



United States Department of Agriculture



WLFW Conservation Strategies

Tim Griffiths (NRCS, Bozeman, MT) & Dr. David Naugle (University of Montana, Missoula, MT)





Roadmap

Session 1 July 8th 10am- noon Mountain
Characterize WLFW is, review our charge
and show how WLFW can assist States

Session 2 July 8th 1pm- 3pm Mountain
Woodland expansion

Session 3 July 9th 10am- noon Mountain
Exotic Annual Grass Invasion
Land Use Conversion

Session 4 July 9th 1pm- 3pm Mountain
Riparian and Wet Meadow Degradation
Other Threats

Working Lands for Wildlife

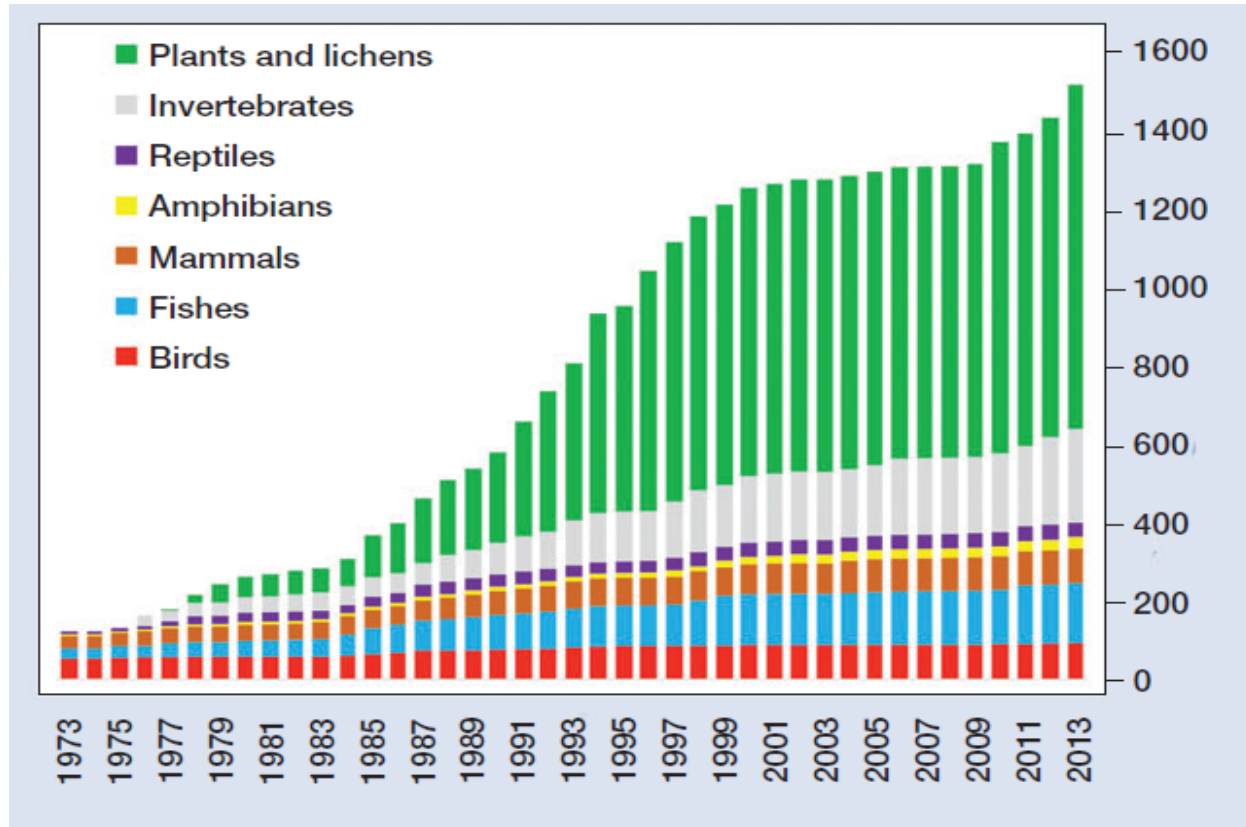


Shared Vision: Wildlife Conservation Through Sustainable Ranching

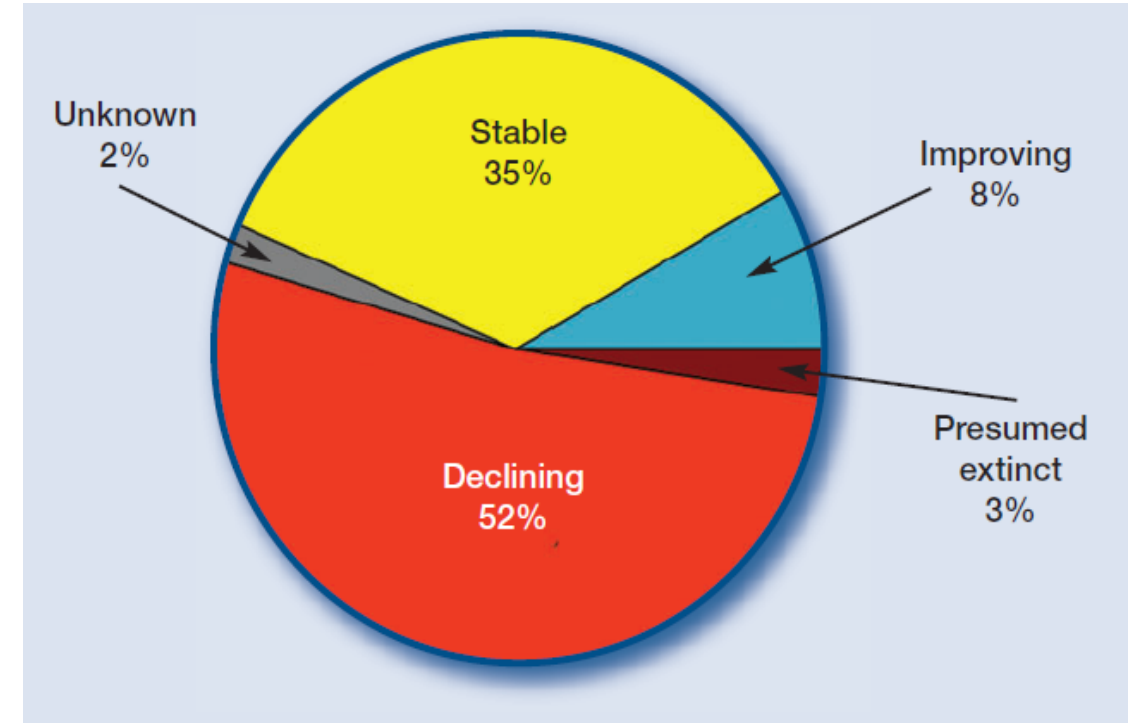


NRCS's premier approach for conserving America's working lands to benefit people, wildlife and rural economies

Wildlife Concerns



Number of listed species
skyrockets



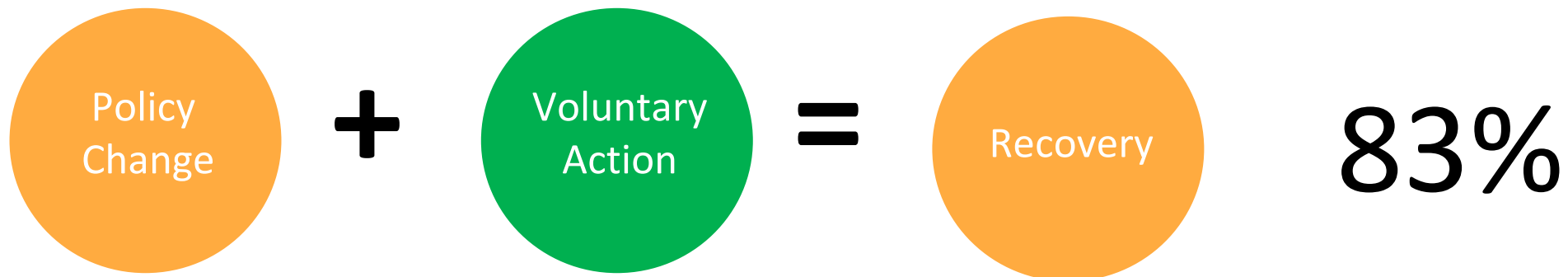
Trends in recovery status for 1,292 listed
species, 1990-2010

