

Brothers Project Update

Wildflowers are a missing link in Greater Sage-grouse conservation. Young chicks must eat wildflowers and the insects they attract to survive. Wildflowers have been depleted from most Sage-grouse habitat in Oregon.

The Project is located on private land near Brothers, Oregon, in the northern part of the Brothers Priority Area for Conservation, a cornerstone in the Oregon state Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy. The Project enjoys funding from Deschutes County and ECAS, services and materials donated by the private land owner, and the abundant help of many volunteers. The Project is directed by Dr. Stuart Garrett, MD, an ECAS leader in High Desert conservation.

Dr. Garret reports exciting progress for the Project. A showcase of wildflower restoration is underway. The land owner has constructed a new 1-acre cattle enclosure in Sage-grouse breeding habitat lacking wildflowers. A dedicated group of 15 volunteers has added more than a thousand wildflower plants of 10 native species to one quarter of the enclosure. The selected wildflower species are favored by Sage-grouse hens and chicks, and were grown by local nurseries from seeds collected in central Oregon. No herbicides, mowing, or tilling were used in the plantings. Volunteers planted the wildflowers in a naturalistic array and will continue to water them by hand until the advent of wetter weather. In addition, native wildflower seeds were raked into areas among the plantings. The enclosure will be monitored yearly to assess changes in the species composition and cover of wildflowers and other vegetation. Monitoring of sage-grouse and other wildlife within the enclosure is being planned.

The project extends special thanks to the ECAS Sage Science Team, the Institute for Applied Ecology, and Terrawest for their support.



Photos by Stu Garrett