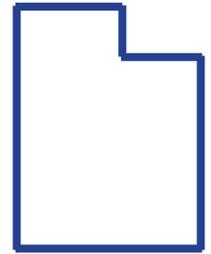


Watershed Restoration Initiative

UTAH



Partners Work to Restore Sagebrush

Since the Watershed Restoration Initiative began in 2004, approximately 500,000 acres of Utah watersheds have been improved to better provide for the needs of wildlife, water quality/quantity, quality of life, and health of land through the efforts of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development (Utah PCD). Utah PCD is a unified group of state and federal natural resource agencies engaged in the restoration of Utah's watersheds across administrative boundaries. With the help and partnering of sportsmen, ranchers and the general public, the group has made tremendous progress in restoring healthy lands in Utah.

Actual on-the-ground project construction involves a variety of partners including the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Utah State University Extension, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife and numerous private landowners and livestock grazing permittees. Watershed restoration methods include removing encroaching juniper through hand-cutting or mechanical treatments such as bull hog or brush saws, Dixie Harrow treatments, greenstripping to reduce fire hazard, and various other methods depending on the physical and biological characteristics of each individual site and the recommendations of restoration experts.



Richfield Restores Habitat with Dixie Harrow



The Richfield Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management makes significant strides using the Dixie Harrow in restoration treatments. A mechanical treatment, the Dixie Harrow method uses a large tractor with rubber tires, pulling a custom built harrow over the terrain. Currently being used in other parts of the state, it is a technique that was perfected by specialists from the Richfield Field Office and the Fishlake National Forest working together. In partnership with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the Richfield Field Office has treated (or is currently treating) 8,000 acres in four locations.

The Richfield Field Office has treated over 21,000 acres using the harrow or other methods. The harrows range from 26 feet to 36 feet wide and are pulled over the designated area once or twice, depending on the amount of disturbance needed. Seed is broadcast in front of the harrow, and then the harrow turns the seed under the soil as it passes. The treatment area is then rested for a minimum of two growing seasons to enable recovery of the site. Originally, the Dixie Harrow was used to improve watersheds and habitat for big game. To facilitate multiple use, the projects are designed to improve various resource and ecosystem values as well as reducing hazardous fuels. In particular, some of the treatments benefit habitat for the pygmy rabbit and sage grouse, possibly preventing these species from being listed in the future as threatened or endangered. And while the drought has killed many acres of sagebrush and other vegetation, the Dixie Harrow treatments enable the most efficient restoration.

BLM and Partners Restore Sagebrush in Harts Draw

The Bureau of Land Management, Monticello Field Office and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in coordination with the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development have been working on the Harts Draw Sagebrush Restoration Project. This project will be conducted in three phases over the next six years using a Lawson aerator, rangeland drill, and/or a Dixie Harrow depending on the site and monitoring.

Phase I is focusing on approximately 670 acres where sagebrush mortality has occurred. The older and dead sagebrush is being thinned by approximately 30 – 50 percent to open the canopy and allow for the establishment of young shrubs, forbs, and grasses being seeded from a broadcast seeder mounted on the back of a tractor. After extensive monitoring, using BLM and DWR transects, of the areas completed during phase I, the project will continue to be implemented accordingly. By the completion of the project in 2011, approximately 3,230 acres will have been treated.



Northeastern Utah Sagebrush-Steppe Restoration

Progress in restoring sagebrush-steppe habitat continues in Northeastern Utah. The BLM Vernal Field Office and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in coordination with the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development, and numerous non-governmental organizations, have completed a wide range of sagebrush steppe restoration projects on approximately 14,600 acres since 2004.

A variety of treatment methods have been employed to reverse the declining trend in vigor and health of sagebrush from seven years of drought. Treatments employed consisted of removing encroaching Pinyon-Juniper from sagebrush habitat (11,350 acres); Bull Hog treatments (1,550 acres); Dixie Harrow treatments (1,250 acres); and inter-seeding crested wheatgrass stands with sagebrush and other desirable browse species (450 acres). In addition, the Dixie Harrow and Bullhog treatments were seeded with a variety of desirable grass, forb and browse species prior to treatment.

Before and After Photos of a Restoration Project in Northeastern Utah



Before: This area of Clay Basin was overrun by Pinyon Juniper, which was destroying grasses and other native plants.



After: The area is now more suitable to wildlife because of the re-emergence of grasses and other vegetation that was being threatened by the pinyon juniper.