

FOREST SPOTLIGHT

Modoc NF – Pacific Southwest Region

225 W. 8th St. Alturas, CA 96101

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/modoc>

Clear Lake Sage Grouse Working Group award

The Modoc National Forest is part of the Clear Lake Sage Grouse Working Group, which seeks to preserve and enhance the local Sage Grouse population in the Clear Lake Management Unit. This Initiative was recognized by California NRCS and the California Association of Rural Conservation Districts with the Excellence in Conservation-Outstanding Team/Partnership Award for 2015. The award recognized this partnership for innovation in conservation in planning to remove Western juniper on more than 31,975 acres of sage steppe-ecosystem within the Modoc National Forest.



Left to right, Gary Kedish, Jim Wright, Garrett Noles, Don Glenn and Chris Christofferson accept the award for the Modoc NF. All participating organizations received such a keepsake.

“The sage grouse working group partnerships are working together for a common cause and are beneficial in making the treatment projects successful in the return of the sage grouse habitat,” said Mike Byrne, local rancher and Lava Beds-Butte Valley RCD member. “I believe the group as a whole has been doing very well.”

The Lava Beds-Butte Valley Resource Conservation District held a Clear Lake Sage Grouse Working Group meeting to present awards to partners on January 7, 2016 at the Tulelake NRCS office. Stakeholders discussed the status of current projects, National Environmental Policy Act planning status and potential areas for future juniper treatments. Biologists and range managers provided an update about recovery of the sage grouse population in the Clear Lake Population Management Unit.

The Clear Lake Sage Grouse working group was started with the purpose of restoring sage grouse habitat around Clear Lake, located on the Double Head Ranger District and adjacent private and refuge lands. The primary participating groups are: local landowners, Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Parks Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the University of California Cooperative Extension and the California Department of Forestry.

Approximately 13,910 of the planned acres on the Forest have been treated so far with approximately \$1.2 million in partnership funding from NRCS and USFWS. An additional 2,541 acres are currently under contract to be treated with \$178,342 of USFS Regional Hazardous Fuels money allocated to the Forest to aide in sage-steppe restoration.

As a result of these treatments and other efforts, sage grouse numbers have increased and leks, where males return year after year to compete for a mate, are returning to historical and possibly new areas where sage grouse numbers have declined in past years. CDFG and USFWS have been relocating birds from other states to the area and have been noticing an increase in returns to those areas. "Populations are not where we want them to be, but we are getting there," said USFWS Wildlife Biologist, John Beckstrand.



A male sage grouse in full display trying to attract a mate.

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