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**Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust and Habitat Improvement Team announce more than \$900,000 in awards for five conservation projects in Southeast Idaho**

*The awards will go toward stream restoration, wet meadow recovery, conservation easements, and wildlife habitat improvement.*

**POCATELLO** — The Habitat Improvement Team (HIT) — a committee of natural resource, land management and tribal trustees — has awarded more than \$900,000 to five conservation projects that will restore rivers and wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat and protect open landscapes across southeast Idaho.

The awards were made through the Southeast Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Fund, an initiative started by Itafos Conda, LLC, to offset mine impacts to wildlife by funding habitat restoration and conservation.

Itafos Conda has provided approximately \$2 million since 2017 to sustain the fund, and this marks the third round of conservation awards in that time. That investment has been leveraged to obtain additional state, federal and private dollars, for a total amount of \$12.4 million invested into habitat restoration and conservation efforts.

In this most recent round, \$900,000 from the fund attracted approximately \$6.6 million in matching support — meaning that for every dollar invested by Itafos Conda, more than \$6 was added by partners to expand the scope and impact of conservation projects.

Curtis Hendricks, southeast region habitat manager for Idaho Fish & Game, said he was “truly appreciative of the collaborative nature of the (HIT) and the sincere desire to produce wins for wildlife and wildlife habitat across the project area.”

Projects were selected based on 10 criteria, including proximity to the Husky 1 / North Dry Ridge Mine, ability to match funds, and impacts on habitat and wildlife. The full scoring matrix is available for review [here](#).

This year’s projects include:

- **Trout Unlimited & U.S. Forest Service – McCoy Creek Wet Meadow Restoration Project**  
*\$75,000 awarded; \$429,500 total project cost*  
 Restoring McCoy Creek’s natural wet meadow system by reconnecting the stream to its floodplain, encouraging beaver activity and creating multiple flow paths. The project will protect and restore up to 77 acres, improving resilience for Yellowstone cutthroat trout and riparian wildlife.
- **Trout Unlimited – Blackfoot River Avian Mitigation and Habitat Enhancement**  
*\$673,000 awarded; \$1.12 million total project cost*  
 Enhancing Yellowstone cutthroat trout habitat above the Blackfoot Reservoir by restoring riparian vegetation, stabilizing streambanks and reconnecting the river to its floodplain. These improvements will reduce predation vulnerability and support long-term fish population resilience.
- **Trout Unlimited – Cub River Habitat Restoration**  
*\$52,800 awarded; \$57,800 total project cost*  
 Designing restoration for 39 acres of Cub River property to reestablish a meandering channel, expand wetlands and restore riparian vegetation. The project will improve habitat for cutthroat trout, amphibians, birds and wetland wildlife while strengthening water quality and watershed health.
- **Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust – Lanes Creek Conservation Easement**  
*\$89,500 awarded; \$5.85 million total project cost*  
 Protecting nearly 3,800 acres in the Blackfoot–Willow Creek Highlands priority area through a perpetual conservation easement. The property secures vital migratory routes, winter range and upland grassland habitat for species of greatest conservation need, including greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.
- **Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust – Thunder Ridge Preserve Fee Title Disposition**  
*\$35,400 awarded; \$97,400 total project cost*  
 Maintaining permanent protection of the Thunder Ridge Preserve through a “protect-sell” model. SSLT will retain a conservation easement while transferring ownership to a private landowner, ensuring the property remains open and undeveloped while enhancing landscape connectivity in the Bear River watershed.

Hannah Murphy, the Southeast Idaho project manager for Trout Unlimited, expressed her gratitude for the funding and said she is looking forward to getting “boots on the ground.”

“This project has been years in the making with multiple stakeholders,” she said. “This conservation work would not be possible without their support.”

The fund was administered by Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, which facilitates the application process but does not take part in award decisions.

Braden Lott, project manager of mining and reclamation for Itafos, said the process to select projects for funding was “well organized, transparent, and thorough.”

“Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust was so excited to have been a part of the HIT process,” said Heath Mann, executive director of Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust. “These projects show what’s possible when partners come together with a shared commitment to conservation. By leveraging local dollars to acquire matching funds, we’re not only protecting and improving open spaces today, we’re ensuring that fish, wildlife and working lands in southeast Idaho will thrive for generations to come.”

To learn more about the Southeast Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Fund and the projects it supports, visit: <http://seidahomitigationfund.com/>.



A herd of elk on Thunder Ridge Preserve in Southeast Idaho. (Photo courtesy of Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust)



A view of the McCoy Creek project area. (Photo courtesy of Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust)

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