

# Baker Sage-grouse Threat Reduction

Strategic Action Plan & OWEB Grant Overview  
Baker Local Implementation Team  
Jacqueline Cupples, USFWS



# Overview



## Background

- Sage-grouse biology and threats
- A closer look at Baker County



## Baker Local Implementation Team

- Inventory of threats and past efforts
- Strategic Action Plan
- OWEB FIP grant



## Case Study

- Love Reservoir area
- Lessons learned

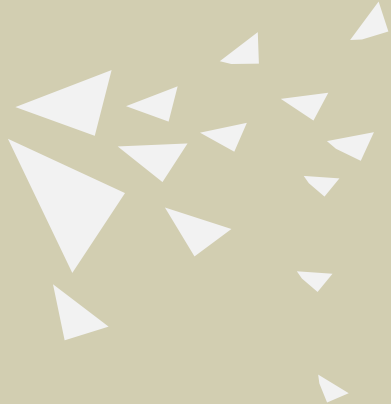


**Sage-grouse are a  
landscape-scale species**





# Major Threats



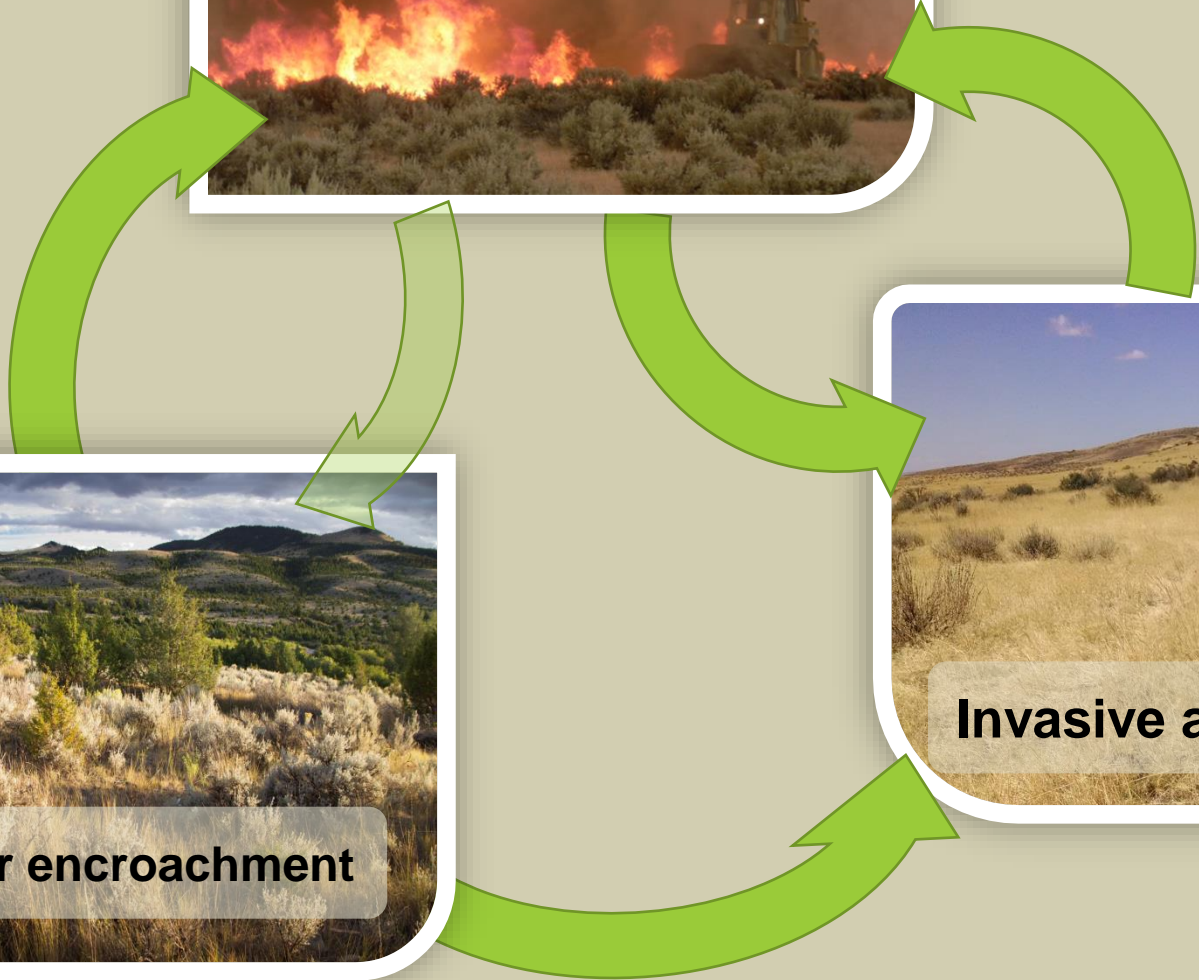
Fire



Invasive annual grass



Juniper encroachment



## **Catastrophic Wildfire:**

- Since 2012 more than 1.6 million acres of habitat burned.
- 98% of ignitions are successfully suppressed.
- Oregon is a leader in the development, use and support of RFPAs.
- Enhanced fire prevention, operations, and post-fire rehab.





## Juniper Encroachment:

- 730,600 acres of early phase juniper in priority sage-grouse habitat.
- > 300,000 acres treated 2008-2016.
- > \$18 million (private lands).





## **Invasive Annual Grasses:**

- Most challenging threat facing sage-grouse habitat.
- Dominant or subdominant understory across 1 million acres of priority habitat.
- Success dependent on capacity and funding of CWMAs, county weed programs, BLM.
- Shift from short-term “random acts of conservation” to landscape efforts with required follow-up treatments.

