



THE SageCon Partnership

Revisiting and Refreshing
our Collaborative Foundations **2022**



SageCon is a collaborative partnership focused on the ecological, social, and economic resilience in Oregon's sagebrush country. Our work together spans across science, policy, communication, and on-the-ground restoration, addressing challenges that operate at a landscape scale where no single agency or organization can make a big enough difference alone.

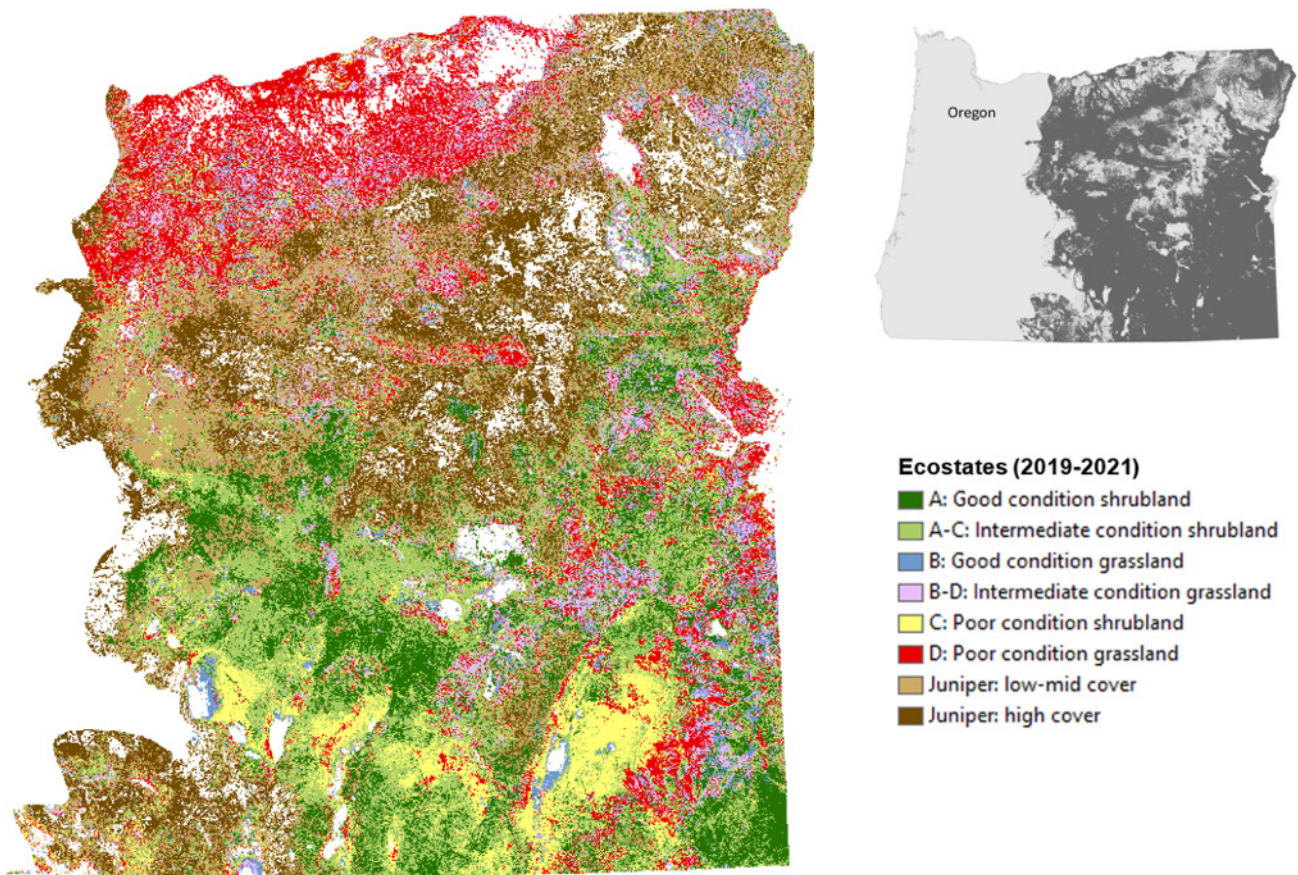


BACKGROUND

Sagebrush rangelands occupy about one-third of the state of Oregon and vast swaths of the western US but face multiple threats across much of their range. In 2010, with populations of the [Greater sage-grouse](#) declining, the US Fish & Wildlife Service proposed a listing under the Endangered Species Act. In response, a diverse range of partners in Oregon came together to build the [Oregon Sage-Grouse Action Plan](#) as an “all hands all lands” approach to species and habitat conservation for the sage-grouse.

