MONTANA

Jurisdictional Updates

Transboundary Grassland Partnership Annual Workshop

November 15, 2022

Federal Updates

1. **Increasing Interest in Grassland Conservation Nationally**
   a) Coordination through the Central Grasslands Roadmap
   b) North American Grasslands Conservation Act introduced to the Senate in July 2022

2. **Unprecedented New Funding Sources for Conservation**
   a) Bipartisan Infrastructure Leglislation (BIL) provided funds for Sagebrush and Grassland Systems
      - MT Partners for Fish and Wildlife helping deliver ~2 million for sagebrush projects across northcentral and southwest Montana
      - NFWF “America the Beautiful” Initiative funded several projects in MT including 4.9 million for Intertribal Approach to Restoring Plains Bison and Landscape Connectivity on Tribal Lands
   b) Inflation Reduction Act provides additional opportunities
      - USDA to received $20 billion to support conservation programs that yield climate-related benefits while building resilience in agricultural operations

State Updates

1. **Motus tracking for migratory birds**
   a) Funding for 50 new towers, to be installed over next 1-2 years
   b) Place at FWP office locations in Eastern MT, build out based on priority locations
   c) Hiring a Motus technician to assist, will be advertised in next few months
2. **New Habitat Conservation Lease program**
   a) Voluntary, incentive-based agreement
   b) Landowner commits to specific management practices that protect priority wildlife habitat
   c) Priorities include shrub, mixed-grass, wetland-grassland, riparian floodplain and intermountain shrub-grasslands. Initial focus on prairie.
   d) One round of applications currently working through

Non-Governmental Organization Updates

1. **World Wildlife Fund**'s Ranch Systems and Viability Planning Program (RSVP) started enrolling ranches in 2021. They now have 33 ranches enrolled in Montana, representing nearly 400,000 acres. Participants agree to non-conversion for 10 years and are provided ecological monitoring, access to educational scholarships, and cost-share for ranch infrastructure.
2. **The Nature Conservancy** is doing a lot of work related to mesic restoration and beaver dam analogs. They continue to hold the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for sage-grouse and declining grassland songbirds. They are also working on drone-based monitoring for sage-grouse, vegetation and riparian areas.
3. **The Ranchers Stewardship Alliance** continues to work with a broad partnership on conservation, education and community development. Since 2017, their conservation committee worked with > 80 ranch families to restore > 21,000 acres of cropland to grassland, enhance > 70,000 acres of grazing systems, modify > 125 miles of fences for wildlife passage, and remove 17 miles of unnecessary fencing. RSA recently launched a membership drive. Become a member or learn more at *www.ranchstewards.org*