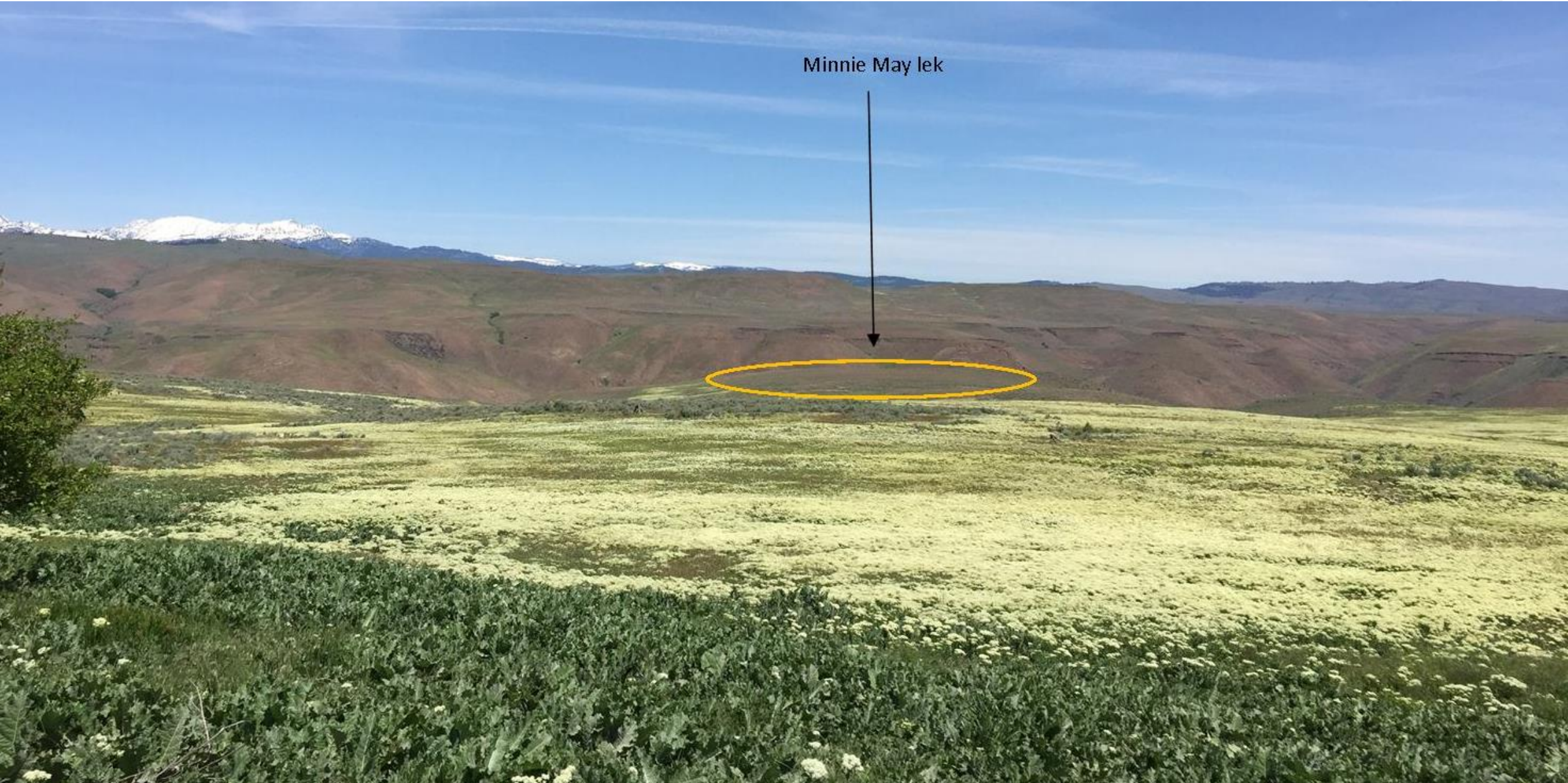




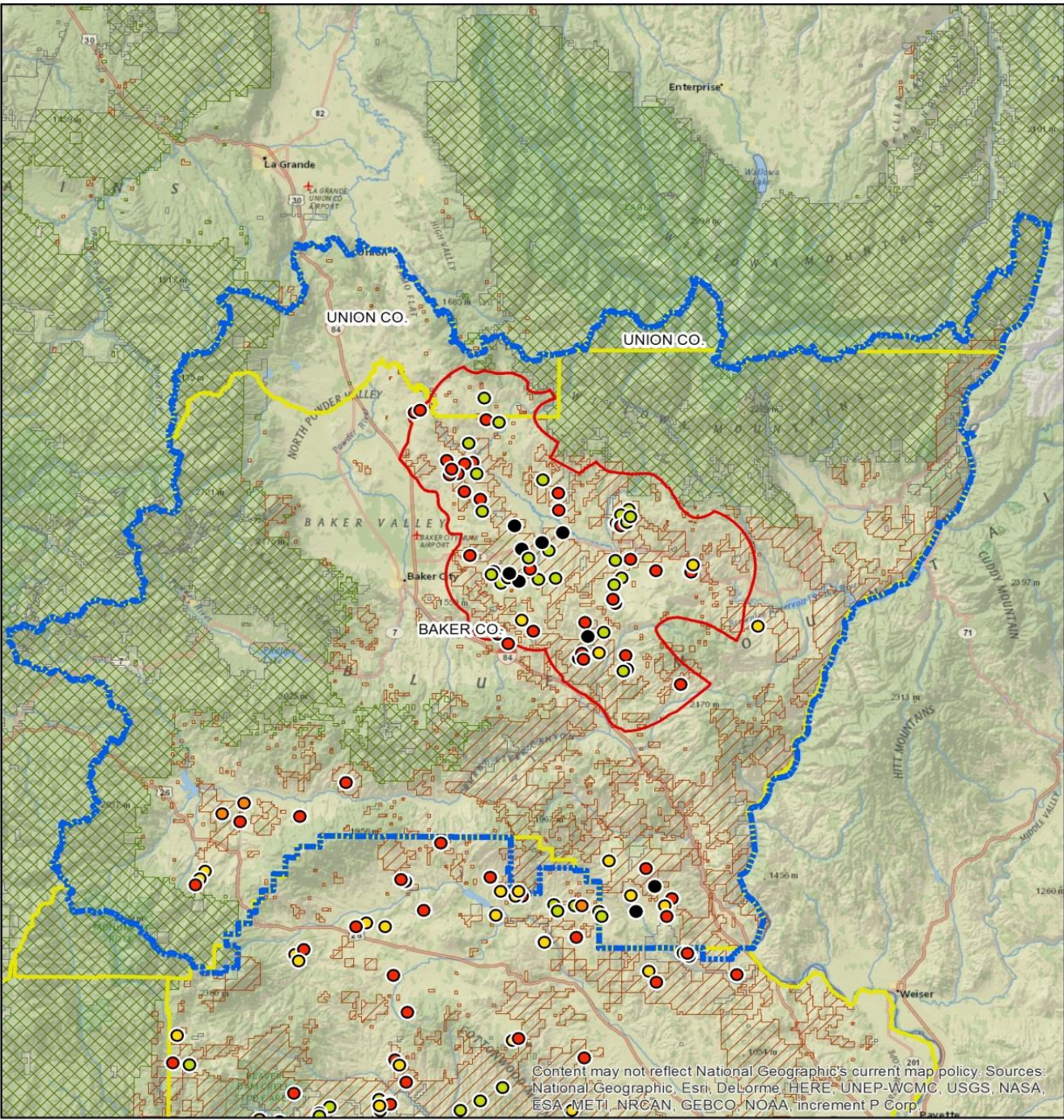
# Not just an invasive annual grass problem...






Minnie May lek













Content may not reflect National Geographic's current map policy. Sources: National Geographic, Esri, DeLorme, HERE, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METI, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA, increment P Corp.

