

**Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
& U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sagebrush Science Initiative
Request for Proposals**

This is an announcement of a call to prepare and submit proposals for funding research and technical assistance projects through the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Sagebrush Science Initiative. The Sagebrush Science Initiative is a collaborative effort coordinated by WAFWA to identify and prioritize science needed for conservation of sagebrush dependent species and fund and/or obtain funding for the highest priority needs. Existing and newly funded science will be incorporated into a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy to be developed by the end of 2018.

Proposals will be considered for traditional research (original data collection) or for projects that provide technical assistance (priority habitat mapping, modeling, adaptive management constructs, decision support tools, compilation or analysis of existing data sets, etc.) and have a clear tie to sagebrush dependent species conservation planning or management at landscape or range-wide scales. WAFWA/FWS conducted an initial Science Needs Assessment meeting for sagebrush dependent species in early June, where focal species for management within the range of sagebrush were defined as: sagebrush obligate, sagebrush near-obligate, sagebrush dependent, or sagebrush associated species identified as (1) at-risk, (2) influencing management actions and regional economies, (3) potentially being negatively influenced by management actions, and/or (4) serving as indicators of habitat quality or habitat niches such as riparian areas in sagebrush ecosystems. The table below contains the initial focal species list.

Birds	Reptiles and amphibians	Mammals
Greater Sage-grouse ^a	Sagebrush lizard ^a	Sagebrush vole ^a
Gunnison Sage-grouse ^a	Greater short-horned lizard ^c	Pygmy rabbit ^a
Gray flycatcher ^b		Merriam's shrew ^b
Sage thrasher ^a		Preble's shrew ^b
Sagebrush sparrow ^a		Pronghorn ^b
Brewer's sparrow ^a		Great Basin pocket mouse ^b
Loggerhead shrike ^c		Bighorn sheep ^e
Pinyon jay ^d		White-tailed prairie dog ^c
Green-tailed towhee ^b		Southern Idaho ground squirrel ^c
		Wyoming ground squirrel ^b
		Ord's kangaroo rat ^c
		Dark kangaroo mouse ^c
		Mule deer ^c

^aSagebrush obligate

^bSagebrush near-obligate

^cSagebrush dependent

^dSagebrush associated, conservation concern and/or likely to be affected

^eSagebrush associated, economic importance

Proposals should pertain to a species or assemblage of species in the focal species table, but we will consider proposals concerning other species for which a credible case can be made that the species meets the definition above at a state or regional scale. Because of the recent and ongoing focus on sage-grouse science and management, this initiative **will not fund sage-grouse** projects, but projects evaluating the effectiveness of sage-grouse management prescriptions at conserving other sagebrush obligate species (“umbrella species concept”), or impact of these prescriptions on other focal species will be considered and are encouraged.

Investigators should review the draft Actionable Science Plan developed by the Department of Interior in response to SO 3336 for science needs identified for sagebrush dependent species, as projects responsive to these needs will receive higher priority. Proposals will be evaluated generally on the extent to which they contribute meaningfully to conservation of sagebrush focal species and the development of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy under the FWS Strategic Habitat Conservation paradigm. This is an adaptive management process which includes identifying priority species, assessing current state of populations of these species as well as limiting factors, compilation of models describing population-habitat relationships leading to species-habitat decision support tools that support formulation of habitat objectives and identification of program priority areas and conservation delivery. Monitoring of impact of management actions on populations and habitats feeds back to evaluate model and program effectiveness, which are revised accordingly.

The Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC) framework suggests a common body of science needed to implement it, including, but not limited to:

1. Distribution, ideally including mapped relative density estimates so that key areas for conservation can be identified
2. Life history requirements, including seasonal habitats and migration patterns, if any, including location of wintering areas for migratory species/populations and land use trends in those wintering areas
3. Population status (size and/or trend) and cost-effective methodologies to obtain size and/or trend estimates
4. Vital rate estimates for species in decline or of greatest conservation concern
5. Models describing relationship between occupancy and/or population size/density and habitat quality, including anthropogenic features that may degrade habitat or reduce habitat effectiveness
6. Risk assessment models for key threats, including climate change.
7. Population or vital rate response to treatments and/or other management actions within sagebrush habitats
8. Likely response to sage-grouse management prescriptions within BLM Land Use Plans as amended and state sage-grouse plans or strategies, including response to pinyon-juniper removal, fuel break or other fire prevention/control strategies, and grazing, oil and gas, right of way, and other programmatic prescriptions
9. Species-habitat decision support tools to aid land managers

Studies that synthesize and therefore leverage existing bodies of work are strongly encouraged. Proposals will be evaluated on scientific merit and quality of proposed research; management significance; coordination and engagement with resource managers; study team qualifications; and budget and work plans. Projects satisfying the following criteria will be prioritized above those that do not:

- Projects with a larger scale of impact
- Projects with cost-share above the minimum
- Projects conducted collaboratively with wildlife or land management agencies (because science is more likely to be implemented)
- Projects fulfilling a need identified in the draft actionable science plan referenced above

This funding is intended to support relatively short-term projects (those that can be completed by 30 September 2018). We are not capping maximum budgets, but keep in mind FWS has provided approximately \$350,000 in science funding for grants and we expect to make several awards. Projects must have at least a 25% funding match from other sources that offsets real project costs, and a 25% match that can include PI salary, waived indirect above the 18% cap, or other in-kind contributions. If you are unable to meet the match requirement after a good faith effort, please contact WAFWA (San Stiver, Ken Mayer or Tom Remington) and we will attempt to identify and help contact potential collaborators or funding sources that may be able to assist with match.

To be accepted for consideration, all submitted proposals must address all elements described in the attached Proposal Template. Proposal narratives will be accepted only in WORD format and budget details will be accepted in EXCEL format. Project funding can be applied to salaries and overhead, but **indirect rates cannot exceed 18%**.