Voluntary Conservation Provides Solution

traditional regulatory approach



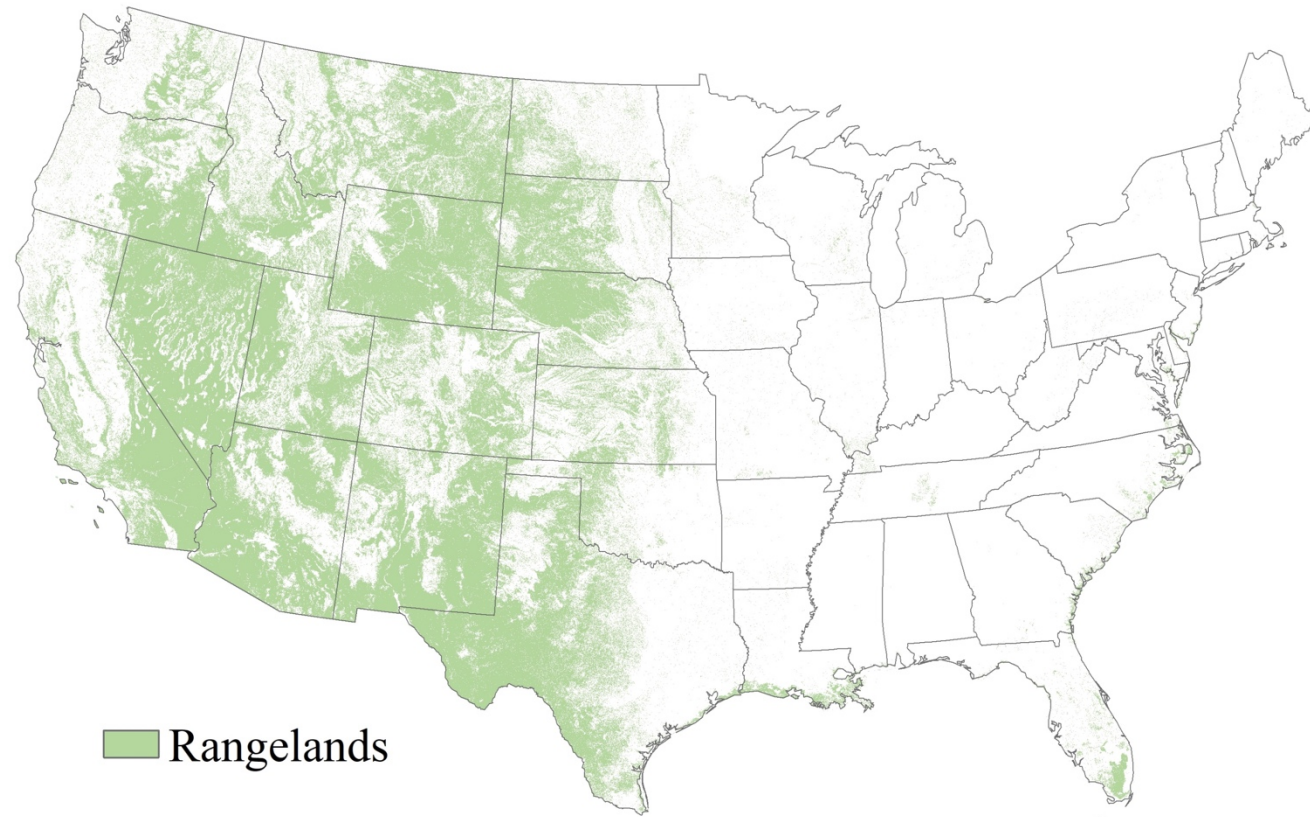
conservation-reliant species

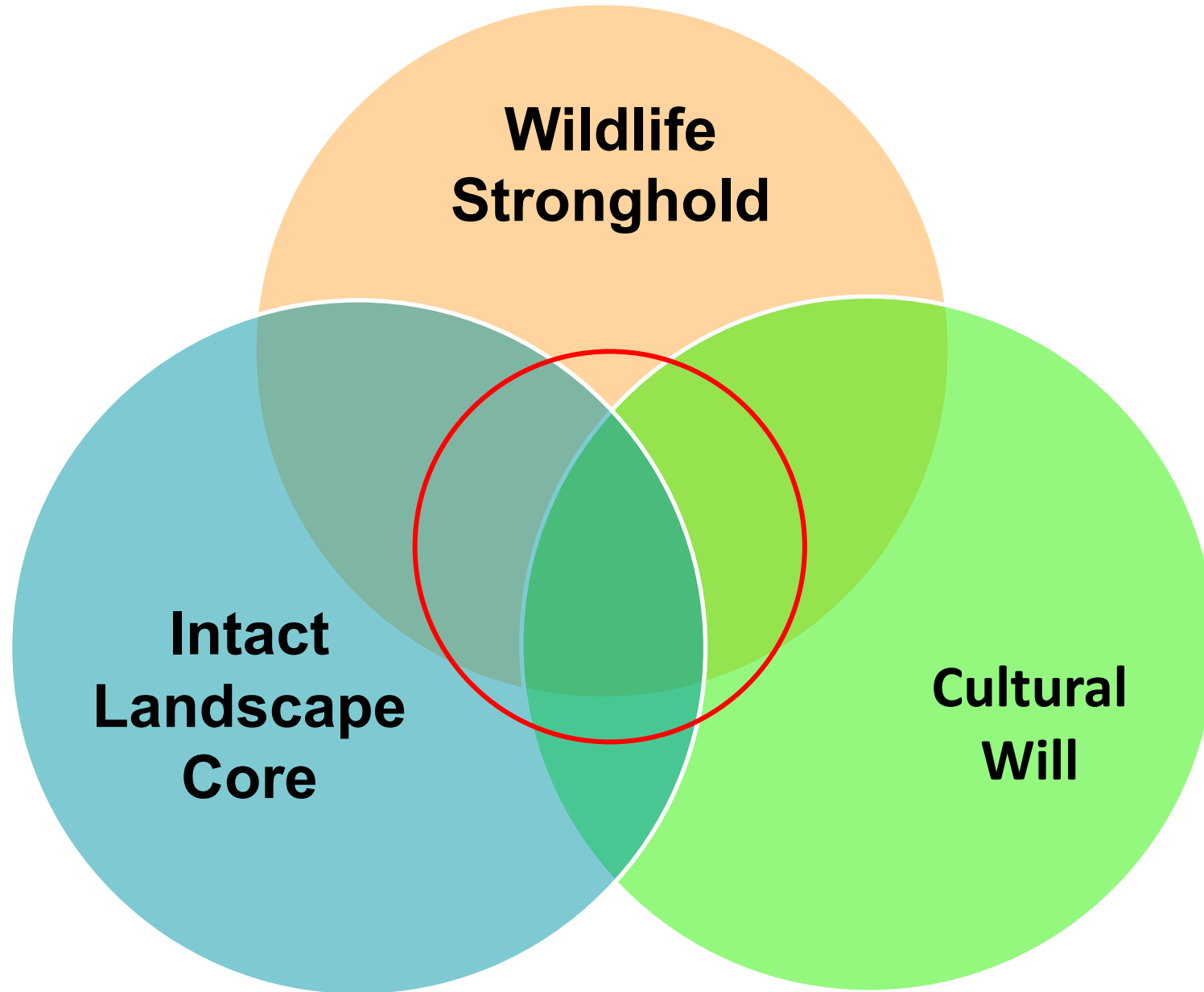


Helping People Help the Land



Why Rangelands?