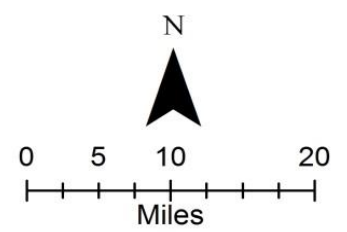
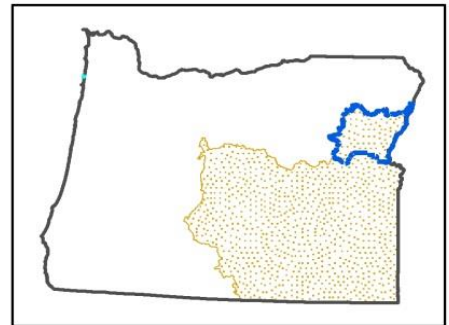
-  Baker LIT Planning Area
-  Baker PAC boundary
-  County boundary

**Lek (2016 conservation status)**

-  Historic
-  Occupied
-  Occupied pending
-  Unoccupied
-  Unoccupied pending

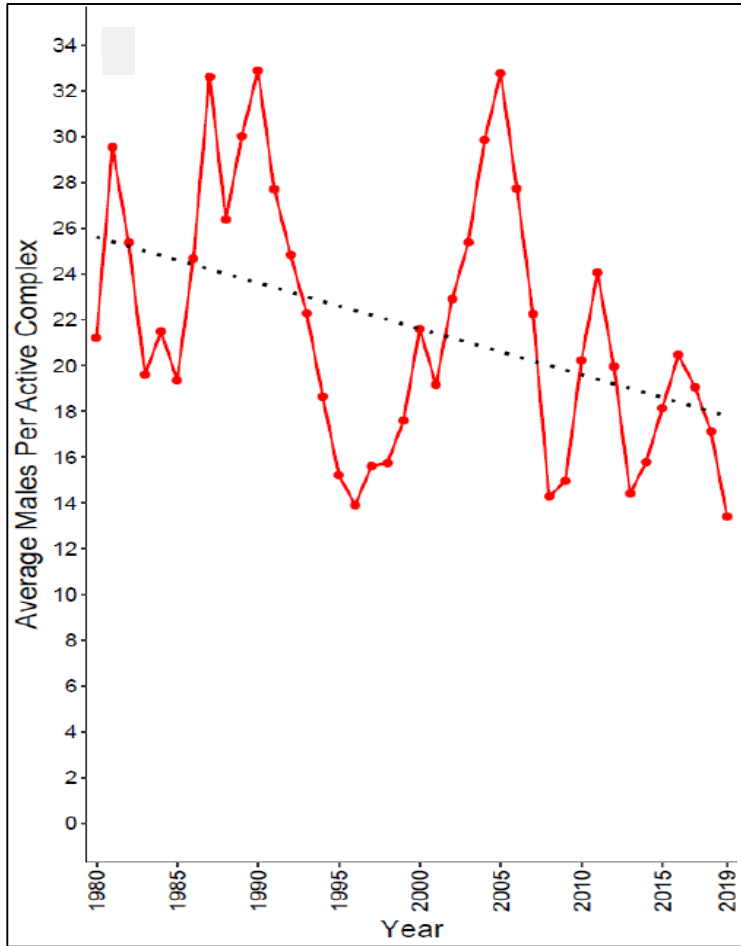
-  BLM
-  Private
-  USFS

# Baker Planning Area

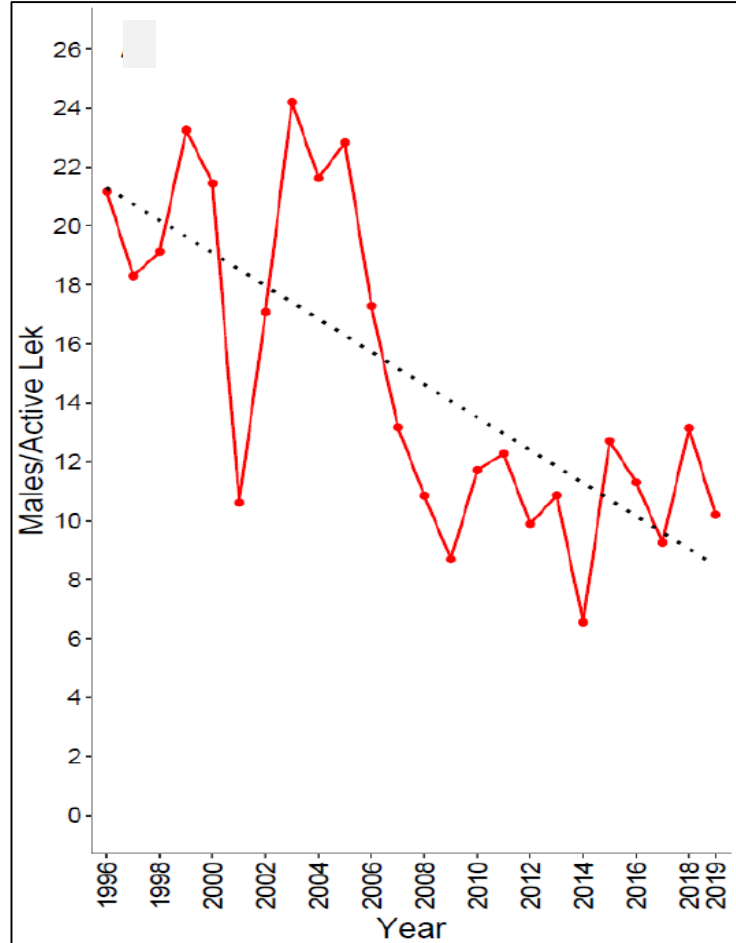




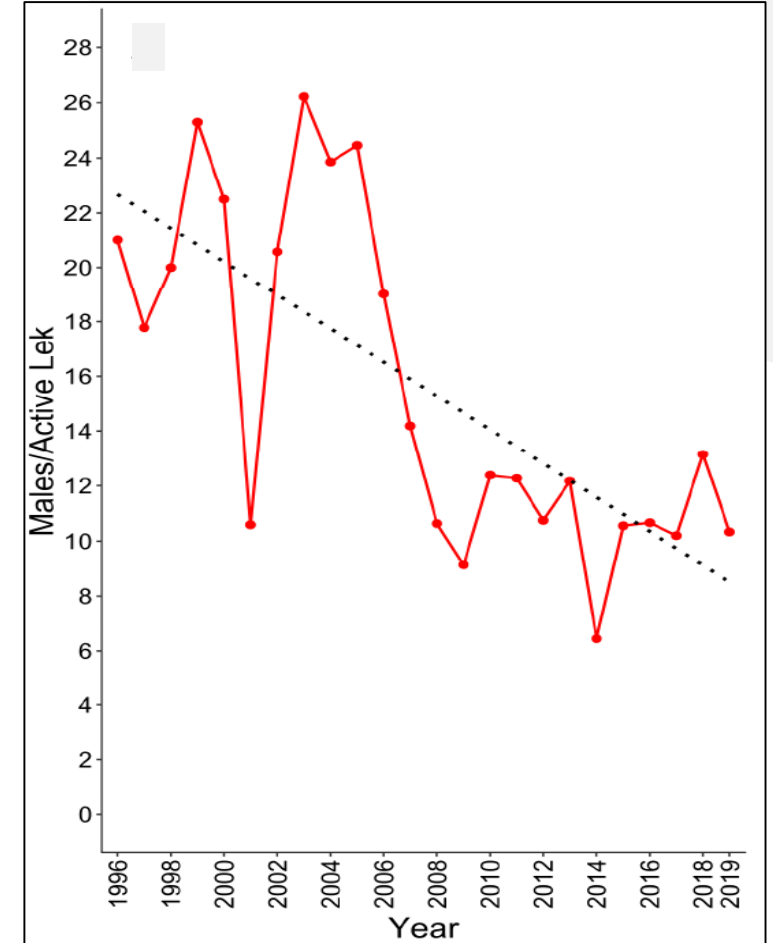
## Statewide average lek complex size



## Baker BLM Resource Area average lek complex size



## Baker PAC average lek complex size



Since 2005, there has been ~ 75% decline in Baker's sage-grouse population.

