



## **AGREEMENT FOR SHARED STEWARDSHIP**

**Between**

**THE STATE OF NEVADA,**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**FOREST SERVICE**

**INTERMOUNTAIN AND PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGIONS,**

**And**

**DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

This agreement for Shared Stewardship is hereby made and entered into by and between the State of Nevada (State), the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

### **Introduction**

The State of Nevada includes about 70,745,600 acres, making it the seventh largest state in the United States. Though it is the seventh largest in size, it is the ninth least densely populated. Nevada's land ownership is a complicated checkerboard of federal-, state-, local-government and private land. The federal government controls and manages over 86% of Nevada's lands, with the remaining 14% split between private (11%), tribal (2%), local government (1%) and state government (1%). Due to this land ownership and management pattern, state, federal and local government entities have formed partnerships and work together to protect, conserve and enhance lands in Nevada.

The primary vegetation cover type in Nevada is classified as rangeland (81 percent or 57.5 million acres), followed by forestland, including timberland and woodland, (12 percent or 8.5 million acres). The remaining cover type includes wetland/riparian zones, agricultural land or developed (homes or business). The USFS manages close to 6 million acres, the BLM manages close to 48 million acres, and the USFWS manages just over 2.2 million acres of Nevada's public lands. More than 92% of those forested lands are public and managed by the USFS and the BLM. The State of Nevada, acting through multiple Divisions, Departments and Commissions, is charged with the conservation, protection and enhancement of state and private forest, range and watershed lands in conjunction with federal, local government and private landowners.

Threats to Nevada's ecosystems continue to increase at a high rate. Large-scale wildland fires are one of the greatest threats to Nevada's landscape and are occurring with increasing size, severity and frequency. Significant increases in invasive annual grasses compound Nevada's fire challenges, alter ecological functions, degrade habitats for wildlife and reduce forage for livestock. The parties to this agreement are committed to protecting communities, livelihoods and ecosystem health by increasing watershed-scale projects. The parties agree it is of utmost importance to reduce the risk of and mitigate the effects of catastrophic wildfire in Nevada with the goal of protecting habitat and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.

### **Vision and Framework**

The challenges facing Nevada's ecosystems cross jurisdictional lines and land ownership. Therefore, in order to prevent and mitigate catastrophic loss, so too should land management actions. This agreement will work toward collaborative, active management of forests, rangelands and watersheds with the same vigor and commitment that has characterized efforts to safely and effectively manage wildland fires over the last century.

This Shared Stewardship agreement relies upon existing strategies, directives, and authorities, and further emphasizes mutual commitments that solidify existing land management partnerships. These mutual commitments entered into by the State of Nevada, the USFS, the BLM and the USFWS adapt Shared Stewardship to Nevada's unique conditions and environment. This document will stand as an enduring model of the relationships and mutual commitments that are expected of each agency's staff.

Through Shared Stewardship, the State, the USFS, the BLM, and the USFWS take this opportunity to expand our working relationships, jointly set priorities and implement projects at the appropriate scale, co-manage risk, and share resources. The concept for this strategy has three core elements:

- 1. Collaboratively determine management needs and priorities at a Statewide level.*
- 2. Do the right work in the right places at the right scale.*
- 3. Use all available tools for active management.*

### **Shared Stewardship Themes**

The parties seek to identify priority landscapes, coordinate investments, and carry out projects that improve the health and productivity of forest, rangeland, and wildlife habitat in Nevada. A collaborative, integrated approach will address benefits and risks across ownership boundaries and habitat types in order to prioritize investments where they will have the greatest impact. The end goal will be to achieve landscapes that are more resistant and resilient to wildfire and other disturbances for the benefit of Nevada's citizens and wildlife.

Shared priorities and goals are derived from the following primary themes:

- **Ecological restoration** - Health and resilience of our lands and waters support people, communities, fish and wildlife. We will expand our capacity for restoration and

rehabilitation by working with local governments, communities, tribal governments, industries, private landowners, and other partners to improve ecosystem health.

