

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Time Running Out to Get 2011 Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Funding

April 1, 2011 –Farmers and ranchers wanting to improve rangeland conditions while protecting sage-grouse populations and habitat in Idaho can apply for funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage-Grouse Initiative. Applications received before April 15 will be ranked for funding in fiscal year 2011.

The Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) helps pay for putting specific conservation practices in place that will improve sage-grouse habitat or reduce threats to bird survival. Many of these practices can also make rangeland conditions better for livestock. Idaho received just over \$3 million for the initiative this year. Landowners in the historic range for sage-grouse are eligible to apply for the initiative.

"The Sage-grouse Initiative supports both sustainable ranching and healthy sage-grouse populations by focusing on improving rangeland conditions," said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "Some of the practices used to improve sage-grouse habitat are the same practices required to maintain healthy grazing land for livestock."

NRCS spent over \$1 million in 2010, the first year for the Sage-grouse Initiative. Producers across southern Idaho used the initiative to help fund projects that enhanced sage-grouse habitat and also improved range condition such as:

- Seeding rangeland to increase availability of sage-grouse food plants and improve livestock forage;
- Installing new fencing and water developments to assist grazing management;
- Removing juniper trees in key breeding, brood-rearing and wintering sites to restore sage-grouse habitat and increase livestock forage production; and
- Improving grazing systems to incorporate a rest period to improve sage-grouse cover during the nesting season.

Declining sage-grouse populations and habitat across the west generated interest in helping the species so that it will not need protection under the Endangered Species Act. The species depends on sagebrush for cover and food and are found at elevations ranging from 4,000 to over 9,000 feet.

For more information on the initiative, contact your local NRCS office or visit our Website http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/sage_grouse/index.html.

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