The [SageCon Partnership](#) was charged with coordinating implementation of the plan across the many public and private partners that play a role. Partners increasingly recognize that the issues underlying sage-grouse decline are much broader and more complex than conservation of a single species and that a broad approach to restoring sagebrush ecosystem health is needed. In addition, complex issues like invasive annual grasses, wildfire, juniper encroachment, impacts from energy, mining, and infrastructure require cross-sector, collaborative, science-based approaches. Continuing negative habitat and population trends highlight the need for a strategic, coordinated approach that ensures we are working effectively on the right things and in the right places to address those issues.

Cover photo by Ken Miracle, Sage Grouse Initiative



[Threat-based ecostate mapping](#) depicts rangeland condition across eastern Oregon based on shrub, grass and tree cover.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

After six years working together to implement the Action Plan, we find ourselves entering a new phase of collaborative work. An [evaluation of plan implementation](#) so far found significant progress and successes, but also highlighted ongoing challenges, including a continued decline in sage-grouse populations and sagebrush habitat condition.

SageCon partners identified a need to sharpen our focus on outcomes, address long-term local capacity needs, and establish mechanisms for coordinated & targeted investment. New data, technologies, collaboratives, funding, and science have also fundamentally altered the landscape within which we work together to meet our shared goals, and a greater understanding of climate change adds urgency. Many of our partners also emphasized the importance of revisiting and refining who we are as a Partnership, what we want to achieve, and how we will most effectively work together going forward.

The framework presented here aims to clarify and refresh the SageCon Partnership’s shared vision, core purpose, and strategic priorities. It reflects the results of a series of facilitated discussions, work sessions, and surveys conducted with SageCon partners throughout 2021. It provides a “north star” for our Partnership, to help keep our different kinds of work aligned and effective as we work together across boundaries and scales. This document will be revisited on a biennial basis and adjustments made as needed to maintain a resilient and effective partnership.

We work together to build resilience in Oregon's sagebrush rangelands.

Our focus is on building **ecological resilience** by addressing the threats to sage-grouse populations and sagebrush ecosystem health from fire, invasive species, woodland expansion, and other stressors.

This work relies on **social and economic resilience** — thriving local communities with the power, capacity, collaboration, and resources for responsible stewardship.

Through this work we build **resilient partnerships**, which will help us work together effectively at multiple scales and be prepared for future challenges as they arise.

HOW SAGECON CONTRIBUTES

The SageCon Partnership helps maintain and rebuild resiliency in this landscape by **creating a supportive, enabling environment for successful and strategic on-the-ground actions.**

We make that happen by working together to:

- Create a **funding and policy environment** that supports effective, strategic, coordinated on-the-ground restoration efforts (including stable, long-term support for key local coordination capacity).
- Identify shared strategic **priorities**, set clear and measurable **objectives**, and monitor and share our **progress**.
- **Provide forums for communication** that help partners build community and access tools, information and resources.
- Develop and share **technical support and tools** for coordinated implementation.

The SageCon Partnership is uniquely prepared to make this contribution because we bring together a diversity of public, private, and non-profit organizations working together across the local, state, and federal scales. Although our organizations each bring their own specific objectives and roles, we all work together to ensure that our partners in local implementation have what they need to do their best work in a supportive environment.



HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

SageCon is a cross-sector partnership that depends on a foundation of locally-led collaboration to achieve our vision. We represent this as a pyramid, with the foundation of our work based in **coordinated and supported implementation of strategic conservation actions on-the-ground**. This model relies on a continual and meaningful flow of information, resources, and relationships across scales and among partners.

