Meeting Our Panelists

Erika Fitzpatrick – Event Host

Erika lives in remote Eastern Oregon, working with her husband, two sons, and extended family on their fourth-generation ranch. She owns Mesa Communications, a media company that serves organizations at the intersection of ranching and natural resource use, and has worked on a number of outreach initiatives about invasive annual grasses.

Brian Mealor

Brian is Director of both the Institute for Managing Annual Grasses Invading Natural Ecosystems (IMAGINE) and Sheridan Research and Extension Center in Sheridan, WY. He is a professor at the University of Wyoming, where he continues to research strategies and techniques for restoring rangelands impacted by invasive annual grasses and other weeds. He works with diverse partners around the western US to help rangeland managers strategically address natural resource challenges

Chad Boyd

Chad is a rangeland ecologist and the Research Leader for the Agricultural Research Service in Burns, Oregon. My current research focuses on restoration of exotic annual grass-dominated rangeland and the relationship between rangeland fuel load attributes and wildfire probability and impact. He is also involved in strategic management planning for sagebrush rangelands at local, regional, and national levels through my participation in development of CCAAs for Greater Sage-Grouse, cooperative management planning with BLM, and work with a diverse array of partners developing ecologically-based decision support systems for rangeland managers and decision-makers.

Jeremy Maestas

Jeremy is an ecologist with the USDA-NRCS West National Technology Support Center based in Bend, OR. There he serves as the agency's National Sagebrush Ecosystem Specialist providing technical leadership on conservation issues across arid lands of the western US. Much of his career has focused on improving the resilience of working rangelands by helping land managers reduce large scale threats, such as, conifer expansion, cheatgrass invasion, and riparian degradation.

Claire Visconti

Claire is the outreach program coordinator of the Invasive Annual Grasses Tech Transfer Partnership (IAG TTP) and assistant research scientist. She helps to plan and implement invasive grasses workshops throughout the western US. She also collaborates with project partners to produce educational materials for land managers. She is based out of Sheridan, Wyoming.

Paul Meiman

Paul and his family moved to Elko in 2019. He is an Associate Professor of Rangeland Ecology and Management and the state Extension Specialist for Rangeland Livestock/Wildlife Interactions with the University of Nevada, Reno. Paul has worked extensively with land, livestock and natural resource managers throughout the west and continues to do this in Nevada in his current position. His interests are closely related to, and have been influenced by on-the-ground interactions with ranchers, land and natural resource managers.

Andrew Olsen

Andrew is the Science to Implementation Coordinator for Intermountain West Joint Venture. Based in Missoula, Montana, he assists partners across the 11 states of the Intermountain West with accessing, interpreting, and applying science to their land management needs and challenges.

Katie Wollstein

Dr. Katie Wollstein is an Assistant Professor (Practice) and Rangeland Fire Specialist with the Extension Fire Program at Oregon State University. Based at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns, Oregon, her research focuses on integrated range and fire management, landscape-scale planning for improved fire outcomes, and social and ecological fire resilience in rangeland communities. Katie's Extension program supports ranchers, agencies, and other rangeland stakeholders in leveraging their different tools, capacities, and types of knowledge where there are multiple jurisdictions, values, and resource uses.

Vanessa Schroeder

Vanessa is a Senior Faculty Research Assistant I for the Oregon State University Extension Service. Located at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center in Burns, Oregon, her extension and research programming focuses on rangeland ecology to support wildlife habitat. She spends about half of her time on stakeholder driven applied research projects and the other half advancing education and outreach programs around sagebrush ecosystem ecology and management and developing strategic management solutions for threatened sage-steppe.

Jaycie Arndt

Jaycie coordinates the Northeast Wyoming Invasive Grasses Working Group (NEWIGWG). NEWIGWG was formed in 2017 in response to the identification of new invasive annual grasses in Wyoming. The collaborative group has combined efforts, funds, and commitment to managing over 150,000 acres of ventenata and medusahead. They use constantly improving science to make adaptive management decisions at the landscape level.

