

UTAH ACTION PLAN

For

Implementation of Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3362: “Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors”

Introduction - There was a great deal of excitement in Salt Lake City during February of 2018 as Interior Secretary Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3362 (SO 3362, Appendix E) at the Western Hunting and Conservation Expo (EXPO). There were over 50,000 sportsmen and women that attended the EXPO. The Director and many personnel of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and their Department’s Executive Director were in attendance at the signing.

The timing of the UDWR Wildlife Migration Initiative created in 2017 couldn’t have been better. Its purpose is to document, preserve and enhance movement of wildlife species throughout Utah. Currently, the Migration Initiative is leading a large-scale effort to describe movements and habitat use for mule deer, elk, and pronghorn. SO 3362 directs the bureaus within the Department of Interior (DOI) to collaborate and work closely with the respective state wildlife agency. The states have direct responsibility and jurisdiction for the management of big game and the Order recognizes this as well as the rights of private landowners.

Conditions in the broader landscape may influence the function of migration corridors and sustainability of big game populations. Such conditions may include habitat fragmentation, land use patterns, resource management, or urbanization. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the USDA Forest Service and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, will collaborate with DOI, the states, and other natural resource managers across the broader landscape when developing an all-lands approach to research, planning, and management, for ecological resources, to include migration corridors in a manner that promotes the welfare and populations of elk, deer, and pronghorn, as well as the ecological integrity of terrestrial ecosystems in the plan area.

Utah has approximately 52,696,960 total acres, 33,275,132 or 63% of which are under the management authority of the federal government. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 22,882,950 acres; the US Forest Service (FS) manages 8,178,600 acres; and the National Park Service (NPS) manages 2,022,600 acres. The Department of Defense and others make up the rest of federal ownership. Also, the State of Utah owns 3,824,800 acres and private lands are weaved throughout big game habitats. This ownership structure requires cooperative partnerships to work across all the habitat categories and ownerships for big game species. A map of Utah Landownership is found in Appendix A.

“In Utah, we have a critical need for big-game movement and habitat use data, because we have limited knowledge of how those species move and use their habitats. Additionally, Utah is

experiencing a period of rapid change. It is one of the fastest growing states in the country, and the population will likely double in the next 50 years. Rapid growth in Utah has greatly increased demand for water, energy, housing and other resources which can significantly impact big-game movements and habitats. For example, traffic volumes in the state have doubled in just 25 years. Additionally, many of the big-game winter ranges in Utah are experiencing degradation from the encroachment of pinyon/juniper forests due to fire suppression.” (Olson, 2018)

Corridors/Winter Range – The UDWR has identified their top 3 winter range habitat restoration priorities. 1. Miller Creek, 2. Cockey Hollow and 3. Little Bear Valley. All three projects have the necessary components completed such as planning, design, NEPA, cultural resource surveys etc. and could be implemented immediately.

The UDWR is actively mapping migration corridors for big game and developing tools to share corridor information with partners. Corridor maps have been constructed for the Paunsaugunt mule deer population in Southern Utah. The UDWR is also developing corridor maps for the Book Cliffs unit in eastern Utah and the Cache unit in northern unit. Corridor data has been shared with BLM and UDOT. A feature service was created to share corridor information directly with UDOT so they have the most current corridor information available for planning road projects.

1. Miller Creek restoration project

The Miller Creek restoration project (Appendix B) is located in central Utah south of Price, Utah (Fig. 1). The area is crucial winter range for mule deer and elk. The Miller Creek area has an expansive pinyon/juniper forest that is encroaching into sagebrush habitats. The project is designed to restore 1,098 acres (78% is on BLM land) of winter range by removing pinyon and juniper trees. The \$500,000 project is supported many partners. We are asking for \$50,000 to help complete this important project.

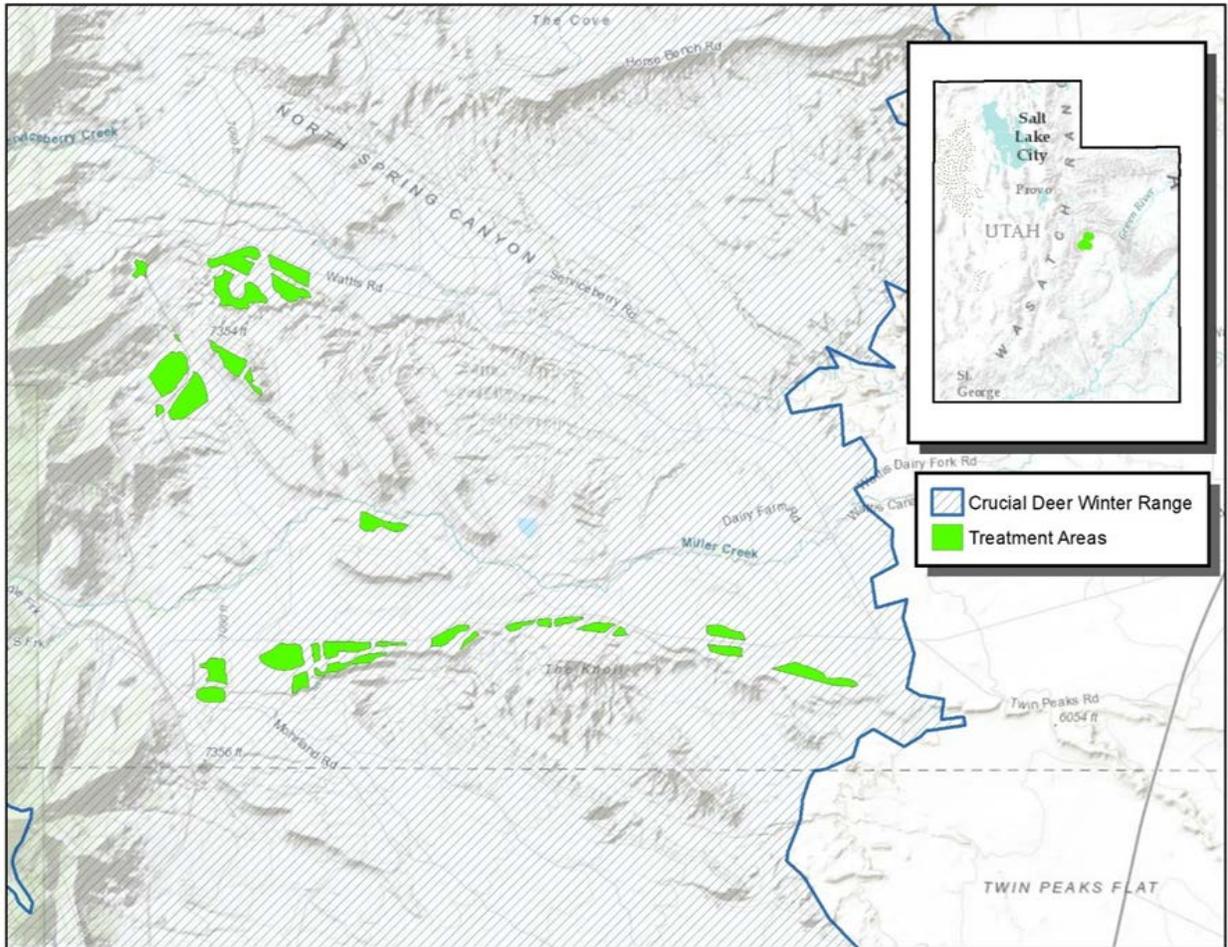


Figure 1. The Miller Creek restoration area on crucial winter range in central Utah.