The diagram below shows how we do this work together. Local implementation and coordination work is led and focused across the five counties of southeastern Oregon, across a wide range of scales, including watersheds, agency District boundaries, and within entities such as Rangeland Fire Protection Associations.

On the left side of the pyramid, organizations and individuals that operate primarily at the state, regional, or national scale support local partners with capacity, information, research, technical tools, and expertise. They help track and communicate results in a way that makes a strong case for public investment and coordinate priorities, messaging, and funding among public partners.

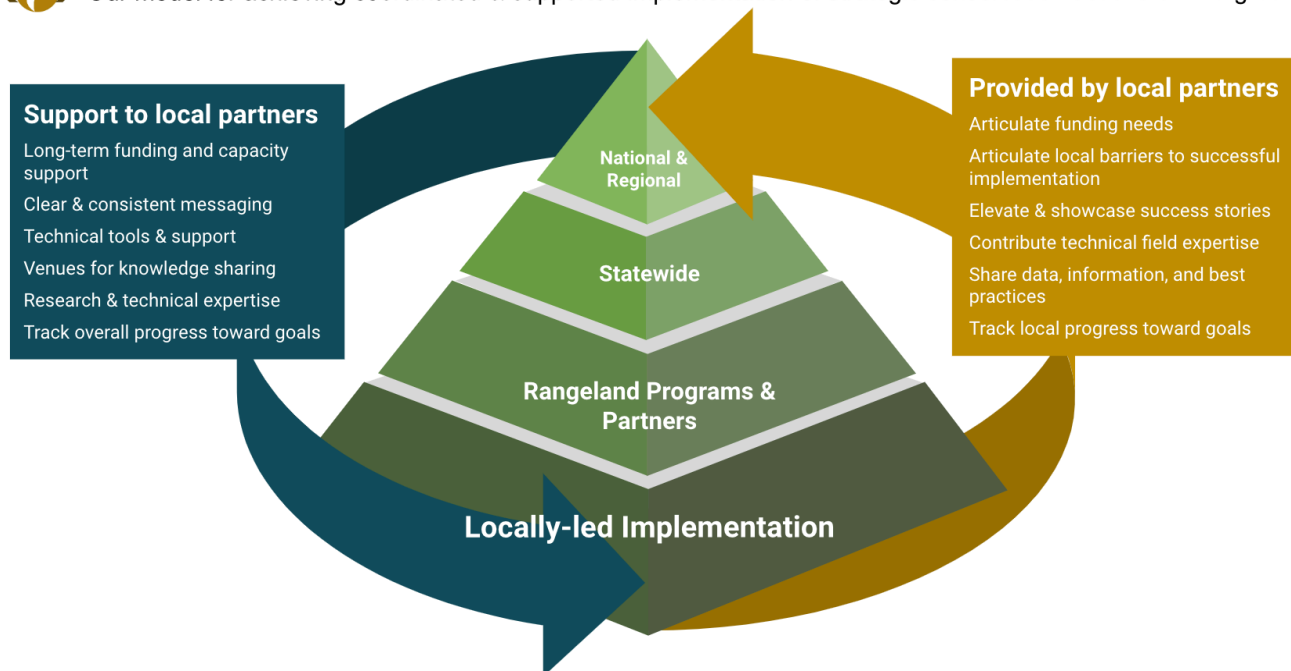
On the right side of the pyramid, partners that operate primarily at the local scale are our connection to community and to on-the-ground outcomes. They contribute local expertise, identify and share best practices, coordinate planning and implementation, direct resources to where they can be most effective, and help flag barriers to successful on-the-ground work. They also report progress toward objectives and elevate local success stories to help make the case for investment, while protecting and respecting landowner privacy.

Information flow within each level of the partnership is also essential to align across agencies and programs and facilitate communication and knowledge-sharing.



SageCon Partnership

Our model for achieving coordinated & supported implementation of strategic conservation actions on-the-ground



Within this collaborative framework, each [partner organization](#) brings their own motivations, strengths, objectives, and priorities, but we all work together to help achieve our shared vision. Key roles include implementation, coordination, funding, technical assistance, science and decision support, strategic communications, and advocacy.