**All actions must be considered to reverse the decline.**



# Baker Local Implementation Team



Tri-County  
CWMA



ODFW



Baker County



Private  
landowners



POWDER BASIN  
WATERSHED COUNCIL

Powder Basin  
Watershed  
Council



USFWS



BLM



NRCS



Union County

## Role of LITs:

- Identify local threats in a spatially-explicit manner with the goal of applying conservation measures with a high degree of coordination.
- Oregon Sage-grouse Action Plan called for further invigoration of LITs and identified them as a key mechanism for developing local strategic work plans and coordinating conservation efforts.



# Baker LIT Work Plan: Purpose

- **Be comprehensive**
  - All land ownership
  - All potential threats
- **Prioritize** where to work and what actions to take
- **Coordinate** all stakeholders
- **Elaborate** upon BLM Causal Factor Analysis



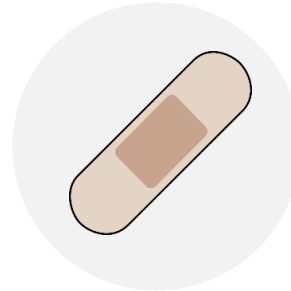


# Approach: Three Categories of Action



Result in **immediate and lasting** reduction and/or elimination of the threat and **require minimal follow-up**

- conifer removal
- marking fences
- installing escape ramps in water troughs



Result in **immediate** threat reduction to provide **short-term, but not necessarily enduring** results

- Predator reduction



Provide **lasting** impacts, but require **long-term and ongoing investments** to ensure success

- Invasive annual grass treatment
- Re-establishment of desirable perennial bunchgrasses

*“It is the view of the Baker LIT that, given the significant decline in the sage-grouse population in the Baker PAC, all three categories of conservation actions must be implemented to halt further declines and promote long-term population growth.”*



# OWEB FIP: The Basics



## What

\$6.1 million over 6 years

First biennium:  
\$1.7 million

---



## When

July 2019 – June 2025

Funds became available  
August 2019

---



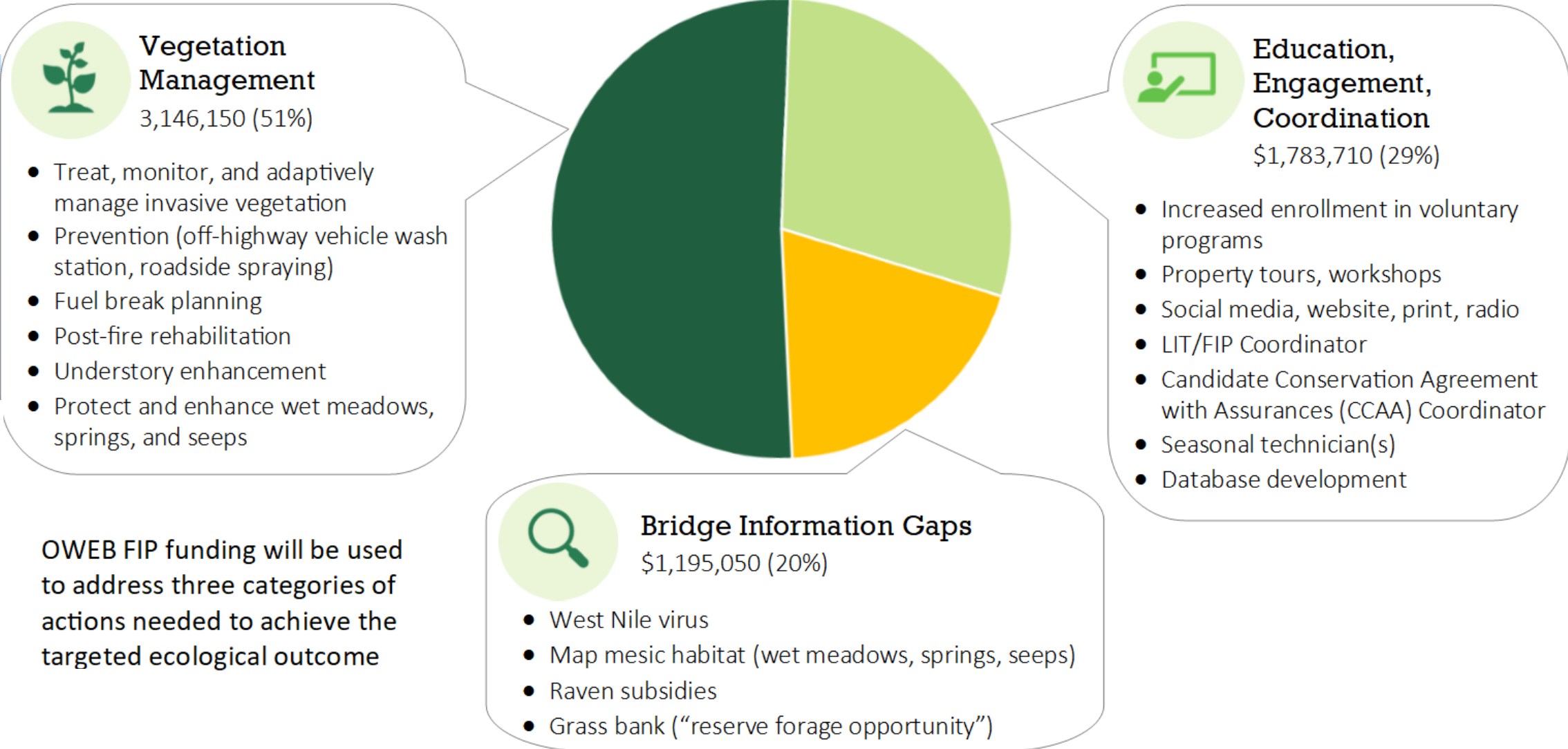
## Targeted Ecological Outcome

Increase quantity & quality of sage-grouse habitat and ultimately sage-grouse population.



