



BLM recognizes 2021 Rangeland and Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award winners



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The BLM recently recognized two permittees and two collaborative teams with the 2021 Rangeland Stewardship and Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship awards, highlighting outstanding efforts in rangeland management and in restoring and maintaining public rangeland health. The ceremony was held via Zoom during the 2021 Virtual Public Lands Council Annual Meeting on Sep. 28 and included award presentations in Idaho, Colorado, and Utah.

“This is the 16th year BLM has given out these awards that recognize the innovation and cooperation needed to safeguard the Great American West,” said Nada Culver, BLM Deputy Director for Policy and Programs. “We appreciate the exemplary stewardship accomplishments of the awardees and all our partners leading efforts to support locally led and locally designed conservation.”

Rangeland Stewardship Awards

The Rangeland Stewardship Award recognizes demonstrated use of beneficial management practices to restore, protect, or enhance rangeland resources while working with the BLM and other partners.

The Rangeland Stewardship Award Permittee Category winner is Matthew and Kristen Redd with The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) Dugout Ranch & Indian Creek Allotment, nominated by Monticello Field Office, Utah. The Redds’ rugged cattle allotment in southeast Utah spans 5,207 private acres encircled by towering red-hued sandstone cliffs along Indian Creek in the Colorado Plateau, and is home to a

diverse partnership of universities, federal land management agencies, and state wildlife organizations. In an era of unprecedented drought in the west, the Redds and TNC have implemented flexible management lowering cattle numbers, adjusting livestock patterns, grazing at a light utilization rate on key forage plants, and implementing various strategies to sustain healthy functioning plant communities to the extent natural conditions allow.



Left to right: BLM Monticello Field Office Range Management Specialist Jed Carling, Rangeland Stewardship Award Permittee Category winners Matthew and Kristen Redd with The Nature Conservancy's Dugout Ranch & Indian Creek Allotment, and Monticello Field Manager Amber Denton Johnson at the Monticello Field Office, Monticello, Utah, on Sept. 28, 2021.

"Stewardship on public lands is grounded in collaboration and, building on this, The Nature Conservancy and Dugout Ranch have engaged in long-term projects with the BLM, other federal agencies, universities, and the [U.S. Department of Agriculture] to research and implement climate-adaptive management that will maintain the health and integrity of the rangelands on the Colorado Plateau here and around the Southwest," said Matthew Redd. "Part of this work focuses on how our local producers, like ourselves, operating in semi-arid and arid landscapes can adapt to the impacts of climate change using heritage breeds and precision

ranching technologies that provide real-time range conditions to the producers so they can facilitate better management.

“Other research focuses on the development of restoration techniques that anticipate the challenges that climate change and changing land use pose to public lands. The impacts of climate change, demographic shift, and changing land use on public lands are increasing, and these challenges make a broadened and continued collaboration between users and land managers even more critical to our ability to sustain and restore the integrity of rangelands’ quest.”

