



# Can we stop cheatgrass?

## Examples of success

Ted Koch, Field Supervisor  
Reno Fish and Wildlife Office

# **Goal: Conserve Sagebrush Ecosystems**

## **Challenge: Fire and Invasives**

- **Cheatgrass is biggest threat**
  - **Cheatgrass dominates at least 2 million ha in Great Basin**
  - **28.1 million ha in Intermountain West have moderate to high probability of cheatgrass dominance in the future**



# Why? What has changed?

- “Fire and Invasives” are the primary factor for Sage-Grouse decline in the Great Basin
- Fire has been a natural part of sagebrush ecosystems for millennia
- Non-native Cheatgrass changed role of fire





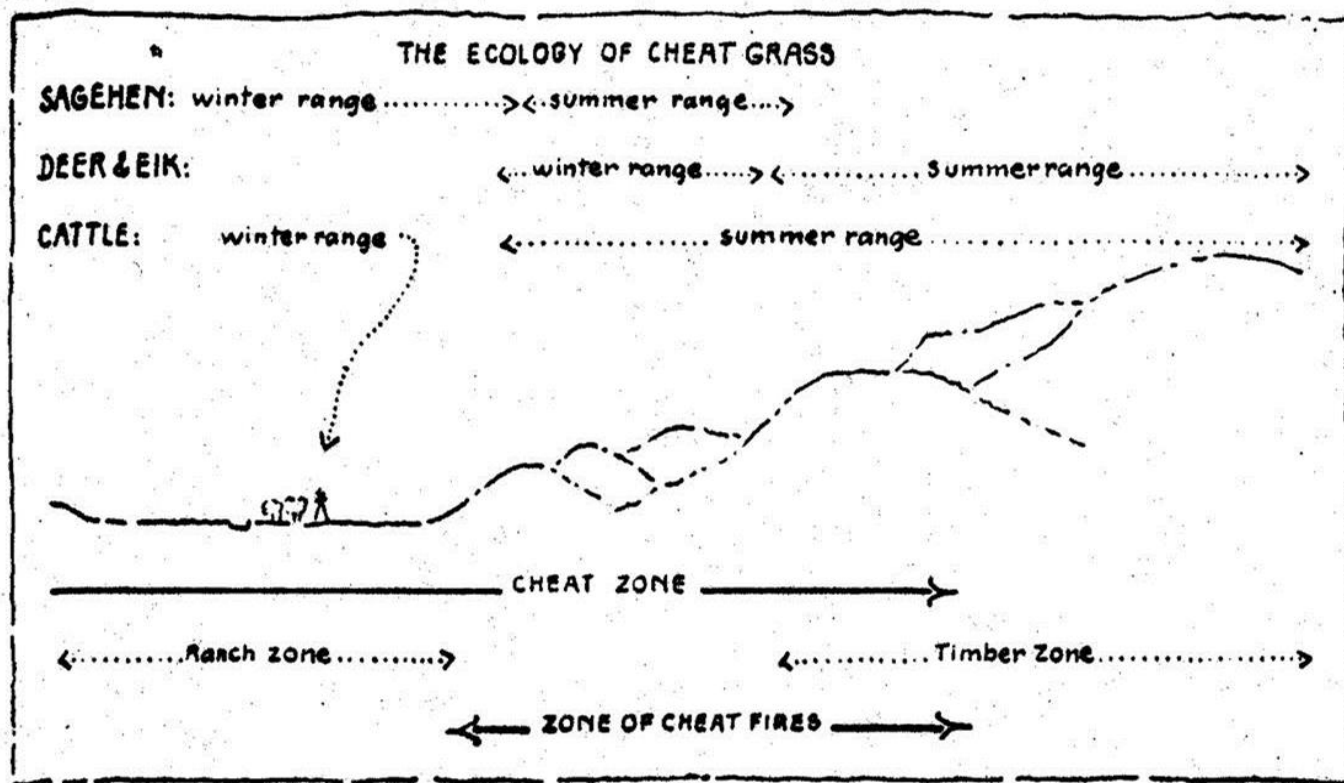
Is It  
**Fire...** and Invasives  
Or is it  
**Invasives and Fire?**



