated Tracts Management. At this draft stage of the document, the "protection" alternative has a significant increase in the number of acreage of Isolated Tracts while the "production" alternative has significantly fewer Isolated Tracts than at present. The "balanced" alternative proposes a slight increase in the acreage of Isolated Tracts. It should be emphasized that how these alternatives affect Isolated Tracts could very likely change in the course of preparation of the final RMP.

### Cooperative Farming Agreements

Presently, there are 48 agreements within three BLM districts. These include 1,472.9 agricultural acres and 1,162.5 irrigated wildlife habitat acres. Hunter access, winter cover, dryland habitat, ponds, leaving grain stubble, and other values are included within the agreements. Cooperative agreements by BLM district are as follows:

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Boise BLM District

<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Agricultural</u>	<u>Irrigated Wildlife Habitat</u>
Anthony, George	177.0	135.0
Nelson, Gary	15.0	5.0 (shelterbelt)
Olsen, Ken	6.0	8.0
Wright, Dale	8.0	17.0
<u>Total</u>		
Agreements - 4	206.0	165.0

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Burley BLM District

<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Agricultural</u>	<u>Irrigated Wildlife Habitat</u>
Baker, Bill	40.0	40.0
Critchfield, Darin	41.5	22.0
Critchfield, Hilton	110.0	65.0
Duncan, Scott	3.5	3.5
Graybeal, Calvin	-	2.5
Hobson, Vaughn	2.5	1.5
Jarolinek, LeRoy	4.0	2.8
Kuwana, Mas	13.2	13.2
Moss, Dean	48.0	48.0
Newcomb, Mark	240.0	85.0
Ore-Ida Foods	32.0	30.0
Rainbow Ranches	16.0	16.0
Reese, Dallin	42.5	0.0
Robinson, Jay	8.7	8.5
Schroeder, Mark	31.3	31.3
Stastny, Ed	10.0	9.0
Stastny, Joe	2.9	2.0
Van Tassel, Carl	33.0	20.0
Webb, Gordon	7.5	7.5
Woodhouse, Kirk	65.0	65.0
<u>Total</u>		
Agreements - 20	751.6	472.8

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

Shoshone BLM District

<u>Cooperator</u>	<u>Agricultural</u>	<u>Irrigated Wildlife Habitat</u>
Ambrose, Neal	8.0	8.0
Arkoosh & Zidan	45.0	45.0
Ball, Dean	10.0	10.0
Bell, Greg	13.0	15.0
Campbell, Jim	11.0	11.0
Dalton, Richard	40.0	33.0
Davidson, Joe	6.0	6.0
Davis, Ernie	4.0	6.0
Dobson, Roy	11.0	11.0
Gillette, Rusty	20.0	20.0
Gough, Jack	38.0	27.0
Harper, Clyde	93.3	51.7
Harper, E.S.	0.0	15.0 (shelterbelt)
Higgonbothan, Ken	0.0	5.0
Janiss Farms	40.0 (grazing)	30.0
Johnson, Forrest	5.0	5.0
McClain, Bob	42.0	40.0
McKay, Leon	3.0	3.0
Reed, Glenn	7.0	7.0
S. A. Farms	40.0	68.0 (28 tillable)
Sauer, Reuben	4.0	0.0 (pond)
Shigihara, Mike	15.0	15.0
Stimpson, Oscar	0.0	33.0
Young, Kaye	60.0	60.0
<u>Total</u>		
Agreements - 24	515.3	524.7

## Experimental Vegetation Work

(conducted by Intermountain Range and Forest Experiment Station)

### Objectives

1. To investigate means of improving the vegetative cover on the wildlife tracts to attract and maintain a satisfactory population of upland game birds and other wildlife.
2. To select and develop grasses, forbs, and shrubs that are adapted to arid conditions, provide wildlife food and cover, and displace undesirable and noxious weeds.
3. To develop site preparation and planting practices that promote the establishment and survival of desirable plants in and among competitive annual vegetation.

### Program

#### Testing:

1. 55 species or varieties of perennial grasses
2. 50 species or varieties of perennial forbs
3. 65 species or varieties of perennial shrubs

#### Plants are being tested for:

1. adaptability to arid conditions
2. herbage production
3. herbage quality
4. palatability
5. growth form (shrubs only)
6. summer/fall greenness
7. rapid growth

### Products

Anticipated results of this testing program have wide spread application to resource management. Specific products which are evolving from this work includes:

1. new superior plant species/selections for rangeland planting
2. improved methods and procedures for achieving successful plantings on arid rangelands

3. new equipment for planting rangelands
4. improved forage quantity and quality for livestock and wildlife
5. plants which can reduce wild fire hazard (wild fires burn an average of 55,000 acres each year in the Boise District)

Costs

Anticipated Project Costs:

Development Cost (1976-1983):

Cassia-Twin Falls (Burley)	\$ 720,000
Saylor Creek (Boise)	\$1,406,000

Post Development Cost (1983-2000):

Cassia-Twin Falls (\$40,000 annually for 17 years @ 6 3/8% discount)	\$ 237,831
Saylor Creek (\$55,000 annually)	\$ 326,993

Total = \$2,690,806

Actual Project Costs (including Shoshone Tracts):

Development Costs (1976-1983)\*:

Cassia-Twin Falls	\$ 370,000
Saylor Creek	\$ 337,300
Shoshone	\$ 168,500
Total =	\$ 875,800

\*Included costs of preliminary work on Agricultural Development and Bannock-Oneida Tracts.

Actual Wildlife Management Costs (1976-1983):

BLM contract funds to IDFG	\$ 171,161
Additional IDFG funds spent on tracts	\$ 115,700

Prior to 1980, all IDFG costs were paid for under BLM contracts. Since then, IDFG has been increasingly spending their own funds on the tracts program. Nearly all management funding is expected to come from IDFG in the future. Past expenditures is as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>BLM Contribution</u>	<u>IDFG Contribution</u>
1980	50,000	14,100
1981	55,000	29,200
1982	55,000	25,100
1983	39,400	47,300

In summary, anticipated development costs for two areas were \$2,126,000 and only \$875,800 in development costs for three areas were spent plus \$171,161 in BLM contracted management funds. This is less than half (\$1,046,961) of the anticipated development costs for two areas.

### Benefits (Economic)

Economic benefits were calculated based on the biological objective of increasing the pheasant population ten-fold from the preproject level of one bird/100 acres to one bird/10 acres. A preproject population of one bird/10 acres is considered to be a low density population. Thus, the biological goal is very conservative. The wildlife benefits do not include any estimates for secondary species such as ducks and geese, Hungarian partridge, valley quail, and dove hunting, although, they have undoubtedly contributed to the hunting opportunity. Moreover, the no calculations were made for soil stabilization, aesthetic values, and nonconsumptive wildlife values. The analysis did include the economic benefits of cooperative farming and trespass abatement.

#### Minimum Total Benefits (Saylor Creek/Cassia-Twin Falls)

Hunter Days Increased - 34,900 X \$19/H.D. = \$663,100 annually for 17 years @ 6 3/8% discount rate =	\$6,763,875
Coop Farm Agreements - \$170/ac X 1,000 ac = \$170,000 annually for 17 @ 6 3/8% discount rate =	\$1,734,065
Trespass Abatement (Savings) 25 cases X \$200/case = \$5,000 annually for 17 years @ 6 3/8% discount rate =	\$ 51,000
Trespass Abatement (Damages) 360 acres X \$25/ac = \$9,000 annually for 5 years =	\$ 45,000
Total Minimum Benefits	\$8,593,941

Note: \$19/H.D. is presently worth \$39.91 and this figure will likely be adjusted up soon.

#### Economic Value of Pheasant Hunting

- Upland Game Hunting \$40.50 per vist a day
- Average No. of Pheasant Hunters Per Year in Southern Idaho (1978-1982) - 84,500
- Average No. of Pheasant Hunter/Days Expended Per Year (78-82) - 460,000
- Economic Value Associated With Pheasant Hunting per Year - \$18.6 million

### Future Plans

An additional 5,000 acres have been identified in the Agricultural Development Environmental Statement, Boise District, for wildlife isolated tract areas. Nearly 21,000 acres were identified in the Bannock-Oneida Grazing EIS, Burley District. Nearly all of these latter acres are in Bannock County and are now in the Idaho Falls District due to a boundary change. Both of these areas are scheduled for implementation in FY 84.

New isolated tracts for wildlife will probably be identified in new planning documents such as the Monument RMP, Shoshone District, scheduled for completion in FY 85.

Funding for management of the total wildlife isolated tracts program will increasingly be from the IDFG as BLM funds for this purpose decrease.

## Summary

A dramatic decrease in upland game bird populations occurred in southern Idaho beginning in the mid-1960's. This decrease was directly related to increased agricultural developments and especially to changes in agriculture practices (sprinkler irrigation, clean farming practices, and removal of natural shelter areas). Idaho BLM began the cooperative wildlife management program (isolated tracts) in 1976. In FY 84, the program is expected to involve over 51,000 acres. The cooperative program involves BLM, IDFG, private landowners, and the Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station of the Forest Service. The program includes protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat on tracts, management of wildlife species, development of shelter belts and reservoirs, research on vegetation, and cooperative farming agreements. Costs are much lower than expected, benefits are higher than expected, and there is a high level of public support.

Elimination of the wildlife isolated tracts program would:

- Require amendment to Management Framework Plans.
- Be contrary to agreements with State Fish and Game Department and Water Resource Department.
- Set a precedent, jeopardizing validity of a wide-ranging long-established Bureau program.
- Be contrary to policy and regulation.
- Cause a rift in Federal/State cooperation and override local governmental programs and policies.
- Result in public opposition--there is wide local support of the Bureau's wildlife enhancement programs.