2. Cockey Hollow restoration project

The Cockey Hollow restoration project (Appendix C) is located in northeastern Utah on a state owned wildlife management area (Fig. 2). The area is crucial winter range for deer and elk but is experiencing pinyon/juniper encroachment. This project will remove 663 acres of juniper and pinyon trees using a bull hog. After the trees are removed, the area will be reseeded. The estimated the cost of the project is \$303,000. We are asking for \$100,000 to help complete it.

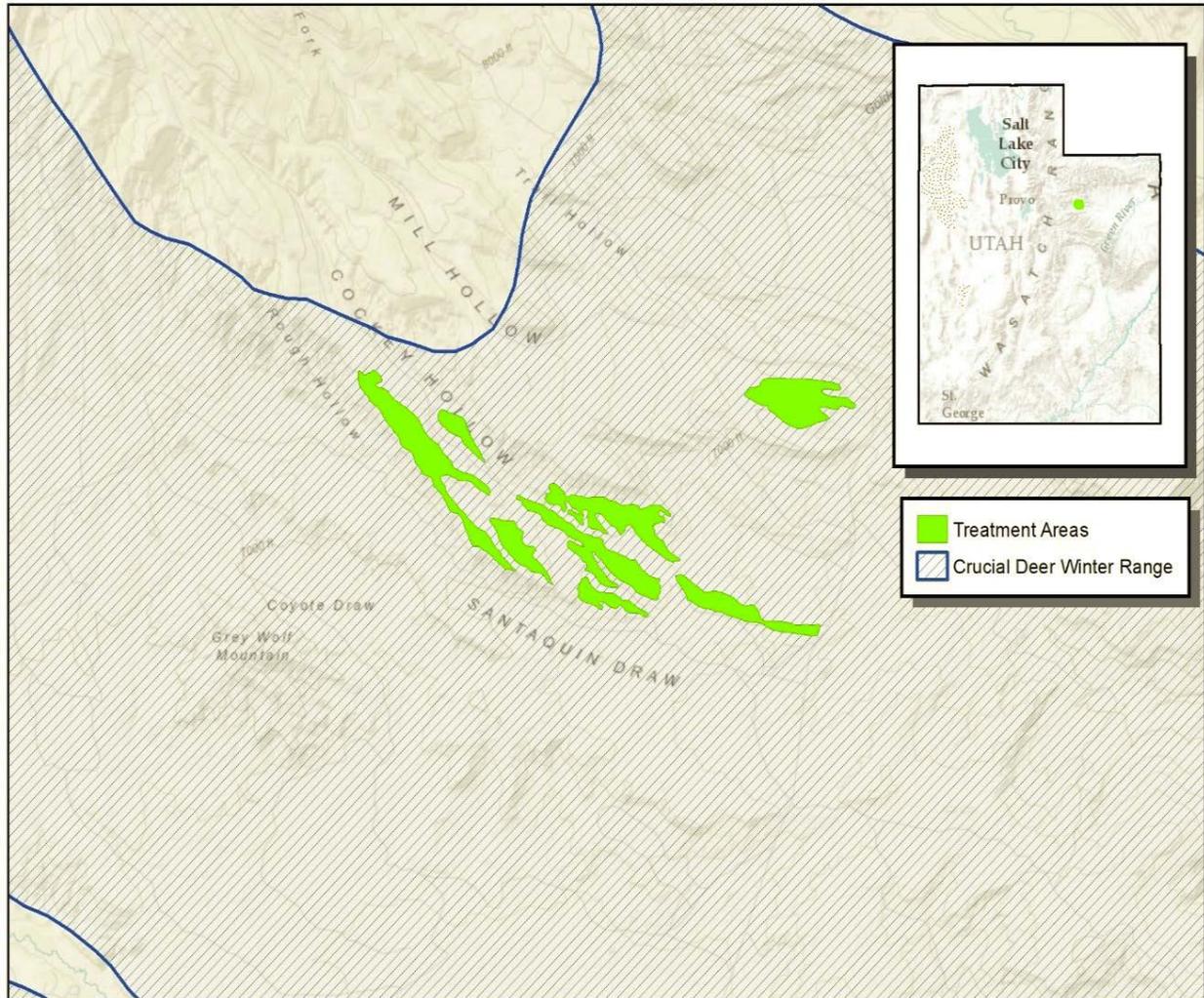


Figure 2. The Cockey Hollow restoration area on crucial winter range northeastern Utah.

3. Little Bear Valley Restoration Project

The Little Bear Valley restoration project (Appendix D) is located in southern Utah (Fig. 3) on crucial mule deer winter range. This winter range is also experiencing encroachment from pinyon and juniper forests. The project will treat 6,752 acres (72% is on BLM land) using lop/scatter and bull hog methods to remove pinyon and juniper trees. The projected cost is \$778,000. A variety of partners has pledged funds to this project and the UDWR needs \$50,000 to help complete this project.