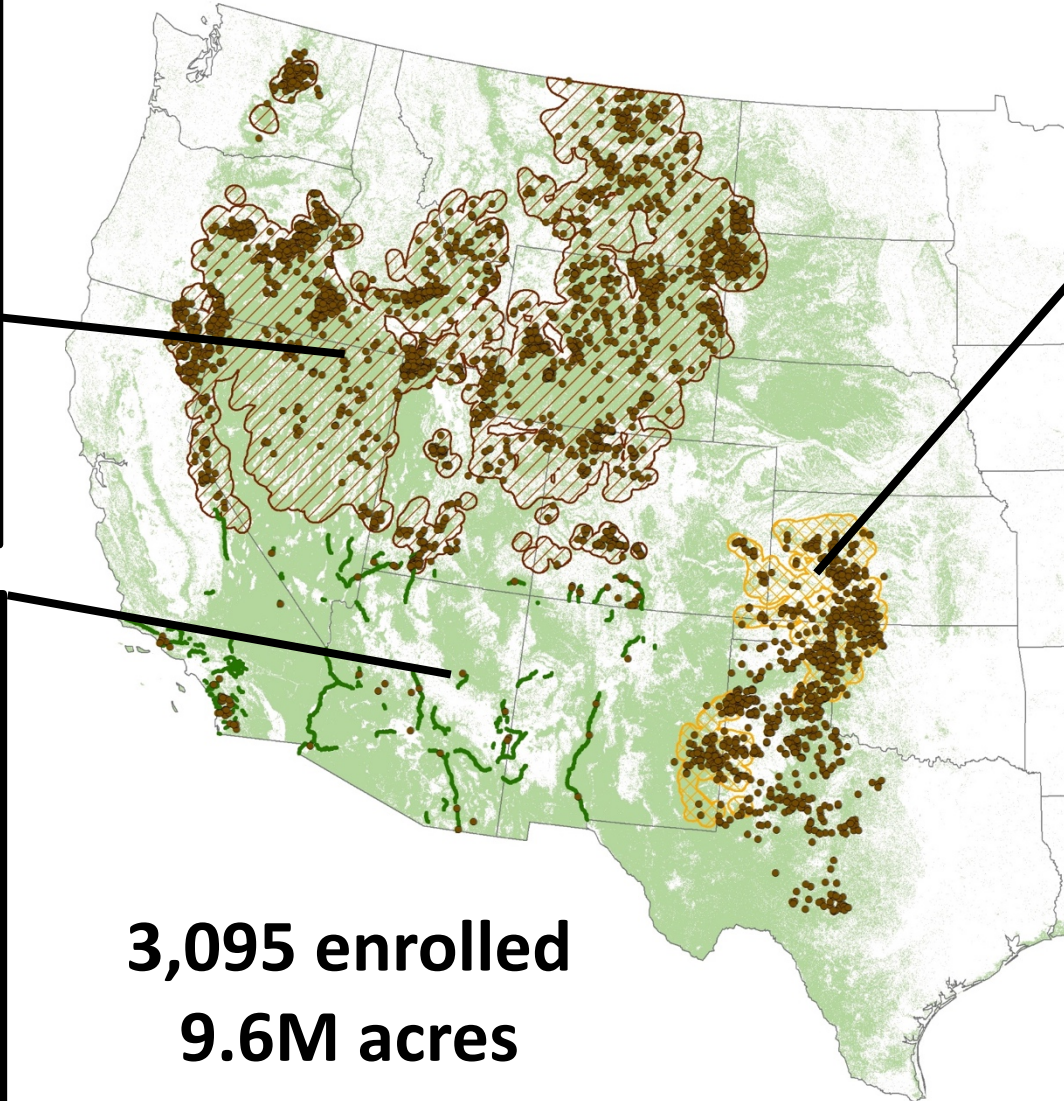
**Wildlife
Stronghold**

**Intact
Landscape
Core**

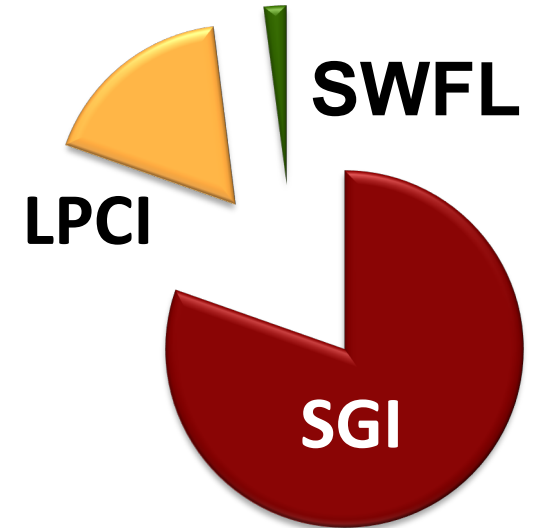
**Cultural
Will**



Past Focus and Accomplishments



**3,095 enrolled
9.6M acres**



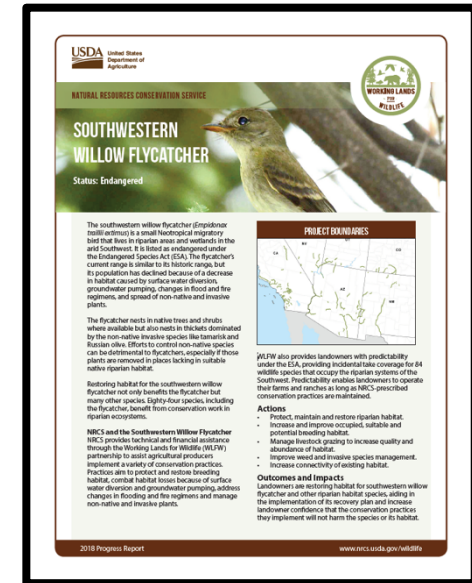
Our Charge Going Forward



Update existing strategy to cover another 5 years (FY21-25)

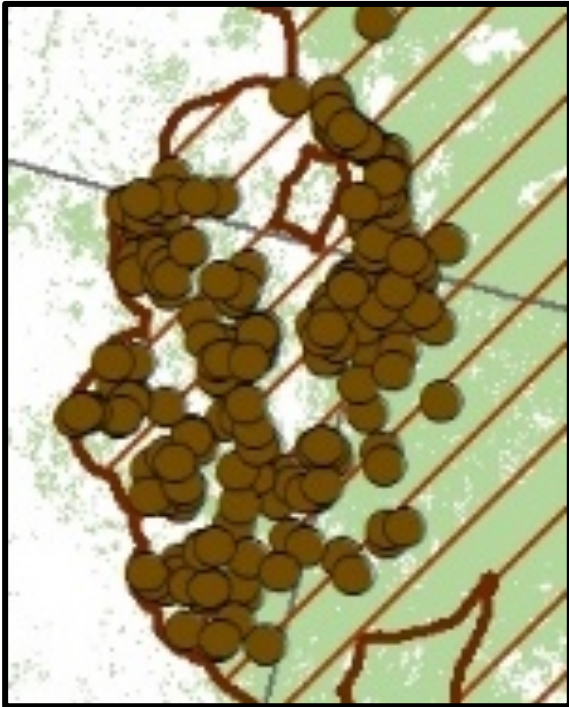


Rebuild LPCI as a broader Great Plains-wide grasslands initiative to cover FY21-25

