

Photo: Josh Metten

# ON IDAHO'S COMMON GROUND

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“Sportsmen and women know the same lands that are essential to greater sage-grouse are just as important to mule deer, pronghorn, elk and a lot of other wildlife. They’re important to our economy, recreation and our way of life.”

-Maggie Heumann, Artemis Co-Founder



# CRUCIAL COMPANIONS: THE HERDS AND THE BIRD

## IDAHO'S GOT GAME:



Desert Bighorn



Elk



Greater Sage-Grouse



Mule Deer

### What is important habitat for big game?

In Idaho it is a combination of habitat for elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep. Identified and mapped for Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Idaho Fish and Game.

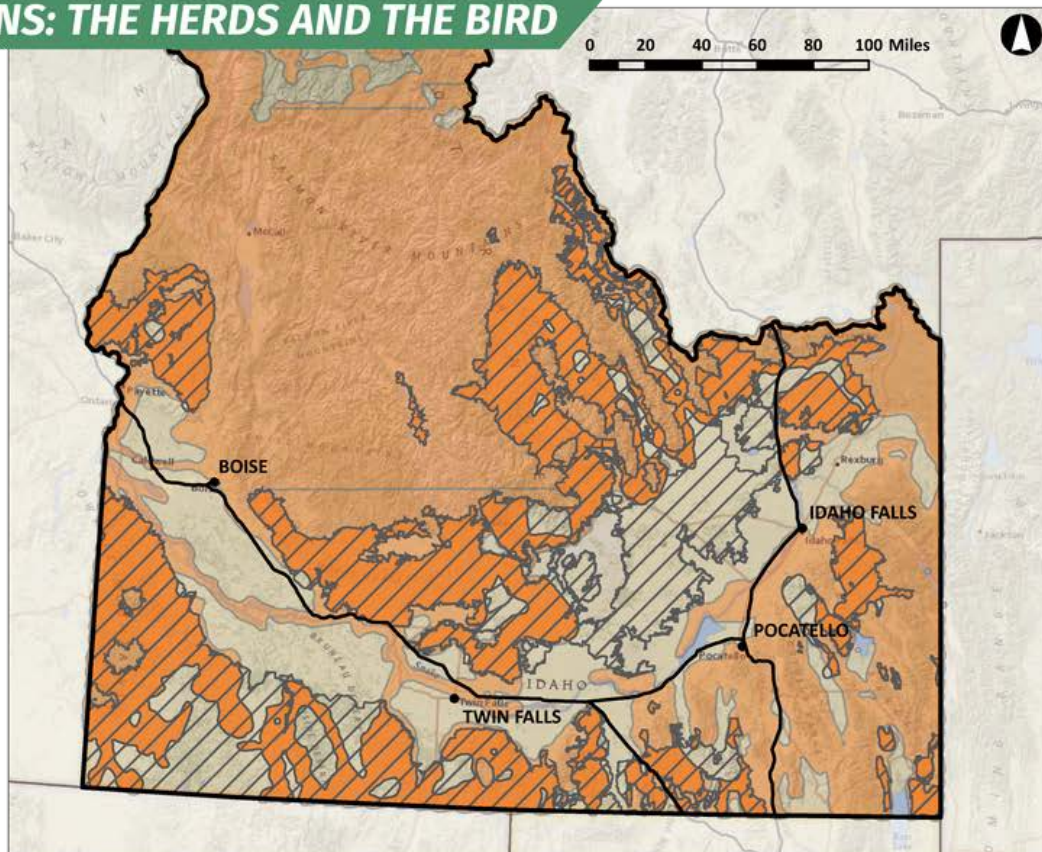
### What is overlapping habitat?

These are areas where sage-grouse and big game share the same sagebrush lands.

### Data Sources:

BLM, IDFG, Esri, WAFWA

Map Prepared by: Alison Gallensky  
Rocky Mountain Wild



GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT



IMPORTANT BIG GAME HABITAT



OVERLAPPING HABITAT

## Big Game and Sage-Grouse

### What's the connection?

When snow blankets vegetation in the foothills and mountains, big game animals like mule deer, elk and pronghorn depend on sagebrush lands, the same habitat that sustains greater sage-grouse. Wildlife biologists point out that healthy habitat is key for healthy wildlife populations.

For sportsmen and women who roam sagebrush country each fall, the connection between sage-grouse and other wildlife is clear. They know what's good for the bird is good for the herd. That's why they want to conserve sage-grouse and their habitat.

Sage-grouse used to number in the tens of millions across the West, but now number an estimated 200,000 to a half-million. Sage-grouse are seen as a bellwether species for the health of sagebrush lands. And sage-grouse conservation plans developed by the states, Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service with input from locals on the ground are the way forward for Western big game.

### Westerners forge a path forward

The Idaho Wildlife Federation is one of the many organizations supporting the sage-grouse conservation strategies shaped by the sporting community, landowners and elected officials, including most Western governors. The plans include safeguards for sage-grouse habitat that will benefit hundreds of other plant and wildlife species, including mule deer, elk and pronghorn.

**Idaho by the numbers: 74% of sage-grouse habitat in Idaho is also important to big game herds - 11 million acres**

### Common ground

The overlap between sage-grouse and big game habitat means an order by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to improve big game winter range and migration corridors can't be achieved if the bird's needs are ignored.

### An Uncertain future

But the fate of the bird and all the work to save it are uncertain as the Department of Interior considers major changes to the plans. These plans helped convince the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that sage-grouse didn't need to be added to the endangered species list. Failure to move forward with the conservation efforts could lead to the very outcome the plans were intended to avoid – a listing of the bird and the restrictions that come with it.

Several Western governors have said wholesale changes to the conservation plans aren't needed and have voiced support for focusing on sage-grouse habitat to rebuild the bird's population.

### Hunters 'get it' - You can help too

For hunters, conservation of habitat is a priority, because they know it sustains strong wildlife herds. Sportsmen and women were also integral in developing these plans.

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