

# Sagebrush Partnership

## Problem Statement, Vision Statement, Principles

4/27/21

### **Problem**

Sagebrush now occupies less than 55 percent of its historical extent, and more than 350 species of plants and animals associated with sagebrush are considered species of conservation concern. Several species considered sagebrush obligates have been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, including greater sage-grouse, Gunnison sage-grouse, and pygmy rabbit. Spurred to prevent the sagebrush biome from degrading to the point where it can no longer support the needs of wildlife and humans, there are over 500 organizations working on all aspects of sagebrush conservation and science, from treating invasive plants to fighting fires, cutting conifers, restoring burned or degraded areas, and many other activities. Many of these groups are working independently of one another and resources are limiting on all these fronts. There are some existing coordination bodies working effectively at/between local and regional scales, but they are not synchronized across scales or at a biome-wide level. Approaches across jurisdictions (e.g., policies, regulations) in the sagebrush ecosystem are not necessarily complementary. To date, there has not been a concerted effort at engaging Tribes and incorporating Tribal sovereign territory, inherent rights, reserved treaty rights, values, and Indigenous knowledge (in a way that respects Tribal data sovereignty and confidentiality) into existing regional or large-scale collaborative efforts.

As a conservation community, we are likely less effective and efficient because we are not leveraging resources; sharing experiences, a common language, methods, or data (and may not even be aligned on the relevant body of science); nor are we oriented towards or accountable for common goals. At times, we may even be working at cross-purposes. The community has not yet explored whether we could develop a voluntary set of broad, common goals (or parallel pathways) on priority landscapes on the biome-wide scale that could be adjusted and adapted as needed on local and regional scales. Can a partnership model help fix that, while resulting in the desired conservation outcomes and ensuring that work continues to get done on the ground?

### **Partnership Vision**

We envision a future where 500+ organizations and regional coordination bodies are partnering on sagebrush conservation across jurisdictions and scales. With integrity, the partnership incorporates Tribes and Tribal organizations, supports their capacity to engage, and acknowledges the status of Native American Nations as sovereign, holders of inherent rights and treaty rights, co-managers of resources, and stewards of this land for thousands of years. These partner organizations and sovereign entities are supporting each other to work on the right problems in the right places with the right tools and sufficient resources, are aware of each other's efforts, and are accountable for their own efforts. They are coordinating efficiently and effectively to preserve the sagebrush biome and its ecosystem role in meeting the needs of humans and wildlife who depend upon it.

[The below Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation Lifeway diagram from the Climate Change Strategic Plan is an example of an attempt to portray a tribal perspective-that all things are connected, and that people are part of the whole. Impacts to one will impact all. Disturbances including drought, flood, wildfire and Invasives will have impacts to tribal cultural resources, traditions, foods, and spirituality. Impacts are expected to be place-based and at various scales, both temporally and spatially.]



### Guiding Principles for Sagebrush Partnership (adapted from the Enlibra Principles)

- *National Standards, Neighborhood Solutions* – Assign responsibilities at the right level
- *Collaboration, Not Polarization* – Use collaborative processes to break down barriers and find solutions
- *Reward Results, Not Programs* – Move to a performance-based, instead of process-based, system
- *Science for Facts, Process for Priorities* – Separate subjective choices from objective data gathering, which includes observations from Western science and traditional knowledge
- *Markets Before Mandates* – Pursue economic incentives whenever appropriate
- *Change a Heart, Change a Nation* – Environmental education and understanding are crucial, and must include the braiding together multiple ways of knowing
- *Recognition of Benefits and Costs* – Make sure all decisions affecting infrastructure, development and environment are fully informed
- *Solutions Transcend Political Boundaries* – Use appropriate geographic boundaries to resolve problems while recognizing the sovereignty of Tribes and states and finding ways

to work together in mutually beneficial relationships

- *Reciprocity – ensure that actions and decisions are mutually beneficial and acceptable to partners and that capacity to participate in the partnership is supported as needed*