**“I told [Interior] Secretary Jewell if she gave me \$50 million more to fight fires I could put it to good use, but I’d rather use it to fight cheatgrass.”**

**Ron Dunton, Assistant Director for Fire & Aviation, Bureau of Land Management**





**ECOLOGY OF CHEAT**

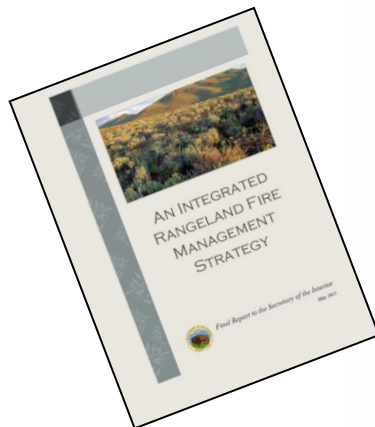
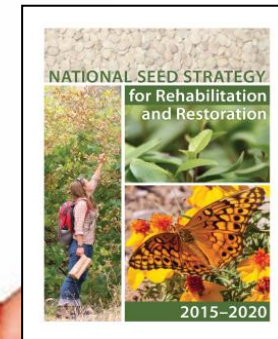
Topography of a mountain range. The zone of cheat fires coincides with the zone in which wildlife must winter, and in which wildlife is dependent on the browse plants destroyed by cheat fires.

“I listened carefully for clues on whether the West has accepted *cheat* as a necessary evil, to be lived with until kingdom come, or whether the West regards *cheat* as a challenge to rectify its past errors in land-use.” *Cheat Takes Over*. A. Leopold, 1941

“I found the hopeless attitude almost universal. There is, as yet, no sense of pride in the husbandry of wild plants and animals, no sense of shame in the proprietorship of a sick landscape. We tilt windmills in behalf of conservation in convention halls and editorial offices, but on the back forty we disclaim even owning a lance.”

*A Sand County Almanac.* A. Leopold, 1949.



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We can affect  
ecosystem  
function through  
management.

What about  
uplands and  
cheatgrass?