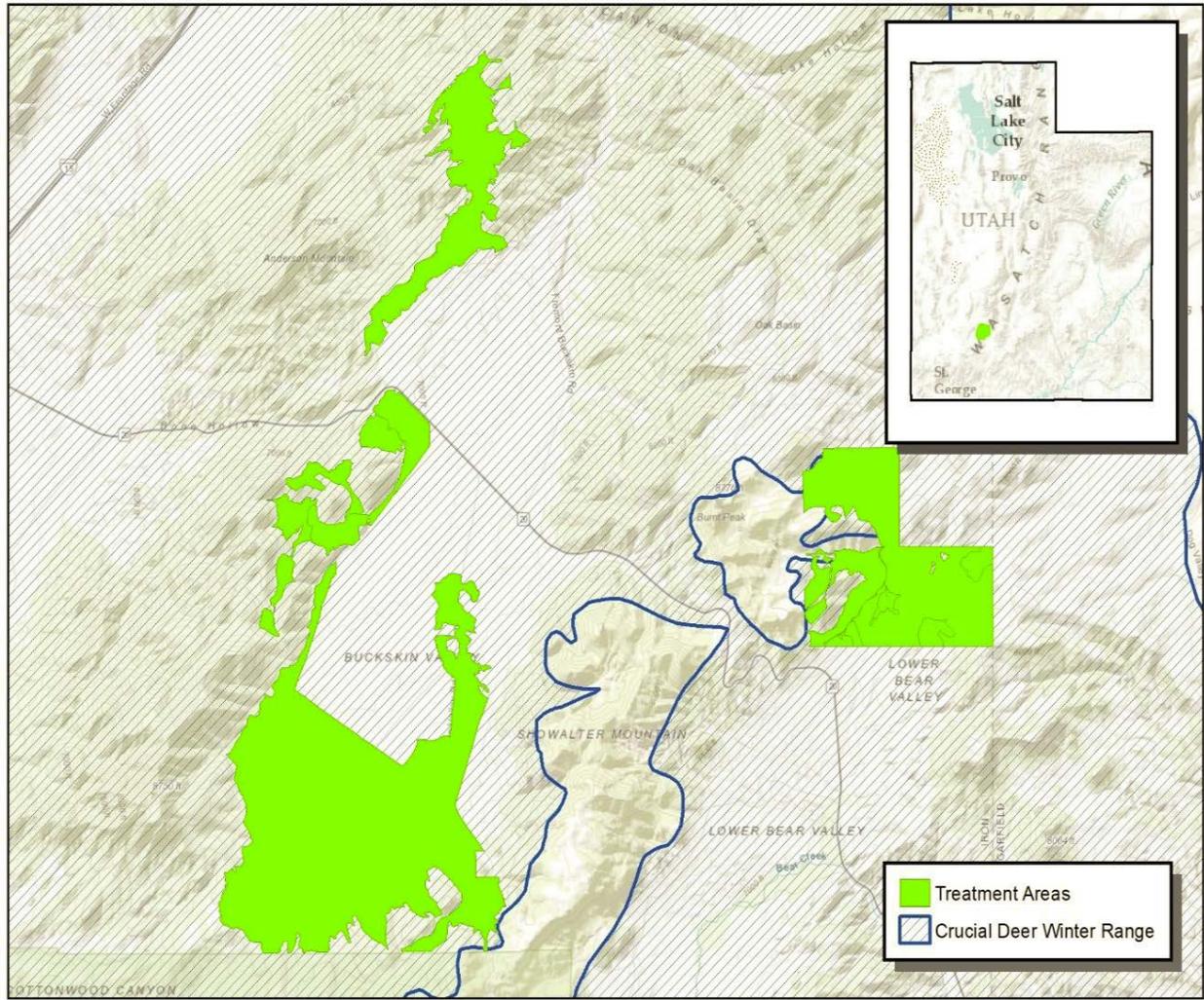


Figure 3. The Little Bear Valley restoration area on crucial winter range in southern Utah.

Research Needs – The UDWR has identified their top 3 research needs and prioritized them. All three projects are being funded by the Department of the Interior bureaus.

1. Lake Mountains Migration Corridor

This area is located in central Utah on the west side of Utah Lake. We have a small amount of data that show that mule deer migrate from the Oquirrh Mountains to the Lake Mountains to spend the winter. The migration crosses SR 73, which connects the City of Eagle Mountain with the Salt Lake and Provo areas. There are significant amounts of BLM, state, and private land in this area.

The migration corridor is at risk due to rapid development that is occurring in the area. In the early 1990s, the area was relatively undeveloped. Now there are approximately 30,000

residents and the population is projected to triple by 2040. There are few businesses in the area so most residents commute to work, which creates heavy traffic volumes, especially on SR 73. The department of transportation is planning to expand SR 73 to accommodate the growth. Additionally, Facebook announced in May that they will be building a \$750 million data center in this area. About 100 mule deer are killed on roads in this area each year.

If we can document mule deer movements in this area, and accurately define the migration corridor, it will be more likely that mitigation will be put in place to preserve the corridor. We would like to capture and place GPS collars on 40 mule deer (20 does, 20 bucks) this winter. The GPS tracking collars we will use are programmed to record locations every two hours for over 3 years. This allows us to accurately describe summer and winter range use, as well as migratory movements and corridors. The cost of the project is \$66,000. *(This project is funded using BLM funds as a result of SO3362)*

