**SGI-SWAT Quarterly Report**

**Jan-March 2015**

**Communications Report**

NEWS

**SGI RELEASES OUTCOMES IN CONSERVATION REPORT: 2010-2015**

***With 1,129 participating ranchers, the NRCS-led Sage Grouse Initiative and its partners have already invested  $424.5 million and conserved 4.4 million acres, an area that is twice the size of Yellowstone National Park.***

February 2015 marked the release of a major report from the NRCS-led Sage Grouse Initiative, highlighting and summarizing all conservation achievements from the start of SGI in 2010 through 2014. NRCS Chief Jason Weller made the announcement on Feb 12 in Webinars for the press and for NRCS staff and partners:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/usda-report-demonstrates-positive-impact-300-million-investment-sage-grouse-conservation-working-lands-west/>

The SGI Outcomes Report and a brief fact sheet are highlighted on the SGI website below the large banner photo: [www.sagegrouseinitiative.com](http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com)

The news of the outcomes came with a pledge for $200 million in additional funding through 2018. SGI used social media to effectively share the news on Facebook and Twitter: Tweet Example:

[**SageGrouseInitiative** ‏@SageGrouseInit](https://twitter.com/SageGrouseInit) [Feb 13](https://twitter.com/SageGrouseInit/status/566284724227014656)

[@USDA\_NRCS](https://twitter.com/USDA_NRCS) Chief Weller addresses partners on **Sage Grouse** Initiative **5 year** **anniversary** - unprecedented conservation! [#sagegrouse](https://twitter.com/hashtag/sagegrouse?src=hash) [#NRCS](https://twitter.com/hashtag/NRCS?src=hash)

**8 retweets2 favorites**

Reply

 Retweet**8**

 Favorite**2**

The on-the-ground proactive conservation and pledge for the future story caught the attention of national press and partners. For example:

E&E News: Ranchers Crucial to Saving Sage Grouse: <http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060013384>

Western Governor’s Association: <http://westgov.org/news/340-news-2015/875-nrcs-reports-significant-progress-in-sage-grouse-conservation-since-2010-commitment-to-future-work>

Pheasants Forever: <http://www.pheasantsforever.org/Newsroom/February-2015/Sage-Grouse-Initiative-Partners-Conserve-4-4-Milli.aspx>

Audubon: <https://www.audubon.org/press-release/usda-announces-200-million-conserve-sage-grouse-private-lands>

Beef Producer: <http://beefproducer.com/story-usda-partnership-improving-sage-grouse-habitat-grazing-lands-10-123952>

**OTHER MAJOR NEWS:**

SGI Communications also played a large role in the following stories, via writing, posts on the website, on Facebook and tweets:

January 10: Conoco Philips Commits $1 Million to IWJV for Sage Grouse Conservation:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/intermountain-west-joint-venture-announces-conocophillips-project-funding-sage-grouse-habitat-conservation/>

January 14: Major Working Ranch Conservation Easement Protects Grouse Habitat in NW Colorado (SGI wrote press release, circulated on Vocus during its last month with this service, resulting in CBS news coverage and excellent newspaper reporting):

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/major-working-ranch-conservation-easement-protects-vital-sage-grouse-habitat-nw-colorado/>

January 20: BLM juniper removal announcement (SGI partner involvement & E&E news story quoting Tim Griffiths, SGI national coordinator for NRCS):

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/ee-news-major-juniper-removal-idaho-save-sage-grouse/>

February 26: Bi-State Sage Grouse Forum Attracts Full House (SGI assisted in materials for the forum, advance news, coverage during the forum, and coordination with Sand County Foundation to share the relevant Fulstone Ranch Story):

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/bi-state-sage-grouse-forum-attracts-full-house-nevada/>

**Rancher Success Stories Gain Traction & Personalize Successes**

The continuing series of rancher success stories now have a page on the website to easily connect readers to featured SGI ranchers: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/category/featured-ranchers/> .

The featured rancher stories will continue to play important roles for sharing, partners, media campaigns, generating reporter interest and more. The stories personalize the statistics in the SGI Outcomes report.

In this quarter, SGI added the California and South Dakota featured rancher stories.

