

Dream Tag Charitable Fund 2012 Request for Proposal
 Duck Creek Valley Habitat Improvement Project

Organization Name:	Nevada Department of Wildlife			
Organization Type:	501(c)(3) EIN#	Governmental entity? Yes State Government		
Address:	1100 Valley Road Reno, Nevada 89512			
Project Name:	Duck Creek Valley Sage Grouse/Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project			
Amount requested: \$12,500.00	Website: www.ndow.org			
This funding will be used to (complete this sentence with a max of 2 sentences):	This funding will be used to supplement a Pinyon-Juniper thinning and sage grouse lek enhancement project. Project located in Duck Creek Valley near Ely, NV.			
Key People:	Director:	Ken Mayer		
	Board Chair:			
	Project Contact:	Name:	Dr. Lee Turner	
		Position:	Habitat Ecologist- Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Coordinator-Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development (NPCD)	
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Organization Mission:	The NDOW manages, protects, and restores Nevada's wildlife and its habitat, and promotes safe boating on Nevada waters.			
Project is on (check one) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private land.				
<p>Are government permits or decision documents needed for the project? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If so, are those permits and decision documents already secured? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If permits and decision documents are needed but not yet secured, in #4 of the Narrative Requirements provide a list of permits and documents needed and a schedule for securing them.</p>				

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT UNDER CONSIDERATION

Indicate the description that best fits the project you are proposing. Mark no more than three categories:

- A. Projects that improve, protect, or restore habitat
- B. Projects that embrace unique opportunities for advancing the mission of wildlife conservation in Nevada
- C. Projects that address emergent needs
- D. Other projects that meet the evaluation criteria

Specific Project Goals and Measurable Outcomes

There are two main goals for the Duck Creek Sage Grouse/Wildlife Project. The first goal is to improve habitat in the immediate vicinity of the Timber Creek Lek (Fig. 1). Long term lek survey data indicate that this lek is the largest and most persistent in Duck Creek Valley. The area around the lek is an old crested wheat grass (*Agropyron cristatum*) seeding that sagebrush vegetation has recolonized. The suitable area for strutting has slowly been reduced as the overall height of sagebrush has increased. Dispersed strutting activity in marginal habitats has appeared to increase within Duck Creek Valley over the past decade. The removal of taller sagebrush plants and retention of shorter plants will increase the suitability of the area for breeding. It is hoped that this will support increased and more centralized breeding activity that will benefit the local sage grouse population. Mule deer may benefit from the increased health and leader growth of the younger sagebrush plants that remain.

The second goal is to expand the footprint of the Worthington Canyon pinyon-juniper (PJ) thinning project that will be implemented on US Forest Service land in summers 2012 and 2013 (Figure 1). The Timber Creek lek is on BLM land that is adjacent to the Worthington Canyon area and the two treatments complement one another as both are aimed primarily at sage grouse, mule deer and elk habitat. The aim of this second goal is to provide funding for additional PJ removal along the east and west sides of Duck Creek and in the area of Boneyard Canyon, Canyon Spring, McGill Spring and Axehandle Spring (Fig. 1). Pinyon-Juniper encroachment into nesting, brood rearing and leks is documented to be one of the largest problems concerning declines in sage grouse numbers across much of Nevada. The thinning of pinyon and juniper in selected portions of the project area will help check the loss of sage grouse habitat that is occurring due to the rapid expansion of these species into sagebrush and mountain brush communities. Increases in PJ vegetation are also drivers for declines in quality of habitat for mule deer and elk as well as general biodiversity of sites formerly dominated by sagebrush, grasses and forbs.

An additional goal of this project would be to complement the project actions proposed in NDOW's Habitat Conservation Fee Pinyon-Juniper thinning project on US Forest Service managed land in Duck Creek Basin. That project is aimed at reducing PJ cover in sage-grouse, mule deer and elk habitat and is north of the Worthington Canyon and acreage proposed for treatment in this proposal (Figure 1). Each of the Duck Creek projects has ecological merit on its own but when all the treatment acres are combined into one larger project, there is a more significant ecological outcome, i.e., the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Further discussion of methods for accessing project outcomes in "Success" section below.

This Dream Tag funding request will be used to allow for Pinyon-Juniper thinning contractor to complete additional acres.

Project Location

The project is located in Duck Creek Valley in White Pine County, Nevada (Figure 1). Work will take place on: T18N R64E Sections 1,2,3,13,24 and 25; T18N R65E Sections 17-20 and 30; T17N R65E Sections 1-36; T17N R64E Sections 10-15, 22-27, 34-36

Project Description

Figure 1 shows Duck Creek Valley near Ely in White Pine County, Nevada. The project sites where this funding would be utilized are the PJ thinning and removal sites in the southwest part of Duck Creek Valley on BLM managed lands.