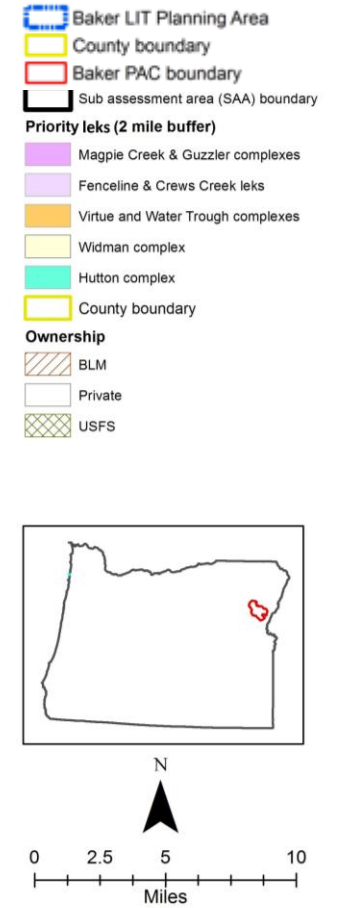
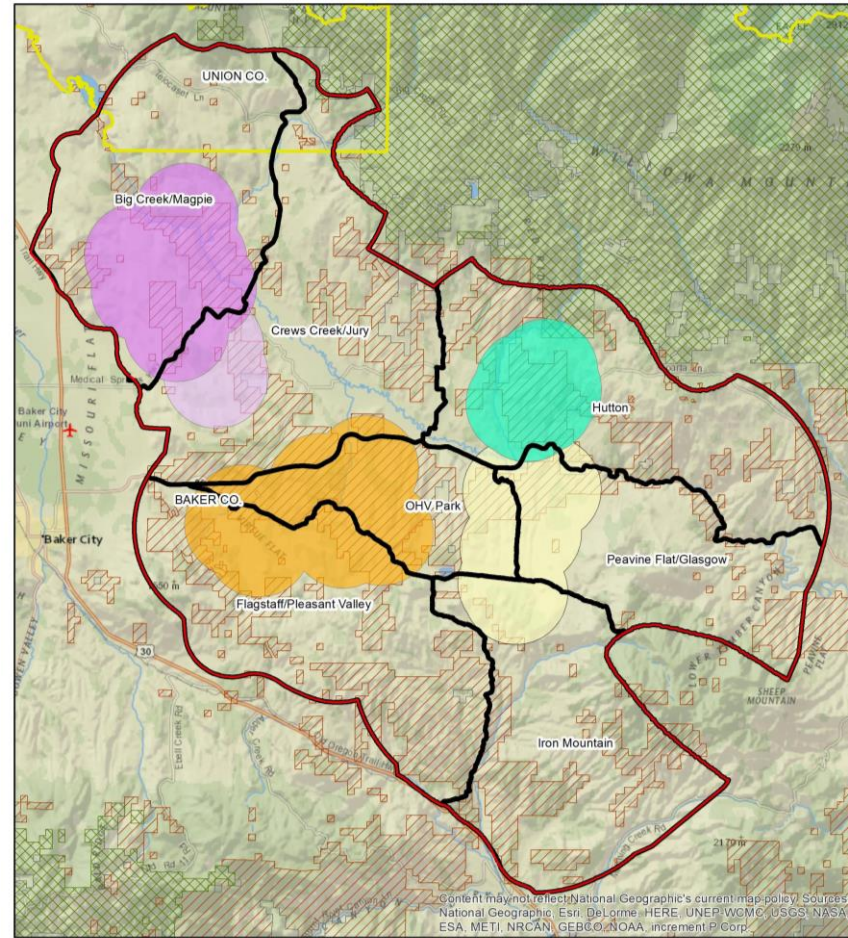
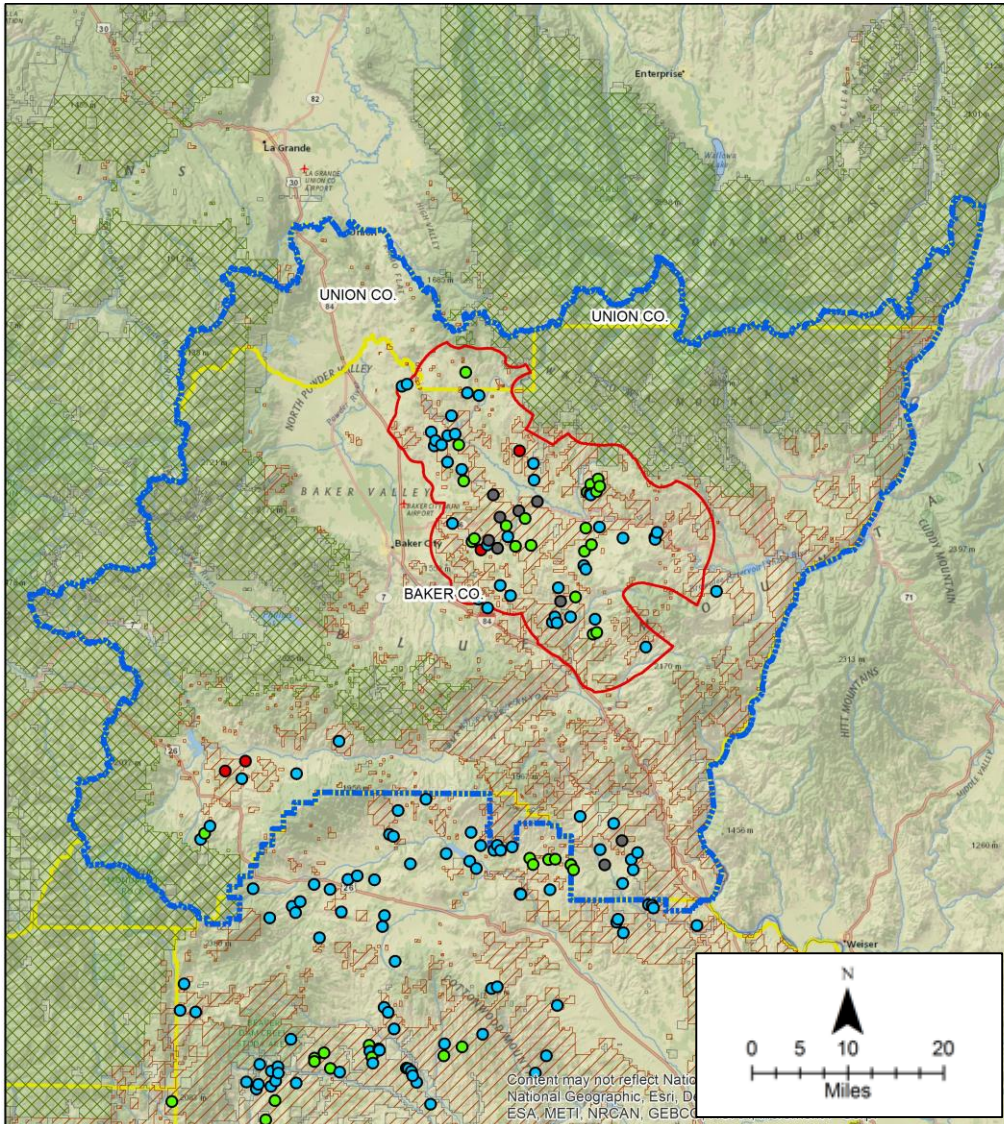
# Three Broad Outcomes