Supplement to Memorandum of Understanding  
Between The Bureau of Land Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Idaho State Office and the  
State of Idaho Fish and Game Department  
for Sikes Act Implementation

I. Purpose

It is the purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding to define working relationships, coordination, and cooperation procedures for implementation of cooperative wildlife management areas under the Sikes Act between the Bureau of Land Management, Idaho State Office, hereinafter referred to as the BLM and the Idaho Fish and Game Department, hereinafter referred to as IDFG.

II. Objectives

The original 1960 Sikes Act applied only to cooperative work between Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Defense. It called for ".....effectual planning, development, maintenance, and coordination of wildlife, fish and game conservation, and rehabilitation in military reservations."

In late 1974, this Act was amended by Congress to include such work in cooperation with State wildlife agencies, on lands administered by BLM, FS, ERDA, and NASA. Cooperative agreements, together with a comprehensive plan between the State wildlife agency and BLM, are basic to full implementation of the amended Sikes Act.

Starting in 1975, the Region IV Supervisor of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) and the Burley, Boise, and Shoshone District Managers of BLM, began to cooperatively develop comprehensive wildlife habitat management plans on 260 isolated tracts of public land located on the Snake River Plains. These tracts are surrounded by highly developed private agricultural land, and they provide important wildlife habitat. This is especially true in light of the clean farming practices prevalent on the surrounding private lands. The current habitat conditions on most of the isolated tracts are not optimum for wildlife. The degraded habitat is largely the result of the following long-term abuses:

1. Heavy overgrazing by domestic livestock;
2. Wildfires;
3. Extensive agricultural trespass; and
4. Unauthorized trash dumping.

The wildlife habitat management plans were completed and signed between 1976 and 1978 by each district. A master Sikes Act Cooperative Agreement, wherein various jobs and responsibilities are delineated, was signed by the Idaho State Director for BLM and the Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, on January 25, 1977. Beginning in 1980, the individual contracts for each of the habitat management plans were combined into one overall contract.

Initially BLM provided nearly all funding for the program. By 1984, IDFG was funding at least half of the program. Review of the contract and the three MOU's at the start of FY 1985 indicated the need for revision of the past material into a single new MOU and contract.

### III. Authority

#### A. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

1. Master Memorandum of Understanding between Idaho Fish and Game Department and Bureau of Land Management, signed November 13, 1974.

2. The Sikes Act of 1974, Title II, P.L. 93-452, as amended (16 U.S.C. 679 et. seq.).

3. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et. seq.).

#### B. Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG)

1. Idaho State code 36-103-36-104

2. Master Memorandum of Understanding cited previously.

3. Cooperative Agreement for Sikes Act Program for Isolated Tracts of National Resource Lands (BLM Burley District) in Twin Falls and Cassia Counties, signed March 11, 1976.

4. Sikes Act Cooperative Agreement for Implementation of a Wildlife Habitat Plan for National Resource Lands (BLM Boise District) in the Saylor Creek Isolated Tracts Habitat areas of Elmore and Twin Falls Counties, signed June 1, 1976.

5. Cooperative Agreement for Sikes Act Program for Isolated Tracts of Public Land (BLM Shoshone District) in Blaine, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, and Minidoka Counties, signed September 18, 1978.

### IV. Definitions

All the Wildlife Tracts (also called Cooperative Wildlife Management Areas or isolated tracts) are located within agriculture lands along the Snake River Plain in Southern Idaho. Tracts are located in the Boise, Burley, and Shoshone Districts of BLM.

Three Sikes Act Wildlife Habitat Management Plans are involved. These are:

1. Saylor Creek Isolated Tracts Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (Boise District), Wildlife Habitat Area (I-1 WHA-T-2), signed April 28, 1976.

2. Cassia-Twin Falls Isolated Tracts Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (Burley District), Wildlife Habitat Area (I-2 WHA-T-24), signed January 13, 1977.

3. Shoshone Isolated Tracts Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (Shoshone District), Wildlife Habitat Area (I-5 WHA-T-1), signed August 8, 1978.

Legal descriptions of the tracts are added as Attachment 1.

## V. Points of Agreement

### A. The Bureau of Land Management will:

1. Furnish public lands for conducting habitat improvement studies and project activities.
2. Designate lands shown on Attachment #1 as areas under Sikes Act Agreement and record this notation on the Master File Title Plats (MTP's) in the BLM Land Office in Boise.
3. Provide for land surveys needed to determine property lines. Post boundaries denoting sites that are public lands under cooperative agreement, open to public access, hunting, and, as necessary, closed to off-road vehicle use.
4. Provide technical and managerial leadership in coordinating the development of the habitat management plan and the Sikes Act Agreement.
5. Contract with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) for wildlife studies including habitat development work, vegetative plantings, purchases and construction of fence and irrigation system work.
6. Review any cooperative wildlife farm plan recommended by IDFG. If concurrence is not possible, BLM will work with the IDFG and prospective cooperator to resolve differences.

### B. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game will:

1. Establish studies designed to evaluate the response of wildlife populations and distributions resulting from work done under the guidelines set forth in the habitat management plan.
2. Provide the necessary manpower, vegetative materials, and seeding and planting equipment to implement the habitat work detailed in the habitat management plan.
3. Supervise all habitat work involving the implementation of the habitat management plan. Establish and maintain all seedings and plantings to provide for optimum survival.
4. Notify the BLM of trespass (grazing, agricultural, equipment, etc.) on the tracts.
5. Contribute manpower and equipment rental costs to implement the habitat work associated with the habitat management plan.
6. Supply the BLM with annual written evaluations of the response of wildlife populations that inhabit the area covered by the habitat management plan.
7. Assist the BLM in signing and posting all public lands associated with the isolated tracts program.

8. Under the Sikes Act, and with BLM concurrence, coordinate the development of any cooperative wildlife habitat farm plans. Negotiate one to eight year agreements with interested adjacent farmers. Select individuals that will provide the farming area and crop layout most beneficial for wildlife enhancement. Require cancellation stipulations to insure farmer adherence to signed agreements. Each agreement will be reviewed annually to determine any modifications.

9. On any cooperative wildlife habitat farm plan, authorize only the use of those insecticides and herbicides that have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

10. Make arrangement for the allowance of free and ready access by the public to all public areas and as much private lands as possible involved in any wildlife habitat farm plan.

11. At quarterly intervals check the cooperative wildlife habitat farm plans to insure agreement adherence and to monitor habitat impacts.

C. Jointly the BLM and Idaho Fish and Game Department will:

1. Support the wildlife habitat concepts presented in the Habitat Management Plans.

2. Continue to provide the necessary funds to maintain the studies and evaluations and cooperative farming wildlife habitat projects.

3. Continue to seek funding to maintain and improve wildlife habitat conditions on wildlife tracts.

4. Tracts can be added or deleted from the program with concurrence from both agencies.

#### VI. Constraints and General Guidelines

A. This MOU is prepared, approved, and implemented subject to Federal laws and regulations of the United States and those governing the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management and State laws and regulations for Idaho and Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

B. Nothing within this MOU shall be considered to be financially obligating to either party nor shall it be limiting to either respective Federal or State agency's responsibilities for management of their appropriate lands, waters, or resources.

#### VII. Provision for Review, Modification, and/or Cancellation

This MOU shall be reviewed every five years by either or both parties to assure its legality, validity, and applicability to the Sikes Act program in question. It may be modified or cancelled by either party upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other party.

VIII. Approval

We, the undersigned designated officials, do hereby approve this MOU for Sikes Act Implementation as authorized representatives for our respective agencies. This MOU shall become effective on the date when last signed and shall remain in effect for 5 years hereafter or until subsequently modified or cancelled as noted under Section VII, above.

Bureau of Land Management:



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MAR 12 1985

DATE

Idaho Department of Fish and Game:



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3/15/85

DATE

700 E. Fairview Ave., SP 68  
Meridian, ID 83642

December 5, 1978

District Director  
Boise District  
Bureau of Land Management  
230 Collins Road  
Boise, ID 83702

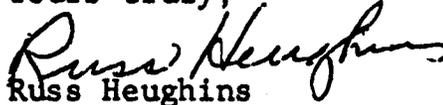
Dear Mr. Bibles:

The membership of the Idaho Gun Dog Training Association has discovered that some criticism has arisen concerning the Isolated Tracts Program in the Bell Rapids (Hagerman) area. This organization wholeheartedly supports the Isolated Tracts program as a means of rejuvenating the pheasant population and all other wildlife species utilizing this type of habitat project. The Association is vitally interested in giving this program a chance to prove itself. We also view this concept as a future management technique that will protect and enhance wildlife populations both game and non-game. It would be a disservice not only to wildlife but also, the Idaho sportsman to obstruct a worthwhile project such as this.

Since the association was an active participant of Governor Evans' state and regional Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences we have supported those recommendations to the fullest. These conferences highlighted the need for habitat improvement to protect and enhance wildlife populations. Since then the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has a draft pheasant restoration program. In this light the Association feels that it is necessary to continue the Isolated Tracts program to help ensure the success of Fish and Game program and other wildlife projects.

We, the membership of the Idaho Gun Dog Training Association, emphatically recommend the continuance of the Isolated Tracts habitat projects.

Yours truly,

  
Russ Heughins

# F&G Cites Habitat Loss for Pheasant Decline

By IUP International  
Slowing down or stopping the decline of Idaho's pheasant populations will not be done overnight, according to Dick Norell, game bird supervisor at the Department of Fish and Game.

Norell said the first thing to do in the "long and difficult seige" to save the pheasant is understand the problem. Idaho's pheasant decline has been blamed on a number of factors, including urban sprawl, sprinkler irrigation, pesticides, fertilizers, predators and hunters, and farming practices.