Principals Involved

Lee Turner (NDOW and NPCD), Cody Coombs (Ely BLM), Matt Rajala (Ely BLM), Kathy Johnson (Ely USFS) are the primary leads for the Duck Creek Project work.

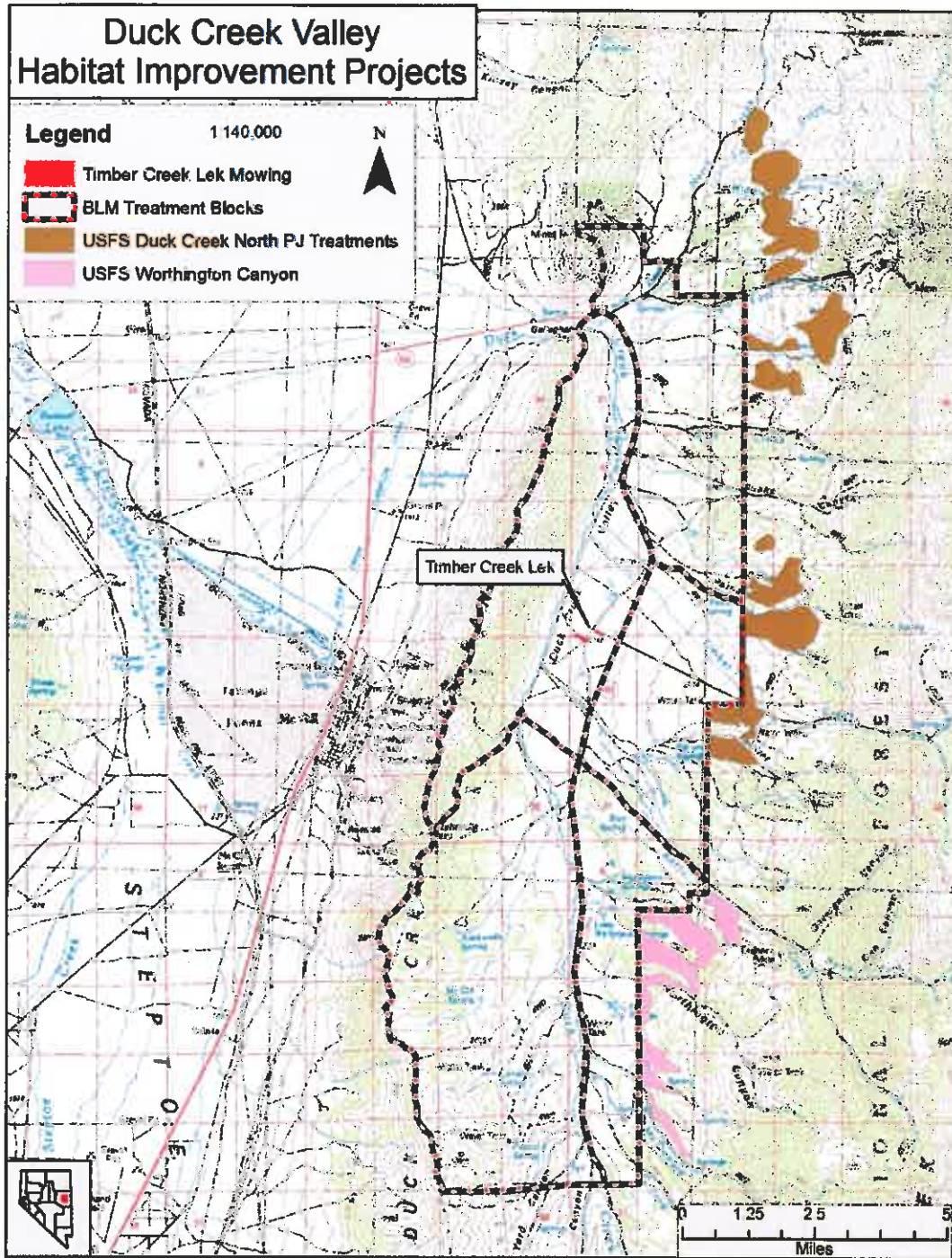


Figure 1. Map of Duck Creek Valley Habitat Projects
PROVIDE MORE EXPLANATION

Permitting

The work that this funding would support is being performed on public lands. The nature of the treatments requires National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses be completed. The NEPA processes on the US Forest Service projects are complete as of spring 2012 and the analyses on the BLM

lands are well underway and the final decision for the projects to proceed is expected in late August or September 2012.

Future Phases

All the Pinyon-Juniper thinning is being scheduled occur in FY13 (July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013). It is anticipated that there will be more acres of PJ permitted for thinning than the current budget will allow work on and as such there will be future phases based on funding availability and new partners being brought into the process.

