



National Wildlife Federation

Northern Rockies, Prairies, and Pacific Regional Center
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September 21, 2020

Reducing Wildlife / Livestock Conflict on Public Lands (Grant Renewal)

Grant Request: \$88,000 for program support as described below.

Background

Last year, the Knobloch Family Foundation (KFF) approved an \$88,000 request to fund critical operating support for year 2 of a 3-year wildlife/livestock conflict resolution program. NWF respectfully requests a third and final year of funding of \$88,000 of operating support for this 3-year program.

Two years ago, KFF also approved a \$300,000 3-year commitment to fund livestock grazing allotment retirements. In 2019, \$50,000 of this commitment was used to help fund the retirement of the Ball Brothers' sheep grazing allotments in eastern Idaho. The 3-year commitment expires on June 30, 2021. We respectfully request this funding commitment be extended through December 31, 2021 to assist in project support should opportunities arise over the next 15 months.

Project Description

Since 2002, National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has been working cooperatively with ranchers and government agencies across the west to reduce conflict between livestock and wildlife on public lands. In particular, much of our focus remains within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), addressing grizzly and wolf depredation and bighorn/domestic sheep disease concerns. Over the past 16 years, NWF and our partners have retired over 1.3 million acres of high-conflict public land grazing allotments in the Northern Rockies, including some 600,000 acres of domestic sheep allotments in the GYE, restoring ecosystem health, expanding grizzly bear habitat and conserving bighorn sheep populations by creating separation between wild and domestic sheep, which reduces the risk of lethal pathogen transmission. Because of our success in the Northern Rockies, NWF has recently expanded this work to the Southern Rockies and Great Basin regions, with three retirements completed protecting bighorns on an additional 150,000 acres.

NWF's work in the GYE historically has been focused on reducing conflict between large carnivores and domestic livestock (primarily domestic sheep). NWF has worked in close partnership with both the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and Wyoming Wildlife Federation on several key allotment retirements in the GYE. For example, a recent retirement in the upper Green River addressed an allotment complex that accounted for over 68% of all grizzly bear -domestic sheep related conflicts in the GYE (2005-2014). More recently, in eastern Idaho, NWF retired 143,000 acres of domestic sheep grazing, protecting two bighorn herds and restoring critical habitat for mule deer, pronghorn and sage grouse. In total, over the past 16 years, we've successfully retired three-quarters of the problem allotments in the Primary Conservation Area for grizzly bears and bighorn sheep in the GYE. All domestic sheep allotments in Wyoming within "core native" bighorn sheep herds have been closed. Our primary focus, currently, is the conservation of bighorn sheep via separation from domestic sheep. Separation reduces the risk of catastrophic bighorn die offs resulting from lethal pathogen transmission from domestic sheep. The Forest Service initiated a "Risk of Contact Analysis" (ROC) in 2012 which has provided the Forest Service with a comprehensive analysis of domestic sheep allotments and identifies those posing a significant disease threat to wild sheep. This analysis has provided some level of concern for domestic sheep permittees leasing public lands in occupied bighorn habitat.

How, and to what level, the Forest Service integrates the ROC and best available science in their Forest Plans is yet to be seen. But, we see continued opportunity during this period of permittee uncertainty to work one-on-one with sheep producers, the BLM and USFS to shift grazing away from key bighorn habitats.

Over the past five years, we successfully retired over 20 domestic sheep allotments in Wyoming and southern Idaho, covering some 450,000 acres, which posed a significant disease risk to bighorns. While much of our work is species specific in nature, the entire ecosystem and the suite of flora and fauna species occupying the landscape benefit.

While reducing the threat of disease in bighorn sheep drives our allotment strategy, and high-profile sensitive species such as bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, wolves, cutthroat trout and sage grouse serve as indicator species for general ecosystem health, grazing retirements provide significant ancillary benefits to ecosystem health in addition to reducing direct conflict with wildlife. Native plant and grazing-sensitive forb species that have seen over a century of livestock grazing are finally having a chance to rest and recover. This equates to streambank recovery, stabilization of highly erosive soils and the re-establishment of native vegetation composition/diversity. In addition, migratory big game species such as mule deer and elk benefit from increased forage potential and reduction of fencing infrastructure on the landscape. Furthermore, and in a climate mitigation context, the recovery of vegetation in these allotments can significantly increase carbon sequestration.