All these things have played a rôle in Idaho's loss of

pheasants by contributing to the basic problem, which Norell said is lack of habitat. Predators such as foxes or coyotes "become more of a problem as habitat decreases."

Norell said most farmers use their lands intensively and leave no parcel unfilled, resulting in loss of cover for pheasants which is most critical during the winter and spring.

"As habitat diminishes, birds are concentrated in marginal areas where competition is keen, and although pheasants are tough birds, the stress is often too much for them," he commented.

Norell said closing the hunting season on pheasants would not help because hunters take about half the annual loss of birds that would be lost whether they were hunted or not. He explained about 75 per cent of the pheasants hatched each spring do not make it through the next spring, normal for a pheasant population. Surplus birds over what the habitat can support must move elsewhere or die.

Norell also objected to the idea of more pen-raised birds, which he said were too expensive and did not survive well when released to the wild.

"I think the time is past when we can ask the farmer to raise pheasants for hunters at his expense."

Norell's solution would be to give some form of compensation to farmers for habitat they leave for wildlife. "We also must manage to a much higher degree public lands which have wildlife values," he said.

In other news this week from the Fish and Game Department:

The Fish and Game Commission will meet Jan. 27 to set opening dates for 1976 big game seasons. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. in the commission room, 600 S.

Walnut, Boise. A public hearing is scheduled between 1:30 and 5 p.m. the same day.

The department reminded hunters duck hunting in Idaho closes next Sunday, but an upland game bird season does remain open until Jan. 18. Hun, chukar and quail hunting continues in the Salmon River drainage in Adams, Idaho, Lewis, Nez Perce and Valley counties downstream from the mouth of Sheep Creek.

The same season closing date applies to the Snake River drainage from Brownlee Dam downstream, but Tamamy Creek, south of

Lewiston, and John's Creek drainage above Tolo Lake near Grangeville are excluded.

The department listed several precautions ice fishermen should take to prevent a cold swim. These include checking the ice thickness close to shore by cutting a hole. If the ice is less than two inches thick, fishermen should not go farther out. The color of ice also gives a hint about how safe it is. A clear blue color is safest, while a green tint is a sign of weak ice.

Ice cannot be expected to hold as much weight during alternate cold and mild weather spells. If ice is soft or slushy it must be thicker to hold a man's weight. In good conditions two inches of ice will support one person on foot. Any vehicle on the ice should move slowly to avoid creating "ice waves" that break the ice.

# WESTERN PERSONALITY



**LANNY O. WILSON —  
Bighorn Expert**

The desert bighorn sheep is unquestionably the most coveted trophy in America. Hunting permits for these sheep are exceedingly difficult to obtain, and the bighorn's habitat is hostile and lethal to all but well-equipped and determined sportsmen.

Lanny O. Wilson, 40, who works for the Bureau of Land Management in Boise, Idaho, is one of the most ardent supporters of the desert bighorn. A wildlife biologist, he is present wherever a bighorn conference is held, and is acknowledged to be one of the foremost experts on the subject. He gave an outstanding talk on bighorns at the 1977 Boone & Crockett Awards Banquet, and has written 17 technical articles about them.

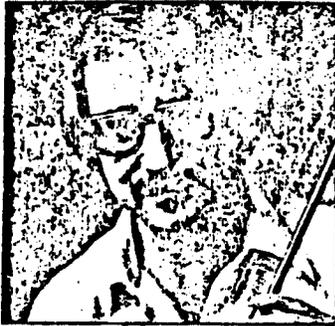
Lanny holds an office on the Desert Bighorn Council each year, and puts much of his personal time into this important program. He has written guidelines for capturing and reestablishing desert bighorns, and was a key figure in working with Mexico toward managing desert bighorns. Because of his interest and experience, Lanny is the first person to be called when a question about bighorns needs to be answered.

Lanny believes that bighorns, both in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, can be reestablished in many areas that are currently vacant. This is one of his primary objectives, and he admits that he'd like to see bighorns on every acre that they originally inhabited.

When not occupied with bighorns and other duties of his office, Lanny directs much of his attention to a unique wildlife improvement project. Known as the "Isolated Tracts Program," it is designed to retain isolated parcels of Bureau of Land Management land in federal ownership in order to provide shelter and food for pheasants and other upland game species. Without Lanny's program, many isolated tracts of public land in Idaho would be turned over to private individuals and "clean farmed," leaving little or no protective wildlife cover. Under his guidance, farm

cooperative agreements are established to create improved wildlife habitat while at the same time benefiting the agricultural community.

Lanny is without question one of the most dynamic personalities in wildlife management. There are few men who possess his dedication and perseverance in the field of conservation. —*Jim Zumbo*



**JON SHOOK —  
Vegas Bass Pro**

In five years time since moving from California to Las Vegas, Jon Shook has become recognized as one of the leading pros on bass fishing Lake Mead and Mohave. He also is one of the rare breed of anglers who enjoys sharing angling knowledge with others.

On one of his early trips to Las Vegas Wash area on Lake Mead, he landed an eight-pound bigmouth from shore, while losing an even heavier fish that bored deep into some tree limbs and broke off.

"Mead and Mohave have entirely different personalities and you must learn the moods of each to consistently take bass," observes the Las Vegas tournament ace.

He rates a black football head jig with plastic skirt best for taking bass during winter and summer months when fish are 50 or 60 feet deep. He switches to a black or red trout coloring spring spawning season when fish are shallow and goes to a red flitail worm if neither of these take bass.

As president of Silver State Bassmasters Club, he prefers Lake Mohave for lunkers, but enjoys Lake Mead because it presents a greater challenge. Shook claims the novel part of fishing Mead is that it has four distinct sections, with different techniques required in each. "It's like fishing four different impoundments," says Jon.

"Bass spawn earliest in Mohave usually the last week in March or early April, with Mead bigmouths moving onto nests three or four weeks later," explains Jon, who suggests that anglers in small boats are safer fishing Lake Mohave, which isn't so susceptible to high winds and danger-

ous rollers.

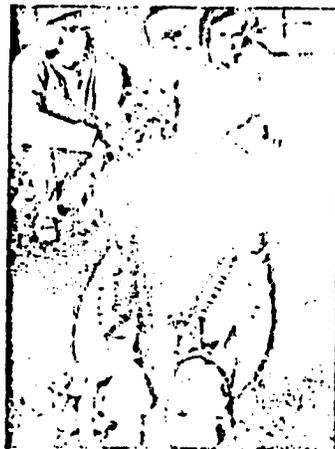
Shook thinks a 15-footer is just too risky as a standard bass craft for Lake Mead. He likes a vee-type hull for cutting through heavy waves rather than the popular trihedral design or bass boat.

Jon's favorite bass haunt in Mead is Las Vegas Wash. He claims a good fisherman never needs to go beyond this fish-rich arm of the lake to catch linesides. This summer he plans to concentrate more on night fishing, which he considers an underrated technique in both Mead and Mohave. It also is a lot more comfortable when summer heat sets in.

Jon has come a long way since the early days when he paddled around California's Big Bear Lake as a kid catching limits of three- to four-pound bass from an inner tube float and surprising local residents who figured the lake was fished out.

Remembering the days when he needed help, Jon now invites any angler planning a trip to Mead or Mohave to give him a ring at (702) 735-4028 if they need advice.

—*Bob Whitaker*



**ABE AND  
ANGELO CUANANG  
Sturgeon Experts**

That strange looking, prehistoric creature the sturgeon is the largest game fish in northern central California and anyone who successfully hooks and subdues one of these brutes is entitled to pat himself on the back. And among the sturgeon anglers who probe San Francisco and San Pablo Bays, there are only a handful who can boast of accomplishing this feat on a consistent basis.

Two of the most successful happen to be brothers — Abe and Angelo Cuanang of South San Francisco. Born and raised on San Francisco Bay, Abe, 25, started fishing when he was four, and his 22-year-old brother started when he was eight.

Their record in sturgeon speaks for itself: there were 200 sturgeon during winter seasons and catchers has accounted for a dozen diamond baubles. Abe's largest Angulo's top fish is 130 pounds.

The secret, they've fishing the herring spawning place in San Francisco Tiburon-California Cl Bluff near the Golden herring roe peeled rig during a heavy spawning herring for bait, they areas around Tiburon dous success.

The herring spawning December to March brothers fish these spawning. But that's not the only book for successful sturgeon.

The Cuanangs' buoy rope and when they've, they quickly disengage rope and follow the fish bottom is rocky, you right over the fish with you'll break it off in the Abu. "Ninety percent also hold the rod, if you don't, it work their way into the rocks almost every time.

Another key to success the rod tip. "Most people what to look for," says. "Even though big fish, it bites, you really have to wait."

They also have been in using the Golden able and kept in condition, from the and reel. Big sloppy, and the equipment at the.

The sturgeon has been tagged and held National Ocean Administration through the search Station.

And it's on the sturgeon, Francisco. P. elson's effort to appear a magazine, OULDOOD tured preservation fishing, International San M. of C.

Amongst as the "Cuanang" a lot of sturgeon that undoubt top fishing less affection.

Artn. Home News - 11/30/78

# Isolated BLM tracts benefit wildlife

By Stu Murrell, Regional Conservation Educator

The cooperative wildlife program between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Department of Fish and Game on isolated tracts of BLM land in southern Idaho has one of the greatest potential benefits for pheasants and other upland game in the state.

Recently, some local ranchers in the Bell Rapids area expressed dissatisfaction with the program indicating the tracts had little wildlife potential and were more important for grazing.

However, the BLM has been criticized in the past for not giving adequate consideration to wildlife on lands they administer. Sportsmen have also been concerned over the decline in pheasant numbers and have

requested the Department of Fish and Game initiate additional programs to reverse the trend, if possible. The cooperative wildlife program is one result of such concern.