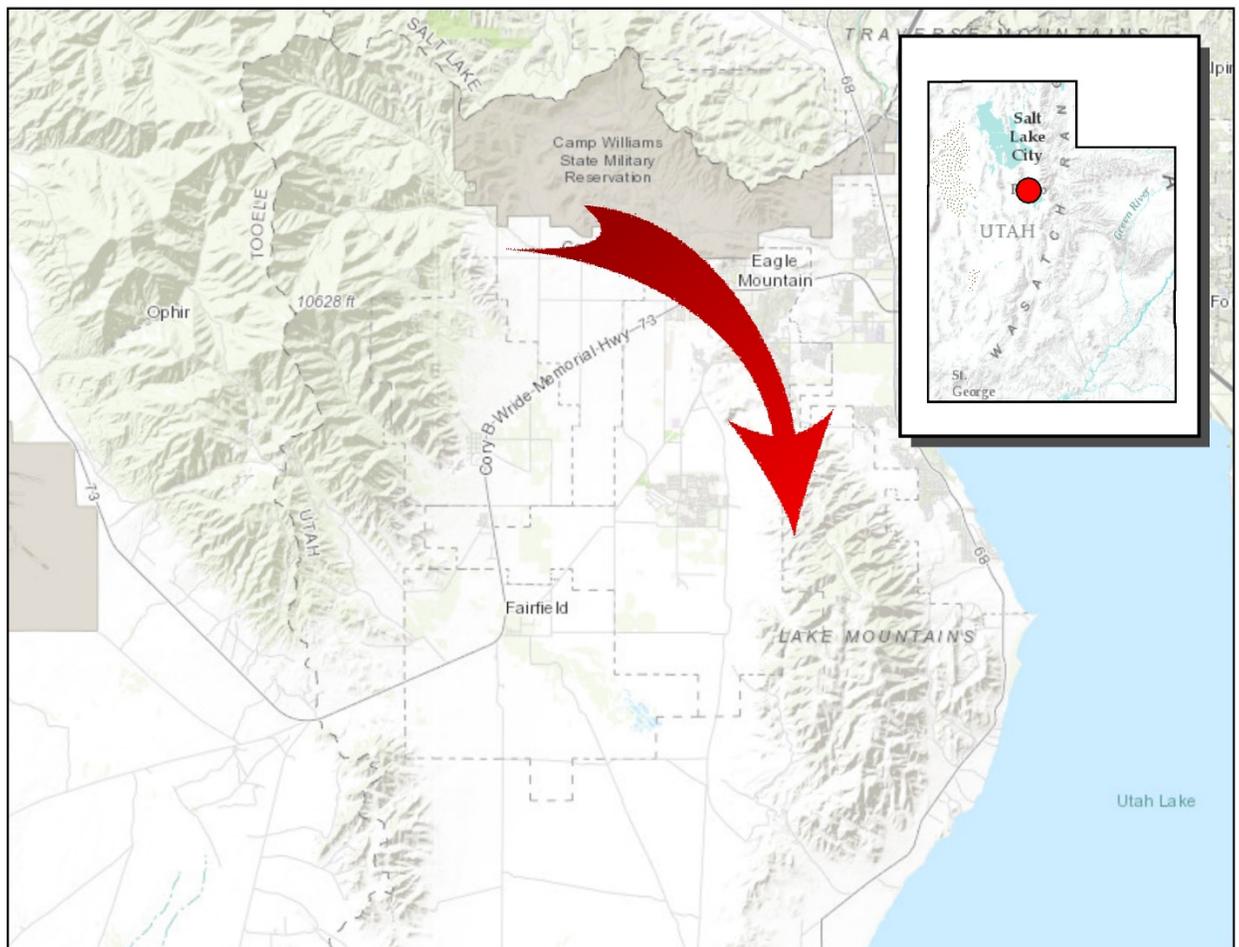


Figure 4. The location of the Lake Mountains migration corridor in Utah

2. Zion Unit

The Zion unit is located in southern Utah near St. George. The area is a complex mix of BLM, Park Service, Forest Service, and private lands. The unit is bounded by Interstate 15 on the west and Highway 89 on the east. It is one of the larger deer herds in the state with approximately 15,000 individuals. The area is adjacent to the Paunsaugunt unit that has some of the longest known deer migrations (up to 80 miles) in Utah, with deer moving south from Utah into Arizona. It is likely that deer in the Zion unit have similar movement patterns, but currently we know little about the length and location of migration corridors in this area.

The area is also experiencing rapid growth and development. St. George is the fastest growing metro area in the United States with a 4% annual growth rate. Additionally, the area is a popular vacation hot spot as Zion National Park is one of the most visited parks in the country. As a result, traffic volumes are increasing substantially.

Because the Zion herd is such a large population and likely has long migration corridors that span a variety of ownerships, documenting corridors will help the UDWR to work with partners to preserve migrations and help maintain this robust population. We would like to capture and collar 80 mule deer (40 does, 40 bucks) this winter to document use of seasonal ranges and migration corridors. The cost of the project is about \$132,000. *(This project will be funded using USFWS funds as a result of SO3362)*

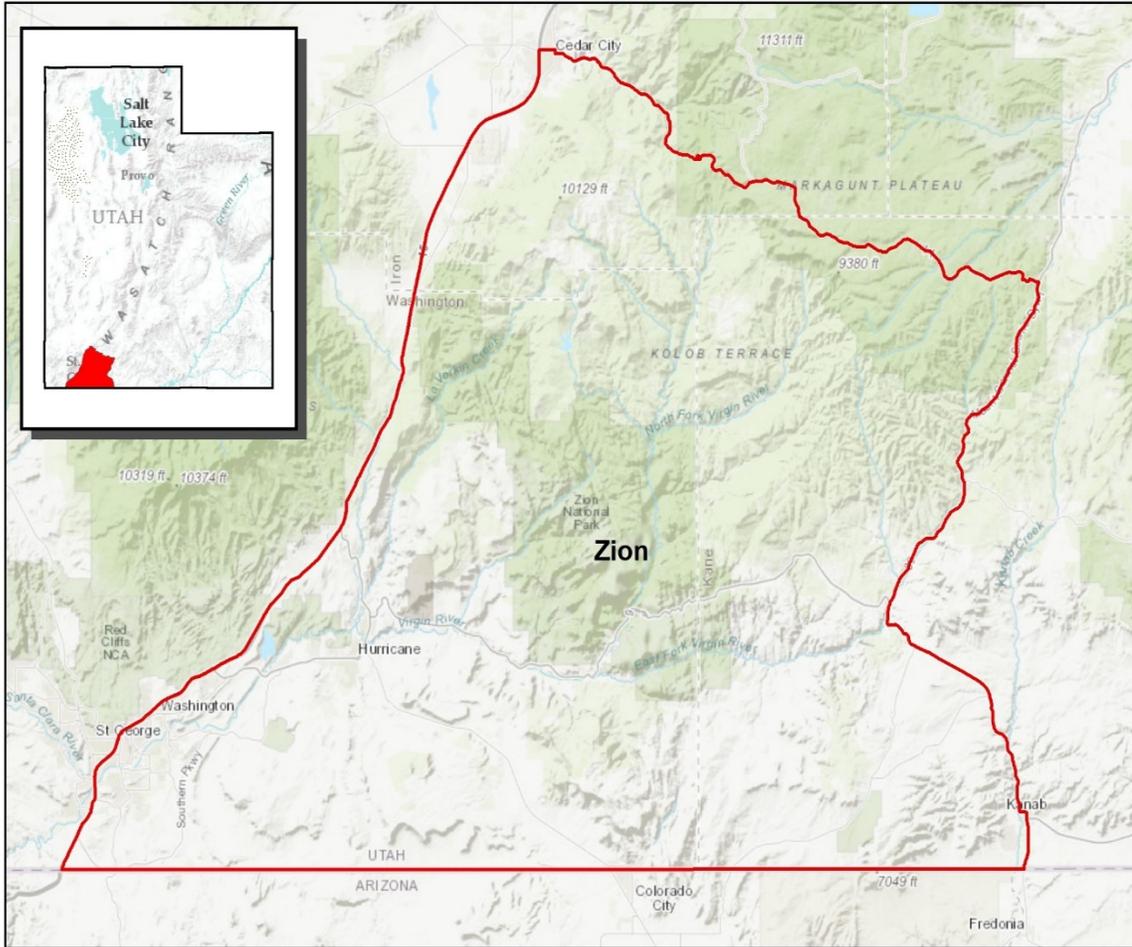


Figure 5. The location of the Zion management unit in southern Utah.

3. Chalk Creek/Kamas Units

The Chalk Creek and Kamas units are adjacent to each other and are located in northern Utah to the northeast of Park City. Interstate 80, the major east/west route in the state, borders the western edges of both units. There are nearly 20,000 mule deer in this area but we have limited knowledge of deer movements and use of critical habitats. The amount of low elevation winter habitat is severely limited in both units.