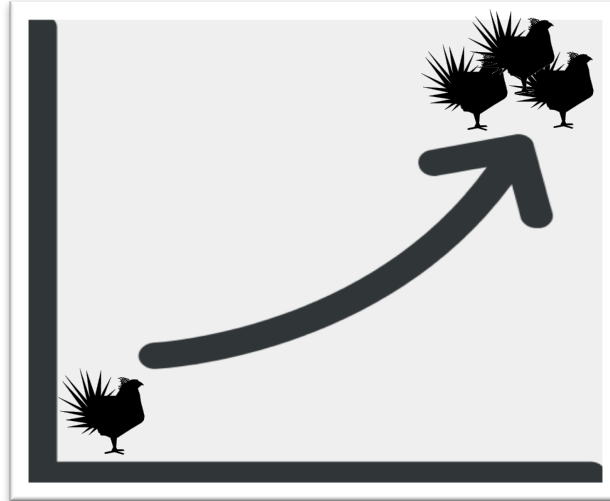


Update milestones for FY21-23 OR **Reimagine** to increase effectiveness

SGL is Highly Targeted with Outcomes



Warner Mountains
OR, CA & NV



The New York Times

A Shifting Approach to Saving Endangered Species



How An Iconic Western Bird Is
Stepping Back From the Brink



**As biodiversity dwindles, a shift in
thought on conservation**



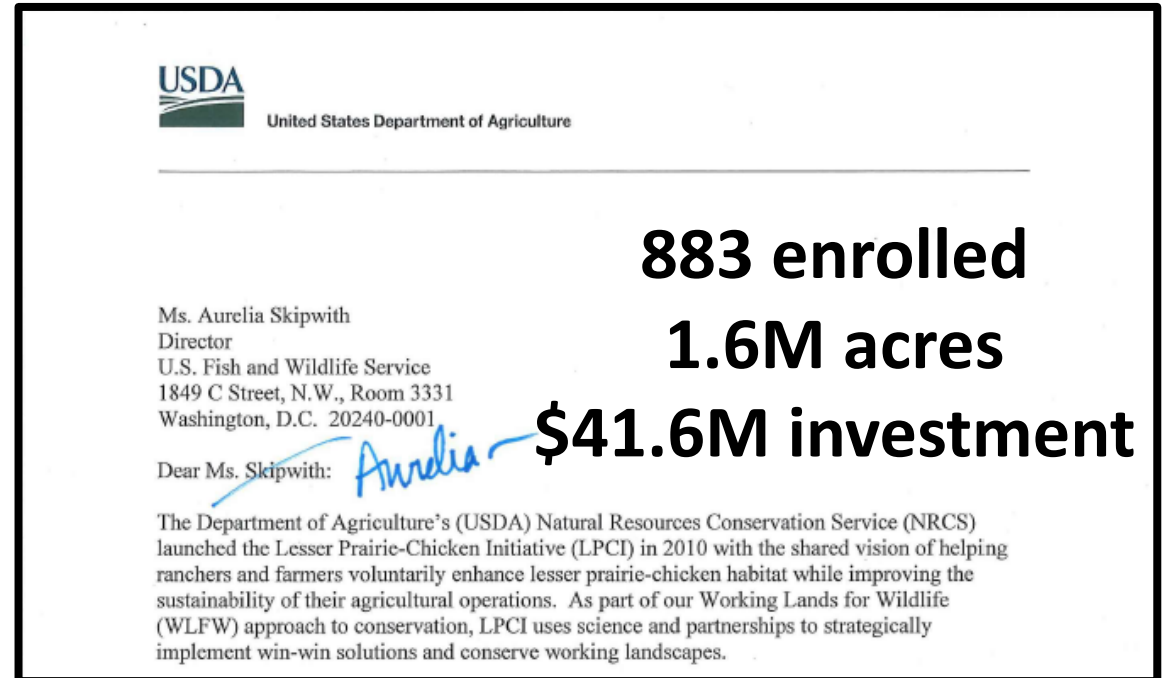
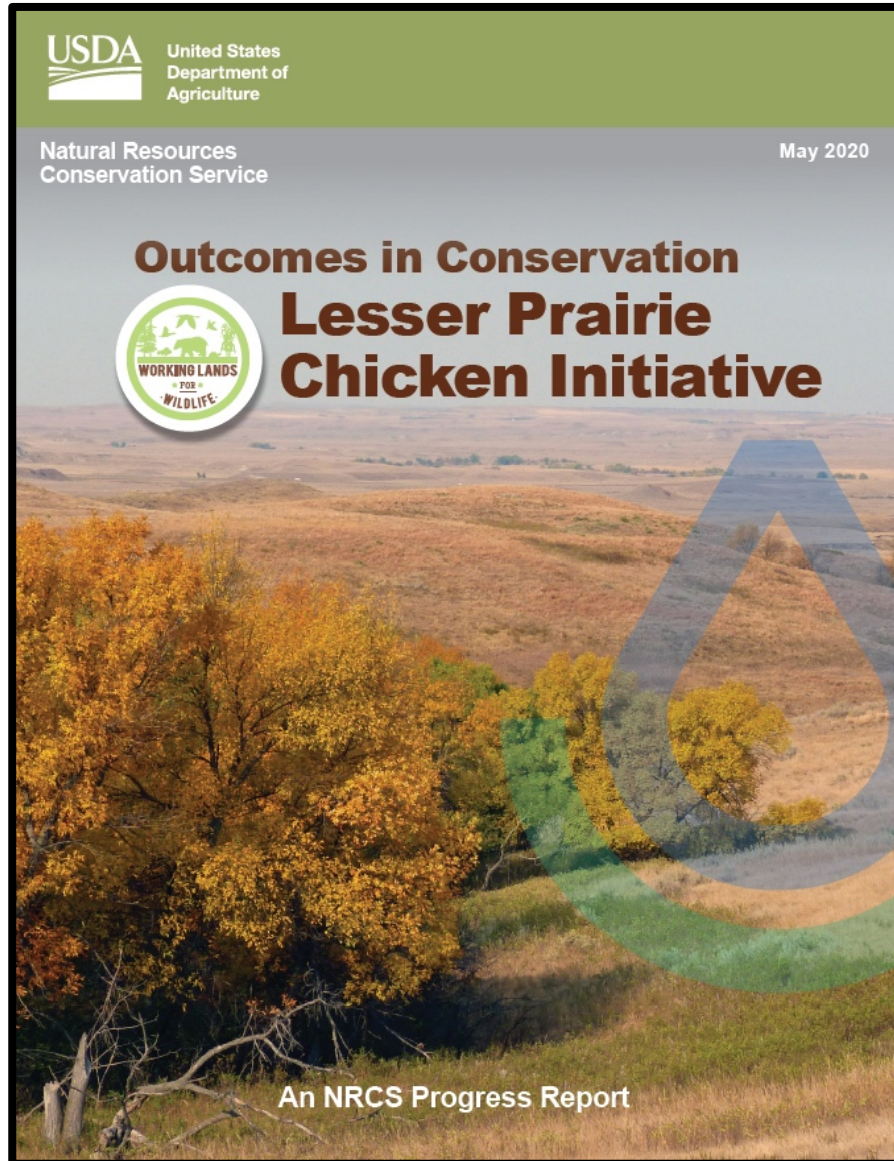
Voluntary Conservation on Par with Regulatory Mechanisms



Historic Outcome



A Decade of LPCI Success Completed




- **Habitat quality increases 11% for every 1% of 528 on the landscape**
- **Massive legacy affect of transitioning 60% of CRP to working grasslands**

Rationale to Rebuild LPCI



1. Create a revised strategy that expands the geography of LPCI to include all the Great Plains
2. Maintain focus on primary threat reduction such as woody expansion that degrades grasslands
3. Replace the name 'Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative' with a more inclusive name such as the Great Plains Grassland Initiative

SWFL at a Crossroads



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

SOUTHWESTERN WILLOW FLYCATCHER

Status: Endangered




The southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is a small Neotropical migratory bird that lives in riparian areas and wetlands in the arid Southwest. It is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The flycatcher's current range is similar to its historic range, but its population has declined because of a decrease in habitat caused by surface water diversion, groundwater pumping, changes in flood and fire regimens, and spread of non-native and invasive plants.

The flycatcher nests in native trees and shrubs where available but also nests in thickets dominated by the non-native invasive species like tamarisk and Russian olive. Efforts to control non-native species can be detrimental to flycatchers, especially if those plants are removed in places lacking in suitable native riparian habitat.

Restoring habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher not only benefits the flycatcher but many other species. Eighty-four species, including the flycatcher, benefit from conservation work in riparian ecosystems.

NRCS and the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership to assist agricultural producers implement a variety of conservation practices. Practices aim to protect and restore breeding habitat, combat habitat losses because of surface water diversion and groundwater pumping, address changes in flooding and fire regimens and manage non-native and invasive plants.

PROJECT BOUNDARIES



WLFW also provides landowners with predictability under the ESA, providing incidental take coverage for 84 wildlife species that occupy the riparian systems of the Southwest. Predictability enables landowners to operate their farms and ranches as long as NRCS-prescribed conservation practices are maintained.

Actions

- Protect, maintain and restore riparian habitat.
- Increase and improve occupied, suitable and potential breeding habitat.
- Manage livestock grazing to increase quality and abundance of habitat.
- Improve weed and invasive species management.
- Increase connectivity of existing habitat.

Outcomes and Impacts
Landowners are restoring habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher and other riparian habitat species, aiding in the implementation of its recovery plan and increase landowner confidence that the conservation practices they implement will not harm the species or its habitat.

2018 Progress Report

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wildlife

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

SOUTHWESTERN WILLOW FLYCATCHER

NRCS Goals
Through WLFW, NRCS works with producers to restore habitat in riparian areas in the Southwest in an effort to increase populations of the southwestern willow flycatcher, provide habitat for other species and provide predictability to producers, ensuring they can continue managing their working lands. NRCS works with landowners to restore nesting habitat in six recovery units. The acreage accomplishments help meet the 10-year goals of the flycatcher recovery plan.

Fiscal Year 2018 Southwestern Willow Flycatcher
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts

State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Arizona	655	\$465,187	2
California	80	\$182,457	4
Colorado	2	\$7,263	1
Nevada	0	\$0	0
New Mexico	0	\$0	0
Utah	134	\$135,437	1
Totals	871	\$790,344	8

Data source: NRCS Resource Economics, Analysis and Policy Division, October 2018.

Overall Summary

FY12-17 FY18

Total NRCS Investment: \$5,235,170 (FY12-17) / \$790,344 (FY18)

Number of Contracts: 73 (FY12-17) / 8 (FY18)

Total Acres Contracted: 12,513 (FY12-17) / 871 (FY18)

2018 Milestones:
Nesting Habitat in Population Recovery Units

Legend: FY12-17 Acres Implemented (Dark Brown), FY18 Acres Implemented (Light Brown), FY12-18 Acres Planned (Grey)

Recovery Unit	Milestone (Acres)	FY12-17 Implemented	FY18 Implemented	FY12-18 Planned	Progress on 10-Year Plan
Basin and Mojave	91	1	0	0	1%
Coastal California	941	1,210	462	814	100%
Gila	729	282	11	778	12%
Lower Colorado	448	400	0	9,500	34%
Rio Grande	482	600	0	518	87%
Upper Colorado	64	105	178	738	100%

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



Key Components of a Strategy

Why - Reduce threats impacting ranching and wildlife

Where - Large scale spatial strategy

What - Practices and programs

Outputs - Acres, numbers and feet

When - 5 years (FY21-25)



Allows us to achieve desired outcomes and tell the story of voluntary conservation on working lands!

How You Report Your State-Level Priorities

New- Qualtrics WLFW Strategy Data Portal

***Dr. Matt Jones- University of Montana,
Landscape Ecologist and Data Wizard***



Which Working Lands for Wildlife geographies/initiatives are applicable to your state?

