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**Media Advisory**

## Interior Department to Host Conference to Address Rangeland Wildfire Threats to Sagebrush Habitat

**Deputy Secretary Connor, Assistant Secretary Schneider, BLM and FWS Directors to attend; Three-day Idaho meeting designed to share science, best practices and advance a proactive strategy to improve and restore sagebrush ecosystems**

11/03/2014

Contact us  
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**BOISE, Idaho** – U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Interior Mike Connor and other senior department officials will participate in a three-day conference in Idaho this week, November 5-7, to discuss rangeland wildfire threats to sagebrush habitat throughout the Great Basin. The conference will be livestreamed.

The conference is designed to share the best available science and operational practices, as well as to help develop more effective fire management strategies and tactics to protect, improve and conserve rangeland habitat and the sage steppe ecosystem for the hundreds of species that rely on it, including the greater sage-grouse.

The BLM is hosting *The Next Steppe: Sage-Grouse and Rangeland Fire in the Great Basin* at the Boise Centre in Boise, Idaho. Speakers and panelists will include current and former senior Department of the Interior officials, scientists, academics, fire managers, tribal representatives, members of the agriculture community and other important stakeholders. More than 300 people are expected to attend and participate.

"The conference will bring together top scientists, policy makers, land managers and wildland fire experts to enhance our response to threats affecting sagebrush habitat – from invasive species like cheatgrass and fuels reduction, to suppression, post-fire restoration and funding," said Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Janice Schneider. "It's part of our proactive efforts – working with western states and communities – to implement the right policies and conservation measures that will not only benefit wildlife, but will also preserve the Western way of life."

Wildland fire in the Great Basin is one of the primary threats to the greater sage-grouse. Fires can significantly damage key habitat and then allow for the spread of dominating and highly flammable invasive annual grass, which can then lead to more fire and more invasives. The adverse effects on the vegetative landscape have been cumulative and severe across the Great Basin states.

Last month, Secretary Sally Jewell toured the Browns Bench/China Mountain region of southern Idaho where, in 2007, the Murphy Complex fire burned more than 600,000 acres. Federal, state and local partners are working to restore the area by reseeding sagebrush and associated vegetation and combatting cheatgrass and other invasive species. They are also altering fire regimes and creating fire breaks that provide critical tactical advantage to firefighters to help limit damage from future fires.

**WHO:**

**Mike Connor**, Deputy Secretary of the Interior

**Janice Schneider**, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management

**Kris Sarri**, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

**Neil Kornze**, Director, Bureau of Land Management

**Dan Ashe**, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Federal and state officials, Tribal representatives, scientists, academics, fire managers, members of the agriculture community and other important stakeholders

**WHAT:**

Conference to Address Rangeland Wildfire Threats to Sagebrush Habitat

**WHEN:**

November 5-7, 2014

The full conference agenda is available at <http://www.nifc.gov/fireandsagegrouse/agenda.html>

**WHERE:**

Boise Centre  
850 W Front Street

Downtown Boise

**MEDIA:**

*Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Janice Schneider will be available to speak with the media, Thursday morning at 10:00 a.m. in the Falcon Room at the Boise Centre. Media interested in attending should contact Randy Eardley with BLM Fire and Aviation at (208) 387-5895.*

**WEB:**

**Live streaming video** of all speakers and panel sessions will be available.

For more information on the conference and the interactive features available, please visit <http://www.nifc.gov/fireandsagegrouse/>

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