



Natural Resources Conservation Service



## **NEVADA SHARED STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT**

**Between**

**STATE OF NEVADA;**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**FOREST SERVICE AND**

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE;**

**AND**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**AND FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

This Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement (Agreement) is hereby made and entered into by and between the state and federal agencies with land management responsibilities: the State of Nevada (State), the USDA Forest Service (USFS), the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

### **Introduction**

The State of Nevada's borders enclose 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, tribal, and private land. The federal government 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 and Tribes 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 (sagebrush and desert scrub, 81% or 57.5 million acres), followed by forestland (including timberland and woodland, 12% or 8.5 million acres). The remaining cover type includes wetland/riparian zones, agricultural land or developed (homes, infrastructure or businesses). 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. In keeping with its mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations, the USFS also supports work on non-federal lands through State, Private and Tribal Forestry programs. BLM programs focus on sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of public lands while also maximizing multiple-use opportunities for commercial industry, recreationists and conservationists alike to ensure use and enjoyment of these lands for present and future generations. USFWS programs also focus on conservation and recovery of migratory birds, at-risk species, and listed species, as well as science acquisition, delivery, and assistance to private landowners to that end, across the state. NRCS programs help private landowners and producers reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. 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, private and tribal 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 shared values, including to communities in the wildland urban interface as well as critical watersheds, wildlife habitat and local economies. Wildfires are occurring with increasing size, severity and frequency. Significant increases in invasive annual grasses compound Nevada's fire challenges by altering ecological functions, degrading habitats for wildlife, and reducing forage for livestock.

Since signing the first Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement in 2019, the parties and cooperators have achieved the following:

- Established an Executive Committee and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Identified 13 priority landscapes (see attached) and completed 604 treatments on 197,142 priority acres.
- Created Nevada's Strategic Plan to Implement the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement and Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy which guides the pursuit of resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, and safe and effective wildfire response. To guide and oversee implementation of the Strategy; the following are responsible for recommending revisions to each tenet: resilient landscapes (Shared Stewardship TAC), fire-adapted communities (Fire Adapted Nevada), and safe and effective wildfire response (Nevada Fire Board).
- Established planning groups in 8 of the 13 landscapes to identify and implement locally led conservation efforts through collaboratively developed 5-year programs of work.
- Averaged a 134% increase in acres treated year over year for the 5-year term, exceeding the 50% target over the term of the Agreement.
- Developed data-sharing platform and standards.

The agencies party to this Agreement remain committed to protecting communities, livelihoods and ecosystem health by increasing the pace and scale of restoration work in priority landscapes, maintaining past treatments so they remain effective, and employing the Shared Stewardship model as described below to achieve ecosystem restoration and wildfire risk reduction throughout the State.

## **Vision and Framework**

The challenges facing Nevada's ecosystems cross jurisdictional lines and land ownerships, therefore, to prevent and mitigate catastrophic loss, land management actions should also be multi-jurisdictional. This Agreement empowers the parties to work toward collaborative, active management of forests, rangelands and watersheds, including maintenance of past treatments, with the same vigor and commitment that has characterized efforts to safely and effectively manage our natural resources, including threats to those resources from wildland fires over the last century.

This Agreement builds 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, USFS, NRCS, BLM, and 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, USFS, NRCS, BLM, and USFWS will collectively expand our working relationships, jointly establish priorities, implement projects at the appropriate scale, co-manage risk, and share resources. The concept for this strategy has three core elements:

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

## **Shared Stewardship Themes**

The parties have and will continue to identify priority landscapes, coordinate and maintain 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 to prioritize investments where they will have the greatest impact. The end goal is to achieve landscapes that are healthy, functional, and more 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** - We will expand our capacity for restoration and rehabilitation by working with local governments, communities, tribal governments, industries, private landowners, and other partners to appropriately restore damaged or degraded habitats and improve ecosystem health. Healthy and resilient lands and waters support people, communities, fish and wildlife.