All six years





# FIP geography and prioritized leks





## Other evaluation criteria:



**Matching funds**



**Willingness to follow long-term guidance to promote success**



**Coordination with multiple partners, agencies, landowners**



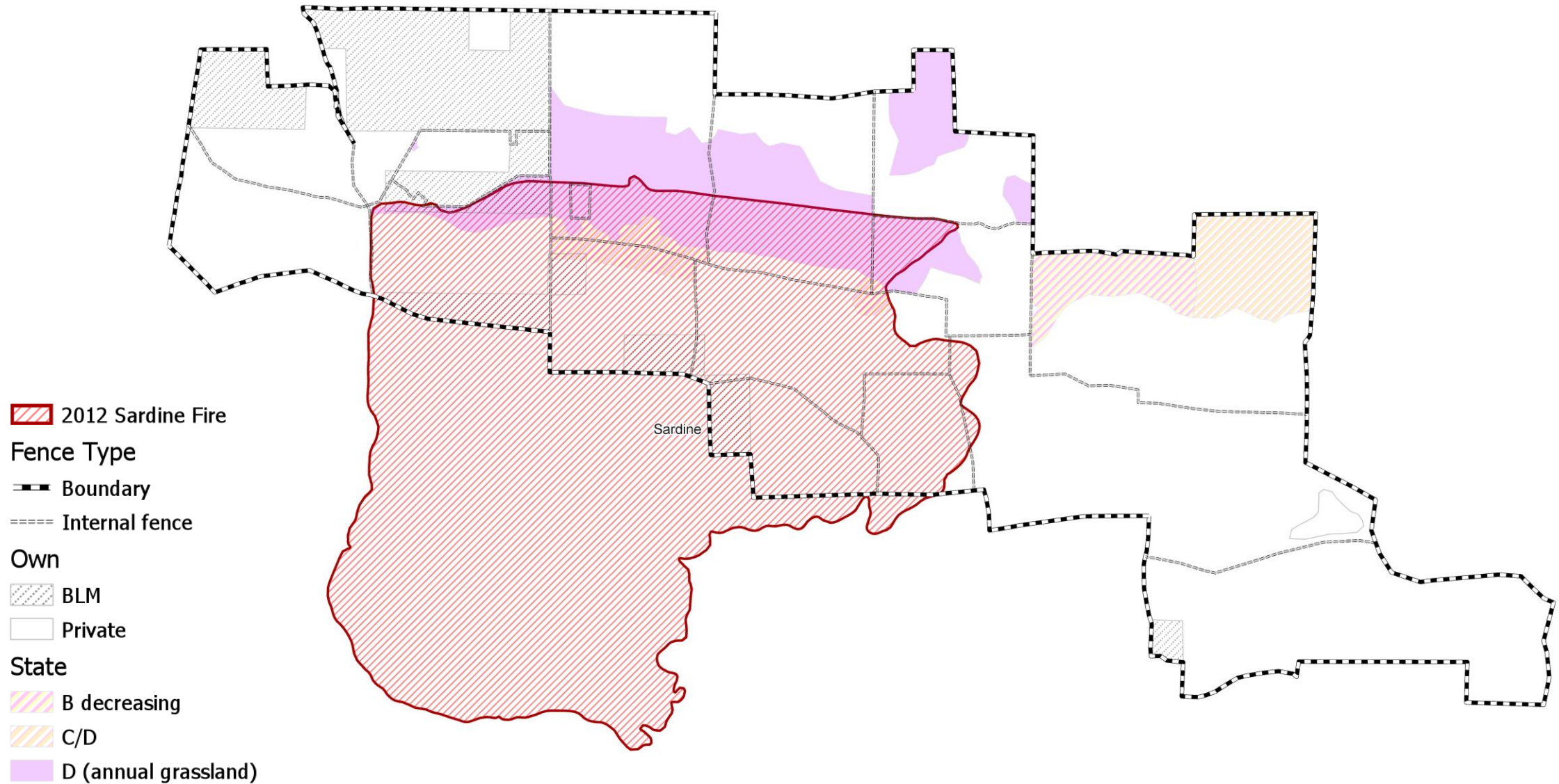
**Supports ongoing CCAA or CCA**



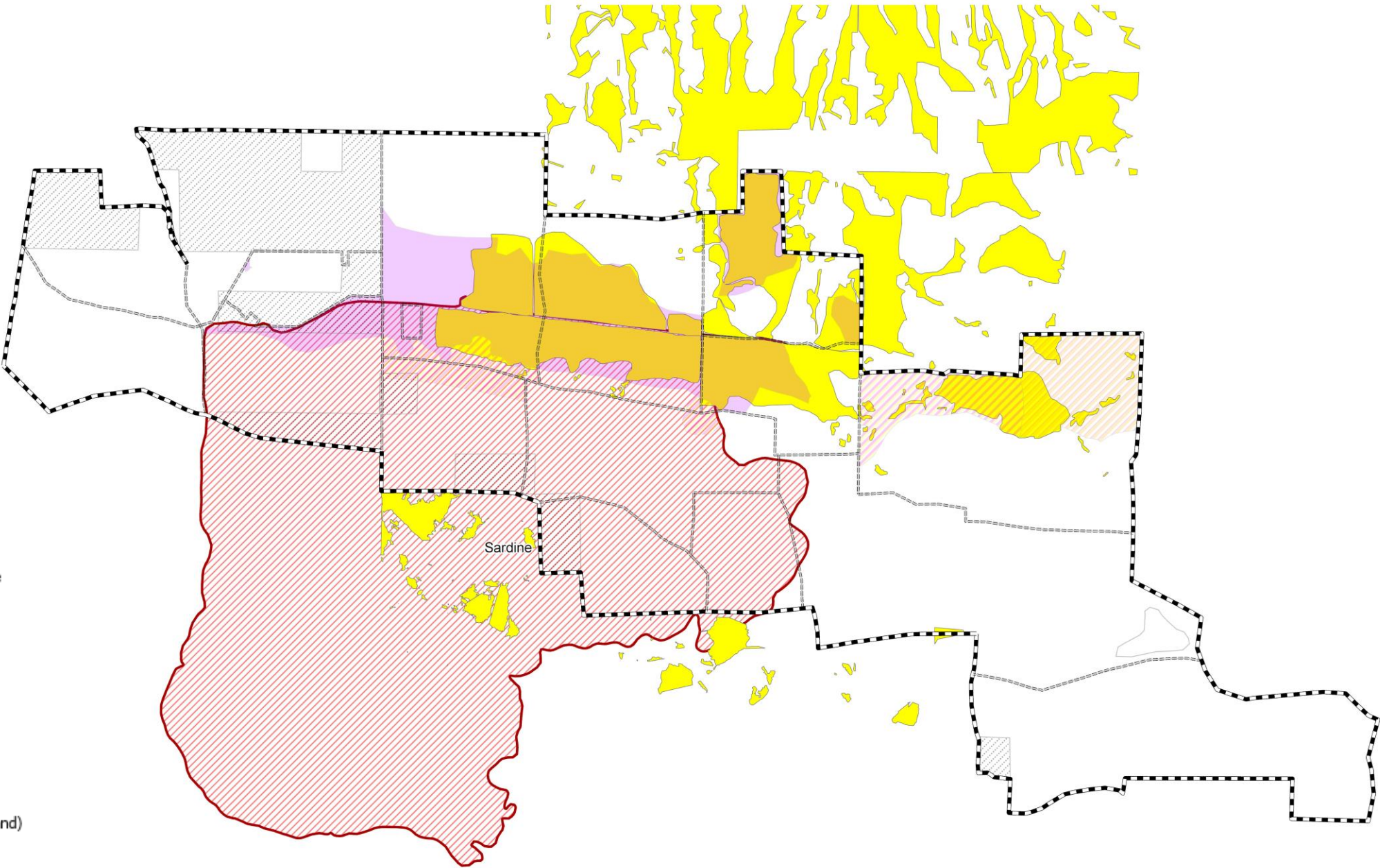
**Addresses goals/objectives in Baker Comprehensive Threat Reduction Plan**



