

Dear Editor:

I would like to respond to Dave Stout's Aug. 3, comments, "Replanted crested wheat doesn't exactly solve the problem for the deer or the sage grouse." For a good many years now, BLM, Forest Service and State Division of Wildlife personnel have promoted three policy which are absolutely the worst thing that could be done for sage grouse and mule deer. First they have done everything possible to reduce livestock use of our rangelands, insuring increased fuel loads and wildfire severity. Second, they have done everything they could to reduce predator control. And third, they have nearly eliminated, the seeding and reseeding of rangelands to crested wheat grass.

The practice of seeding crested wheat grass to rangelands began in northern Nevada in the 1950's, and today a good many of the very best deer habitat is on range which was seeded to crested wheat grass. It is a fact that bitterbrush and many other important plant species, including native grasses, come back a lot sooner, and do better when crested wheat grass is planted. And since crested wheat grass burns cooler, fires are less intense when they do occur. And when a fire is cooler and less intense, fewer bitterbrush and native grass plants are lost. There is no question, the planting of crested wheat grass is a win, win situation.

And as for sage grouse. The whole notion that crested wheat seedings are bad for the birds is garbage. In the 1940's there were sage grouse everywhere in Ruby Valley; and there were many, many sage grouse strutting grounds, both on the west side of the valley and the east side of the valley. Most of the strutting grounds which were in existence at that time were on the white sage flats on the east side of the valley. Since that time, there has been no change in the vegetation at all in that area, yet sage grouse no longer strut there. Today there is only one known sage grouse strutting ground left in south Ruby Valley and its located on a crested wheat seedings south of Harrison Pass.

The problem is not cattle grazing or crested wheat seedings. The problem is bureaucracy. The primary reason for the great numbers of sage grouse in the 1930's 40's and 50's was the sheep industry. When there were large numbers of sheep in the country, the sheepmen saw to it that predators were held in check. People can say what they wish about all that is behind environmentalism, but in truth, officials within the bureaucracies have done more to perpetuate the mistruths and policy that is causing problems for wildlife today than any other group.

You don't have to be an expert to understand the benefits of crested wheat seedings, predator control and livestock grazing, but you do have to be observant and you have to be honest. Unfortunately, most experts working in government today are neither observant or honest.

*Ed J. Gardner*

GRACE 7