There are approximately 26,000 acres of public lands scattered throughout key wildlife areas of southern Idaho, according to Dale Turnipseed, Regional Wildlife Land Manager. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game has two full time wildlife land managers working with local farmers on cooperative agreements in Region 4 to improve isolated public tracts for wildlife and provide additional acres for farming by adjacent landowners. A farmer signs a cooperative agreement to farm part of the public land and furnish water to the remainder for developing wildlife habitat. Some tracts have been withdrawn for public use to be seeded with dryland crops beneficial to upland birds.

Many of the tracts presently have degraded wildlife habitat, and subsequent poor wildlife populations due to uncontrolled fires, trespass grazing, trespass dumping and other abuses. The BLM and Fish and Game Department have been fencing the areas to help protect them from these problems. Other developments include watering devices, ponds and reseeding which will improve the lands carrying capacity for wildlife.

It will take some time for many of the areas to develop good wildlife populations and when they do, both recreational and

monetary benefits will accrue to the people of Idaho. All the tracts are open to public hunting and one only has to read the newspapers regarding the opening of pheasant season to learn how hunting lands can contribute to the economy. Comments such as, "All the motels are full in the Burley area for the pheasant season opener," point to monies spent by hunters at restaurants and on sporting goods, gasoline and groceries.

Many dogs are primarily utilized for hunting and cost the owners a considerable amount of money to feed and maintain throughout the year. Four-wheel drive vehicles and other large cost items are purchased with hunting and wildlife related activities in mind. It would be difficult to say funds spent for wildlife enhancement are not important to the people of Idaho.

## News of Record

### Marriage Licenses

Michael Simpson to Patsey Criffield, both of Mountain Home.

Edward Potucek to Jane K. Knox, both of Glens Ferry.

Kevin L. Collins, Mountain Home Air Force Base, to Kimberly P. Thompson, Mountain Home.

### Magistrate Court

James McGrath, Mountain Home, was found guilty of resisting arrest and was sentenced to six months in jail and fined \$1,000 plus \$7.50 court costs. The court suspended all of the jail time and \$850 of the fine and placed McGrath on one year of supervised probation.



The **ZENITH** Fair

**Saturday**

If you are considering your future you really

**One Day**

# BLM'S ISOLATED TRACTS

The management of BLM's isolated tracts in Idaho has had a short but interesting history. Over the hundred odd years that land ownership patterns took shape in the American West, it was inevitable that many relatively small (40 to 60 acres) parcels of public land would be left unpatented yet completely surrounded by privately owned cultivated lands. BLM refers to these as "isolated tracts" and they abound in Idaho.

To get a better picture of what has been happening to isolated tracts in Idaho in the last dozen or so years, we talked to Lanny Wilson, Wildlife Management Biologist in the BLM's Idaho State Office. Wilson said the whole idea of giving a management thrust to the tracts originated with the Burley District's Realty Specialist, Del Waddoups, when he was troubled about the land use prospects of the Milner Tract. The 1,572 acre Milner Tract, which is considerably larger than the usual isolated tract, lies along the south side of the Snake River in the area of the Milner Dam west of Burley. Waddoups felt the area had unique values.

Wilson said that on his initial inspection tour of the area in 1968 he found an excellent pheasant habitat in the predominantly sagebrush cover. On the river, alongside the tract, Wilson estimated that 6,000 to 10,000 ducks and about 300 to 400 geese were coming and going. In addition, there were other wildlife values plus a potential for an outstanding sports fishery.

Wilson and Waddoups also identified cultural and recreational values that they felt merited further study. The tract contained an easily identifiable portion of the Oregon Trail and there were apparent opportunities for recreational and educational experiences.

A complicating circumstance surrounding the future management of the Milner site was the fact that its lands were under application for desert land entries and in 1968 the Bureau of Land Management was a land disposal agency rather than a land retention agency as it is now. There were those who felt that an attempt to keep the land in public ownership to retain its wildlife, recreational and educational values would not meet with great success.

However, there were others who shared Waddoups' and Wilson's enthusiasm and hopes. One of these was the then Burley District Manager Max Bruce. Under Max's guidance Wilson conducted extensive wildlife inventory and resource studies in the area and subsequently prepared the Milner Wildlife Habitat Management Plan. It was the first wildlife habitat management plan to be prepared by the BLM in Idaho.

Among other values, the Milner site wildlife inventory revealed that upwards of 40,000 waterfowl could be counted on a given day; wintering pheasant densities measured an unusually high 1.2 per acre; approximately 1,320 pheasants were being produced annually; during the course of any given year over 100 different species of wildlife can be seen; and rough-legged hawks and golden eagles use the site as a wintering area.

To point up the value of the Milner Tract to discerning bird hunters Wilson said that on the opening day of the pheasant season in 1969 forty-seven of them from eleven different states showed up. Wilson also noted that on any weekend from January through April rabbit hunters can be seen in the area.

The upshot of the Milner situation was that the Habitat Management Plan was submitted to Washington in 1969 with the recommendation that the tract be retained in public ownership for recreation and wildlife. On April 29, 1970, the then Under Secretary of the Interior Harrison Loesch rejected the desert land entries on the Milner Tract. Loesch's decision stated, "bird counts show a high density of pheasants. There is no doubt the subject lands provide some of the best winter and spring pheasant habitat in the country. In the circumstances, even a small tract of land has extremely high public value as a continuing vital segment of the planned wildlife area. Because of the scarcity of this kind of wildlife habitat in Cassia County, I have concluded that the lands should remain in public ownership."

## ISOLATED TRACT MANAGEMENT ON BLM LANDS IN IDAHO WAS ON ITS WAY!

Soon other isolated tracts were identified in the Burley District and Wildlife Habitat Management Plans were prepared. One of these was for the Golden Valley area south and west of Burley. Others were identified in the Shoshone and Boise Districts. In the Boise District's Sailor Creek area 29 isolated tracts totaling 2,500 acres (an average of about 80 acres each) were identified and retained in public ownership before desert land entries were allowed.

Another milestone in the evolution of the management of isolated tracts was reached on April 5, 1976 when Idaho State Director Bill Mathews received authority to contract farm certain parcels where it is deemed necessary to supplement the food supply to sustain over-wintering populations of pheasant and other wildlife. Under such a contract a farmer may cultivate a portion of a tract and plant wildlife-suitable food crops such as wheat, barley and/or corn which is to be left for wildlife. In return, the farmer may cultivate other public land on the same site in order to recover his costs.

*Typical pheasant habitat found in many BLM Isolated Tracts in Idaho.*

One of the most significant events in the development of the isolated tracts program as it is today was the passage by Congress in 1974 of the Wildlife Amendment to the Sikes Act. This legislation encourages Federal land management agencies to enter into cooperative agreements with state wildlife agencies for the intensive management of important wildlife and fisheries areas.

Upon completion of a "Sikes Act Master Cooperative Agreement" between the Idaho Fish and Game Department and the Bureau of Land Management, a determination was made of areas to be developed under provisions of the Act. The first BLM Habitat Management Plan—Sikes Act Agreement, the "Cassia—Twin Falls," was signed by BLM's Bill Mathews and IF&G's Joe Greenley in January, 1976. Subsequently, the Boise District's Sailor Creek Isolated Tracts and the Shoshone District's Isolated Tracts Habitat Management Plan—Sikes Act agreements have been signed.

Wilson said that today there are 214 isolated tracts totaling a little over twenty thousand acres that have been identified for intensive development in the three Sikes Act agreements. The BLM and the IF&G are moving ahead to develop the isolated tracts for wildlife habitat as time and funds permit.

Many of the tracts have very little vegetative cover at this time due to past wildfires and heavy livestock grazing. This is particularly true in the Sailor Creek area (a large agricultural development area south of Glenns Ferry). Therefore, it may be several years before some tracts will realize their maximum potential where slow-growing shrub and tree plantings are established. Conversely, the results of contract farm agreements may furnish wildlife food and cover within one growing season.

Generally, there has been considerable support and enthusiasm for the isolated tract program, but BLM managers must look objectively at the more obvious problems so that the total needs of their land management responsibilities are met.

Some of the isolated tract problems are:

1. Suitability for agricultural development;
2. Suitability for intensive livestock grazing which would preclude management for wildlife values;
3. Weedy tracts are a threat to adjacent agricultural lands;
4. Costs of development for wildlife values may be non-justifiable; and
5. Adjacent land owners may have legitimate concerns about littering and vandalism once the public becomes aware of the isolated tracts.



The goal of BLM's isolated tract program in Idaho is to manage isolated tracts for compatible wildlife and recreational values (note: one tract near Burley supports an archery range and another a motorcycle park) and to meet other incidental wildland resource needs and values in a predominantly agricultural environment.

Idaho State BLM Director Bill Mathews said of the program, "the progress that has been made thus far by our resource managers and the cooperation that we have gotten from the public has really been gratifying. It appears to me, also, that in the eighties and nineties the BLM's isolated tracts effort may be one of its most successful programs."

# Conservation Trails FOCUS ON ISSUES

## Giving Our Gamebirds an Edge

• Several years ago, when I was living in Virginia, I returned to my native Nebraska for a visit. I stopped the car impulsively near a field on a back road not far from Lincoln. Wasn't this the field Fred Nelson and I had hunted before I moved away? The long finger of brush that had stretched from the wooded gully out into a corn stubblefield was gone. The land had been plowed and planted in soybeans—wall-to-wall crops, or clean farming, as the agriculture people say.

As I stood beside the road a dusty pickup loaded with wire and other fence fixings turned off the road just below me, pulled up, and stopped. The driver got out and asked if he could help me.

"I used to hunt around here," I said. "I remember a patch of brush that went from the creekbottom over there out into the field. Used to be a lot of pheasants there."

