



# Institute for Applied Ecology



## **NEVADA INMATES HELP RESTORE GREATER SAGE GROUSE HABITAT**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC) have partnered with ecologists from the Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE), a non-profit in Corvallis, Oregon, to utilize inmates in the effort to restore Greater sage-grouse habitat.

The Greater sage-grouse, once a common sight in the western part of the U.S. and numbering in the millions, has declined to an estimated population of 200,000 to 500,000. To assist in the effort to keep Greater sage-grouse off the endangered species list, select Nevada inmates are tackling the problem of diminishing sage-grouse habitat. The inmates will begin cultivating thousands of sagebrush plants to help restore the bird's habitat.

The program is funded through the BLM in Washington D.C. and incorporates three Nevada Prisons; Northern Nevada Correctional Center and Warm Springs Correctional Center, both located in Carson City and Lovelock Correctional Center in Lovelock, Nevada.

Stacy Moore, Ecological Education Program Director with IAE is overseeing the Sagebrush in Prisons Project at 11 prisons in six states. Moore explained that inmates and staff are receiving educational lectures to learn about the ecology of the sagebrush ecosystems and the threats they face. "Greater sage-grouse are at risk of being put on the endangered species list. This is a major concern for people in Nevada and across the West where sage grouse live. Inmates growing native plants that help restore the landscape also help the local community," commented Mrs. Moore.

Contractor and University of Nevada graduate Shannon Swim is working alongside inmates to sow the sagebrush seed and direct daily care of the plants. "This project is a win-win for the State of Nevada. Inmates acquire horticulture and team building skills at the same time they are helping restore sage grouse habitat on federal lands."

Inmates at the three prisons will start sowing a total of 105,000 plants on April 25<sup>th</sup>. The sagebrush will be cared for over the summer and planted in the fall on BLM managed public land that has been scorched by fire. Minimum custody inmates who reside at camps in remote areas of the state will work alongside BLM staff to plant the seedlings. Mark Williams, fire ecologist with the Winnemucca BLM District Office is supplying sagebrush seed for the project. "The Winnemucca BLM District is excited to be involved with Institute for Applied Ecology and Nevada Department of Corrections to propagate native plants which will help the Greater sage-grouse in the Winnemucca region."

Dr. Darcy Davis, Quality Assurance Manager for Behavioral Programs with NDOC, is working closely with prison staff and inmates. "Inmates come to us from a criminal culture and this type of activity provides an opportunity to develop prosocial attitudes, values and behaviors. Research shows that by addressing these areas, we may be able to reduce the likelihood of these inmates committing future crimes."