- **Sustainable Recreation** – We will protect the environments and infrastructure that support outdoor recreation by mitigating wildfire risks, creating resilient landscapes, and providing public outreach and education focusing on recreationists’ roles and responsibilities in protecting natural resources and preventing human caused wildfires.
- **Conserve and protect fish, wildlife, and plants** - We will prioritize activities that conserve and protect Nevada’s native fish, wildlife, and plant species and habitats that are important to support, restore, and maintain viable populations. We will focus on “defend and grow the core” principles for sagebrush ecosystem conservation with additional focus on keystone needs, such as healthy riparian systems and intact migration corridors which support intrinsic values of these systems, as well as recreational, cultural, and economic values of our state.
- **Diversity** - We will be inclusive and reflective of Nevada's culturally rich and diverse populations, seeking out a diversity of stakeholders and communities across backgrounds and demographics, and working to make the enjoyment and stewardship of our natural resources meet the changing demographics within the State.
- **Healthy Communities** - We will help support diverse and vibrant local economies through relationships, practices, collaboration, and investment. As stewards of Nevada’s natural resources, the parties will directly and indirectly support jobs, create career pathways, and generate economic activity across the state.

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

The State, USFS, NRCS, BLM, and USFWS have a long history of cooperation to address ecosystem management and conservation issues. By renewing this Agreement, the parties continue to strengthen collaboration in Nevada and advance outcome-based, locally led 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. **Collaborative Operating Structure & Process**: The parties will collaborate in sustaining effective structures and process that facilitate the effective collaborative stewardship, relationships, communication, resource allocation, etc. We envision this includes:
  - a. Maintain an Executive Committee, consisting of the heads of the party agencies to ensure the terms of this Agreement are followed. The Executive Committee will meet not less than twice annually, and will be responsible for:
    - i. Establishing leaders’ intent for how to achieve the commitments identified in this Agreement.
    - ii. Addressing and resolving any issues that arise.
    - iii. Reporting on mutual accomplishments regarding Shared Stewardship in Nevada.

- iv. Executive Committee leaders may appoint a proxy to represent them in the event they cannot attend a scheduled meeting.
- b. Technical Advisory Committee – Executive Committee members will designate an agency staff member to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The purpose of the TAC is to implement Executive Committee direction, develop recommendations to assist in implementing the goals of this Agreement, and assist the landscape planning groups.
- c. Landscape Planning Groups – Executive Committee members will commit staff participation in landscape planning groups to strategically prioritize and implement activities that protect and restore the priority landscapes consistent with this Agreement. These groups report accomplishments to the Executive Committee annually and maintain and implement a collaboratively developed five-year program of work. Field staff from the signatory agencies form the core of each landscape planning groups and should coordinate with other partners working within the landscape, including tribes, other state and federal agency staff, conservation districts, weed management areas, local governments, fire protection districts, nongovernmental organizations and private landowners, to collaborate and implement priority work.

2. **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. Fish, wildlife, and habitat distributions so that negative effects to populations can be minimized and beneficial actions can be incorporated where appropriate.
- c. Identifying information gaps and securing funding for new research needs.
- d. Using efficient processes to identify, track, and share information on partner projects and commitments.
- e. Evaluating and managing risk in decision-making processes by prioritizing actions based on the highest probability of success.
- f. Continuing to evaluate and adjust priority landscape boundaries using the best available science.

3. **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 ecological function and processes to guide landscape restoration for resiliency.
- b. Using mechanical and hand treatments, hazardous fuels reduction, innovative wood product utilization, and fire breaks to limit mega-fires and their effects on wildlife habitat and human communities.

- c. Carefully managing and collaboratively planning 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.
- d. Implementing coordinated post-fire restoration efforts, including the appropriate use of desirable native, non-native, and fire-resistant species for reseeded based on resistance and resilience modeling, pre-fire ecological conditions, and current science.