Matt Glenn

Matt has been a restoration biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife for the past 10 years where he has worked primarily in the northeastern part of the state and is based out of Elko. In his position, he works with both federal partners and private landowners to restore range lands for Nevada's wildlife working on a variety of projects with a major emphasis on wildfire, proactive range, and riparian restoration projects. A typical work week for Matt might include developing drill & aerial seed mixes, ground truthing preemergent herbicide treatment polygons, counting sage grouse leks, or working through complex remote sensing problems that he really doesn't understand.

Reese Irvine

Reese is the Supervisor for Carbon County Weed and Pest located in Rawlins, WY. He works in partnership with private landowners, BLM, USFS, NRCS, USFW, UW IMAGINE, WY Game and Fish, and conservation districts to treat cheatgrass in priority habitats across Carbon County. Him and his team began treating cheatgrass in 2014 as part of mule deer and sage-grouse habitat restoration efforts in the Platte Valley. He has since been able to expand these efforts to include other crucial habitats, wildfires, migration corridors and the BLM's Muddy Creek Restoration Landscape. Through these partnerships they have treated 71,000 acres and plan to treat an additional 75,000 acres in the next two years.

Petar Simic

Petar is the Habitat Restoration and Cheatgrass Coordinator for the Gunnison Basin in Gunnison, CO. He represents seven different federal, state, and local agencies that support his position through an agreement with Gunnison County. He coordinates with a diverse set of stakeholders to design and implement cheatgrass treatments across federal, state, private, and tribal ownerships. Their local cheatgrass working group, which they have branded as the Gunnison Sagebrush Alliance began meeting in 2023 due to the increase in cheatgrass infestations across the Basin and the concern for Gunnison sage-grouse habitat. About 90% of the global population of the federally threatened Gunnison sage-grouse resides in the Gunnison Basin. From the roughly 600k acres of sagebrush habitat in the Gunnison Basin, it is estimated that there are a few thousand acres that are infested with cheatgrass.

Lisa Jones

Lisa Jones is a Research Associate in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Idaho in Moscow. She leads the field ecology unit researching herbicide efficacy and plant community response in natural areas. Lisa is knowledgeable about invasion biology and ecological impacts in grassland and shrub-steppe systems of the Intermountain West.

Meeting Our Planning Team

Seth Flanigan

Seth is the Senior Natural Resource Specialist for Invasive Plants. He provides program and policy oversight and coordination for the Invasive Plant Management Program at the Bureau of Land Management. He coordinates with counterparts in the across the BLM's programs and with various partner agencies and groups, to prevent and reduce the impact of invasive species to the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands. Seth is based in Boise, Idaho, and has a long personal and professional history in the Great Basin.

Lindy Garner

Lindy's career of 29 years with USFWS has covered planning and implementing operations, integrating science and research, and messaging for policy and funding for invasive species issues. Her career has spanned local to landscape-scale management from Lead Refuge Biologist, Management Planner, Regional Invasive Species Coordinator, to her current position working through critical partnerships to address the number one threat of invasive annual grasses in the sagebrush ecosystem.

Jane Mangold

Jane is a professor and Extension invasive plant specialist at Montana State University in Bozeman, MT. She has been studying and sharing research-based information about rangeland invasive plants in the western U.S. for about 25 years. In addition to invasive annual grasses, she has worked on a variety of weedy forbs, most of which are on noxious weed lists in Montana and nearby states. She strives to use our best understanding of plant ecology to inform invasive plant management decisions.

Megan McGrath- Technical Support

Megan McGrath is the Sagebrush Communications Specialist for the Intermountain West Joint Venture. In this capacity she produces and facilitates media and efforts on behalf of the Joint Venture's partnership-driven habitat conservation work across 11 states, especially focusing on the JV's Partnering to Conserve Sagebrush Rangelands effort with the Bureau of Land Management. She often helps co-facilitate workshops like this one that aim to help land managers implement ecological restoration techniques. Megan is based remotely in Seattle, WA, where she spends her weekends chasing whales, salmon, and waterbirds around Puget Sound for fun.

Jordan Spaak

Jordan Spaak is an ecologist for the National Park Service headquarters office. Jordan also serves as the Natural Resources Liaison to the Fire and Aviation Management Program for the NPS. Jordan is passionate about collaboratively managing invasive annual grasses. This includes applying management strategies to keep sagebrush and grassland ecosystems intact and properly functioning to enhance resiliency to disturbance.