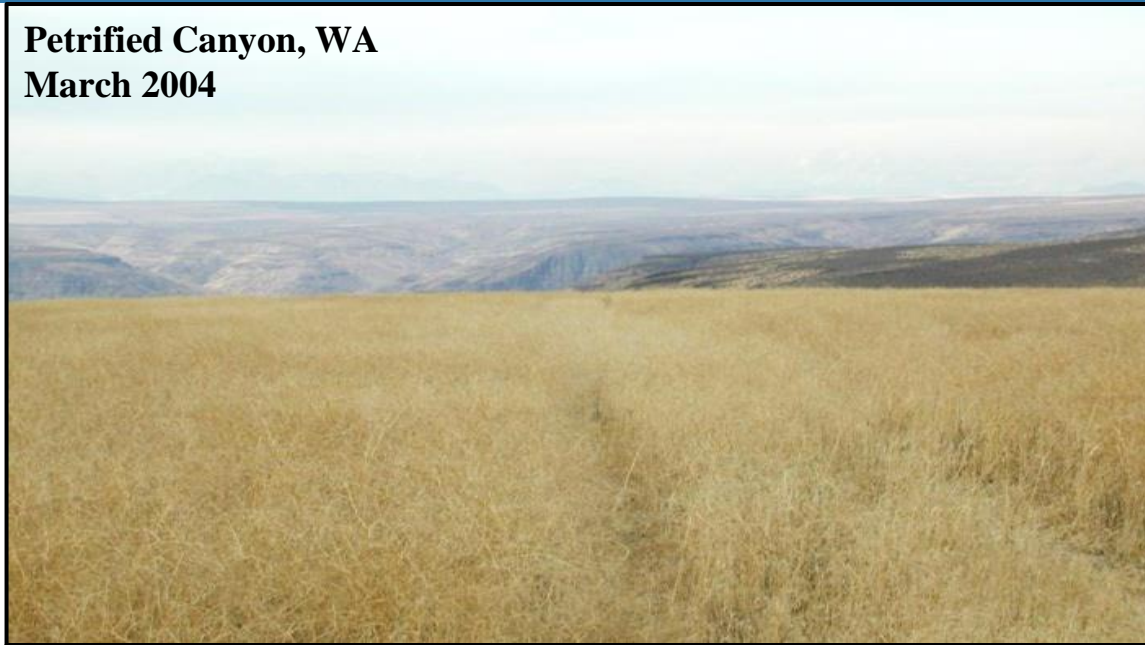


Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge





**Petrified Canyon, WA**  
**March 2004**

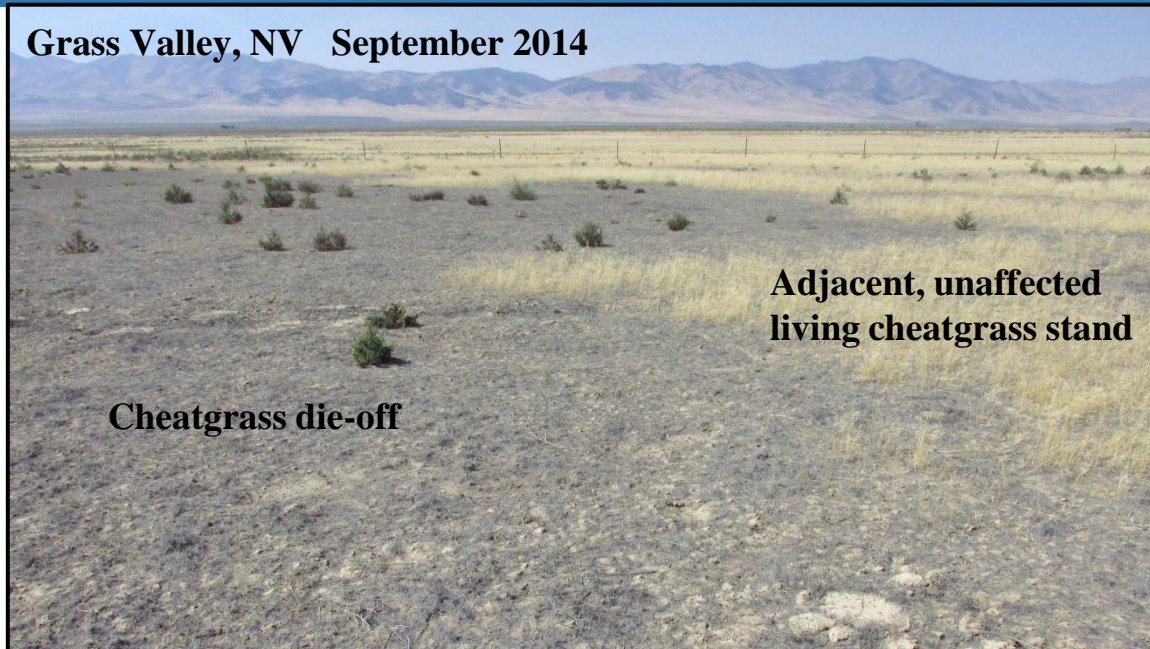


**Petrified Canyon, WA**  
**May 2011**





**Grass Valley, NV September 2014**



**Grass Valley, NV April 2015**





**Dry Gulch 2004**  
**Elko Co, NV**  
**2 years before Susie fire**



**Dry Gulch 2015**  
**Elko Co, NV**



# Yes we can!