We are concerned about the effects that roads, development, and vegetation change are having on mule deer in these units. Traffic volumes on Interstate 80 have roughly doubled in the past two decades and the region has the highest number of deer-vehicle collisions in the state. To address the problem, the Department of Transportation has installed wildlife fencing along sections of the I-80 corridor to prevent deer from crossing the roadway, but there are few wildlife crossing structures to provide connectivity. Additionally, the limited winter range that is in this region is being reduced due to housing development and juniper encroachment.

With better information on migration corridors and winter range use, the UDWR could work with landowners and other agencies to preserve migratory movements and to improve and protect winter ranges. To get this data, we would like to capture and collar 60 mule deer (30 does, 30 bucks) this winter. The cost of the project would be approximately \$100,000. *(This project will be funded using USFWS funds as a result of SO3362)*

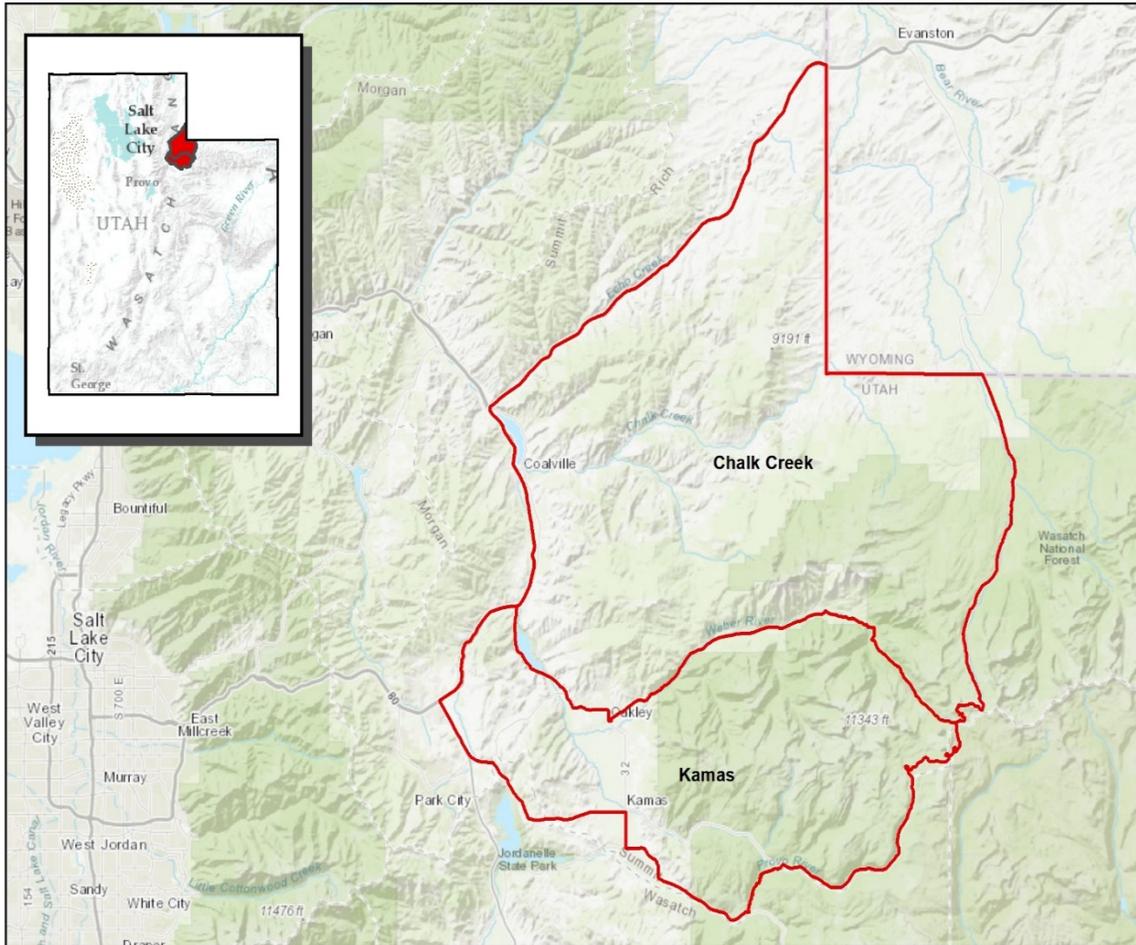


Figure 6. The locations of the Chalk Creek and Kamas management units in northern Utah.

Current Activities

Habitat and Management Actions – Projects

UDWR Migration Initiative- 2017

Statewide initiative to document, preserve, and enhance movement corridors for species in Utah. This will be the implementation program for SO 3362. This program will include all the partners such as UDWR, NGO's, Federal Agencies and private Landowners.

Miller Creek Restoration Project 2018

This is a multi-phase project with many partners including Watershed Restoration Initiative/UDWR, BLM, Permittees, Landowners, National Wild Turkey Federation, Safari Club, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Mule Deer Foundation. The project is focused on mule deer and elk winter range. To date, the BLM has provided \$201,500, FWS \$12,500, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) \$2,500 as well as NEPA and other in-kind services toward this project.

Little Bear Valley Restoration

This project is improving critical mule deer winter range. It has many partners providing funding including many NGOs, State of Utah Agencies and NRCS \$242,797, BLM \$293,733 and USFWS \$17,705.

Research Projects

Statewide Mule Deer GPS Collar Study 2014-Present

Brigham Young University and the UDWR have an ongoing study on mule deer. The collar data is providing health conditions of animals coming off the summer range and winter range and is following mule deer movements/migration throughout the state. BLM biologists participated in trapping of mule deer and BLM provided funding for this study in 2018 in the amount of \$50,000.

Literature cited

Institute, N. W. (1995). *Public Ownership by State*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwi.org/Maps/LandChart.html>

Olson, D. (2018). Responce Letter to DOI request for research and habitat needs.

Appendix B

Miller Creek Watershed Restoration

Project ID: 4207
Status: Current
Fiscal Year: 2019
Submitted By: N/A
Total Acres: 1,098

Project Manager: Jordan Nielson
PM Agency: Trout Unlimited
PM Office: National Office
Lead: Trout Unlimited
WRI Region: Southeastern

Description:

Multi partner collaboration for restoration of instream, riparian, and upland habitats in Miller Creek, tributary to the Price River.

Location:

This project will encompass activities ranging from beaver dam analogs to pinyon-juniper removal in the Miller Creek Watershed. There are three private landowners as well as publicly owned property participating in the project.