(select all that apply)

Great Plains Grasslands

Sagebrush Biome /
Sage Grouse Initiative

Southwest / SWFL

Which threats are you addressing (select all that apply)

Woodland expansion

Exotic annual grass invasion

Ways the WLFW team can help make your job easier



Threat based trainings
to help scale up
delivery



Tailored
communications



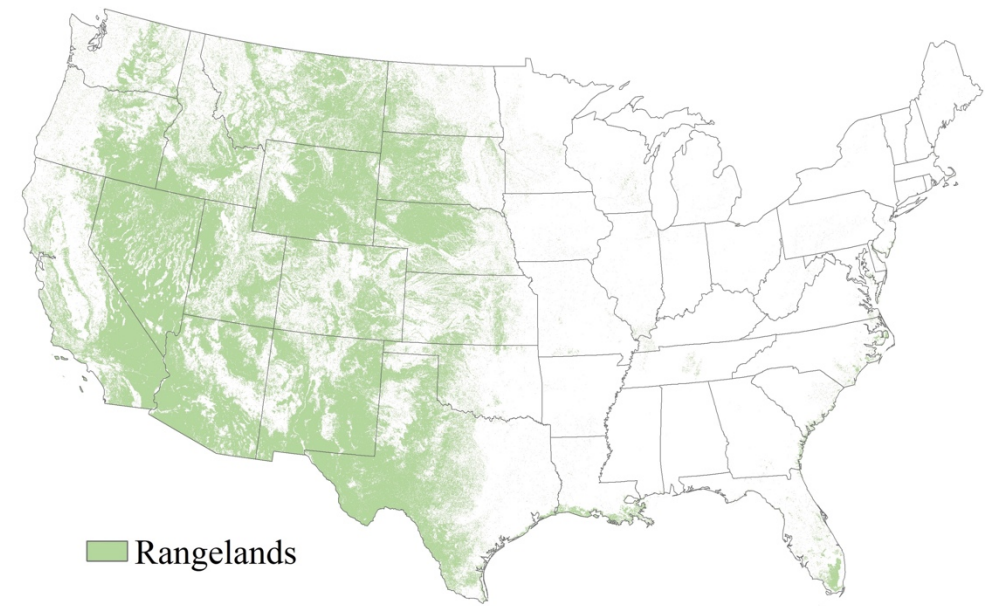
Shared grant for
capacity



Break for Q & A

Photo by: Scott Bean

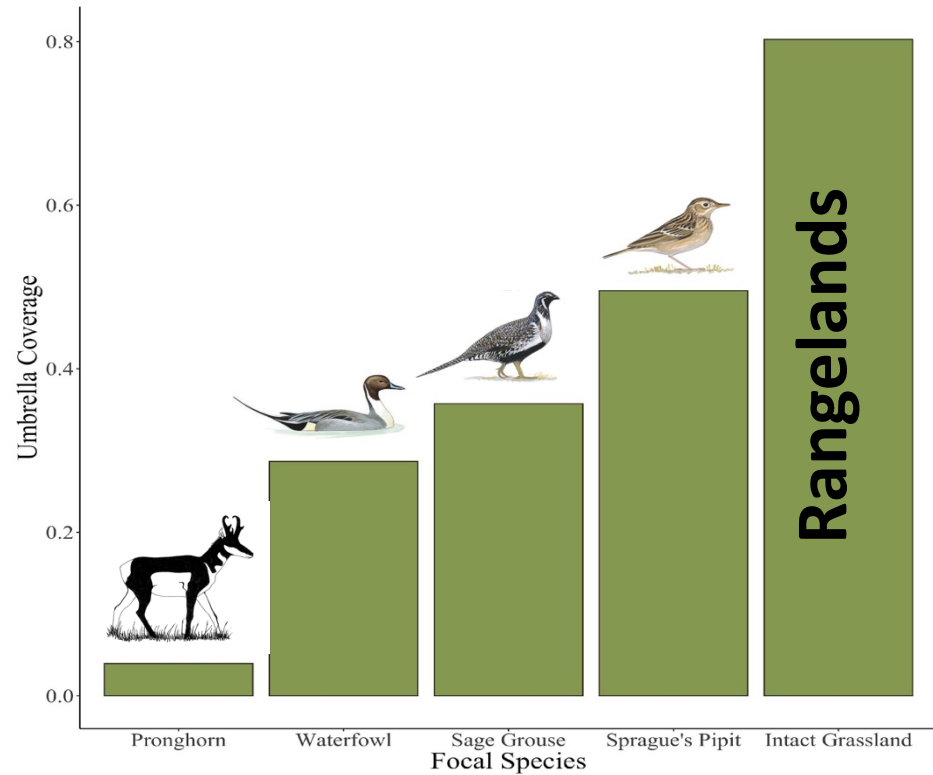
4 Primary Rangeland Threats to Wildlife and Working Lands



Other issues degrading rangelands



Take Home: Maintain Your Intact Rangelands



Best umbrella for multi-species conservation

Threat-Based Strategies

Threats = WHY



Woodland Expansion

Practices = HOW

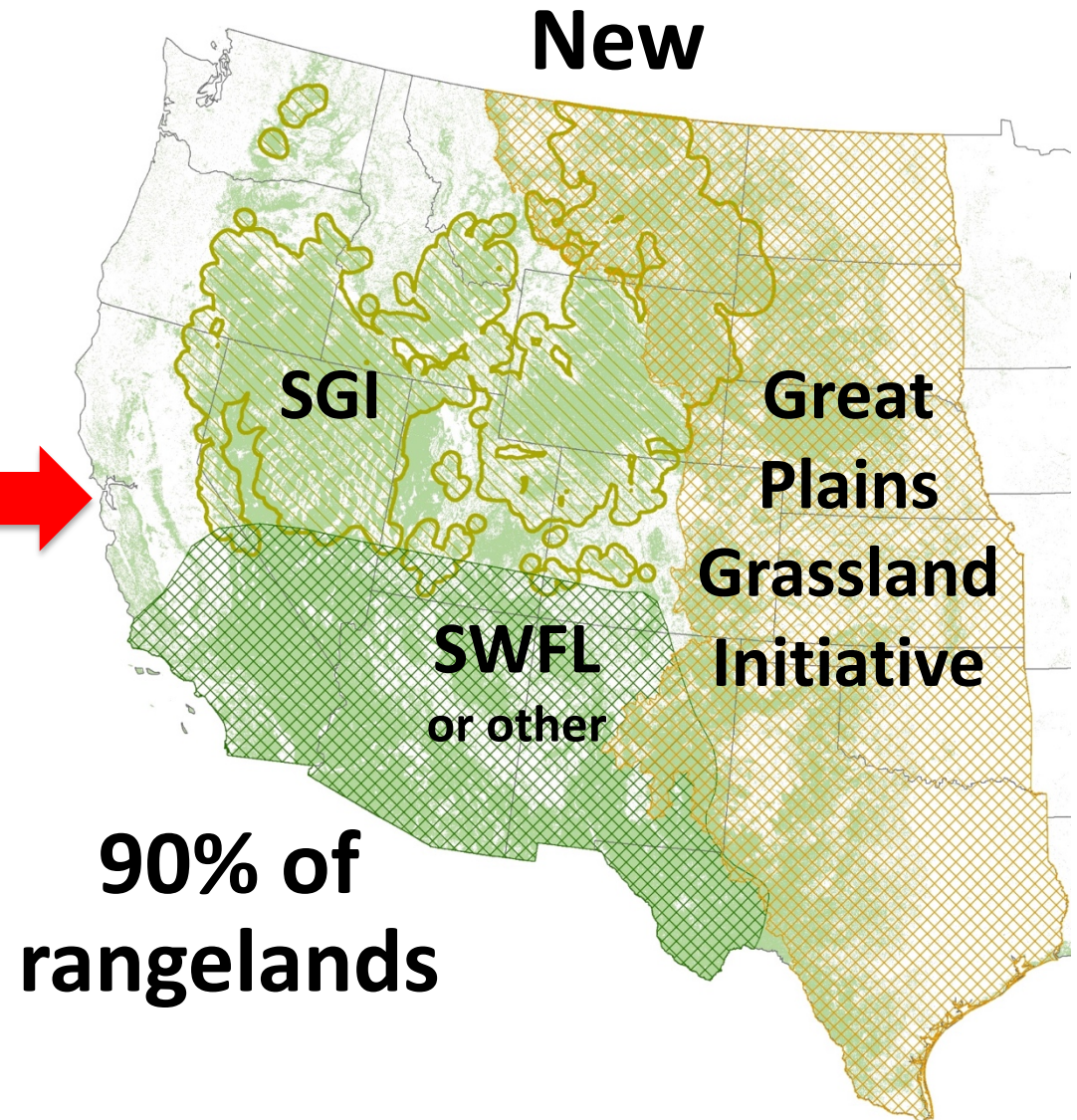
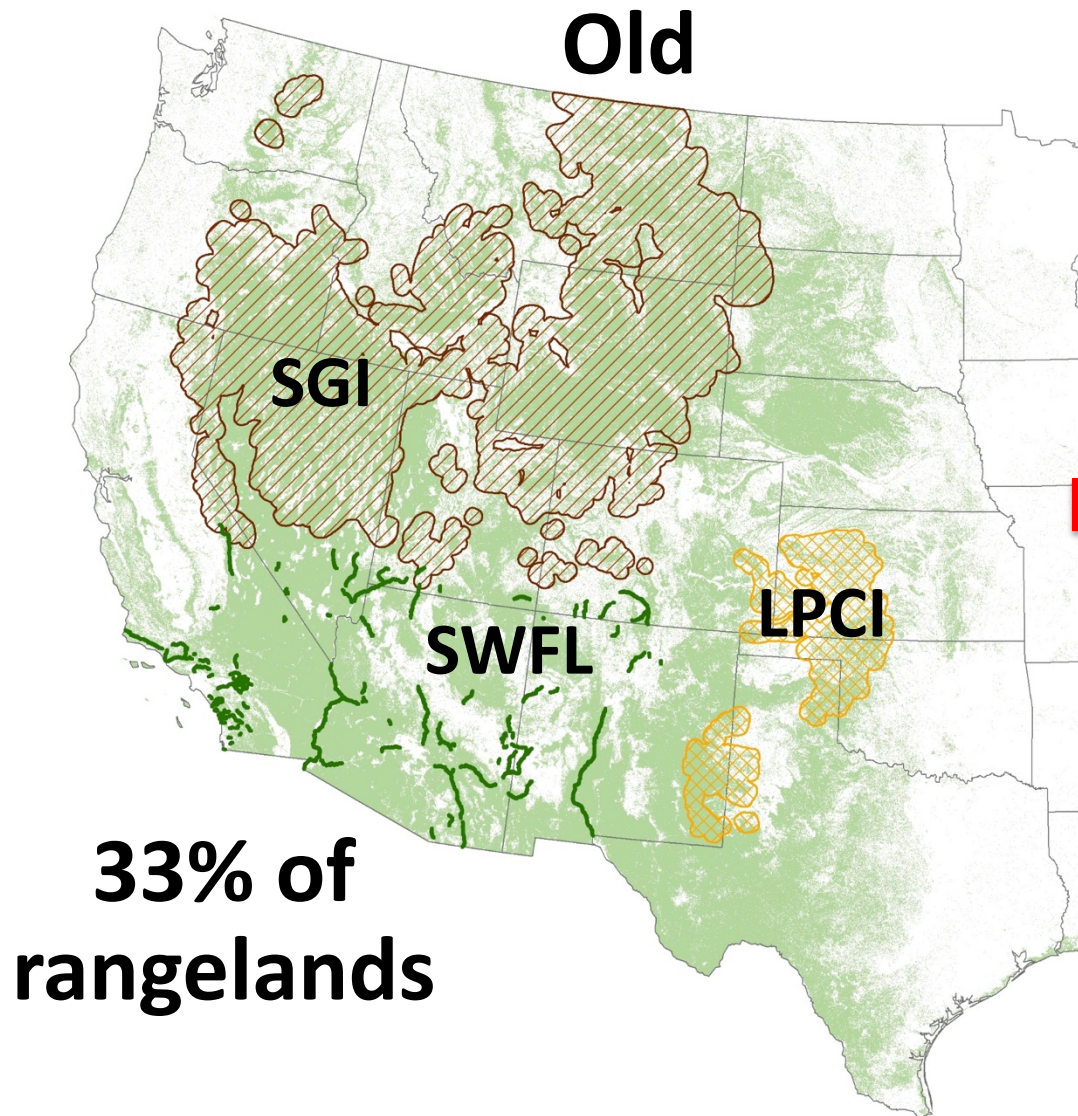


