



WYOMING

Landscape Conservation Initiative

Conserving world-class wildlife resources

Facilitating responsible development

www.wlci.gov

WLCI Background

The Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI) was announced in February 2007 as a long-term, science-based effort to assess, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife habitats while facilitating responsible development. The concept for the WLCI began in the spring of 2006 as Federal and State fish and wildlife managers discussed the need for a landscape-scale approach to ensure healthy wildlife populations in areas with proposed energy development. The collaborative effort represented by the WLCI is unique as it provides a means to address multiple concerns at a scale that covers all activities on the landscape, incorporates multiple needs in project implementation, and can leverage resources that might not be available for single agency projects.

The partnership formally includes the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, six County Commissions, and eight Conservation Districts. Other organizations cooperate with the WLCI and provide support as needed, including the National Park Service, Natural



View of the Red Canyon/Elk Mountain burn in fall 2008, showing one year of regrowth.

Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming State Land Board, and Jonah Interagency Office. Partnerships are forming with industry and conservation groups. The WLCI has developed an agreement with the Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming to hold and administer private contributions.

Mission and program goals

The mission of the WLCI is to conduct a long-term science-based program to assess and enhance the quality and quantity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats at a landscape scale in southwest Wyoming, based on community partnerships and facilitation of responsible development. The WLCI has developed six goals that support and conform to the overall WLCI mission:

Goal 1: Manage, conserve, restore, or enhance the sagebrush, mountain shrub, aspen, riparian, and aquatic focus communities to ensure sustainability of fish and wildlife populations in the WLCI area.

Goal 2: Support opportunities for sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3: Improve the understanding of ecological processes across southwest Wyoming.

Goal 4: Synthesize information and facilitate communication to inform and encourage responsible development and sustain healthy landscapes.

Goal 5: Ensure effective relationships exist among partners, stakeholders, and the public through internal and external partnerships.

Goal 6: Provide mechanisms to ensure effective data and information exchange.

Science-Based Approach

One of the most unique features of the WLCI is the application of science to decision-making processes. To develop and pursue the science required for success of the WLCI, the USGS has assembled a WLCI Science Team composed of hydrologists, geologists, biologists, geographers, social scientists, and information-management specialists.



USGS researchers take measurements at a plot.

The team has developed an overall science strategy and specific work plans to address management needs identified by WLCI partners. Major strategies include assessing what is already known about southwest Wyoming's ecosystems and people who use the land, conducting monitoring and research to detect changes and improve the knowledge, and developing a means of archiving the knowledge and sharing it with collaborators and the public.

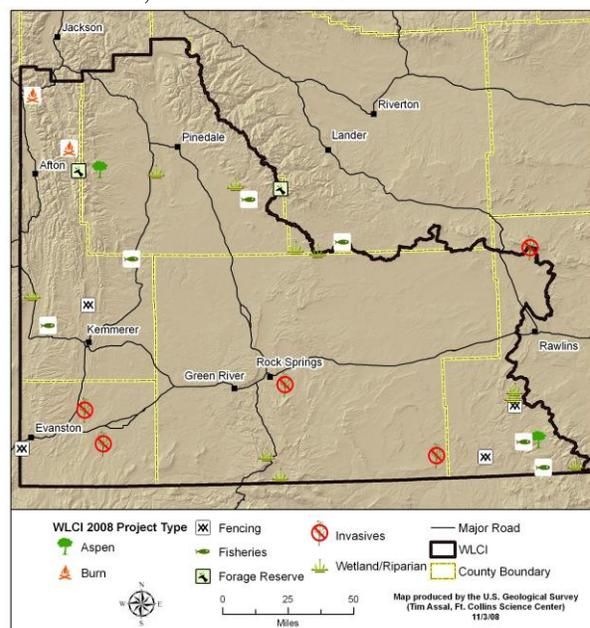
The Science Team has developed a comprehensive assessment, or a compilation of the current conditions from all available data for the WLCI area. The assessment includes developing methods for using spatial images to assess changing conditions, and mapping key habitat types, crucial wildlife-use areas, potential development areas, and on-the-ground habitat treatments. Some of the compiled data are being used in evaluation of habitat-improvement projects. Assessment work in 2009 includes acquiring and standardizing additional data and using that information to guide ongoing and future monitoring and research.

Assessment information will be used to identify species most likely to be affected by development. An important outcome of this effort will be transferability of landscape conservation models and procedures to other areas targeted for energy development.

Current On- The-Ground Projects

WLCI funding and coordination provided support for 29 on-the-ground projects in fiscal year 2008. Both the BLM and FWS provided project funding. Projects also garnered support from other groups, who contributed more than \$1.5 million in funding and in-kind support. Projects types included fencing, wetland creation, prescribed burns, riparian enhancements, weed treatments and river restoration. Treatments helped create or protect 400 acres of wetlands/riparian areas, restore 10 miles of stream, enhance or conserve 1,900 acres of uplands, treat weeds on 4,500 acres, and improve effectiveness of 70,000 acres of forage reserves. Work included an additional 20 miles of fencing to protect key habitats. Projects benefit multiple species, including sage-grouse, trumpeter swans, cutthroat trout, various warm water fish, various migratory birds, and big game species.

The WLCI has held workshops with local stakeholders to develop projects and formed Local Project Development Teams to create local program ownership and use local level expertise and resources in the project development and prioritization. The WLCI Executive Committee approved a list of projects for fiscal year 2009, and applied a ranking protocol to guide project prioritization. The rankings will be applied to the funds that come through agencies and private contributors.



Map showing projects implemented in 2008. Interactive map is available at www.wlci.gov.