# Case Study: Love Reservoir

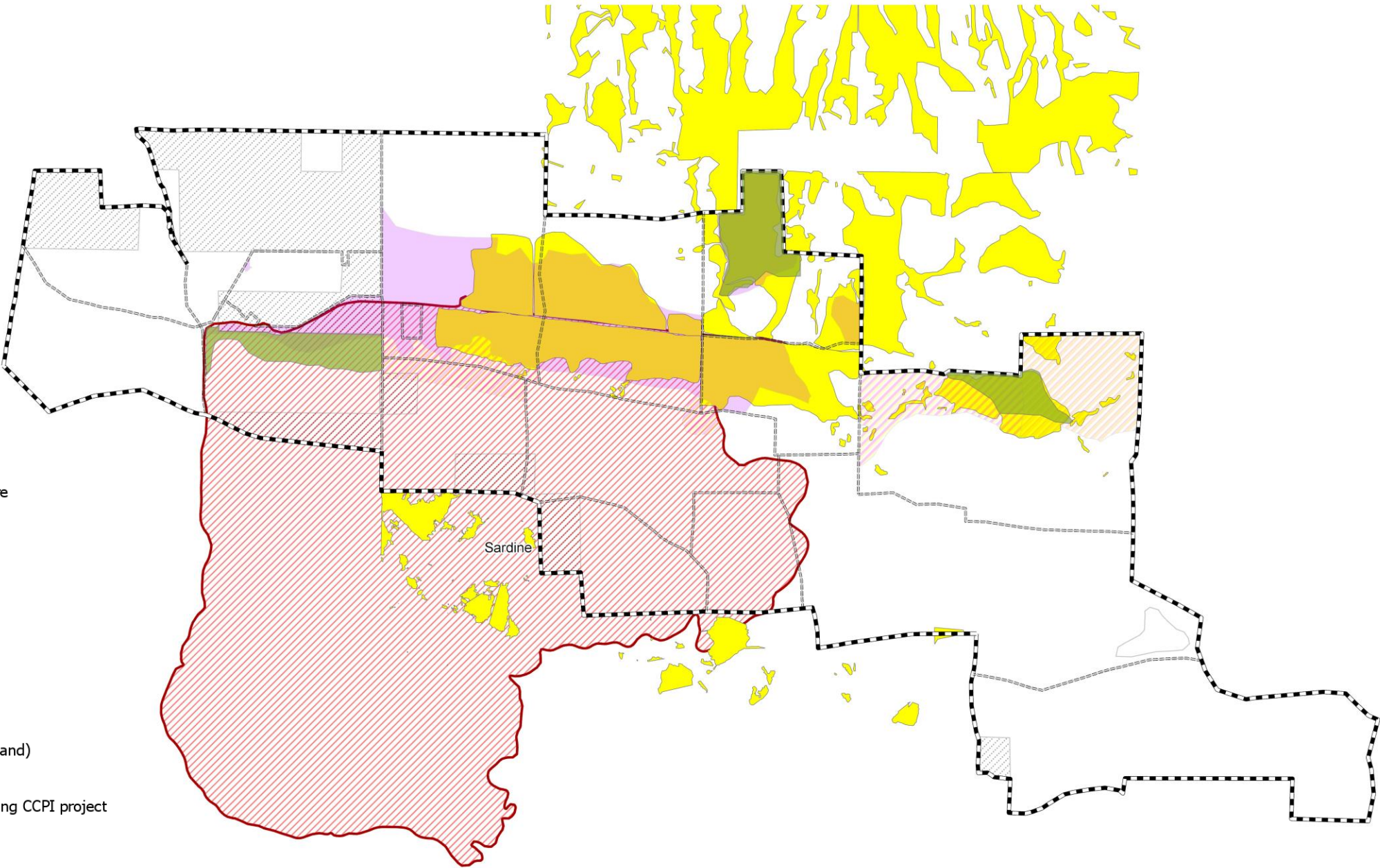






- 2012 Sardine Fire
- Fence Type**
  - Boundary
  - Internal fence
- Own**
  - BLM
  - Private
- State**
  - B decreasing
  - C/D
  - D (annual grassland)
- Keating CCPI**
  - 2011-2013 Keating CCPI project





2012 Sardine Fire

Fence Type

Boundary

Internal fence

Own

BLM

Private

State

B decreasing

C/D

D (annual grassland)