PROJECT NEED

Need For Project:

Upland Component

Vegetation: Sagebrush habitats throughout the west have declined drastically and continue to decline under many threats that are impacting this habitat type (Bradley 2010, Miller and Eddleman 2000). The greater sage-grouse is one of several species that has been impacted by the loss of sagebrush habitat (Miller and Eddleman 2000). The Miller Creek Watershed Restoration project will target restoring and protecting sage habitat and is one of the BLM's utmost priorities. One of the greatest threats to sage habitat is encroachment of pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) (Bunting et al. 1999). Through fire suppression, historic livestock over-grazing, and changes in climatic conditions, PJ have expanded and encroached into areas once dominated by sagebrush (Tausch 1999). When PJ canopy cover and tree density reaches certain levels, the diversity and density of under-story vegetation (shrubs, grasses, and forbs) decline. This removes an important component of food and shelter for elk, mule deer, sage-grouse, sage sparrows, brewer's sparrow, and small mammals, such as jackrabbits, which are a large component of Golden Eagle diets (Bates and Moretti 1994, Naillon et al. 1999, Vaitkus and Eddleman 1991). In addition to out-competing under-story vegetation, increased PJ tree densities within sage-brush parks have been proven to reduce the use of these habitats by sage-grouse. Sage-grouse avoid these areas because of the increased risk of predation by aerial predators (i.e. raptors) that can use these trees as perches (Commons et al. 1999). Thus, potential habitat for this imperiled bird is lost. This project will help to remove the threat PJ is causing on crucial sagebrush habitat and benefit the species that rely on it for survival.

Water Quality: Another negative impact on the watershed from PJ encroachment is soil erosion (Farmer 1995). Removing PJ will allow grasses and forbs to expand and decrease the speed of water-flow and the size of soil particles that can be transported. Also, PJ have been shown to intercept about 10-20 percent of precipitation and have greater precipitation runoff (Farmer 1995, Skau 1984). By removing PJ and establishing grasses and forbs water will more readily infiltrate the soil and remain in the system. Dense tracts of PJ are a big concern for stand replacing wildfire which tends to sterilize and cause hydrophobic soil. Removing sections of trees will help to slow down fire spread and intensity, and help to prevent invasive species like cheatgrass from establishing post-fire. It has been observed that by cutting PJ, the under-story vegetation will grow back in greater amounts than in those areas that are not cut (Bates et al. 2000). Mechanical PJ removal (e.g. Bull hog or chainsaw crew) projects like this project have proven to be a successful method for replacing the function of fire in the ecosystem and help to maintain watershed health.

Wildlife: The Miller Creek Watershed Restoration project area has an expansive PJ ecosystem which is encroaching into the domain of sage brush habitats. This plateau system is crucial mule deer and elk winter and summer range and primary sagegrouse habitat. This project will provide several hundred more acres of usable habitat for sage-grouse and ungulates. It is essential that we implement this project as soon as possible to help mitigate the numerous impacts affecting sage habitat.

Stream and Riparian Component

In the summer of 2012 the Seeley fire burned on the Manti La Sal National Forest, part of it burning the upper end of the Miller Creek Watershed. The slow rehabilitation of native vegetation in Upper Miller Creek and the increase in high flow flood events have resulted in moderate to severe channel incision and sediment movement, and subsequently the destruction and/or disconnection of stream and riparian habitats throughout

Appendix C

Cockey Hollow phase II

Project ID: 4433
Status: Current
Fiscal Year: 2019
Submitted By: N/A
Total Acres: 663

Project Manager: Tory Mathis
PM Agency: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
PM Office: Northeastern Region
Lead: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
WRI Region: Northeastern

Description:

Improve 663 acres of mule deer, elk, and sage-grouse winter range through pinyon and juniper tree removal (using a bull hog mastication device) and seeding.

Location:

On the Tabby Mountain WMA in Duchesne, County, UT

PROJECT NEED

Need For Project:

This project was initially proposed as a part of a larger project (WRI #3969) that included multiple treatment types. Due to limited funds, the bullhog portion of the project was not funded at that time. The lop and scatter portion of the project was funded and completed in the fall of 2017. This proposal now represents a second phase of that original effort.

Landfire data classifies most of this area as Montane Sagebrush Steppe and Big Sagebrush Shrubland, with some portions overlapping into Gambel Oak-Mixed Montane Shrubland and Pinyon Juniper Woodland. The USDA soil survey and associated ecological site descriptions describe the project area as a mix of sagebrush shrublands (including black, mountain, and wyoming sagebrush types) and pinyon juniper woodlands. The majority of the project has not been classified for ecological site description.

As conifer cover increases, the sagebrush areas become less suitable for Greater Sage-grouse and other species that rely on sagebrush habitats. Conifers compete with grasses, forbs, and shrubs for resources, leading to a loss of these species and a decrease in habitat value for mule deer and elk, as well as sage-grouse. Removal of these encroaching conifers is necessary to protect habitat values for sage-grouse, mule deer, and elk. Many of these areas are immediately adjacent to lop and scatter projects that were done previously to preserve the sagebrush areas. This project will effectively expand these sagebrush areas and provide a greater benefit to sage-grouse.

In pinyon and juniper sites, larger trees (over 12-15 in DBH) will be left standing. Leaving these larger trees in-place will preserve their inherent value for species that utilize these habitats, including woodpeckers, bluebirds, pinyon jays, Clark's nutcrackers, nuthatches and other bird species as well as bats that have been found roosting in the area. Leaving these trees in-place will also help preserve cover for game species who heavily use the area in winter. Removing the smaller trees in these areas will reduce competition for light, water, and other resources allowing grasses and shrubs to remain within the woodland area, providing forage for a variety of species.

In all of these areas removal of pinyon and juniper trees in these areas will mimic natural disturbance events and move the area to an earlier successional stage without the risk of a large-scale catastrophic fire event.

In addition, the Tabby Mountain WMA is an important area for wintering elk. Elk sometimes move off the WMA into agricultural areas in search of food during severe winters. This project is part of the UDWR's efforts to provide adequate resources on the WMA to hold elk off agricultural areas and minimize depredation issues.

Objectives:

Reduce pinyon and juniper cover within the project area to benefit sage-grouse and other wildlife species. Larger trees will remain standing within pinyon-juniper sites. In sagebrush sites, conifer cover will be reduced to 0%

Enhance existing grasses, forbs, and shrubs through seeding.