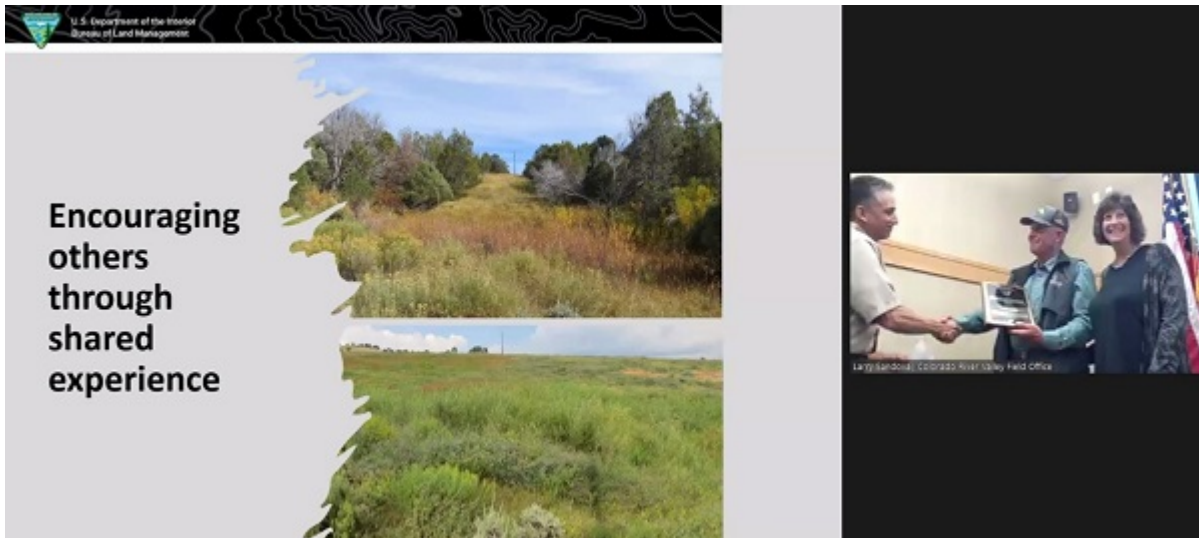
The Rangeland Stewardship Award Collaborative Team Category winner is the Bruneau-Owyhee Sage-Grouse Habitat (BOSH) Project, nominated by the Bruneau and Owyhee Field Offices, Idaho. BLM developed the BOSH project in collaboration with the Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Lands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. BOSH is a landscape-scale sagebrush restoration project that focuses on reducing encroachment of juniper trees in the sagebrush-steppe landscape in southwest Idaho’s Owyhee Mountains. The project is re-opening natural meadows and uplands, restoring premium habitat for sage-grouse, and benefiting numerous other species. The BOSH project Record of Decision was approved in February 2019 following completion of analysis examining the impacts of treating juniper on 617,000 acres of sagebrush-steppe rangelands within an area encompassing 1.67 million acres in Owyhee County. About 60,000 acres have been treated during the project’s first two years.

“One of the things about working collaborative that I think has really opened my eyes over the years, and this effort has really highlighted that, there are a lot of fringe benefits working with this many groups, working across the landscapes of all these different ownerships, and the fringe benefits are that it leads into a lot of other projects and a lot of other efforts, so there are a lot of things spinning off of the BOSH project into the riparian and all those other resource issues,” said BLM Boise District Fuels Program Lead Lance Oakeson accepting the award on behalf of BOSH.

Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Awards

The Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award recognizes outstanding examples of enhancement, restoration, or reclamation of sagebrush habitats, in addition to the accomplishments meriting the Rangeland Stewardship Award.

The Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award Permittee Category winner is Pat Luark with Reverse JL Bar Cattle Company, LLC, nominated by the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO), Colorado. Pat and his family are strongly connected to the land and the wildlife it supports, and are committed to running a cattle operation, being hunting outfitters, raising horses that they share with summer camps, and sharing their knowledge and passion for land stewardship with clients that visit year-round. Pat's commitment to improving habitat conditions in mule deer and elk winter range and Greater sage-grouse habitat spans decades and includes numerous projects on his ranch and BLM-managed lands. Pat regularly collaborates with CRVFO and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to improve range conditions for wildlife and livestock and continues to help Field Office staff work toward connecting occupied Greater Sage-grouse habitats. He is also working on a new and exciting project with CRVFO and CPW to use virtual livestock fencing on one of his BLM grazing allotments.