**Five Dot Ranch: Pasture to Plate**

[**http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/five-dot-ranch-sustains-sage-grouse-produces-natural-beef-california/**](http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/five-dot-ranch-sustains-sage-grouse-produces-natural-beef-california/)

On January 13, SGI released the Five Dot Ranch story in California, working closely with NRCS California Public Affairs. This marks the first story that effectively connects the concept of “pasture to plate” or “fork to farm”, linking conservation practices for sage grouse with sustainable beef products in urban markets, in this case the Bay Area. The story ran on the SGI website, was featured in Five Dot Ranch E-Newsletters, promoted as a PDF handout at the Society for Range Management in Sacramento, and included a visit to the Waterboy Restaurant that serves the Beef for social media posts such as this one:

<https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=408072312539614&story_fbid=1006825319330974>

**South Dakota Steineke Ranch Ties in Drought Conservation to SGI practices:**

[**http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/south-dakota-rancher-adds-value-operation-improves-wildlife-habitat/**](http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/south-dakota-rancher-adds-value-operation-improves-wildlife-habitat/)

A January 22 article on South Dakota’s Ron Steineke showcased his fine work putting SGI conservation practices on the ground that include rest-rotation grazing and water developments that are key in a drought-prone area.

Quote from Steineke: “The grazing rotation is a good thing—I’ve never done that before,” Steineke says. “I won’t be able to run as many cattle as I used to, but the grass will be better and thicker. We’ll know a lot more in three to four years, but I think there will be all kinds of extra grass out there for sage grouse and other wildlife.”

The Facebook post on the Steineke ranch has more than 3000 views and 17 shares:

<https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=998651196815053&id=408072312539614>

**Sand County Foundation partnership adds more rancher success stories**

The Sand County Foundation is working closely with the Sage Grouse Initiative to create a booklet of rancher stories, featuring producers who are enrolled in SGI. The Foundation has a strong media team and is very successful at cultivating media interest in the process of assembling the stories—with the goal of creating a final product that also inspires related media stories along the way. SGI has helped Sand County Foundation with numerous calls and connections to the NRCS public affairs staff in the areas—with shared media connections and more.

The Foundation provided an advance copy of the story written about Bi-State rancher Fred Fulstone to all participants at the landmark conifer removal workshop in Minden in late February.

News Results to date from Partnership:

March 3: Mike and son Matt Byrne make a difference for sage grouse in northern California—article in Western Livestock Journal: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/livestock-producers-step-sage-grouse/>

March 30: The Reno Gazette long feature article relied heavily on the leads and information on the Fulstone family, thanks to the Sand County Foundation, working in conjunction with Nevada NRCS and SGI:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/nevada-ranchers-take-proactive-measures-in-bi-state-as-listing-date-approaches-reno-gazette-journal-article/>

**Communications from the SGI-SWAT Field Staff**

February 25: Kelsey Molloy, stationed in Malta, Montana, put together a Webinar that SGI features on the YouTube station: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/new-sgi-webinar-intro-greater-sage-grouse-conservation-u-s/>

March 9: Lara Fondow, stationed in Rexburg, Idaho, spoke to a reporter who wrote a great profile piece about her work and background: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/sgi-wildlife-conservationist-lara-fondow-enjoys-working-birds-people/>

**Science to Solutions: New Addition & More Prominence on SGI Website**

The popular Science to Solutions series now has its own section on the SGI Website:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/category/science-to-solutions/>

The Resources page prominently features the category:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/resources/>

In this quarter, SGI released and promoted on the website, Facebook & Twitter: “Sage Grouse Conservation Benefits Migratory Mule Deer”: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/sage-grouse-conservation-benefits-migratory-mule-deer/>

**Featured Friends**

This series is dedicated to holding up partners of the Sage Grouse Initiative—featuring the partner on the home page of the website and providing a one-page well-designed PDF for handouts. In addition to the home page feature, the Featured Friends to date can be viewed similarly to Science to Solutions—with its own section and prominence on the Resources page:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/category/featured-friends/>

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/resources/>

January 2015 opened with a nod to our partner in conservation easements: The Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Featured-Friend-Wyoming-Stock-Growers-Land-Trust-HIGH-RES-010615.pdf>

The quarter ended with the addition of USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife:

<http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Featured-Friend-USFWS-LOW-RES-033115-4.pdf>

**Social Media Gets Boost With Addition of new SGI Communications Specialist**

Brianna Randall, SGI Communications Specialist, joined the team in this quarter in a part-time position working closely with Deborah Richie, SGI communications director. She brings many social media skills to the table. She now schedules tweets through a program called “Buffer” and researches and applies best times for Facebook Posts and Tweets, and has added her considerable website skills to improving the SGI website, working in close conjunction with the SGI-contracted website company, Partners Creative.

See Facebook site:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sage-Grouse-Initiative/408072312539614>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SageGrouseInit>

Info on Brianna on the Staff page: <http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/about/meet-our-staff/>

**SGI teams up with NRCS National Headquarters Public Affairs in 2015 for Strategic Planning & Amplifying Message**

The Communications arm of SGI is now working in close tandem with the NRCS nationally as well as regionally, since the release of the SGI Outcomes report in 2015. Coordination on Bi-State press, merging strategies and calendars for SGI communications, and regular conference calls are improving abilities to streamline messages, amplify them, and coordinate on news where practical and effective.