Objectives and Measurable Outcomes

Politics have prevented significant grazing management improvements in the west since the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management were founded over a century ago. Even as public land conservation efforts have evolved significantly, changing how, when and where domestic livestock are permitted to graze on public lands has proved difficult.

Given the slow and generally insignificant changes occurring with public lands grazing, since 2002, NWF has implemented a grazing retirement program. Here's how it works: NWF pays livestock producers to voluntarily waive their grazing privilege to a given allotment back to the Forest Service without preference for a new permittee. Simultaneously, NWF reaches agreements with federal land management agencies to permanently close or place in vacancy/forage reserve allotments to livestock use – or to convert the allotment from sheep to cattle, which reduces pathogen transmission to bighorns. Moreover, cattle are generally unable to access the more steep and fragile landscapes previously grazed by domestic sheep. Along with benefits to wildlife, these agreements produce benefits to hunters, anglers and taxpayers by eliminating the often-substantial expense of managing livestock/wildlife conflicts. The average cost of NWF-negotiated grazing retirements across the West is about \$3 an acre, although prices fluctuate depending on market conditions. In addition to the transactional work, NWF works with our state affiliates and conservation partners to ensure the long-term security of grazing retirements is realized through federal land management process and policy – i.e. Forest Plans which span some 20 years between updates. By engaging in National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) processes, we are ensuring positive long-term land management decisions are maintained.

The grazing retirement process differs significantly on BLM and USFS lands. On BLM lands, which are administered through the Taylor Grazing Act, it is much more difficult to obtain full closure of an allotment. What we are able to do, however, is work with permittees and the agency to change the class of livestock and adjust stocking rates in a manner that eliminates the vast majority of conflicts. We rely on the expertise of independent biologists to assess the benefit of removing domestic sheep, to both bighorn sheep and overall range health, even if cattle are allowed to remain in a portion of the allotment or at significantly reduced stocking rates. Our tactic with the USFS has been to strongly advocate for closure through existing forest plan direction and rely on vacancy status to result in closure through future forest planning processes. On the Bridger-Teton NF for example, the FS will begin their process of a forest plan revision sometime in the next 5 years. Because the plan revision has been delayed, the FS is starting a process to amend their current Forest Plan to address bighorn sheep disease issues across the forest. With our advocacy, this process will likely result in the ultimate closure of many allotments currently held in “vacancy” status. Unlike BLM lands, conversion of class of livestock is rarely an option because topography and elevation limit the ability to graze cattle.

NWF's goal is to conserve wildlife through conflict resolution, not to put livestock producers out of business or to remove all livestock grazing from public lands. In fact, most ranchers have used grazing-retirement payments to secure grazing in new locations, public and private, where significant livestock/wildlife conflicts are greatly reduced. This approach meets an important NWF objective of trying to resolve wildlife conflicts in a manner that builds, rather than alienates, support from local communities. The efficacy of this approach is easily measured. Since the program was initiated in 2002, NWF and our partners have retired 80 grazing allotments, totaling more than 1.5 million acres- an area four times as large as Grand Teton National Park.

Planned Activities and Timetable / Third Year Outcomes

NWF's work over the next year will focus on defending successful grazing retirement transactions, developing new agreements and advocating for policies with producers and land management agencies to protect wild sheep and limit conflict with large carnivores.

NWF respectfully requests a third and final year of funding for this three-year program. Over the coming year we plan to focus our efforts on:

1) Working closely with partner organizations, including the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation in pushing the USFS to ensure that retirements negotiated in past years remain vacant or closed.

2) Engage in the Bridger-Teton (WY) Forest Plan Amendment Process for bighorn sheep. This will provide an opportunity to influence Forest Service policy, providing for permanent closure of high-risk allotments and minimize potential backlash from the domestic sheep industry. Our close engagement in this issue will be critical to ensure that previous investments in retirements are secured and future grazing allotment retirement opportunities have a clear path forward on the forest. We plan to work closely with the BT forest as well as meet with officials from the Regional Office in Ogden, UT.