"There's no money in weeds," the man said, taking off his cap by the bill and wiping his forehead on his sleeve. "Why should I let some of my land grow over for birds so a carload of hunters from Omaha can come out here and blast everything in sight?"

In these days of soaring prices and increasing scarcity of food, why, indeed, should a farmer sacrifice some of his land so wildlife will have a place to live? It's a question as valid today as it was 25 years ago when Arthur Grahame wrote in OUTDOOR LIFE that "... habitat improvement, which for pheasants and other farmland game depends on our success in inducing hundreds of thousands of farmers to go to considerable trouble to produce game for other people to shoot, is bound to be a slow process . . . only an incurable optimist can even hope that habitat improvement on privately owned land will ever provide decent pheasant shooting for our hordes of hunters." (OL, December 1949)

A certain amount of agricultural

activity, however, is beneficial to some species of wildlife. Repeated stockings of pheasants, for example, were unsuccessful in the Sacramento Valley in California until 1916, when increased crop production stimulated a population explosion of the birds.

Now most state government programs try to duplicate conditions that prevailed before the advent of clean farming and big, corporate farms. In Oklahoma 38 state-management tracts are annually planted with small plots of German millet, African millet, and grain sorghum. In Iowa the state lets sharecroppers farm state land on a bid basis. Some of the contracts specify that several rows of sorghum (an important forage plant for wildlife) be left standing around field borders.

Despite such efforts, clean-farming and development projects continue to gobble up wildlife habitat at an alarming rate. Missouri alone has within the last 10 years lost over 1-million acres of forest land to various kinds of development.

The most telling losses, however, are the most difficult to measure in acres. These are the precious little brushy margins that biologists call "edge"—a little corner of a field here, a fence row there, and uncounted little "islands" and peninsulas like the one Fred Nelson and I hunted on that farm in Nebraska.

These areas provide travel lanes for game of all sizes, dusting areas for quail, and roosting, resting, nesting, and feeding areas for just about any game (and nongame) species of bird or animal you care to name.

What can the sportsman do besides sit back and watch wildlife-supporting lands disappear? Two of

the most striking examples of positive action I know took place in Nebraska and Missouri.

Herman Rossner, a sportsman and farmer who lives in Taney County, Missouri, says he was shocked at the results after he'd had his land aerially sprayed a few years ago.

"Nothing moved," he said. "Not a rabbit, not a bird."

Rossner vowed he would never use aerial sprays again, and he did everything he could to make his land produce more wildlife. He leaves plenty of edge around his fields, along with a 20-foot strip of standing grain. He is careful not to overgraze his land, he allows native grasses to grow where possible, and he tries to get others to do the same.

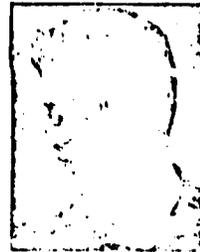
Rossner talks to civic clubs and P.T.A. groups. And he writes articles for local newspapers. He also heads a group called the Taney County Wildlife Food Club, which consists of about 200 members who donate their labor and money—and land if they have it—to wildlife food plots.

Another sportsman-conservationist who believes in doing the job on the land is Dr. Bruce Cowgill of Nebraska. It was the sight of a railroad crew burning off the weeds along a right-of-way that prompted Cowgill to launch his Acres for Wildlife program, which earned him the OUTDOOR LIFE Conservation Award for 1972.

Under the program Cowgill enlisted teams of citizen-volunteers to enroll farmers, railroad and highway interests, and other landowners in an effort to set aside patches of cover for wildlife. Other states have come up with the same or similar programs, and thousands of acres



Edge of the type shown here is excellent habitat for game animals. Cultivated area (left) is bordered by brushy fence row and a narrow strip of native grass



## WHAT AFFECT YOUR FISHING AND HUNTING

have been set aside in this way.

If you're an organizer, maybe you can follow the example of Rossner or Cowgill and start a group of sportsmen, landowners, or both, who can work together to provide more edge for wildlife. If you're a joiner, you can join a conservation organization and agitate for action to improve landowner-sportsman relations.

### WHERE TO GET HELP

#### Government Offices

• State and regional offices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, your own state's conservation agency, and colleges and universities offer publications, films, and specialists to explain what's being done to improve wildlife habitat in your state, what needs to be done, and how you can help.

#### Books

- "Gardening With Wildlife"—\$12.95 from the National Wildlife Federation, 1412 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- "Wildlife Management Techniques"—Robert Giles, ed., published by the Wildlife Society, Suite S-176, 3900 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20016, \$15.
- "Placing American Wildlife in Perspective"—25¢ from the Wildlife Management Institute, 709 Wire Bldg., 1000 Vermont Ave., Washington, DC 20005.

#### Films

• If you're interested in films about wildlife and habitat improvement, try the government offices I've mentioned above. Also, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, 1075 Post Road, Riverside, CT 06878, offers a listing of sportsmen's films, many of which contain habitat information. Modern Talking Picture Service, 2323 New Hyde Park Rd., New Hyde Park, NY 11040, is a good source of films for group showings. Ask for their listing.

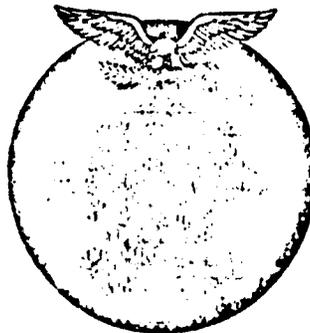
If you're neither an organizer nor a joiner, you can always set an example of decent sportsmanship and respect for property when you're out in the field. Some of the simple things you can do are: always ask permission to hunt, don't hunt near a farmer's house or outbuildings, respect the owner's wishes if he asks not to go into a certain field, and never open a gate without clos-

ing it securely behind you.

If you're a landowner, you might be surprised to learn that there are economic advantages to leaving an edge around a cultivated field. It adds more water to the soil, prevents erosion, serves as a barrier to disease, and harbors insect-eating birds.

Research has shown that if the edge is less than six feet high and is ditched along one side, it won't spread out and compete with crops. And once an edge is established, it requires little maintenance. Birds that come to perch on fences or limbs bring in all manner of seeds and leave them with their droppings.

Most hunters can readily grasp the importance of edge because that's where the game is. It's where you hunt, whether it's a woody border



America's Conservation Pledge was originated as a public service by Outdoor Life in 1946

along an alpine meadow or a brush-pile beside an Iowa cornfield. And it's the hunter who is among the first to notice when wildlife starts to lose its edge in an area. If only by his actions while he's hunting, the sportsman can be one of the most effective forces around to help give our gamebirds an edge.—Bill Vogt.

### AGENT CRACKS DOWN

• Waterfowl and dove hunters in North and South Carolina, be forewarned—Willie Parker, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent, says his team of men expect to make over 1,000 arrests in the Carolinas this fall on migratory-bird charges.

Parker is the man who halted the widespread practice of baiting (popular among some U.S. Congressmen) on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia.

Parker's enthusiasm for catching violators knows no bounds, and he

sometimes drops out of the sky in a helicopter to make his arrests. He claims he can tell by the way waterfowl are rafted on the water whether they're being baited.—Jim Phillips.

### EPILOGUE TO A FISH WAR

• In "The Great Fish War," a feature story in this magazine last month, I told how sportsmen organized a group called Save Oregon's Rainbow Trout (SORT) and successfully got the state's voters to approve a new law that bans the commercial sale of steelhead trout in Oregon. In that story I said the battle lines are already drawn for future fish wars. Well, another fight between sportsmen and commercial-fishing interests already is fast coming to a head.

Ranny Rancourt, president of SORT, and Mike Sallee, head of the Oregon Northwest Steelheaders Council of Trout Unlimited, have come out strongly against the opening of the Columbia River to gillnetters.

"The newly merged Fish and Wildlife Commissions (now the Department of Fish and Wildlife), in one of their first official acts, opened the Columbia River's fall season to non-Indian gillnetters, effective August 10, while keeping intact the closure on sportfishing for steelhead," Rancourt said.

Sallee added that "although sportsmen have not been allowed to fish in the main stream of the Columbia River since early last spring, they are willing as conservationists to keep the river closed so that the pitifully small run of steelhead in the river will have a chance to reach their spawning grounds and propagate."

Although the sale of steelhead is now illegal, the gillnetters, who are allowed to take and sell salmon, will surely take some steelhead in their nets. Under the law they will be obliged to turn the fish over to the state, which will have them processed and distributed to needy institutions.

"The passage of the law last November by 458,000 people mandated that everything possible be done to 'minimize' the commercial catch of the steelhead and gave it true gamefish status," said Rancourt. "Gamefish are to be caught on hook and line only."

As this issue goes to press, Rancourt and other sportsmen are fighting the decision to reopen the Columbia. "It's another fish war," Rancourt told me.

# Farmer Urges Good Food

## Production, Pheasant Habitat

By WILLIAM HARGROVE

The Idaho Statesman  
CANYON COUNTY — As precisely squared and leveled as a shopping center parking lot, in midwinter the furrowed Canyon County fields stretch away toward the horizon, marred only by concrete irrigation ditches.

No weeds, no fence rows, no corners of unused ground, no wasted space. And, as Central Cove farmer and conservationist Burr Trueblood would quickly point out, no pheasants.

That's not news to pheasant hunters, of course. Outdoorsmen have been complaining for years that increasing efficiency in farming is steadily eating away upland game bird habitat. As world food needs and high prices spur farmers on toward increased production, continued game habitat seems inevitable. Trueblood, however, claims it's an economic inevitability.

In fact, he contends food production could be enhanced through combined efforts of better soil management and game conservation.