338 Prescribed Burning



314 Brush Management

Our 3 Geographies



Outcomes Instead of Outputs

700k acres of woodland management with \$100M invested

872 contracts

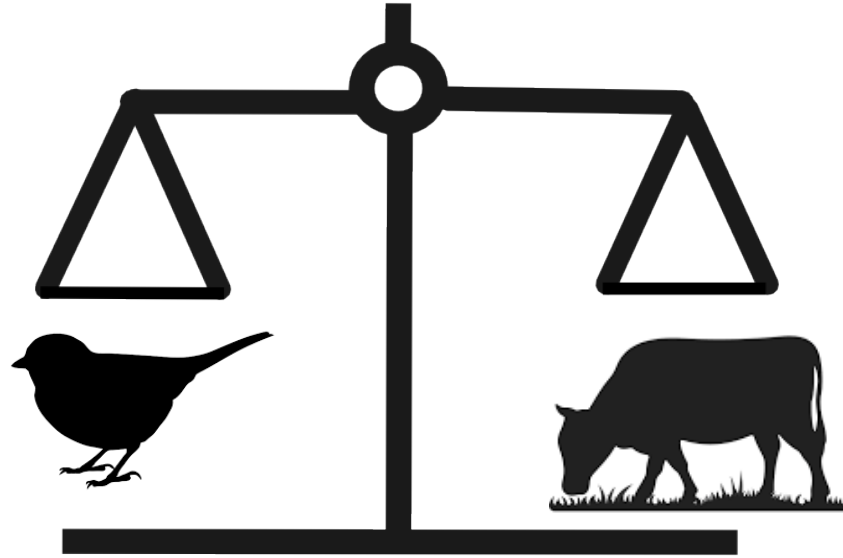
Still left wondering...Is that good?



Merriam.—Outcome (n.) the way a story turns out; a consequence.

Syn. Upshot, effect, conclusion

Outcomes for Ranching and Wildlife



**Wildlife remains core to
strategy; ranching
outcomes now equally
important**



60% more forage



2 more weeks of water

Co-production of science fills two roles:

1. Build targeting tools to prioritize where we work
2. Conduct outcome-based evaluations to assess conservation effectiveness



Outcomes
apply *directly* to implementation



Old “Loading dock”
approach



Meet our Co-producing Scientists



Just published our 70th
evaluation on behalf of
working lands!



Technology to Assist WLFW Planning and Strategies

Rangeland Analysis Platform (RAP)