- **Conserve and protect Nevada's industries** - We will help support diverse and vibrant agricultural and rural economies through relationships, practices, collaboration, and investment. As stewards of Nevada's natural resources, the parties will directly and indirectly support jobs and generate economic activity across the state.
- **Sustainable recreation** - We will provide a diverse array of safe and sustainable recreation opportunities by favoring investments that leverage resources and expand our capacity through integration and partnerships.
- **Conserve and protect fish and wildlife** - We will prioritize activities that conserve and protect fish, wildlife, and habitat.
- **Diversity** - Our work will be inclusive and reflective of Nevada's culturally rich and diverse populations, seeking out a diversity of stakeholders and populations across backgrounds and demographics, and working to make the enjoyment and stewardship of our natural resources meet the changing demographics within the State.

### **Mutual Commitments for Shared Stewardship in Nevada**

The State, the USFS, the BLM, and the USFWS have a long history of cooperation to address ecosystem management and conservation issues. This Shared Stewardship agreement serves to strengthen collaboration in Nevada and advance outcome-based, landscape-scale efforts to improve resiliency across landscapes.

The following mutual commitments will guide our immediate efforts and long-term strategies toward implementing Shared Stewardship on priority landscapes:

1. **Science and Models**: The parties will use the best available science and models to prioritize and inform decisions. We envision this includes:
  - a. Applying currently available information such as resistance and resilience mapping, conifer encroachment, wildfire risk assessments, and analyses of past project results in Nevada to make the best possible decisions,
  - b. Identifying and addressing information gaps and securing funding for new research needs,
  - c. Using efficient processes to identify, track, and share information on partner projects and commitments, and
  - d. Evaluating and managing risk in decision-making processes by prioritizing actions based on the highest probability of success.

2. **Tools**: The parties acknowledge that landscape-scale challenges require solutions of commensurate size. To that end, the parties will use all available science-based tools to address Nevada's ecological challenges. We envision this includes:

- a. Using mechanical treatments, hazardous fuels reduction, innovative wood product utilization, and fire breaks to limit mega-fires and their effects on wildlife habitat and human communities,
- b. Carefully managing fire in priority landscapes, including coordinated use of prescribed fire, fire for resource benefit, and full suppression in areas where fire comes at a high cost to human or natural resources, and
- c. Implementing aggressive and coordinated fire rehabilitation efforts, including the appropriate use of desirable native, non-native, and fire-resistant species for reseeding based on resistance and resilience modeling, pre-fire ecological conditions, and current science.

3. **Strategies and Plans**: Each party has existing laws, policy, strategies, and plans that guide work within their respective purview. The parties will use these as the foundation for landscape-scale prioritization and decision-making, and will make a concerted effort to identify mutually beneficial priorities, while avoiding duplicative efforts.

National Strategies include (but are not limited to):

- a. Executive Order 13855 – Promoting Active Management of America's Forests, Rangelands, and Other Federal Lands to Improve Condition and Reduce Wildfire Risk
- b. DOI Secretarial Order 3372 – Reducing Wildfire Risks on DOI Land Through Active Management
- c. DOI Secretarial Order 3362 - Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors
- d. DOI Secretarial Order 3363 – Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States
- e. USFS - Toward Shared Stewardship Across Landscapes: An Outcome-Based Investment Strategy
- f. Natural Resources Conservation Service Sage Grouse Initiative
- g. U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Bill
- h. Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership
- i. National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
- j. North American Bird Conservation Initiative

Statewide Strategies and Plans include (but are not limited to):

- a. Nevada State Natural Resources Assessment and Strategy (Forest Action Plan)
- b. Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan
- c. Nevada Strategic Action Plan – For Implementation of the Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan

- d. Bi-State Action Plan – For Conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment
- e. Nevada Wildlife Action Plan

4. **Resources and Relationships**: The parties will dedicate resources to ensure continued success and growth of partnerships and collaborative decision-making. Parties are committed to work collaboratively to reach agreements and decisions on protecting, improving, and sustaining ecosystem health on priority landscapes. We envision this to include:

- a. Emphasizing collaboration and information sharing to resolve differing interpretations of data and research,
- b. Deploying available resources, including personnel, equipment and funding, by using efficiencies and economy of scale to achieve success at appropriate scales to achieve landscape resiliency,
- c. Emphasizing inclusion of partner agencies when shared or mutually important resources are at risk. We recognize this includes decisions at all main stages (preventative treatments, emergency responses such as fire suppression, and post-fire rehabilitation projects),
- d. Embracing new thinking and partnerships, innovation, and measured risk-taking to seize opportunities for shared success, and
- e. Coordinating and working in partnership with each other as well as other federal, state, tribal and local governments; private landowners; industry; and non-governmental organizations early in the process to derive the best decisions and solutions.

**The parties to this agreement shall:**

- 1. Create an executive committee, consisting of the heads of the party agencies, or their designees, to facilitate implementation of this agreement. This committee will meet not less than twice annually, and will be responsible for:
  - a. Addressing and resolving any issues that arise, and
  - b. Reporting on mutual accomplishments regarding Shared Stewardship in Nevada.
- 2. Develop a Strategic Plan and 5-year program of work that addresses wildfire prevention, response, and rehabilitation to achieve resilient landscapes and fire adapted communities.
  - a. Parties will identify a list of initial projects and target completing two of these projects by the end of 2021. These projects will model the themes and core elements of this agreement, will be mutually identified as priority landscapes, and will be implemented at a multi-jurisdictional landscape scale.
  - b. By 2025, the parties will work to increase the annual number of acres treated by 50 percent, through active management on state, county, private, tribal or federally-administered lands within priority landscapes that reduce fire risk, restores or

enhances wildlife habitat, increase fire adaptations for communities, and improves rangeland, watershed or forest health and resiliency.

3. Develop and implement data sharing agreements to share relevant spatial and tabular data with partner agencies. Data should be accessible through online services that are accessible across individual agency platforms, web applications, and databases. Crucial data sets are those that help inform and improve land treatment or research projects. Examples include, but are not limited to, resource data, land status and use, past land treatment projects, wildland fire boundaries, and research or modeling products pertaining to natural resource management.
4. Commit staff participation in existing local groups or forming them where necessary, to implement projects consistent with this agreement. The local groups are encouraged to report all accomplishments and planned priorities to the executive committee at least twice per year.

#### **Modifications and Periodic Review of Agreement**

The State, the USFS, the BLM, and the USFWS agree to review this agreement not less than every five (5) years to evaluate the mutual commitments identified and make necessary adjustments as appropriate.

#### **Mutual Understanding and Agreement**

It is agreed that this document does not serve as an authorizing tool. The State, the USFS, the BLM, and the USFWS will rely on all available authorities and funding to implement priority projects. Specific authorities for actions will be identified prior to project implementation and development.

The parties are bound by all applicable federal, state and local statutes and regulations, and this agreement does not supersede those. If conflicts arise, the parties will evaluate how authorities can best achieve the goals of the individual project.

This MOU creates no right, benefit, or trust responsibility, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity. The parties shall manage their respective resources and activities in a separate, coordinated and mutually beneficial manner to meet the purpose(s) of this MOU. Nothing in this MOU authorizes any of the parties to obligate or transfer anything of value.

The parties will protect sacred sites and preserve cultural resources and take all necessary actions to protect data collected from Nevada Tribal Nations.

#### **Principle Contacts:**

Individuals listed below are the primary contacts for the purposes of this agreement.

**Authorized Representatives**

By signing below, each party certifies that the individuals listed in this document as representatives of the individual parties are authorized to act in their respective areas for matters related to this agreement for shared stewardship.

*IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last date written below.*



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Governor Steve Sisolak  
State of Nevada

11-15-19  
Date



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Nora Rasure, Regional Forester  
United States Forest Service, Intermountain Region

11-12-19  
Date



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Randy Moore, Regional Forester  
United States Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

11/12/19  
Date



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Jon Raby, Nevada Director  
Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

11/12/19  
Date



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Paul Souza, Regional Director  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region

11-8-19  
Date

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