Threats / Risks:

Threats to this project area centered on pinyon and juniper trees expanding into sagebrush habitats. The higher elevation portion of the project overlaps Gambel Oak habitat, as well. This project addresses threats that are outlined in the Utah Wildlife Action Plan as follows:

Appendix D

Little Bear Valley to Fremont Canyon Sagebrush Steppe

Project ID: 4402
Status: Current
Fiscal Year: 2019
Submitted By: N/A
Total Acres: 6,752

Project Manager: Clint Wirick
PM Agency: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
PM Office: Utah Field Office
Lead: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WRI Region: Southern

Description:

This project is to enhance and restore sagebrush steppe habitat in critical mule deer and sage grouse range. Pinyon and juniper has and is continuing to encroach and the area has been identified by multiple partners as an important landscape to preserve and restore sagebrush habitat for priority species. This project will treat pinyon and juniper on private and public lands adjacent to other public lands that have previously been treated thus creating a more contiguous area restored.

Location:

The project areas lower end begins near highway 20 in Lower Bear Valley and runs north over cottonwood ridge into Fremont Canyon. The project area is in Iron County, bordering Garfield County on the eastern edge.

PROJECT NEED

Need For Project:

This project will enhance and/or restore several habitat types such as: lowland sagebrush, mountain sagebrush, mountain shrub, wetland, wet meadow, and spring fed open water.

Habitats near water – streamsidess, wet meadows and wetlands – support the greatest variety of animal and plant life, and attract wildlife during their daily and seasonal movements. In a water-scarce landscape like Utah, these lush habitats are also where people have naturally settled. A recent study (Donnelly et. al. 2014) reveals a strong link between wet sites, which are essential summer habitat for sage grouse to raise their broods, and the distribution of sage grouse breeding areas or leks. The authors found 85% of leks were clustered within 6 miles of these wet summer habitats. Moreover, although wet habitats covers less than 2% of the western landscape, more than 80% are located on private lands. This study makes it clear that successful sage grouse conservation will greatly depend on cooperative ventures with private landowners, ranchers and farmers to help sustain vital summer habitats. This project site has several springs, wet meadows, on the lower part of the project that are critical summer and brood rearing areas.

This project site also lies within the Panguitch Sage Grouse Management Area identified in the Conservation Plan for Utah Greater Sage Grouse and is critical habitat for sage grouse brood rearing because of the springs, wet meadows, and adjacent sage brush habitat on the project site. The project site also falls within an identified Bird Habitat Conservation Area (BHCA) with shrub-steppe and wetland habitat listed as priority habitats types for conservation. Sagebrush dependent species such as sage grouse, sage sparrow, and brewer's sparrow are listed as priority birds needing conservation practices implemented.

This project will address priority habitats, species, and threats identified by several state agencies, federal agencies, NGO's, and conservation organizations as being important for conservation and restoration.

The project is also a continuation of previous sagebrush steppe restoration accomplished on adjacent public lands. These public pinyon and juniper removal projects stopped at the private boundary. This project will connect some of these previous projects and create a more contiguous area restored. Sage grouse have been observed using the springs and wet meadows on the project site and have been observed using the adjacent treated sites on public land.

The area in and around the project site has been identified as being critically important mule deer habitat and the area has been identified in the Statewide Mule Deer Management Plan as being a "priority for restoration of crucial mule deer habitat" (Utah Statewide Mule Deer Management Plan, 2014).

It is important that we continue to work in these areas that are critically important to the landscape around them, and because these wet areas are mostly private it is extremely important to work with private landowners restoring these areas whenever possible.

Areas that become dominated by by pinyon and juniper out compete understory herbaceous species and leave bare soil prone to erosion. This herbaceous vegetation is important to reducing overland flow and reducing

APPENDIX E: Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors

ORDER NO. 3362

Subject: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors

Sec. 1 Purpose. This Order directs appropriate bureaus within the Department of the Interior (Department) to work in close partnership with the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming to enhance and improve the quality of big-game winter range and migration corridor habitat on Federal lands under the management jurisdiction of this Department in a way that recognizes state authority to conserve and manage big-game species and respects private property rights. Through scientific endeavors and land management actions, wildlife such as Rocky Mountain Elk (elk), Mule Deer (deer), Pronghorn Antelope (pronghorn), and a host of other species will benefit. Additionally, this Order seeks to expand opportunities for big-game hunting by improving priority habitats to assist states in their efforts to increase and maintain sustainable big game populations across western states.

Sec. 2 Authorities. This Order is issued under the authority of section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat. 1262), as amended, as well as the Department's land and resource management authorities, including the following:

- a. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, 43 U.S.C. 1701, *et seq.*;
- b. U.S. Geological Survey Organic Act, as amended, 43 U.S.C. 31, *et seq.*;
- c. National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*; and
- d. National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, as amended, 54 U.S.C. 100101, *et seq.*

Sec. 3 Background. The West was officially “settled” long ago, but land use changes continue to occur throughout the western landscape today. Human populations grow at increasing rates with population movements from east and west coast states into the interior West. In many areas, development to accommodate the expanding population has occurred in important winter habitat and migration corridors for elk, deer, and pronghorn. Additionally, changes have occurred across large swaths of land not impacted by residential development. The habitat quality and value of these areas crucial to western big-game populations are often degraded or declining.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the largest land manager in the United States (U.S.) with more than 245 million acres of public land under its purview, much of which is found in Western States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Park Service (NPS)

also manage a considerable amount of public land on behalf of the American people in the West. Beyond land management responsibilities, the Department has strong scientific capabilities in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) that can be deployed to assist State wildlife agencies and Federal land managers. Collectively, the appropriate bureaus within the Department have an opportunity to serve in a leadership role and take the initiative to work closely with Western States on their priorities and objectives as they relate to big-game winter range and migration corridors on lands managed by the Department.

Consistent with the American conservation ethic, ultimately it is crucial that the Department take action to harmonize State fish and game management and Federal land management of big-game winter range and corridors. On lands within these important areas, if landowners are interested and willing, conservation may occur through voluntary agreements.

Robust and sustainable elk, deer, and pronghorn populations contribute greatly to the economy and well-being of communities across the West. In fact, hunters and tourists travel to Western States from across our Nation and beyond to pursue and enjoy this wildlife. In doing so, they spend billions of dollars at large and small businesses that are crucial to State and local economies. We have a responsibility as a Department with large landholdings to be a collaborative neighbor and steward of the resources held in trust.

Accordingly, the Department will work with our State partners and others to conserve and/or improve priority western big-game winter range and migration corridors in sagebrush ecosystems and in other ecotypes as necessary. This Order focuses on the Western States of: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. These States generally have expansive public lands with established sagebrush landscapes along with robust big-game herds that are highly valued by hunters and tourists throughout the Nation.