Time Line

- Treatment areas located in 2011 and spring 2012
- Initial funding sources secured and verified in spring and summer 2012
- Permanent plots located and vegetation sampled in June and July of 2011 and 2012
- NEPA process underway in spring 2012 (anticipated to be complete in fall 2012)
- It is anticipated that a contractor will begin PJ removal in late fall 2012 and into spring 2013. Final treatment are currently proposed to be complete by June 30, 2013 however winter weather can be unpredictable and this may change.
- Fires within the project sites may alter scheduled activities but as of August 18, 2012 none of the selected treatment sites had been impacted by wildfire

Success and Measuring Results

The Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development (NPCD) installed and sampled permanent vegetation sampling locations within the BLM treatment areas and the US Forest Service North Duck Creek treatment sites in summer 2012 prior to any vegetation treatments. The project area will be monitored by the NPCD two and four years following treatments to resample the permanent plots. Obtaining pre-treatment data allows for baseline conditions to be assessed and rigorous comparisons to be made once the treatments are complete and the permanent points are revisited at the two or three year post-treatment interval. The US Forest Service is implementing PJ treatments in the Worthington Canyon project site and has collected pre-treatment vegetation data.

Initial baseline breeding bird point count surveys were conducted by the Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) in the Duck Creek Valley. These surveys were conducted in 2009 and 2010. In addition, sage-grouse were captured within the Duck Creek Basin and had VHF radio transmitters placed on them. This information can be utilized as baseline information regarding movement between seasonal habitats and determining home ranges of sage-grouse within this particular area.

Once treatments are begun the NPCD will revisit the permanent vegetation sampling locations, recollect the vegetation data then compare the results to the goals and aims of the project. The GBBO would be contracted to revisit their sampling sites and provide post treatment information. This allows for success or some deviation from success to be quantitatively determined. Should there be deviation from original project goals adaptive management strategies may be employed. At this early stage in the process it is difficult to be explicit as to specific adaptive strategies and some flexibility on the part of the planners and project managers is key.

Staff Positions

The Ely BLM, NDOW and NPCD project ecologists, fuels managers and biologists are dedicated on a part-time basis to this project. No salary money is being requested via this Dream Tag proposal. All salary for state and federal employees is generated by other sources. Project oversight will be performed by Ely BLM and USFS employees to ensure contractor compliance with project specifics.

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Volunteers Involved

The Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition (ENLC) has made the Duck Creek projects one of their focus projects and will schedule a formal work weekend based on the BLM and USFS scheduling. The ENLC requires Board of Director members participate in and recruit additional volunteers for one or more projects each year. Sportsmen's groups such as the Nevada Mule Deer Foundation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation are being contacted for volunteer requests.

Grant Match

Grant Amount Provided: \$186,000

Match details:

This Dream Tag proposal is not intended to be the primary source of funding for the Duck Creek Valley projects. The total match budget of secured funding (including in-kind) is \$186,000.00 and budget detail is provided. The total budget of non-federal monies necessary to satisfy the Dream Tag requirement of at least 25% match has been met and exceeded. The Dream Tag request is being made to allow for the overall effectiveness and collaborative nature of the project to be expanded.

For most habitat projects, numerous funding sources are necessary and each source applied for has a match requirement. Obtaining the \$12,500.00 requested here will allow leveraging of an additional \$37,500.00 in federal funds. The total of ~\$50,000.00 represents a significant contribution to the habitat work on the Duck Creek Habitat project.

Existing Funding and In-Kind Breakdown

1. Cash Funding Sources

a. US Forest Service resource advisory council (RAC)	\$	100,000.00
b. Nat. Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$	11,000.00
c. Ely BLM funding NEPA	\$	9,500.00
d. Nevada Partners for Conservation and Development	\$	5,500.00
e. Heritage Trust Fund (NDOW)	\$	30,000.00
f. Habitat Conservation Fee (NDOW)	\$	25,000.00
g. <i>Total Other Funding Sources</i>	\$	<i>181,000.00</i>

2. In-Kind Services and Donations for This Project

a. Volunteer Time	\$	5,000.00
b. TOTAL MATCH BUDGET (As of August 16, 2012)	\$	186,000.00

The funding that is being held by the applicant for this project applies to Heritage Trust Funds, Habitat Conservation Fee, and BLM funding.

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Budget

Budget Item Description	DT \$	Other Funding Name	Match	Project Total	Expenditure to Date	Expenditure to Date
Trailer and Mower Rental	0.00	See note	6,500.00	6,500.00		
Chemicals for weed treatments	0.00	See note	8,000.00	8,000.00		
Seeds	0.00	See note	8,000.00	8,000.00		
NPCD Vegetation Monitoring	0.00	See note	5,500.00	5,500.00		
Pinyon-Juniper Vegetation Removal Contractor	12,500.00	See note	153,000.00	165,500.00		
Pinyon-Juniper Vegetation Removal (in-kind)	0.00	See note	5,000.00	5,000.00		
TOTAL	12,500.00		186,000.00	198,500.00		

Note: Funding sources are mixed from USFS, NFWF, BLM, NDOW and NPCD.