Project results will be included in the Sagebrush Conservation Strategy and are expected to inform collaborative, inter-organizational efforts to sustainably manage sagebrush systems and obligate species. Data sets, maps, and other products are expected to be delivered to the LC MAP repository. LC MAP enhances and facilitates data sharing and synthetic analyses while retaining access control in the hands of each investigator.

Proposals should be submitted to the WAFWA Sagebrush Science Coordinator, Dr. Tom Remington (remingtontom@msn.com), electronically when completed, **but no later than October 14, 2016**. Proposals will be reviewed and ranked by the Sagebrush Science Initiative Oversight Committee, a group of scientists and managers familiar with sagebrush conservation from Federal and State agencies as well as Universities. Final selection of project awards will be made by October 31, 2016.

If you should have any questions, please contact Tom Remington at remingtontom@msn.com or at 970-221-3310.

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PROPOSAL FORMAT

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: We encourage collaborative development of proposals among the Great Basin LCC, Great Northern LCC, Southern Rockies LCC, Plains and Prairie Potholes LCC, State and Provincial Wildlife Management Agencies, Universities, and Non-Governmental organizations. Letters or other expressions of support from State, Provincial and Federal Management Agencies, and from the Steering Committee of the respective LCC(s) are also encouraged and recommended.

Electronically submit the proposal to Dr. Tom Remington, WAFWA Sagebrush Science Initiative Project Coordinator, at remingtontom@msn.com as soon as complete but no later than 5 p.m. MDT on 14 October, 2016.

Proposals may not exceed 7 pages (6 page maximum for proposal, 1 page for budget breakout, no appendices beyond page limit), must be in 10 point or larger font, with margins of half-inch or larger. Complete proposal must not exceed 5 mb in size so that they can be readily shared electronically among reviewers. If maps or other illustrations exceed this limit please include links to URLs where they can be retrieved. Proposals must contain the following elements:

- 1. TITLE:** Provide a brief descriptive title for the project.
- 2. PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR:** Provide the name, title, mailing address, telephone, fax, and e-mail of the principal investigator or in the case of multiple principal investigators, the name of the contact person.
- 3. PARTNERSHIPS AND ROLES:** Provide the names, titles, mailing addresses, telephones faxes, email addresses, and the specific roles of each partner that will be involved in this project through added expertise, funding, in-kind contributions, etc. Itemize and identify contributions in the budget section of the proposal by partner. Indicate if partners are supportive but otherwise not directly involved in conduct of the project.
- 4. TYPE OF SUPPORT REQUESTED:** Identify whether this proposal is a request for research support, management support and/or extant data integration/interrogation. There may be aspects of all three in a proposal, please indicate if this is the case.

Research is a systematic investigation designed to test a hypothesis, address specific questions, represent a descriptive inventory, status survey, or model development; permit accurate conclusions to be drawn; and thereby to develop or contribute to the base of knowledge. Research is usually described in a formal protocol that sets forth an objective and a set of procedures designed to reach that objective.

Management Support is the process of scientists working in close cooperation with land and resource managers and other scientists to interpret, implement, and evaluate research results, technical information, findings, techniques, recommendations and/or provide special equipment and assist with its operation.

Extant Data Integration/Interrogation is the acquisition of extant data sets from one or more sources and the analysis and/or reformatting or rescaling of data for delivery and use by the LC MAP platform, along with the appropriate and standard-compliant metadata to adequately describe the delivered data sets.

- 5. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:** Clearly describe the focal species being addressed, the exact management problem and how the proposed project will address this need? If relevant, describe the geographic area(s).
- 6. OBJECTIVES:** Clearly describe the goals and objectives and how they will address the management problem. Objective statements are specifications of the primary products or results to be derived from research. They should be directly and obviously linked to management needs described in the Problem Statement. Objectives drive the development of methods, particularly sampling plans, identification of data to be collected, determination of sample sizes, and methods of data analysis. Tasks such as reviewing existing literature, locating a suitable study site, or evaluating the effectiveness of gear are not objectives, but should be described in Methods.
- 7. METHODS AND STUDY AREA:** Clearly describe methodologies and how they will achieve the stated objectives. Methods must detail the means by which each of the objectives will be achieved. Provide sufficient detail so that the likelihood of achieving each of the objectives can be fully evaluated. Include a description of the proposed study area(s).
- 8. PROJECT DURATION:** Provide the start date and completion date (the completion date is when deliverables are provided to WAFWA). All deliverables are due by 30 Sept. 2018 – no extensions will be given.
- 9. PRIORITY:** State how project and deliverables satisfy one or more of the research, management, and/or data needs of sagebrush focal species described above, and how the project deliverables will support the development or implementation of a Sagebrush Conservation Strategy as described in the Request for Proposals.
- 10. PRODUCTS AND SCHEDULE:** Products resulting from the proposed research or other project should be clearly defined, and a delivery date specified. Vague terms such as ‘final report’ as a product are not adequate since such terms leave a great deal of latitude in both format and content, sometimes resulting in a less than desired report. Electronic products streamline product dissemination as well as enable incorporation of products into the LC MAP portal.

11. BUDGET: Provide, in a separate .xls file, realistic costs and itemize in the following budget categories: (1) Operating Expenses; (2) Supplies & Equipment; (3) Salaries and fringe benefits, (4) Travel, and (5) Overhead.

- Salaries for technical support, temporary and/or contract employees are eligible for funding.
- If a project involves researchers with different overhead rates, please apply the appropriate rates to each portion.
- Itemize partner contributions in the budget breakout.
- Include details on matching funds and in-kind contributions as indicators of partner commitments and indication of the leverage the project brings.