"The situation we have in Canyon County now where you go out and for miles and miles everything is plowed just won't work," says Trueblood, a member of the Canyon County Soil and Water Conservation Board.

That it won't work for pheasants is clear. Fish and Game Department data show that in most of the county average spring breeding populations over the past five years were down 50 to 60 per cent from similar period in the late 1950s.

But just as critical, Trueblood claims, is depletion of soil by overcropping of the more profitable row crops such as potatoes and sugar beets, crops that once harvested leave little or no cover for game birds.

It is our belief that some farmers could increase production through better soil management, enough that they wouldn't have to have a

potato or sugar beet crop every year and could still make a good profit," says Trueblood.

In the parlance of soil conservationists potatoes and beets are known as soil depleters, while such crops as grain and alfalfa seed, which can provide good game cover, are soil builders.

Though situations vary from farm to farm, a common practice in Canyon County is to rotate potatoes one year, sugar beets the next, then a grain, and finally back to potatoes; two years of a depleter, one of a builder.

Trueblood would like to see the depleter-builder ratio reversed in many cases. Pheasants as well as the soil would benefit, he says.

For example, a man might plant sugar beets first, then wheat, then corn (another builder).

By planting the wheat early the first fall after beet harvest, green cover would be provided that winter. The second winter the wheat stubble and volunteer plants would hide pheasants. The third winter the corn stubble would offer pheasant cover as well as winter feed for ducks and geese.

"They (some farmers) think that economics won't permit it," says Trueblood.

"This is where the disagreement is."

But even if rotations were changed, the improved habitat still might not come about. The key, says Trueblood, is what is done with crop residues that can provide organic return to the soil and cover for birds.

Many farmers, for example, burn off such residue as alfalfa chaff to clear land for fall plowing. Acre upon acre of bare, cultivated land in the county in winter makes it clear many farmers would rather get the plowing done in the slack time of late autumn instead of waiting for a busy springtime.

A walk through Trueblood's own 200-acre farm where his crops this year were corn ensilage, wheat and alfalfa seed illustrates the alternatives.

In some fields alfalfa, corn and wheat stubble are left standing, providing game cover and preventing erosion. Some alfalfa chaff is cut and saved for spreading elsewhere.

"I saw fields that last spring lost two inches of top soil to wind erosion. If that soil was worth \$1,200 an acre, which is a minimum, he lost \$250 to \$300 an acre. And it could have been prevented," says Trueblood.

His methods seem to get good results as far as pheasants are concerned. The average brood size on his farm last year was nine chicks. The average in the state is five.

But Trueblood wouldn't ask other farmers to go to the lengths he takes. For example, each year he lets a small field go fallow as wildlife habitat. This year it is a 10-acre tract planted in alfalfa for cover.

Nor, he says, is it practical to ask farmers to forego efficient concrete ditches just to help pheasants.

Other measures, however, can go a long way toward helping with only a minor sacrifice of valuable land, he says.

Any alfalfa grower, he points out, has to have a bee house in the field for his pollinators. Trueblood lets a small area around each of his grow up in cover.

Settling points on his farm serve three purposes. They save eroded soil, prevent pollution of irrigation runoff and provide a mini-game refuge because a few yards of surrounding ground are left to undergrowth.

"Most farmers would put cattle in to graze on it or put chemicals on it to sterilize the ground to cut down on weeds," says Trueblood. "It just doesn't seem that anyone can leave the smallest spot open."

To control weeds himself, Trueblood surrounds such patches with a narrow strip of sterilized ground. "You can't let the weeds take you over or you'll go out of business," he says.

But, he adds, it's not necessary to denude every inch of unfarmable ground as might be done on the little corners where he has left piles of tree trimmings and brush as a home for rabbits.

"If you're going to have every acre bare in Canyon County to the point that there's no cover at all, we're going to lose a lot of things, a lot of the aesthetic values," Trueblood says.

He is one of the main backers of an upcoming seminar for farmers at the College of Idaho on means of combining soil and wildlife conservation.

The day-long session, to be sponsored by the county Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Soil Conservation Service and the county agent's office will feature technical advice on soil conservation in the afternoon. Talks by environmentalists and outdoorsmen are slated

for the morning program on Feb. 19.

# Comment and Opinion

## Fewer and Fewer Pheasants

In 1964 Idaho hunters killed an estimated 750,000 pheasants. As recently as 1971 the total was almost 600,000 birds. Its been declining rapidly. The Fish and Game Department estimates a kill of only 325,000 in 1974.

Pheasant hunting has declined more than 50 per cent in just 10 years. What's going on?

Basically what is going on is that year by year there is less habitat for pheasants.

Farmers have been moving to "clean farming," farming virtually all available land, leaving fewer undisturbed overgrown areas where birds can nest and find cover. The movement of sprinkler irrigation eliminates ditches and the cover around them.

Thousands of acres of farm land are lost each year to subdividing, much of it of the "urban

sprawl" variety. Areas along roadways or railroads where pheasants might take refuge are sometimes burned off.

Responding to the declining pheasant population, the Fish and Game Commission has this year reduced bag and possession limits and prohibited the taking of hens.

The limits will be two birds a day for the first five days of the season (a change introduced in 1974) and three rather than four birds after that.

Pheasant hunting pressure should also be relieved by an increase in the license fee for out-of-state hunters.

These steps should help. But they are not a long-term answer to the pattern of decline.

Farmers must be encouraged to leave some areas that offer cover for the birds. Urban sprawl must be curbed.

When publicly owned lands are opened to irrigation under Desert Entry or under the state Carey Act, one of the conditions should be leaving part of the land unfarmed for bird habitat.

Aside from the enjoyment of hunters, the pheasant harvest has great value to the state. It puts meat on the table. It generates dollars that circulate through the economy.

We seem to be gradually losing a bird that was once abundant all across Southern Idaho. A Game Department spokesman said the map once showed a heavy black line of abundant pheasant areas across the state. Now it's a polka dot pattern.

The Fish and Game Commission may be able to slow the pattern of decline with smaller bag limits. The basic problem is the relentless loss of habitat.

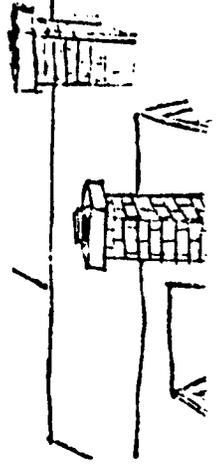


Robert Novak  
Punish

NEW YORK - Having convinced neither Wall Street nor Main Street that its fiscal reform is sincere, New York City's government desperately needs help from unwilling Washington to keep from defaulting on its bonds - an event that would carry potentially ruinous national implications.

The fact this city is so unrepentent could result in decisions across the country to refuse to buy taxfree bonds offered by the Municipal Assistance Corp. (MAC) at 11 per cent interest. With New Yorkers not apologizing for decades of profligate spending, there is an understandable desire by Americans beyond the Hudson to punish this city.

But the cost of punishment could run high. Sober financiers see not only a strong possibility of default, perhaps in September, but also a frightening fallout: civil disorder in the city, default spreading to the New York State government and, finally, national and even international financial difficulties.



## Sacrificing Public Safety

There is irony in the decision to curtail night hunting which is considerably more than

**MIKE SAWYERS**  
Idaho State Office

tablet paper; a practice that all but drove conservation officers out of their minds.

After clean farm practices started in the late 1960's, food and winter cover started to disappear from the area, and the wildlife populations went into decline. With the obsession for clean farms, weeds and stubble were burned along the edges of fields, and fall plowing laid bare the soil. Cement ditches were installed and circular sprinkler systems

wildlife against the adversities of winter. Even where such items existed they were seldom found together—a definite requirement for the pheasant's well being.

However, not all has been lost. BLM still manages many isolated tracts of public land throughout southern Idaho. These tracts, ranging between 20 and 320 acres, have always supported populations of ring-necked pheasants, but now the onslaught of clean farming on the Snake River plains

# HABITAT ISLANDS FOR WILDLIFE

*Extensive Management of Isolated Tracts Promises Benefits for Wildlife.*

If you looked at the world through the eye of a ring-necked pheasant, you would see that the face of Idaho has changed drastically since 1960. Looking at the world through the eye of a pheasant hunter would give pretty much the same picture.

During the 1950's, Idaho's Snake River Plains, a vast sweep of sagebrush and farmland that reaches across the southern part of the State, offered some of the best ring-necked pheasant hunting in the United States. As late as 1968, BLM wildlife biologists counted 47 hunters from 11 states hunting on the Milner site near Burley.

During the best years, motel rooms were reserved for the hunting season a year in advance. Vacant camp sites were as rare as an uncooked steak and tents sprouted in borrow pits and along road sides. Once, when vendors ran out of the proper forms, hunting licenses were written on

allowed farmers to irrigate and cultivate areas that had previously been ideal for wildlife. These practices continue today.

As the pheasant population declined, the State restricted bag limits and hunter interest declined. The impact on the local economy was inevitable. Businesses in the Burley and Rupert areas were the first to feel the pinch.

As public lands in the area passed into private ownership under the Desert Land Entry and the Carey Act even more pheasant habitat was lost. Both Acts provided for private individuals to acquire public lands provided they irrigated and cultivated the land.

To the pheasants and other wildlife, these changes spelled disaster. The habitat no longer provided all essentials for the bird's survival. Among these were food, escape cover, and the kind of vegetation needed to protect

makes them increasingly valuable for pheasant habitat. Some are literally islands of favorable pheasant habitat in a sea of cultivation.

When pheasants were plentiful, BLM managers saw little need to manage their habitat in the light of other priorities, but with populations in decline the value of the scattered tracts became obvious. BLM biologists worked with personnel from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to plan a program to boost the ring-neck population in southern Idaho.