3) An important component of retiring grazing is not simply resolving the livestock/ wildlife conflict, but also providing opportunity for fragile landscapes to recover after nearly a century of intense livestock grazing. As a means to address the ecological shortfalls on grazing allotments we are assisting in the USFS developing Ecological Site Descriptions for the sensitive tall forb floral communities within the Wyoming Range vacant and forage reserve allotment. Steve Kilpatrick plans to lead field tours with Forest Service officials to discuss monitoring protocols and site conditions of vacant grazing allotments that are slowly recovering from a century of heavy livestock use. Kilpatrick will also participate in monitoring the nested frequency vegetation transects associated with allotment buyouts in the Wyoming Range of the Bridger Teton. Ground cover and species composition thresholds associated with these transects were established for future restocking of allotments.

4) While maintaining a close watch on Forest Service policies is important, NWF will also be working to develop new relationships with sheep and cattle ranchers and negotiate additional grazing retirements. Over the next year, NWF will continue working on the retirement of the remaining high-risk bighorn allotments in Wyoming and southern Idaho. We are also focusing on several allotments that have a long history of livestock depredation from bears and wolves. We have initiated conversations with the last remaining conflict sheep producer on the North end of the Wyoming Range (Selman) and are hopeful to retire two critical (high-risk) allotments over the next year. On the Shoshone Forest we have been coordinating with the Forest on opportunities to develop forage reserves on cattle allotments where grizzly conflict has increased over the years. In eastern Idaho, we are also close to reaching agreement on two critical domestic sheep allotments in the Centennial Mountains—a critical expansion pathway for Yellowstone Grizzlies as they continue to forge westward into the expansive Salmon Selway Wilderness in central Idaho. See attached map for 2020 priorities.

5) In addition to our on the ground work, we are working at the Federal level to develop legislation that will allow for the permanent retirement of grazing allotments. We have seen the tremendous impact legislation has provided in places like the Boulder White Clouds Wilderness in Idaho where grazing allotments that are retired are closed permanently. Coupled with this effort is a study NWF has initiated with the University of Wyoming to research the effects grazing retirements have on private land agriculture. Our goal is to demonstrate that retiring high-conflict grazing allotments has not hurt ranching operations, but instead has provided a path for livestock operators to adapt and shift to landscapes where conflict is minimal.

NWF works with many partners. For the Bighorn Sheep Initiative, NWF is working closely with the

Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, the Wyoming Wildlife Federation and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. A portion of the funds NWF is requesting would be re-granted to those organizations to help support their participation. Bighorn sheep are a charismatic species, highly valued by sportsmen and the general public. Moreover, they are quite sensitive and represent a much broader guild of ecologically and socially important wildlife species. The potential exists for restoration at significantly higher population levels and with broader distribution if stakeholders (land managers, NWF and other NGO's, the funding community, livestock producers and other potential partners) can work together to ensure domestic sheep/wild sheep separation on public lands. Moreover, we are working to designate bighorns a species of conservation concern with the USFS, which results in policy leverage relative to their conservation. On the state level, we continue to engage and are proposing to "re-boot" the WY Wild/ Domestic Sheep Plan to address changing priorities and challenges related to bighorn conservation.

While NWF's grazing retirement program draws support from a wide array of foundations and individuals, including the Turner Foundation, Keneda Foundation and the Sagebrush Conservation Fund, operating support from the Knobloch Foundation has been a critical element in allowing us to keep up with the rate of grazing retirements we're developing as well as defending previous retirements. It is obviously necessary to have direct support for the grazing retirements. However, operating support is critical for transaction negotiation and policy development/vigilance. Often the transactions take months and even years to complete—developing trust and close relationships with producers and agencies ensures the long-term viability of the program. Because of your strong support, including operating support, we are spending more time developing retirement agreements with federal land management agencies and permittees, the real work required to develop the transactions, and less time fundraising.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kit Fischer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kit Fischer, National Wildlife Federation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Kilpatrick", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Kilpatrick, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation / Wyoming Wildlife Federation