The Department has broad responsibilities to manage Federal lands, waters, and resources for public benefit, including managing habitat to support fish, wildlife, and other resources. Secretary's Order 3356, "Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting, and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes, and Territories," (SO 3356) was issued on September 15, 2017. SO 3356 primarily focused on physical access to lands for recreational activities, particularly hunting and fishing. This Order is focused on providing access to big game animals by providing direction regarding land management actions to improve habitat quality for big-game populations that could help ensure robust big-game populations continue to exist. Further, SO 3356 includes a number of directives related to working with States and using the best available science to inform development of guidelines, including directing relevant bureaus to:

- a. Collaborate with State, tribal, and territorial fish and wildlife agencies to attain or sustain State, tribal, and territorial wildlife population goals during the Department's land management planning and implementation, including prioritizing active habitat management projects and funding that contributes to achieving wildlife population objectives, particularly for wildlife that is hunted or fished, and identifying additional ways to include or delegate to States habitat management work on Federal lands;

b. Work cooperatively with State, tribal, and territorial wildlife agencies to enhance State, tribe, and territorial access to the Department's lands for wildlife management actions;

c. Within 180 days, develop a proposed categorical exclusion for proposed projects that utilize common practices solely intended to enhance or restore habitat for species such as sage grouse and/or mule deer; and

d. Review and use the best available science to inform development of specific guidelines for the Department's lands and waters related to planning and developing energy, transmission, or other relevant projects to avoid or minimize potential negative impacts on wildlife.

This Order follows the intent and purpose of SO 3356 and expands and enhances the specific directives therein.

Sec. 4 Implementation. Consistent with governing laws, regulations, and principles of responsible public stewardship, I direct the following actions:

a. With respect to activities at the national level, I hereby direct the BLM, FWS, and NPS to:

(1) Within 30 days, identify an individual to serve as the "Coordinator" for the Department. The Coordinator will work closely with appropriate States, Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and/or associations to identify active programs focused on big-game winter range and/or migration corridors. The programs are to be organized and cataloged by region and other geographic features (such as watersheds and principles of wildlife management) as determined by the Deputy Secretary, including those principles identified in the Department's reorganization plan.

(2) Within 45 days, provide the Coordinator information regarding:

(i) Past and current bureau conservation/restoration efforts on winter range and migration corridors;

(ii) Whether consideration of winter range and corridors is included in appropriate bureau land (or site) management plans;

(iii) Bureau management actions used to accomplish habitat objectives in these areas;

(iv) The location of areas that have been identified as a priority for conservation and habitat treatments; and

(v) Funding sources previously used and/or currently available to the bureau for winter range and migration corridor conservation/restoration efforts.

(3) Within 60 days, if sufficient land use plans are already established that are consistent with this Order, work with the Coordinator and each regional Liaison (see section 4b) to discuss implementation of the plans. If land use plans are not already established, work with the Coordinator and each regional Liaison to develop an Action Plan that summarizes information collected in section 4 (a) (1) and (2), establishes a clear direction forward with each State, and includes:

(i) Habitat management goals and associated actions as they are associated with big game winter range and migration corridors;

(ii) Measurable outcomes; and

(iii) Budgets necessary to complete respective action(s).

b. With respect to activities at the State level, I hereby direct the BLM, FWS, and NPS to:

(1) Within 60 days, identify one person in each appropriate unified region (see section 4a) to serve as the Liaison for the Department for that unified region. The Liaison will coordinate at the State level with each State in their region, as well as with the Liaison for any other regions within the State. The Liaison will schedule a meeting with the respective State fish and wildlife agency to assess where and how the Department can work in close partnership with the State on priority winter range and migration corridor conservation.

(2) Within 60 days, if this focus is not already included in respective land management plans, evaluate how land under each bureau's management responsibility can contribute to State or other efforts to improve the quality and condition of priority big-game winter and migration corridor habitat.

(3) Provide a report on October 1, 2018, and at the end of each fiscal year thereafter, that details how respective bureau field offices, refuges, or parks cooperated and collaborated with the appropriate State wildlife agencies to further winter range and migration corridor habitat conservation.

(4) Assess State wildlife agency data regarding wildlife migrations early in the planning process for land use plans and significant project-level actions that bureaus develop; and

(5) Evaluate and appropriately apply site-specific management activities, as identified in State land use plans, site-specific plans, or the Action Plan (described above), that conserve or restore habitat necessary to sustain local and regional big-game populations through measures that may include one or more of the following:

(i) restoring degraded winter range and migration corridors by removing encroaching trees from sagebrush ecosystems, rehabilitating areas damaged by fire, or

treating exotic/invasive vegetation to improve the quality and value of these areas to big game and other wildlife;

(ii) revising wild horse and burro-appropriate management levels (AML) or removing horses and burros exceeding established AML from winter range or migration corridors if habitat is degraded as a result of their presence;

(iii) working cooperatively with private landowners and State highway departments to achieve permissive fencing measures, including potentially modifying (via smooth wire), removing (if no longer necessary), or seasonally adapting (seasonal lay down) fencing if proven to impede movement of big game through migration corridors;

(iv) avoiding development in the most crucial winter range or migration corridors during sensitive seasons;

(v) minimizing development that would fragment winter range and primary migration corridors;

(vi) limiting disturbance of big game on winter range; and

(vii) utilizing other proven actions necessary to conserve and/or restore the vital big-game winter range and migration corridors across the West.

c. With respect to science, I hereby direct the USGS to:

(1) Proceed in close cooperation with the States, in particular the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and its program manager for the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool, prior to developing maps or mapping tools related to elk, deer, or pronghorn movement or land use; and

(2) Prioritize evaluations of the effectiveness of habitat treatments in sagebrush communities, as requested by States or land management bureaus, and identified needs related to developing a greater understanding of locations used as winter range or migration corridors.

d. I further hereby direct the responsible bureaus and offices within the Department to:

(1) Within 180 days, to update all existing regulations, orders, guidance documents, policies, instructions, manuals, directives, notices, implementing actions, and any other similar actions to be consistent with the requirements in this Order;

(2) Within 30 days, provide direction at the state or other appropriate level to revise existing Federal-State memorandums of agreement to incorporate consultation with State agencies on the location and conservation needs of winter range and migration routes; and

(3) Consult with State wildlife agencies and bureaus to ensure land use plans are consistent and complementary to one another along the entire wildlife corridor in common instances where winter range or migration corridors span jurisdictional boundaries.

e. Heads of relevant bureaus will ensure that appropriate members of the Senior Executive Service under their purview include a performance standard in their respective current or future performance plan that specifically implements the applicable actions identified in this Order.

Sec. 5 Management. I hereby direct the Deputy Secretary to take is responsible for taking all reasonably necessary steps to implement this Order.

Sec. 6 Effect of Order. This Order is intended to improve the internal management of the Department. This Order and any resulting reports or recommendations are not intended to, and do not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provision of this Order and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

Sec. 7 Expiration Date. This Order is effective immediately. It will remain in effect until its provisions are implemented and completed, or until it is amended, superseded, or revoked.