

## Brothers Project Update - September 2025

Wildflowers are a critical but often overlooked link in Greater Sage-grouse conservation. Sage-grouse chicks depend on wildflowers and the insects they attract to survive, yet wildflower abundance has been depleted across much of Oregon's sage-grouse habitat.

The **ECBA Brothers Project**, located on private land near Brothers, Oregon, sits in the northern portion of the Brothers Priority Area for Conservation—a cornerstone of Oregon's Sage-grouse Conservation Strategy. Launched in 2021, the project is supported by Deschutes County, private donors, the landowner, and ECBA, along with the generous contributions of time and energy from many volunteers. The project is directed by **Dr. Stuart Garrett, MD**, an ECBA leader in High Desert conservation.

In 2023, a dedicated team of 15 volunteers planted more than 1,000 wildflower plugs representing 10 native forb species known to be important for sage-grouse hens and chicks. These plants were grown by local nurseries from seeds collected in central Oregon. No herbicides, mowing, or tilling were used. In addition, locally collected wildflower seeds were raked into the soil around the plantings. The exclosure is regularly monitored to track changes in species composition and vegetation cover. We extend special thanks to the **ECBA Sage Science Team**, the **Institute for Applied Ecology**, and **Terrawest** for their invaluable support.

By June 2025, the project had achieved exciting results. Dr. Garrett reports a **400% increase** in grouse-preferred wildflowers, with forb cover rising from 1.5% to 6%. Our next milestone is to reach at least 10% native wildflower cover. Even more encouraging, sage-grouse have already been observed using the acre plot.

The Brothers Project shows that restoring wildflowers is both possible and impactful. We invite you to join us in continuing this success for sage-grouse conservation.



Photo courtesy Stu Garrett