

Governors Executive Order 2021-18

Nevada Habitat Conservation Framework



Alan Jenne, Habitat Division Administrator

October 1, 2021



Nevada Habitat Conservation Framework (HCF) - Background

- The concept discussion began with conservation partners relative to protecting big game migratory corridors.
- It was soon expanded beyond the corridors to consider actions to improve, maintain and protect the sagebrush habitats supporting the migrations.
- In the end the EO scope was broadened to encompass all Nevada's habitats to afford conservation opportunities that may be identified in the required Wildlife Connectivity Plan.

The Executive Order (EO) recognizes:

- Nevada's native habitats are decreasing due to ever increasing risks and threats such as climate change, development, wildfire and invasive, fragmentation and conversion.
- Nevada's wildlife habitats support over 895 wildlife species across the 70.7 million acres of the state
- Some habitats such as sagebrush are being lost or converted at an astonishing rate.
- Nevada's lands and associated habitats support our communities and economies not only through traditional uses such as mining, and grazing, but also outdoor recreation.
- The plight of Nevada's wild places and encourages additive collaborative efforts, resources, and capacity to collectively design and implement on-the-ground conservation and restoration activities.
- The HCF will consider all key habitats of Nevada but will start with sagebrush and migratory corridors.



EXECUTIVE ORDER 2021-18

CREATING THE NEVADA HABITAT CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

WHEREAS, the wildlife habitats of the State of Nevada provide recreational, economic, and quality of life values to all citizens; supporting more than 895 wildlife species despite threats such as climate change, development, wildfire and invasive species, fragmentation, and conversion; and

WHEREAS, Nevada has approximately 70.7 million acres of total land area and roughly 86 percent are public lands managed by various federal governmental agencies for multiple purposes, creating management opportunities and challenges; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation in Nevada generates \$12.5 billion of annual consumer spending, supporting over 87,000 jobs and over \$1 billion in tax revenue; and

WHEREAS, thriving functional ecosystems with intact habitats are culturally important to Tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, Nevada is the driest state in nation where wetland and riparian areas are critical yet only comprise approximately 1% of Nevada; and

WHEREAS, the State of Nevada is known as the Sagebrush State and sagebrush habitats alone cover over 50 percent of Nevada, supporting more than 367 species of wildlife, plants, and invertebrates; and healthy and intact sagebrush habitats support and maintain rural economies and traditional uses including livestock and agricultural production; and

WHEREAS, healthy sagebrush ecosystems are 90 percent more effective at sequestering carbon than invasive cheatgrass degraded rangelands; and

WHEREAS, range-wide, approximately 50 percent of all historic sagebrush habitats have been lost to threats such as wildfire, invasive species, agricultural conversion, and pinyon-juniper encroachment. These threats degrade, convert, and fragment sagebrush habitats, and the sagebrush ecosystem is now one of the most imperiled in the U.S.; and



The EO will establish a **Nevada Habitat Conservation Framework (HCF)**.

- The HCF will provide for habitat conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and protection in a coordinated and inclusive manner across landownerships and in partnership with federal land management agencies, other relevant state and local agencies, stakeholders, and local entities
- The HCF will be led by NDOW working with partners on the following goals:
 - 1) Conserving and propagating diverse and productive wildlife habitats;
 - 2) Addressing the priority threats to key habitats such as the wildfire and annual invasive grass cycle, and conifer encroachment; and
 - 3) Maintaining connectivity of habitats and corridors

Two initial EO products

Sagebrush Habitat Plan will:

- 1) Be developed collaboratively with counties, federal land management and state agencies, and other stakeholders
- 2) Include identification of the primary threats and challenges to Nevada's sagebrush biome;
- 3) Identify priority landscapes for action in consideration of associated resource values, site potentials and feasibility;
- 4) Identify and prioritize strategies and actions to enhance, restore, or maintain priority habitats for all species dependent upon those habitats for their lifecycles;
- 5) Be informed by best available science and reference of relevant cooperator management plans that overlap within different priority habitats



Two initial EO products

The **Wildlife Connectivity Plan** will:

- identify and conserve migratory corridors of wild ungulates and other key species and
- identify and delineate migration corridors supported by existing and ongoing scientific research
- identify habitat definitions, conservation recommendations, and best management practices or measures





NDOT MOU upon completion of Connectivity Plan

- Identifying opportunities to protect or restore habitats and migratory corridors in new or existing NDOT policies, regulatory permitting processes, and planning processes
- Identifying key wildlife habitat, wildlife migration corridors, and highways intersect;
- Identifying and implementing strategies to avoid, minimize and mitigate wildlife-vehicle collisions; and
- Prioritizing areas for implementation of wildlife crossings or other highway features to improve permeability for wildlife while maintaining highway user safety.

- The EO was created with the understanding that no one entity or agency has the capacity or resources to individually change the trend of loss or conversion across our wild landscapes.
- The EO does not dictate direction or resources of any agency or associated boards except NDOW or NDOT.
- The intent is to compile knowledge, strategies, and techniques from all partners and available science to assist in implementing conservation actions across Nevada wildlands.
- This EO will build upon the past actions and plans to conserve, restore, and rehabilitate our habitats through a collaborative evaluation of existing ecological threats, opportunities, and priorities to maximize our collective efforts to better deliver effective on-the-ground conservation.

