



# Volunteer Habitat program

## pprsprpProgram

DECEMBER 2019

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## Year in Review— 2019

This newsletter showcases our Volunteer Habitat Program's efforts over the past fiscal year (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019).

The Volunteer Habitat Program is under the Southwest Region Habitat Program and is led by one full-time wildlife habitat biologist, Michael Young, and one part-time volunteer coordinator, Karie Pappani.

Our program partners broadly with federal and state agencies, school groups, scouts, NGOs, the City of Boise, and local communities.

All of this good work is made possible by dedicated volunteers who donate their time and energy on projects throughout the year.

We have long-term volunteers who have been integral to this program for up to 25 years as well as volunteers who have just joined us on their first project this past year.

Our program is known for supplying locally adapted native seed and seedlings for wildland restoration efforts. We also assist wildlife staff with sage-grouse surveys and fence removal, pheasant stocking, deer capture, check stations, and depredations. We clean-up along waterways and plant riparian habitat for wildlife and associated fishes that need sustainable, productive, river corridors. And much, much more.

The SW Region Habitat Program contribution in the 2019 state fiscal year is shown below.

- 1,130 volunteers
- 6,378 hours donated
- Valued at \$130,658
- Vehicle mileage and other donations of \$7,114
- Grand total of \$137,772

## Keithley Fire Restoration (continued on pg. 2)

The Keithley Fire burned around 18,000 acres in August 2018 near Midvale Hill, north of Weiser. This fire was caused by lightning and occurred on both private and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - managed property. Our habitat program works closely with BLM staff and other agencies. There was a specific need for a certain type of sagebrush that grew in this area. Our program met that need. (Learn more on pg.2)

We were the only agency that had collected seed from a subspecies of big sagebrush, *Artemisia tridentata xericensis*, or commonly called xeric sagebrush. It is thought to be a hybrid between mountain big sagebrush and basin big sagebrush. This type of sagebrush grows at lower elevations, on drier and warmer sites than mountain big sagebrush and on basalt or granite derived soils predominantly in Washington county, ...



Volunteer, Greg Hambacker, collecting seed for the Keithley Fire

## Keithley Fire Restoration (continued)

but it can also be found in Gem, Payette, and parts of Boise co.

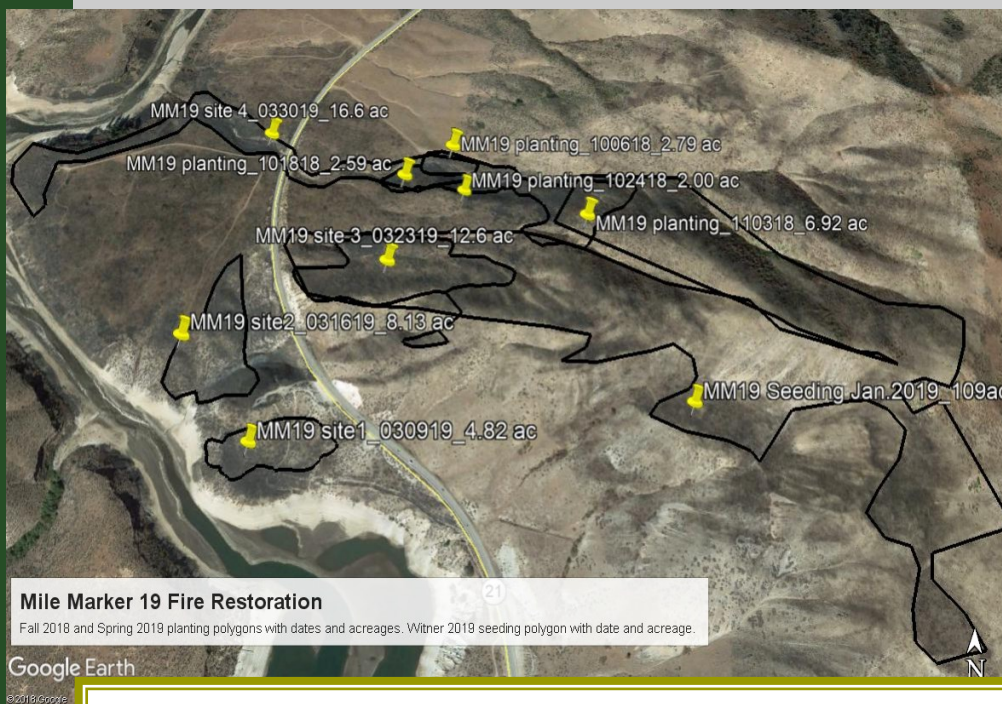
We concentrated our efforts, in response to the restoration needs for the Keithley Fire, to collect 1,500 additional raw pounds of xeric sagebrush seed fall of 2018. This seed was used to reseed 1,000 acres of land. We also