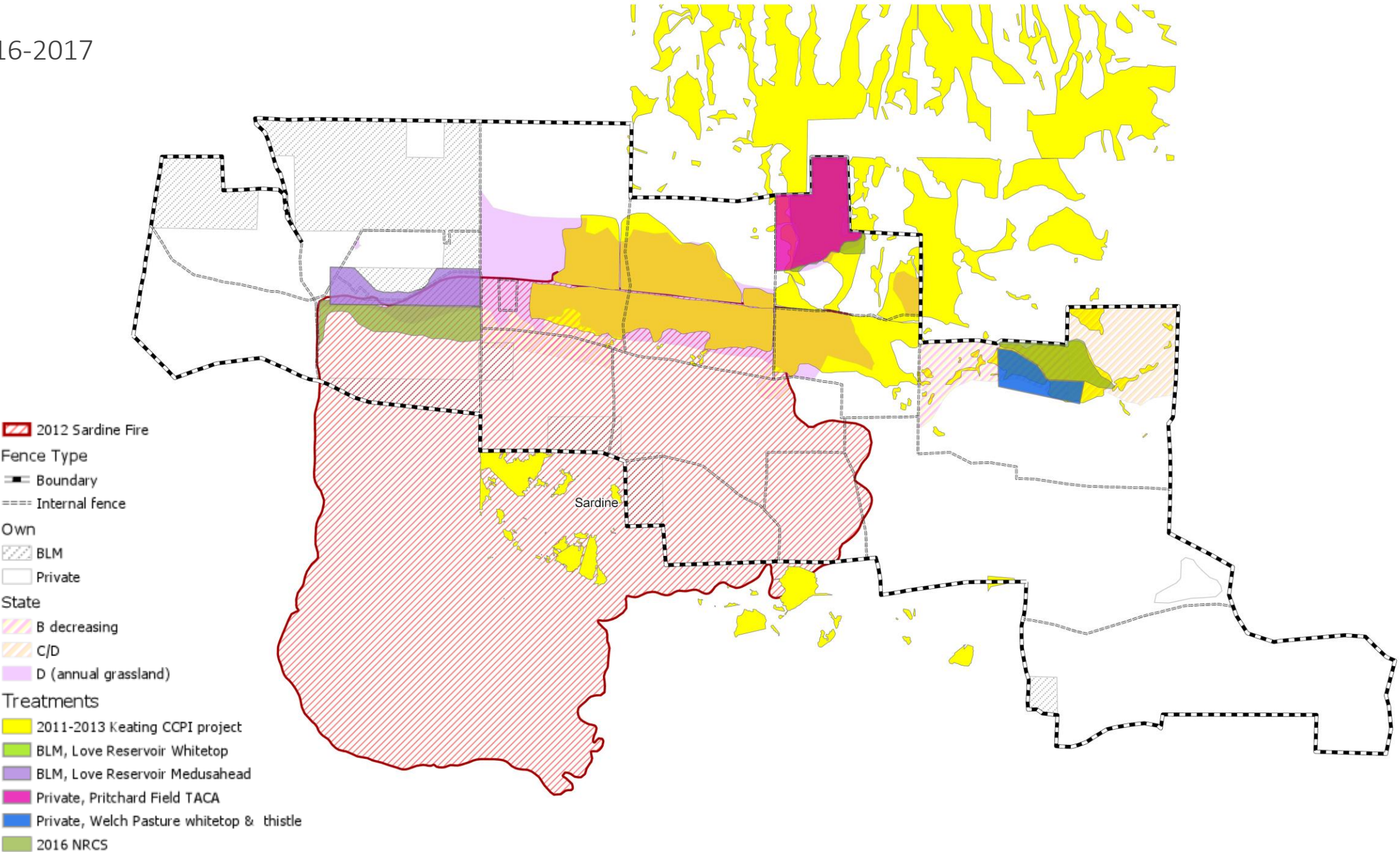
Keating CCPI

2011-2013 Keating CCPI project

NRCS Tx

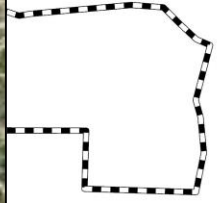
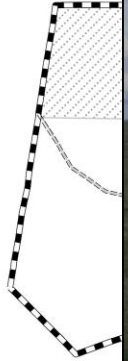
NRCS 2016










Pasture: Pritchard Field  
Date: 4/30/11  
UTMs: 463860 E 4956608 N



 2012 Sardine Fire

Fence Type

 Boundary


 Internal fence


Own

 BLM

 Private

State


 B decreasing


 C/D

 D (annual grassland)

Treatments


 2011-2013 Keating CCPI project


 BLM, Love Reservoir Whitetop


 BLM, Love Reservoir Medusahead

 Private, Pritchard Field TACA

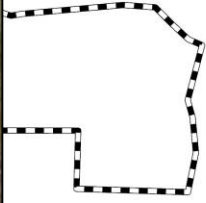
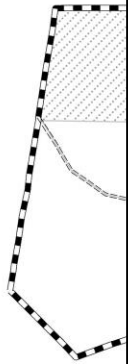
 Private, Welch Pasture whitetop & alfalfa

 2016 NRCS

 2018 Tri-County CWMA, NRCS, & FWS

 2018 NRCS





2012 Sardine Fire

Fence Type

- Boundary
- Internal fence

Own

- BLM
- Private

State

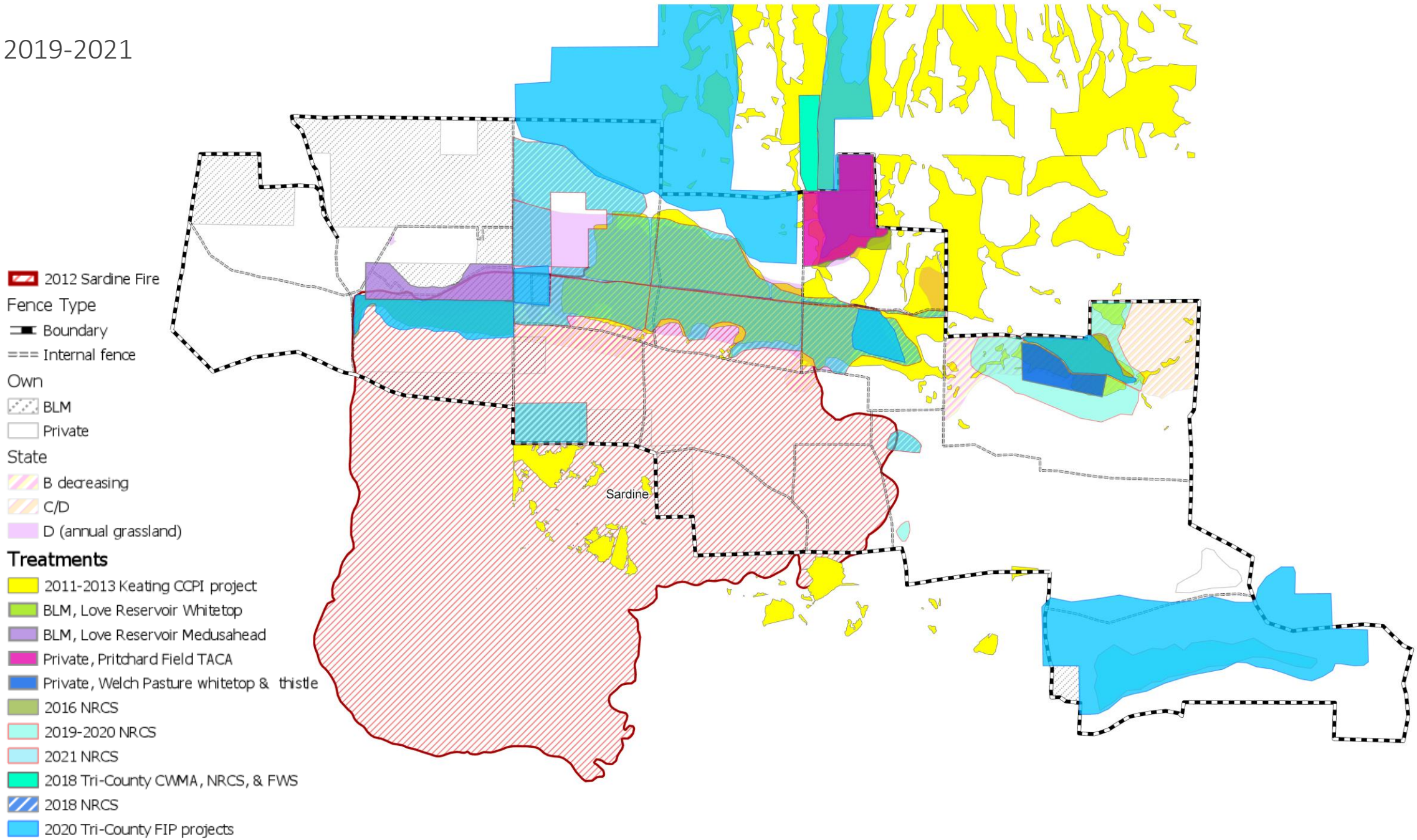
- B decreasing
- C/D
- D (annual grassland)

Treatments

- 2011-2013 Keating CCPI project
- BLM, Love Reservoir Whitetop
- BLM, Love Reservoir Medusahea
- Private, Pritchard Field TACA
- Private, Welch Pasture whitetop & thistle
- 2016 NRCS
- 2018 Tri-County CWMA, NRCS, & FWS
- 2018 NRCS



2019-2021





# Lessons learned:



**No quick fixes.**



**Be creative to work around policy constraints.**



**Voluntary conservation is a balancing act.**




**Capacity and funding.**



# Questions?



Jackie Cupples 

+541-962-8593 

[jacqueline\\_cupples@fws.gov](mailto:jacqueline_cupples@fws.gov) 