4. **Strategies and Plans:** Each party has existing strategies, plans and other documents that guide work within their respective purview. The parties will use these as the foundation on which to base landscape-scale priorities and decisions, and parties 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. NRCS – Working Lands for Wildlife
- 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
- k. BLM – Restoration Landscapes
- l. Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy

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

- a. Nevada’s Strategic Plan to Implement the Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement and Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy
- b. NDF – Nevada Forest, Range & Watershed Action Plan
- c. Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan
- d. Nevada Strategic Action Plan – For Implementation of the Nevada Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan
- e. Bi-State Action Plan – For Conservation of the Greater Sage-grouse Bi-State Distinct Population Segment
- f. Nevada Wildlife Action Plan

- g. Nevada Native Seed Partnership- Nevada Seed Strategy
- h. Nevada Wildlife Connectivity Plan
- i. Nevada Sagebrush Habitat Plan (in draft)

5. **Resources and Relationships**: The parties will dedicate agency resources to ensure continued success and growth of partnerships and collaborative decision-making. The parties are committed to working 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 economies 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 and maintenance treatments, emergency responses such as fire suppression, and post-fire rehabilitation/emergency stabilization/restoration projects).
- d. Embracing new thinking and partnerships, innovation, and measured risk-taking to seize opportunities for shared success.
- 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.

### **Nevada Shared Stewardship 2024 Renewal Commitments**

The parties to this Agreement shall:

1. Use the best available science and data to reanalyze the priority landscape boundaries and consider designation of additional landscapes or treatments to focus risk mitigation efforts that protect shared values (ongoing).
2. Work toward increasing the number of acres treated for wildfire risk mitigation and ecosystem restoration from 2023 (120,766 acres) across the priority landscapes by 50 percent, by 2029, while continuing the maintenance of past treatments.
3. Identify other outcome-based metrics to track the success of Shared Stewardship, such as reduced risk, habitat protected, watersheds improved, and partners engaged. The TAC will research additional proposed metrics and present recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval by the end of 2026.
4. By 2029, establish landscape planning groups and complete and maintain prioritized five-year programs of work for all priority landscapes, including initial treatments and maintenance.

5. Evaluate areas of high human-caused wildfire occurrence and develop overarching fire prevention and fuels management strategies to protect identified values at risk.
6. Update or create Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) for all counties and communities-at-risk in Nevada by 2029, and incorporate them into County Hazard Mitigation Plans, where possible.
7. Review and update the Nevada Cohesive Strategy/Nevada Shared Stewardship Strategic Plan by 2027 to ensure the plan reflects the most effective strategies for sustaining resilient landscapes (Lead: Shared Stewardship TAC), protecting communities (Lead: Fire Adapted Nevada), and promoting safe and effective wildfire response (Lead: Nevada Fire Board). Produce an annual report regarding the completion of action items within this strategy.
8. Explore new Threats Based Strategic Conservation approaches such as the Sagebrush Conservation Design and Nevada Sagebrush Habitat Plan to protect, grow, and connect core habitats.
9. By the end of 2025, complete research on proven collaborative funding models and supporting mechanisms, such as Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative and Idaho's Cheatgrass Challenge, and identify current and potential funding sources that could support a similar effort in Nevada. By the end of 2026, develop a white paper recommending a proposed collaborative funding model and mechanisms to enhance and sustain Shared Stewardship of Nevada's natural resources.
10. By the end of 2025, develop, adopt and employ a strategy to institutionalize Shared Stewardship as the working model for state and federal agency staff collaborative function, including an orientation program for new staff at the field, technical specialist and executive levels.

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

The State, USFS, NRCS, BLM, and 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**

The parties agree this document does not serve as an authorizing tool. The State, USFS, NRCS, BLM, and 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.



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


**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 Nevada Shared Stewardship Agreement.


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

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor Joe Lombardo Date  
State of Nevada

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Farnsworth, Regional Forester Date  
United States Forest Service, Intermountain Region

For   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Eberlien, Regional Forester Date  
United States Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Heidi Ramsey, State Conservationist Date  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Raby, Nevada Director Date  
Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management

PAUL Digitally signed by PAUL  
SOUZA SOUZA Date: 2024.11.12  
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Paul Souza, Regional Director Date  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region