National Wildlife Federation
Report for Year Two and Request for Year Three
July 2018-August 2021
Report and Proposal to the Knobloch Foundation

this funding request does not represent any direct grazing allotment payments

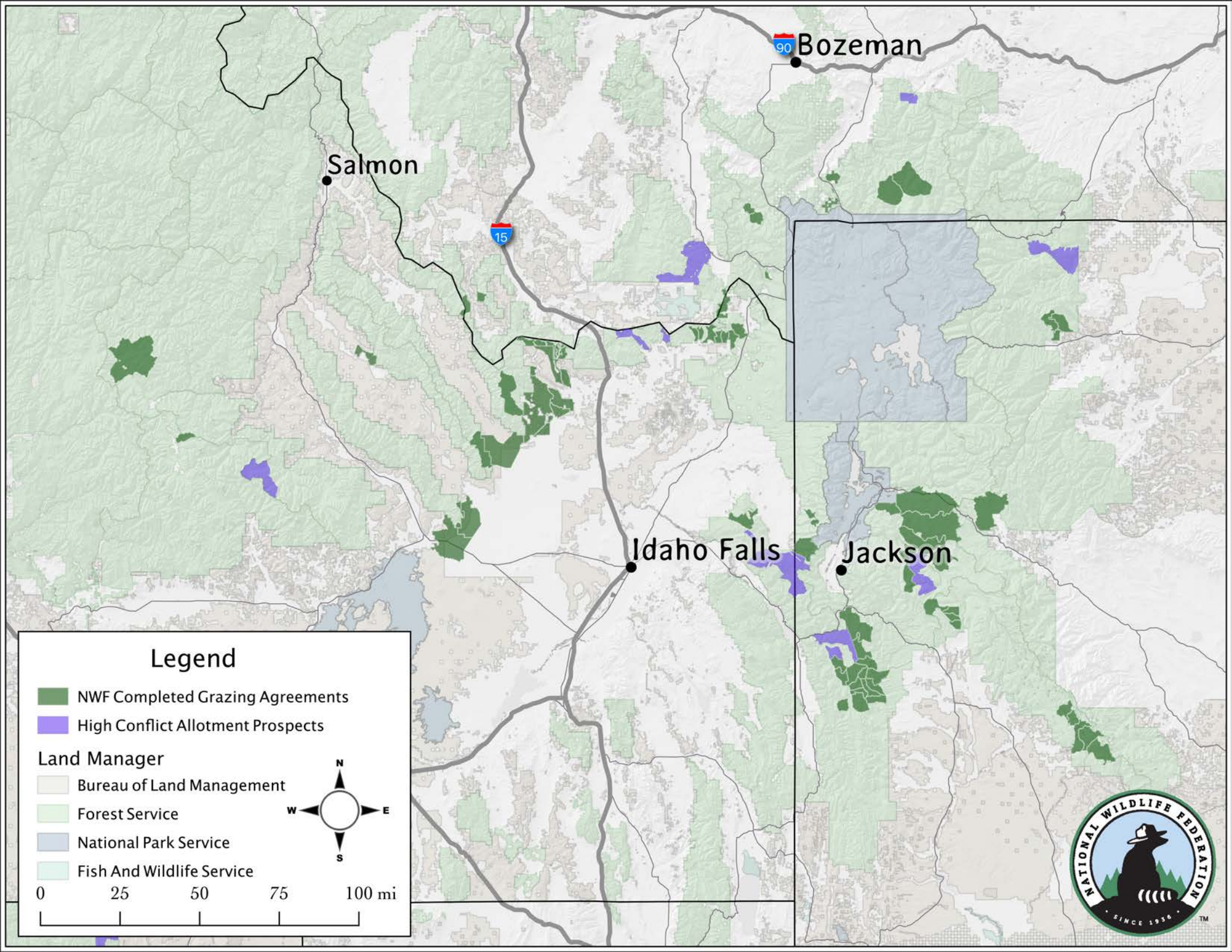
	Report First Year		Second Year Request		Report Second Year		Third Year Request	
	Wildlife Conflict Resolution (Grazing Allotment) Program	Knobloch Report First Year	Wildlife Conflict Resolution (Grazing Allotment) Program	Knobloch Request	Wildlife Conflict Resolution (Grazing Allotment) Program	Knobloch Request	Wildlife Conflict Resolution (Grazing Allotment) Program	Knobloch Request
Budget Income								
Kendeda Fund	\$ 25,000		\$ 25,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 25,000	
Knobloch Foundation	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 88,000
Claiborne and Ortenberg Foundation	\$ 16,000		\$ 15,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000	
Walker Foundation (Southern Rockies)					\$ 30,000		\$ 30,000	
Hewlet foundation (Public Land Support)	\$ 22,100						\$ -	
Turner Foundation	\$ 30,000		\$ 30,000		\$ 30,000		\$ 20,000	
Weeden Foundation	\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 15,000		\$ 15,000	
Individual Support	\$ 13,572		\$ 20,000		\$ 25,000		\$ 35,000	
Southern Rockies Individual Support	\$ 28,420		\$ 20,000		\$ 12,158		\$ 20,000	
Other Organizations Funding	\$ 40,000		\$ 65,000		\$ 40,000		\$ 40,000	
Payroll Protection - SBO Loan (COVID-19)					\$ 21,000		\$ -	
Total Income	\$ 283,092	\$ 88,000	\$ 283,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 301,158	\$ 88,000	\$ 293,000	\$ 88,000
Budget Expense								
Salary and Benefits	\$ 185,152	\$ 39,722	\$ 172,401	\$ 43,500	\$ 180,737	\$ 36,069	\$ 180,737	\$ 35,475
Project Contracted Services	\$ 200	\$ 25	\$ 22,000		\$ 30,608	\$ 1,950	\$ 20,000	\$ 1,500
Project Travel Expenses	\$ 9,101	\$ 3,060	\$ 8,000		\$ 6,500	\$ 2,283	\$ 7,000	\$ 1,500
Special Meeting Expenses	\$ 1,664	\$ 731	\$ 2,000		\$ 1,580		\$ 2,000	
Promotional Components	\$ 2,132	\$ -	\$ 2,500		\$ 1,365	\$ 262	\$ 2,500	\$ 250
Other Partner Organization Support	\$ 14,000	\$ -						\$ 275
Other Grant Specific Deliverables					\$ 1,000			
National Wildlife Federation Organization Support Expense	\$ 33,344	\$ 6,962	\$ 38,599	\$ 7,000	\$ 41,868	\$ 9,936	\$ 43,263	\$ 11,500
Wyoming Wildlife Federation Subaward	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500
Wyoming Wild Sheep Subaward	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500
Greater Yellowstone Coalition Subaward							\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500
Total Expense	\$ 283,093	\$ 88,000	\$ 283,000	\$ 88,000	\$ 301,158	\$ 88,000	\$ 293,000	\$ 88,000