began planting bitterbrush seedlings in fall 2018, and ramped up our xeric sagebrush planting efforts in fall 2019.

The distribution of xeric sagebrush overlaps with winter mule deer range. Sagebrush offers a source of crude protein for ungulates with xeric sagebrush

being more protein rich than some others. It also provides habitat for mammals, birds, and other wildlife. The Hixon Sharp-tailed Grouse Preserve (learn more on page 3) is located within the Keithley Fire perimeter. This area is also a focus area for sage-grouse, making it an important area to restore.

## Mile Marker 19 (MM19) Fire Restoration on the Boise River WMA



The arson-caused MM19 Fire burned about 700 acres off HWY 21, above Lucky Peak Reservoir near Robie Creek in July 2018.

221 volunteers replanted roughly 60 acres of the burned area starting fall 2018 and continuing into spring 2019. These volunteers contributed over 1,200 hours to plant 10,400 bitterbrush seedlings and 7,400 mountain sagebrush seedlings. Another 109 acres were hand seeded in the winter 2019.

Seedling survival is being monitored at three sites.

## Sagebrush in Prisons Project- Institute for Applied Ecology

Our Volunteer Program began receiving high quality native sagebrush seedlings from the Sagebrush in Prisons Project in 2016. This was a new project intended "to provide unique and meaningful ecological activities to incarcerated adults with the goal of restoring native habitat for the greater sage-grouse in the great basin region" (<https://appliedeco.org/programs/sagebrush/>). It is a partnership between the Institute for Applied Ecology, Department of Corrections, and the Bureau of Land Management. Seedlings that were grown the first year were planted on the high profile, 280,000 acre Soda Fire that burned



Nancy Dewitt

in 2015 in Owyhee County.

Our local contact and contractor for the project is Nancy DeWitt. She is a native Boisean with lots of know how, compassion, and dedication. Nancy even donates her time volunteering with Fish and Game outside of her role with the project. We have continued to receive native seedlings that are in great condition and think of this project as a win, win, win for all.

*"The inmates learn new skills, overcome challenges, practice patience and respect, and share a huge sense of accomplishment by growing so many first-rate plants."* -Nancy Dewitt



## Wildlife Reservists Stock Pheasants and More

Wildlife reservists have been an integral part of our volunteer program since it's inception. A wildlife reservist is committed to assisting with the department's core-undertaking, to manage fish and wildlife for the citizens of Idaho.

This is year two of our expanded program and we have new reservists coming on board into the program.

This past year, reservists assisted with nearly every pheasant stocking day, lightening the load for staff in the early morning hours at four of our Wildlife Management Areas

in Southwest Idaho. "It's fun to release the birds and learn about the whole program," said Rick Robideau, reservist in his second year in the program. Rick personally volunteered nearly 20 days this fall.

In total, IDFG released 12,410 birds in the Southwest region in fall of 2019 and reservists helped with the vast majority of those!

Reservists also assisted staff with wildlife monitoring cameras (thanks John Sloan), beaver trapping and translocation (thanks



Bret Kimmel), transporting wildlife carcasses, irrigating food plots, teaching hunter education and clipping fins on rainbow trout!