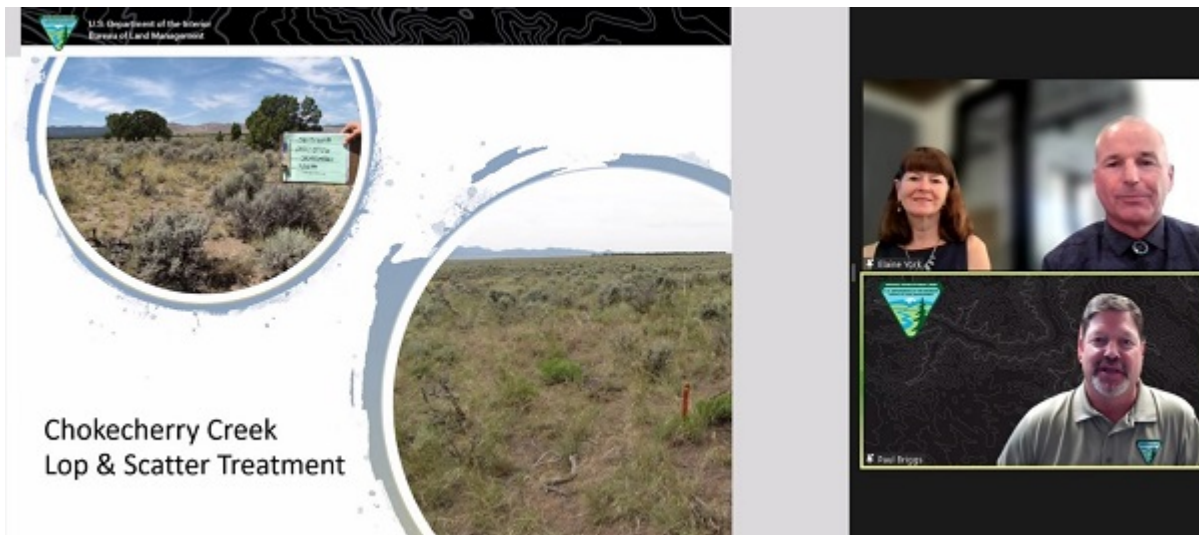


Pat and Niki Luark (right) with Reverse JL Bar Cattle Company, LLC accept the Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award Permittee Category award from BLM Colorado River Valley Field Manager Larry Sandoval (left) via Zoom Sept. 28, 2021.

"It's essential that we have a team," said Pat Luark. "What we've noticed mostly is how quickly the range responds to correct management. It is just amazing how fast you can rehabilitate this range."

"We have a fifth-generation ranch, working cattle ranch," said Niki Luark, "and without the BLM we will have nothing to hand down to our children. So, we thank you and applaud you."

The Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award Collaborative Team Category winner is The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Great Basin Ecoregion, nominated by the Cedar City Field Office, Utah. The Field Office and TNC have partnered since 2012 on two Landscape Conservation Forecasting projects to develop a cost-effective management plan to forecast ecological conditions using management scenarios chosen by stakeholders. Projects using this forecasting model have improved vegetation health, composition and diversity, and have been instrumental in suppressing wildland fires, minimizing the spread of invasive species, and maintaining adequate habitat components to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife including Greater Sage-grouse and Utah Prairie Dogs.



Elaine York and Louis Provencher (top right) accept the Sagebrush-Steppe Stewardship Award Collaborative Team Category award on behalf of The Nature Conservancy Great Basin Ecoregion presented by BLM Cedar City Field Manager Paul Briggs (bottom right) via Zoom Sept. 28, 2021.

“The Landscape Conservation Forecasting methodology was invented in 2004 by The Nature Conservancy to provide better information for proposed action by federal agencies, and also private industry (we also work with the mining industry on sage grouse habitat restoration using this method),” said Louis Provencher, TNC Nevada Director of Conservation Ecology. “The method was invented to inform public land proposed actions, in part as a need to reduce litigation on these proposed actions just by providing more comprehensive science, more grounded in numbers. It’s been very helpful where the goals of The Nature Conservancy and the goals of the agencies overlap on a proposed action; we wanted to support that. We wanted those actions to go forward, so better science was always great.”

“I’d like to thank the Public Lands Council for these awards,” said TNC Utah State Director Dave Livermore. “It’s so easy to say what’s wrong with this problem or that

problem, but what these awards do is say what is right, what is working well on public lands around the West.”

“These awards for outstanding stewardship of Western landscapes are an important public recognition by BLM of something the agricultural community has known to be true for decades — ranching work is conservation work,” said Public Lands Council President Niels Hansen. “Multiple use and active management are vital elements of a lasting, successful strategy for our nation’s public lands, and we appreciate BLM’s partnership with Western ranchers as we all work to conserve America’s stunning landscapes.”