Knobloch Foundation Grant Funding for Allotments



January 2015 - September 2020

	Sturzen Agreement Nicholia- Chandler	Christian Agreement Upper Gros Ventre	Sturzen Agreement Howe Peak	South Wind River Wyoming	Walker Agreement Deadman	Allen Agreement Limestone Irving	Roberts Agreement Wyoming Range	Mary Thoman Agreement Wyoming	Ball Brothers Agreement	Retirement Total
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Total Acres	34,312	25,693	35,728	64,000	58,610	28,116	67,438	30,598	143,000	487,495
Agreement/Check Date	12/11/2014	2/27/2015	5/4/2015	6/10/2015	6/21/2015	8/24/2015	9/12/2016	9/12/2016	6/18/2019	
Knobloch Foundation Funding	\$ 20,000	\$ 33,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 140,000	\$ 22,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 132,690	\$ 140,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 657,690
Other Funders	\$ 44,746	\$ 75,000	\$ 100,800	\$ 287,500	\$ 49,815	\$ 167,114	\$ 297,226	\$ 280,000	\$ 314,980	\$ 1,617,181
Cost for Retirement	\$ 64,746	\$ 108,000	\$ 145,800	\$ 427,500	\$ 71,815	\$ 242,114	\$ 429,916	\$ 420,000	\$ 364,980	\$ 2,274,871
Cost per Acre	\$ 1.89	\$ 4.20	\$ 4.08	\$ 6.68	\$ 1.23	\$ 8.61	\$ 6.37	\$ 13.73	\$ 2.55	Average: \$4.67



Legend

-  NWF Completed Grazing Agreements
-  High Conflict Allotment Prospects

Land Manager

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  Forest Service
-  National Park Service
-  Fish And Wildlife Service

