



Featured Friend

Wood River Land Trust

Creative Collaboration Preserves Ranchland and Prime Habitat in Idaho

In Idaho's sage grouse country, unique partnerships are protecting precious open spaces. The Wood River Land Trust (WRLT), a nonprofit group based in Hailey, is spearheading collaborative and creative projects that benefit birds as well as a host of sagebrush-dependent wildlife.

By partnering with the NRCS-led Sage Grouse Initiative and the members of the Pioneers Alliance, WRLT and other conservation organizations have worked with private landowners on easements and acquisitions that preserve over 88,000 acres of ranchland and prime habitat for the iconic greater sage-grouse near south-central Idaho's Pioneers Mountains. Over 50,000 acres of these easements were funded through NRCS conservation programs.

Two years ago, WRLT and The Nature Conservancy acquired the Rock Creek Ranch—10,400 acres of paradise for sage grouse and plenty of other critters. The ranch encompasses the entire Rock Creek watershed, and includes sage grouse leks. SGI contributed funds through the NRCS Grassland Reserve Program, which paid for the easement and compensated the landowners for enacting their conservation goals.

The Rock Creek Ranch serves as a model for collaborative management, and is open for public access, too. An advisory council helps develop grazing management plans, education programs, and research topics for this unique property, and the University of Idaho is now conducting cutting-edge research on what works here for sage grouse, wildlife, and range health.

"It's exciting to see the opportunities that come with combining recreation, research, livestock grazing, and wildlife habitat all on one ranch."

~Keri York, Director of Conservation at WRLT



Rock Creek Ranch provides wonderful wildlife habitat and preserves ranchland, thanks to a conservation easement put in place with help from WRLT and SGI. Photo by John Finnell.

Meet the Wood River Land Trust

About

Wood River Land Trust is a local conservation nonprofit organization that protects and restores land, water, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities in the Wood River Valley and surrounding areas throughout south-central Idaho. WRLT acquires conservation easements, manages preserves, coordinates restoration projects, and provides educational outreach on water conservation.

Role With Sage Grouse Initiative

Protecting and improving greater sage-grouse habitat has been a focus for WRLT over the past decade. This nonprofit partners with the NRCS and the Sage Grouse Initiative to acquire and improve habitat for sage grouse, and to conduct outreach to private landowners about easements. In turn, WRLT provides matching funds or in-kind assistance for SGI's habitat improvement projects, such as marking fences to prevent fatal sage grouse collisions.

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