## Hixon Sharp-tailed Grouse Area Fence Removal



*Photo credit Becca Aceto*

The Hixon Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) contains the only occupied sharp-tailed grouse habitat in western Idaho. These birds require intact, connected and healthy habitat to ensure their long-term survival.

When the Keithley Fire burned through the ACEC, it left an old pasture fence in disrepair that was not on the correct property boundary. Working with BLM, Fish and Game's volunteer habitat program stepped in and had three work days over the summer and fall to remove the old fence.

A local boy scout troop also spent a work day with BLM and in all, over two miles of fence was removed from the landscape.

A new fence was constructed by BLM with the support of Fish and Game. The net gain for protected habitat within the ACEC was over 100 acres of land for sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife. Thank you to the volunteers that attended this project and Idaho Wildlife Federation for supporting with a few volunteers and photo documentation.

## Riparian Restoration: Collaboration on the Cascade Strand Project

Our Volunteer Habitat Program has partnered with Valley Soil and Water Conservation District on many riparian restoration projects near Cascade. This particular project focused on stabilizing a stretch of the North Fork of the Payette River through the installation of a type of beaver dam analog structures (BDAs) instream and riparian shrub plantings. Additionally, the project included a protective fence, an ADA river access ramp, interpretive trail



*Kathy Lankford and Sallie Morse planting willows*

signs, and a monitoring camera for educational purposes. Partners include the Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, City of Cascade, Cascade High School, Valley County Building and Grounds, University of Idaho MOSS graduate students, AmeriCorps volunteer, Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game volunteers and Trout Unlimited.

We spent three productive field days on this project, working alongside partners and volunteers.

## Special Acknowledgement of Our Mountain Home Wildlife Reservists !!!

Wildlife reservists contribute hundreds of hours each year to CJ Strike and Ted Trueblood Wildlife Management Areas.

This year, reservists helped with our annual cooperative duck banding project by setting up bait, monitoring & relocating traps.

They installed beaver exclusion panels at pond drains to maintain the proper water levels. Reservists also transported culverts and water control structures to the Bruneau Duck Ponds in preparation for a wetland improvement project.

Reservist, Gary Pendegraft, along with Susan Lidback volunteered to transport Elliot the Elk. Gary remained in a hurry-up-and-wait stance for a few weeks as IDFG

awaited permits before he transported the elk to Colorado on its trip to Texas A&M University.

Glenn McNally has been especially helpful this year in hanging boundary signs at Ted Trueblood WMA and our Hot Springs Segment of CJ Strike WMA. We'd previously had issues with hunters wandering onto private lands in the area. This fall, area landowners expressed appreciation with no reported incidents!

Glenn took the initiative to clear broken cottonwood limbs hanging over an access road and organized the Legacy Park Free Fishing Day event again this year.



Glenn McNally

Glenn officially became a wildlife reservist this past spring and agreed to serve as Mountain Home District Reservist Supervisor, stepping in to fill the shoes of Brad Seymour, reservist of 10 years. Brad was this year's greatest program contributor with 215 hours donated to the fish, wildlife and citizens of this state.

Thank you Gary, Glenn, Brad and Mountain Home wildlife reservists!

*Many thanks to all of our dedicated volunteers and reservists!*



To volunteer please contact:

Michael Young at  
michael.young@idfg.idaho.gov  
208-854-8985

Or

Karie Pappani at  
karie.pappani@idfg.idaho.gov  
208-854-8993

### Fiscal Year '19 Top Volunteer Hours

- \* Brad Seymour=215.50
- \* Mike Tyvand=176.00
- \* John Sloan=161.25
- \* Steve Lipus=134.50
- \* Sallie Morse=133.75
- \* Bill Clark=127.75
- \* Kathy Lankford=122.00
- \* Dan Smith=114.00
- \* Greg Hambacker=109.00
- \* Carolyn Larson=101.25
- \* Bob Brantley=94.00
- \* Kirsten Severud=92.25
- \* Michelle Meyers=86.75
- \* Jason Chu=83.25
- \* Glenn McNally=82.50

*Happy New Year to you and yours!*