Initially about 15,000 acres of public land having a potential to provide pheasant habitat are involved. Tracts slated for development are found along the Snake River south of Hagerman in the Boise District and in Twin Falls and Cassia counties in the Burley District. Management plans were prepared under the authority of the Sikes Act which directs BLM



BLM employee, Mike Rath examining a planting of 4-wing salt bush. Such plantings provide both food and cover for pheasant and other wildlife.

to cooperate with State wildlife agencies to plan for the effective management of habitat to increase wildlife on the public lands.

Tracts will be fenced to prevent livestock and agricultural trespass, and dry-land trees, shrubs and forbs will be planted to provide windbreaks and escape and wintering cover needed by the birds.

While implementing the program, biologists consulted with personnel from the U.S. Forest Service's Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station who have developed plants that are particularly well adapted to the arid west. The Station now has successful plantings along Interstate 80 where the soil and precipitation is similar to that on the tracts slated for development. Seed and transplant stock from the station has been used in plantings on the tracts. Further testing will determine their adaptability to the BLM lands. Many of the tracts being developed are adjacent to private farm land. BLM and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game are

A hunter checking a pheasant cock killed on an isolated BLM tract managed for wildlife.



working out cooperative agreements with interested local farmers. Such agreements allow the farmer to cultivate a part of a given tract if, in return, he will irrigate an equal amount of land set aside for wildlife habitat.

Farmers who enter into such agreements must follow a schedule of crop rotation approved by BLM and the Department of Fish and Game. According to the schedule, the farmer must grow grains or alfalfa five years out of a seven-year rotation. He can then grow potatoes or another cultivated crop the remaining two years. This system provides the food and cover needed to support a large pheasant population. When the grain is harvested the farmer is required to leave a five-foot strip standing at the edge of the field. The harvesting operation also leaves stubble which serves as cover for the birds. Livestock are not allowed on that portion of the tract reserved for wildlife, and farmers are required to control weeds.

These cooperative agreements provide for more intensive

management of the tracts than would be possible if either the State or BLM had to do all the planting and harvesting. There is a further advantage since, under the agreement, private lands involved in the program are opened to hunting.

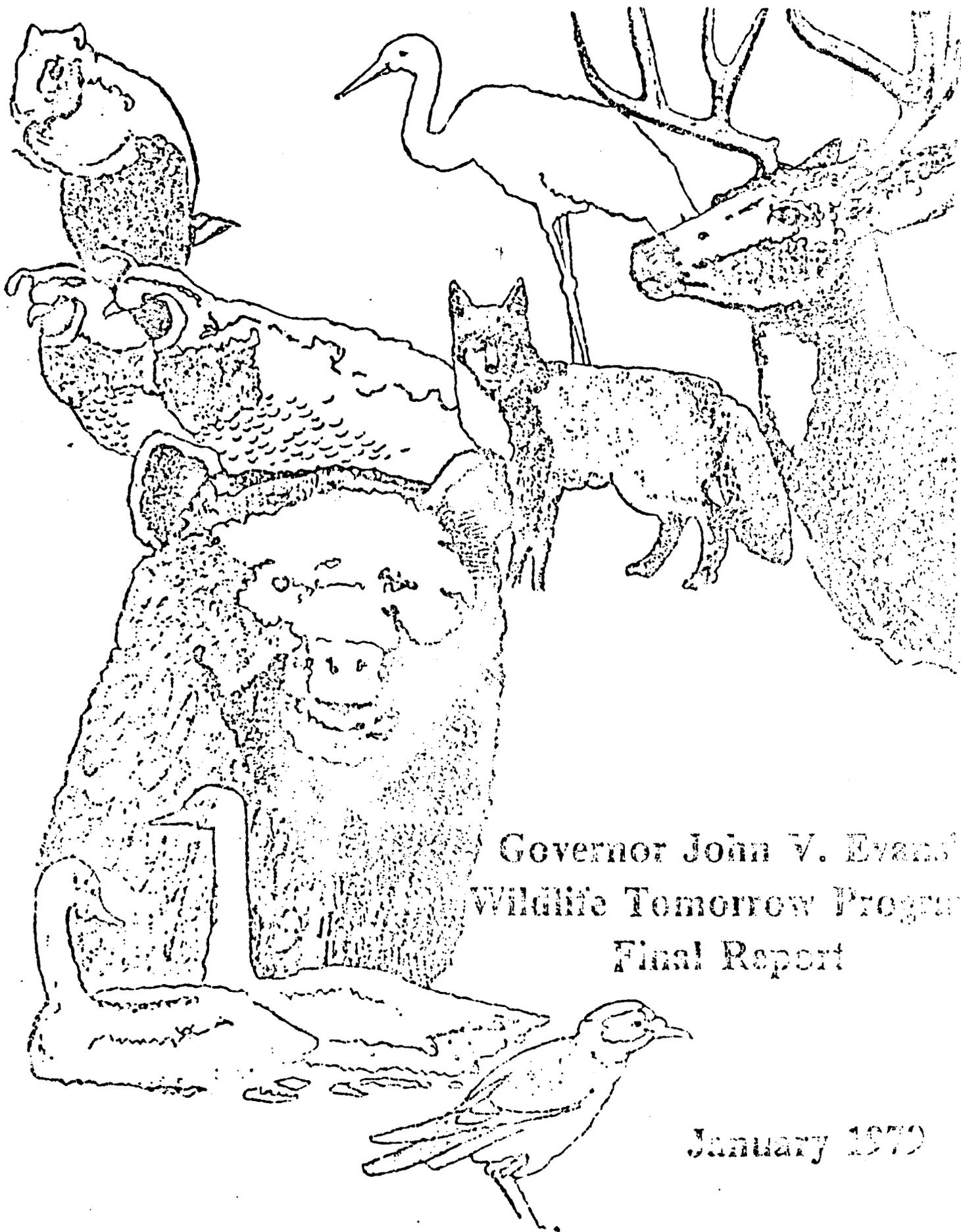
In past years, most of the private land in this area was ringed with "No Trespassing" signs, and even some of the public land was not accessible to hunters since it was surrounded by closed private lands.

The purpose behind the program is to increase the pheasant population at a time when their numbers are declining in other areas. As the grasses, shrubs and forbs grow taller, so will the benefits to both the hunting and non-hunting public. Wildlife biologists expect a ten-fold increase in the pheasant population in the managed areas. BLM biologists expect management and development to improve the hunting on adjacent lands. A total of 220,000 acres will be affected. As a result, the opportunity for pheasant hunting is expected to sky-rocket. The two agencies estimate that the program will provide up to an additional 40,000 hunter days when maximum development is reached.

Other wildlife will benefit from the program. The populations of mourning doves and hungarian partridges are expected to increase along with small mammals that provide food for hawks, eagles and owls.

Fencing of the tracts will help control trespass, and the experience gained in planning and managing the tracts will be useful in other public land areas. Plants that prove well adapted to the area will be used in the rehabilitation of land scarred by fire or other disasters.

Many local farmers have entered into cooperative agreements, and other agreements are in the process of negotiation. Ideally the program will bring together the ingredients needed to improve the pheasant population of the State.



Governor John V. Evans  
Wildlife Tomorrow Program  
Final Report

January 1979

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ii
Wildlife Tomorrow Task Force Reports	
Habitat Management and Enhancement	1
Inter-Agency Coordination	8
Game Laws and Enforcement	11
Information and Education	14
Funding	22
Summary of Legislative and Executive Recommendations	27
Appendix	
A. Synthesis of Regional Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences	33
B. Proceedings of Statewide Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences	53

Prepared by  
The Division of Budget, Policy  
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JANUARY 1979

## INTRODUCTION

In 1977 Governor John V. Evans sponsored the Wildlife Tomorrow Statewide Conference in Boise, Idaho. This conference was attended by about 450 persons that were concerned about the future of Idaho's wildlife. As a result of the success of this conference, Governor Evans and the Wildlife Tomorrow Steering Committee extended the effort to include six Regional Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences to be held in Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Boise, Twin Falls, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls. These conferences were held in the Fall of 1977. These conferences had an average attendance of about 100 persons and offered many recommendations on Idaho's wildlife future. Unfortunately, these recommendations were based on perceived problems and did not consider costs or the "State of the Art".

In order to better understand the identified problems and proposed solutions, it became important to gain an understanding of existing programs. Because of this, Governor Evans appointed five task forces, made up largely of wildlife professionals and the citizen representatives from the conferences. These task forces were charged with the duty of analyzing the synthesized recommendations for their assigned area and formulating three types of solution to the identified problems.

- These kinds of solutions are:
- 1) Legislative solutions
  - 2) Executive solutions
  - 3) Administrative solutions

\* Each task force was assigned one of the following areas of concern:

- 1) Funding
- 2) Game Laws and Enforcement
- 3) Information and Education
- 4) Inter-Agency coordination
- 5) Habitat Management and Enhancement

This report contains the recommendations of the task forces based on the input from the Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences.

## WILDLIFE TOMORROW TASK FORCE ON WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

Members of the Wildlife Tomorrow Task Force on Wildlife Habitat Management and Enhancement are:

Richard Beesley  
Rexburg  
Regional Representative

Dave Tidwell  
Department of Lands

Thomas Eier  
Lewiston  
Regional Representative

Burt Trueblood  
State Steering Committee

Dr. Steve Oki  
Nampa  
Regional Representative

John Tyson  
Idaho Cattlemen's  
Association

Jerry Thiessen  
Department of Fish and Game

Lanny Wilson  
Bureau of Land Management

This committee recognizes that every inch of land and water is habitat for one or more species of wildlife. However, it is beyond the scope of this committee to address itself to every habitat requirement for every wildlife species. Thus, only habitat management and/or protection for the major popular species, sensitive species, and special habitat types will be discussed. Popular species are game animals, birds, and fish; sensitive species are the threatened, endangered; and species of concern ( as listed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game ); special habitats are riparian situations, wetlands, and unique areas. By concentrating the recommendations to these species and habitats, it is the belief of this committee that, directly or indirectly, the major wildlife habitats in Idaho will be addressed.