CEAP



<https://rangelands.app>

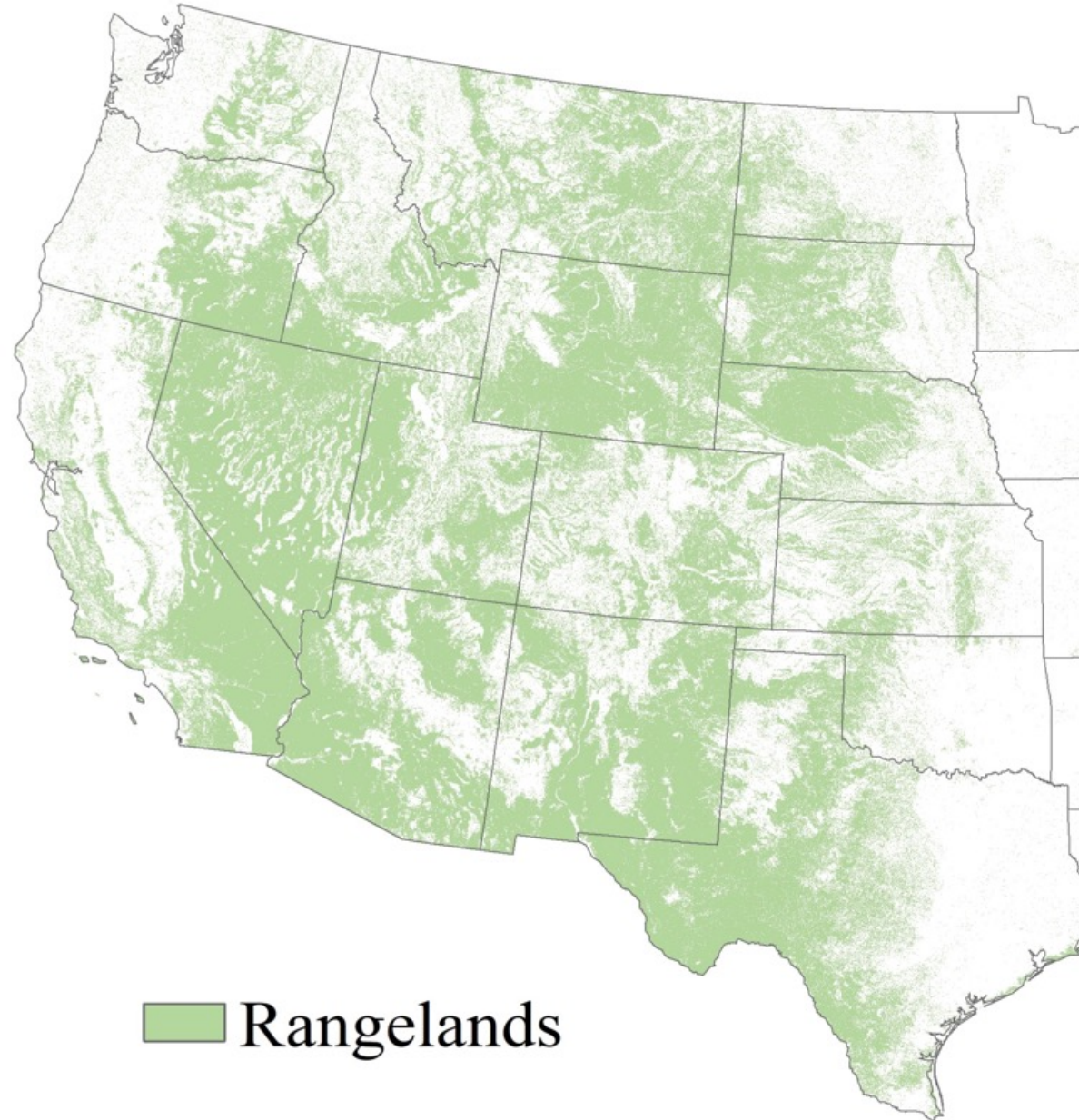


First things first

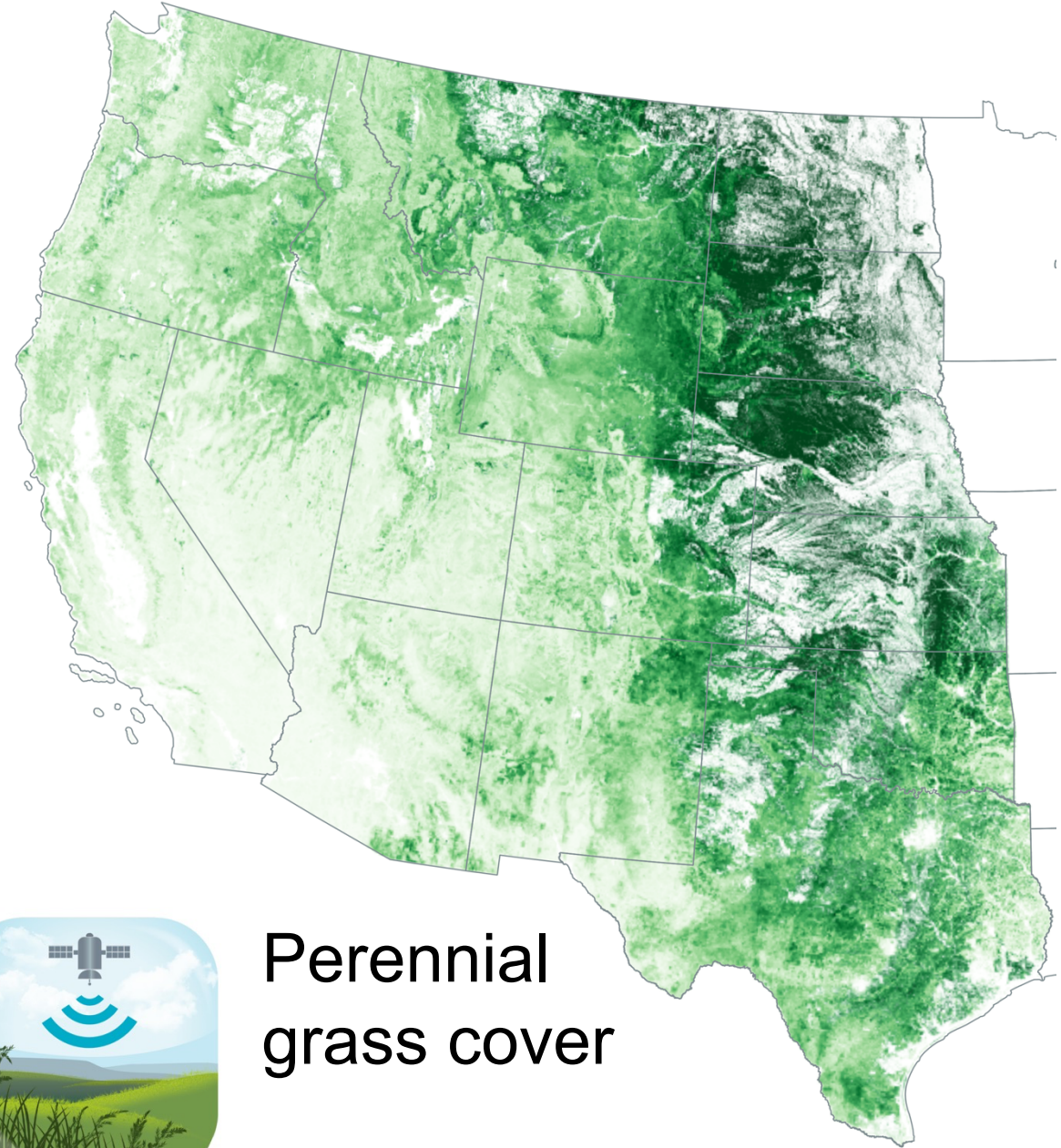
Do not wait or get paralyzed by data and science



