

Social Acceptability of Alternative Management Practices: Restoring Sage-Steppe Ecosystems in the Great Basin

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The sagebrush-steppe land type occupies 100 million acres in the Western U.S. Healthy sage-steppe communities in the Great Basin are rapidly disappearing due to invasion of non-native plants (especially cheatgrass), catastrophic wildfires, and encroachment of pinyon-juniper woodlands. Sagebrush communities have been identified as one of the most threatened land types in North America, and as much as half of this land type has already been lost in the Great Basin.

SageSTEP is a 5-year study that will explore ways to restore sagebrush communities. Land management options, including prescribed fire, mechanical thinning of shrubs and trees, and herbicide application will be examined to learn more about how these treatments can reduce the potential for wildfire and restore healthy and diverse native plant communities. The project is fully interdisciplinary, with ecological, economic, and social components.



Social Acceptability of Restoration Activities

Public acceptance of management actions is a critical component of developing and implementing successful long-term land management plans. We will describe the social acceptability of alternative management practices used to restore degraded sagebrush ecosystems in the Great Basin and identify key factors influencing levels of social acceptability across the region. This research is an essential component of the Sagebrush-Steppe Treatment Evaluation Project. Collectively, these studies will help determine rangeland management practices that facilitate public acceptance and are supported by biophysical research.

Objectives

- Identify factors that have influenced the public's current knowledge and support of proposed restoration activities.
- Identify critical factors of public acceptance on a regional scale.
- Characterize differences between rural and urban populations' levels of knowledge and support for proposed restoration activities.
- Characterize the effectiveness of various outreach methods for addressing the information and communication needs of community members and interest groups
- Characterize how the interaction between organizational cultures, jurisdiction-specific histories, and the underlying concerns of community members and stakeholder groups influences the acceptability of proposed restoration activities.

Methods

Site Visits

Key Informant Interviews

Agencies & Stakeholder Groups
Key Community & Agency Meetings

Social Acceptability Survey

Stratified Random Sampling
of Rural & Urban Communities:

- Utah: Salt Lake City & Tooele County
- Nevada: Reno/Vegas & E. Counties
- Oregon: Bend & E. Counties
- Idaho: Boise & E. Oregon Counties



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