In reviewing the recommendations and discussions of the Wildlife Tomorrow Conferences, the terms "winter range", "critical areas", "crucial areas", and "key areas", are frequently encountered. For discussion purposes in this report, the following terms and definitions will be used:

"Critical areas are those areas where animals of a given species tend to concentrate in maximum numbers during periods of stress and for other reasons, where the carrying capacity of the critical areas is the major limiting factor on the size of the populations."  
Examples of critical areas are given in Appendix 1.

### Habitat Loss and a Need for Habitat Management

Special management attention must be given to protecting, maintaining, and enhancing critical areas. Many of these areas occur on public lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Atomic Energy Commission. These agencies must give and be given encouragement to intensively manage critical areas.

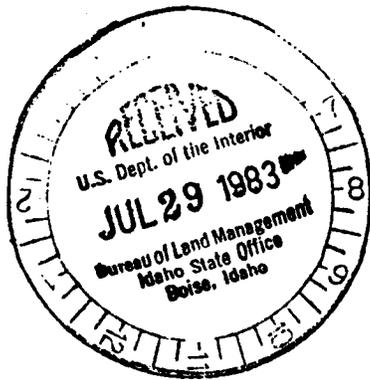
In 1974, Congress amended the Conservation and Rehabilitation Act (Public Law 93-452) now known as the Sikes Act. In general, the Sikes Act gives the Federal land management agencies and the State wildlife agencies the authority

to enter into cooperative agreements for intensive management of important fish and wildlife areas on federal lands. These plans identify specific projects and programs which will result in maintenance, enhancement and/or habitat expansion (burning, plowing, chaining, reseeding, livestock grazing practices, etc.) for critical areas. They also identify the responsibilities of each agency to reach the goals and objectives identified in the plan. Therefore, the committee recommends the Governor take the following actions:

- \*1. Request from the executives of the various land management agencies to accelerate the development of habitat management plans for all critical wildlife habitat areas within their areas of jurisdiction.
2. Encourage the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to help with the development of habitat management plans and enter into Sikes Act Agreements for management of all critical wildlife habitats occurring on Federal lands. An example of immediate concern at this time is the public lands administered by the Bureau of Reclamation in the Minidoka Project Area adjacent to Rupert, Idaho.
3. Request through the various congressional and federal departmental channels for funds to develop the various habitat enhancement projects and provide for intensive management of areas under Sikes Act Agreements.
- \*4. To encourage federal land management agencies when it is feasible and in the best interest of the citizens of Idaho to give priority to land exchanges that would consolidate areas of critical wildlife habitat.
- \*5. To encourage federal land management agencies to retain all critical wildlife habitats and seek alternative solutions when land exchanges or other land disposal actions are contemplated that would remove critical wildlife habitats from state or federal ownership.
6. Encourage the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Idaho Conservation groups to actively participate in programs offered by the Federal Government or conservation entities which will result in the protection, enhancement and the maintenance of critical wildlife habitats. (Example: The Unique Wildlife Ecosystem Program offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Particular emphasis should be placed on adequate funding for operation, development and maintenance after acquisition.)

77  
Several thousand acres of critical wildlife habitat occur on State Endowment lands and private lands. It is the policy of the Idaho Department of Lands to protect and to give special management attention to lands having high wildlife values which are under its jurisdiction. Therefore, the committee recommends that the Governor encourage the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Idaho Department of Lands to intensify a cooperative program whereby personnel of Idaho Department of Fish and Game will submit to the Idaho Department of Lands, recommendations and, in the case of possible conflicts to wildlife, alternatives for management of critical areas of State Endowment Lands. Cooperative programs for wildlife habitat development need to be encouraged and are as follows:

1. Encourage the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to develop a wildlife extension program as more funds and manpower become available. In this program, personnel of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game would be available to counsel and help private landowners in techniques and management of critical and important wildlife habitat areas.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
REGION 4  
868 East Main • Box 428  
Jerome • Idaho • 83338

Dear Cooperator:

Enclosed is a brochure giving an overview of our Cooperative Wildlife Management Project that may be of interest to you.

We presently have cooperative agreements with 48 individual landowners. We appreciate your efforts in this endeavor and look forward to our continued association with each other.

As you are aware, we have been monitoring the wildlife habitat portions of our agreements to determine how best to manage them for wildlife. Our primary objective is to provide nesting and winter cover for birds, particularly pheasants. After extensive observation of these areas, we feel it may be necessary to make management changes which will affect our cooperators in varying degrees.

In the past, at our option, we have allowed the lessee to take one cutting each year from the wildlife areas with the understanding it would be discontinued if it proved detrimental to wildlife values. This cutting was of low quality since it was delayed to protect nesting pheasants. After observing these wildlife areas, we feel the practice of taking a cutting may be detrimental and keeping us from reaching our objectives. In most cases, where one cutting is taken, no winter cover is left and inadequate residual cover is left for optimum spring nesting. In addition to these problems, brood rearing and reneating (late nesting) efforts have been adversely affected.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know our concerns in regard to the wildlife portion of our cooperative agreement. We will continue to monitor the wildlife areas and will make special efforts to visit each one this coming winter and during the spring of 1984. With these inspections and input from you during this coming year, we will be in a better position to make the correct decisions next spring.

Some management options available are: 1) continue the one cutting a year with a cutting date of July 15-20; 2) take one cutting leaving several 10' strips of uncut cover; 3) take one cutting leaving 8" of cover at the time of cutting; 4) eliminate any cuttings from the wildlife areas.

Bob Owen has recently been hired as a Land Manager assigned to this project. The addition of Bob will bring us back to our full compliment of two people. This will enable us to keep in better touch with you. For your additional information, Dale Turnipseed is the Regional Land Manager.

## WORK GROUP I

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE UPLAND GAME BIRD HABITAT ON FEDERAL LANDS?

Report presented by Fred Christensen

#### General Statement

Work Group I would like this conference to adopt the following to "reiterate a public ethic for land management for the state of Idaho."

1. Maintain public ownership of small parcels of land interspersed in areas of private lands that are important islands of cover for upland game birds. Plan with adjacent landowner to provide cover in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Game, Forest Service and farmer.
2. Grazing pressures should be regulated on critical areas by fencing, adjusting permitted numbers, closures, etc. This may be especially necessary for wet meadows, wetlands, stream courses and riparian areas, i.e., adjust grazing on key meadow complexes until after brood rearing seasons; sage grouse - protect isolated meadow areas. Further need for cooperative plans with adjacent landowners on private meadows.
3. Need to do a complete job of inventorying soils, flora, fauna. Basic to plan. Require public commitment for public land management agencies in providing upland game habitats in long-range land-use plans and objectives.
4. Federal agencies exert effective control of off-road vehicle use. Close key upland game areas either seasonal or year-round to ORV such as nesting, brooding and booming areas. This includes seasonal closure of existing roaded trails. Closed areas should be posted with reasons for closure.
5. Seek increased funding and manpower for cooperative agreements between Fish and Game Department and federal agencies under Sikes Act for improvement of wildlife habitat. Federal land agencies must have more biologists who can provide strong input into management plans. May be accomplished through agreement with Fish and Game.
6. Maintain existing and establish new permanent water developments, i.e., through spring developments and fencing to benefit both upland game and livestock and further to encourage Fish and Game to join Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in investing appropriate amounts of money each year in developing areas of shrubs to provide food and cover.

## **Executive Solutions:**

### **Habitat Task Force**

1. Urge the Director's of all land management agencies both federal and state to accelerate the development of habitat management plans for all critical wildlife habitat areas within their jurisdiction.
2. Encourage Department of Fish and Game to help with development of habitat management plans and enter into Sikes Act agreements for management of all critical wildlife habitats on federal lands.
3. Request through various federal agencies funds for habitat development.
4. Encourage federal lands management agencies to give priority to land exchanges that would consolidate areas of critical wildlife habitat.
5. Encourage federal land management agencies to retain critical wildlife habitats and seek alternative solutions when land exchanges or other land disposal actions would remove critical wildlife habitat from federal ownership. These principles would also be applicable to state land management agencies.
6. Encourage state agencies to participate in federal programs which could result in the protection, enhancement and maintenance of critical wildlife habitat, i.e. unique wildlife ecosystem program offered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

7. Encourage Department of Fish and Game to develop a wildlife extension program whereby private landowners could receive training and assistance in techniques and management of wildlife habitat.
8. Provide encouragement for the continued development of a flexible, versatile incentives program for habitat improvement by private landowners on their land.
9. Promote adoption of "Pheasants Tomorrow" program.
10. Encourage all land management agencies, both state and federal, to cooperatively administer and enforce road closures and restriction of off-road vehicles in order to protect wildlife and critical habitat.
11. Encourage the Bureau of Community Affairs to assist in the development of county comprehensive plans in order to ensure wildlife habitat consideration and protection.
12. Support the proposed wildlife/outdoor recreation economic study that has been submitted to PHRC for funding.

#### Information and Education

1. Encourage the State Board of Education to re-create the full-time, permanent Conservation Education Consultant position. It is important to not only encourage but to personally support this request. This is the strongest single issue raised in Wildlife Tomorrow.
2. Encourage Department of Fish and Game to expand the Hunter Safety Education Program, especially in relation to protection of non-game species.

I do want to mention, you should not do anything to the wildlife habitat areas without our permission.

Please feel free to contact us if you have input or questions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Gorgen".

Bill Gorgen  
Wildlife Land Manager II