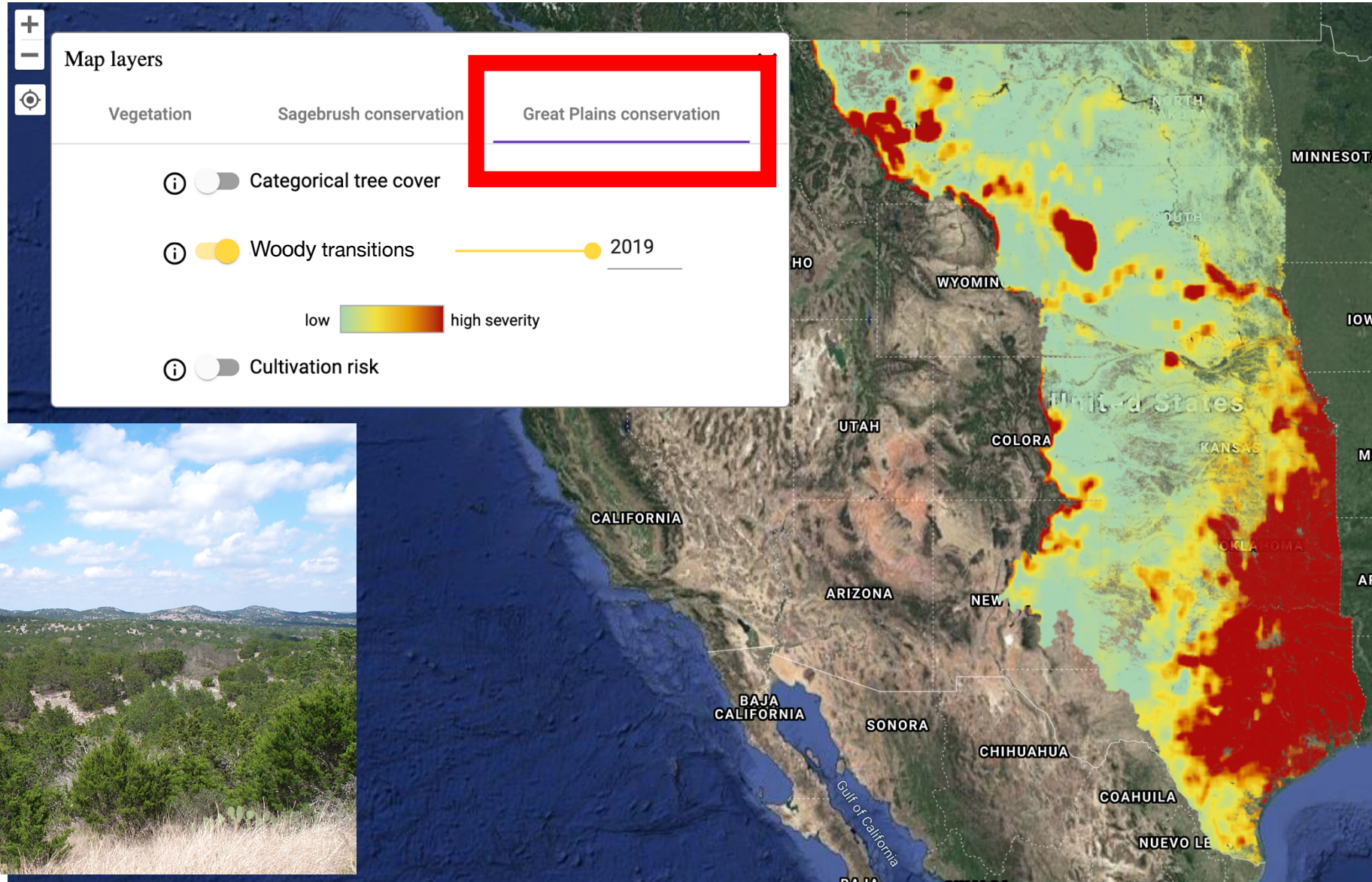
Matches Initiative's Geography



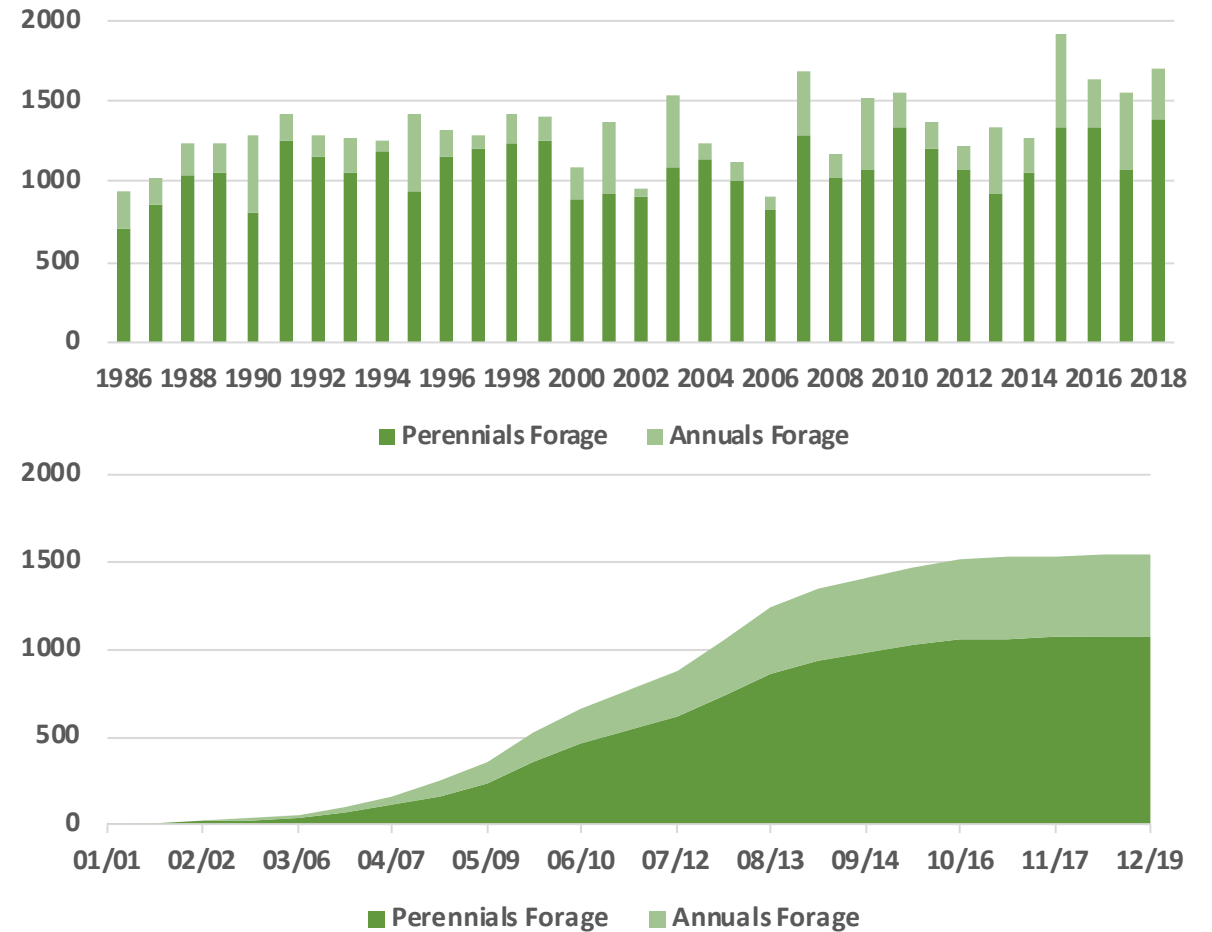
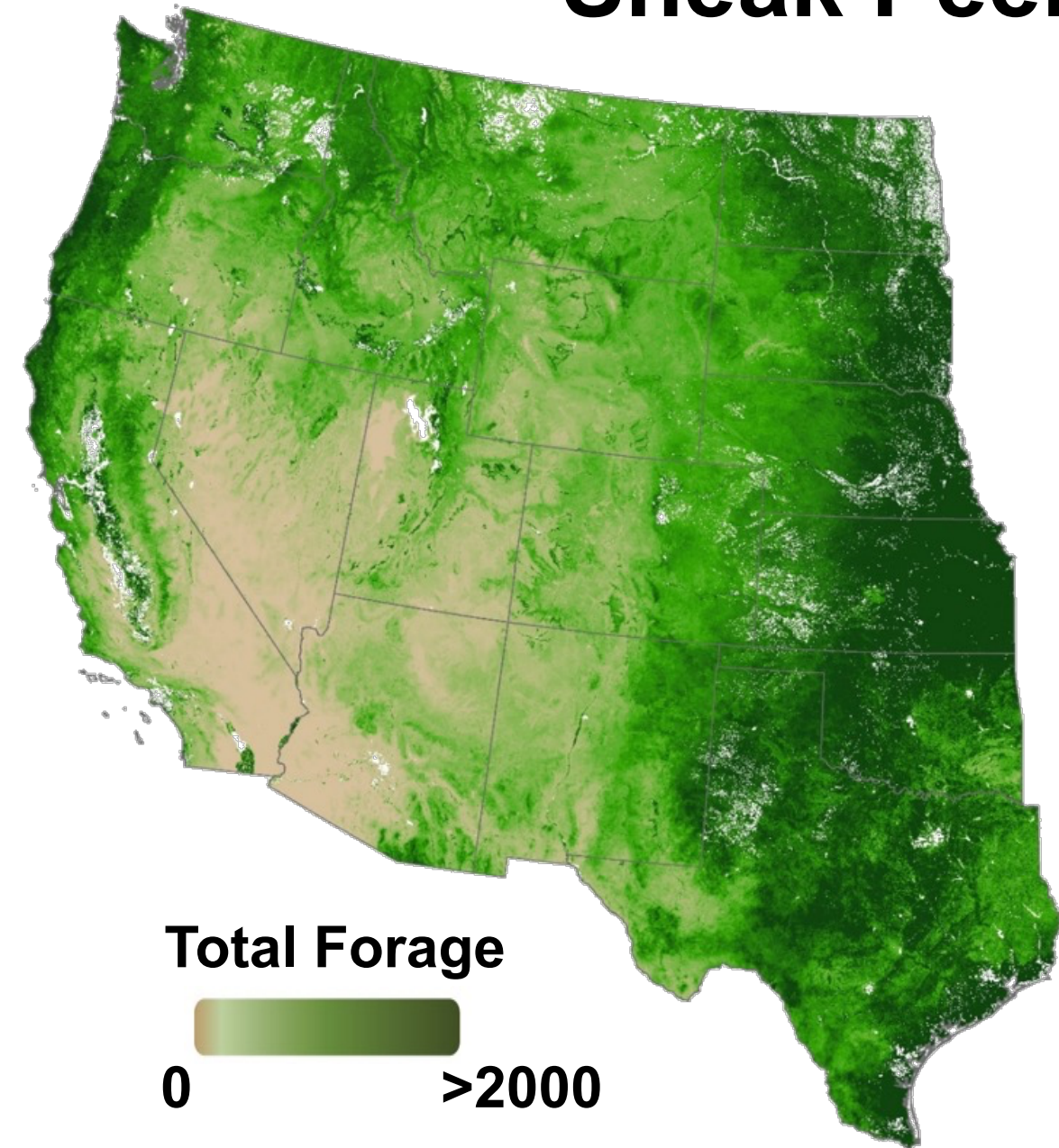
Perennial
grass cover



New Targeting Tools RAP Applications



Sneak Peek of Production

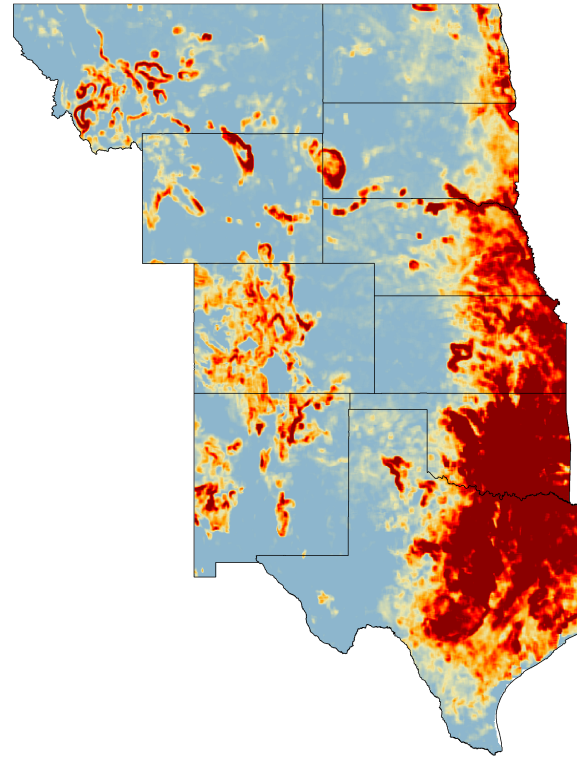


Assess conservation
benefits to ranchers'
bottom line

Additional Ways WLFW Assists States



Annual workshop



CART data needs



Strategies, progress and outcomes

Logistics

✓ ***Leadership Kickoff Meeting June 25th***

State Conservationist support and team selection

✓ ***Technical Sessions July 8-9 @ 10-noon & 1-3 pm MST***

Prep NRCS States for breakout with their staff and partners

State-level Meetings led by States July-August

NRCS-led meeting to develop individual State contribution to broader strategy

Close-out Meeting Early September

Review State Contributions and Draft Strategy

A desert landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, purple, and orange. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange glow. In the foreground, there are several saguaro cacti of various sizes. A large Sphaeralcea cactus is prominent on the left side. The ground is covered with desert vegetation, including low-lying shrubs and small cacti.

Discussion and Wrap Up

Photo by: Julie Chen