



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
IDAHO OPERATIONS OFFICE**

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Restoring Sagebrush on the INL Site**

Last autumn the U.S. Department of Energy planted sagebrush seedlings on areas burned in wildfires on parts of the 890-square-mile Idaho National Laboratory site to help improve habitat for sage-grouse and other native sagebrush-dependent animals and plants.

In October 2015, 5000 seedlings were planted by hand on about 70 acres of an area burned by fire in 2000. During the next several weeks, these seedlings will start greening up along with the rest of the native sagebrush on the desert at and around INL.

DOE plans to conduct more sagebrush restoration in the future and to monitor the success of the restoration work.

The department is doing this as a conservation measure to support sage-grouse recovery. DOE has been collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for more than ten years on work to conserve habitat for sage-grouse on the INL site and to ensure that DOE maintains maximum flexibility to continue the department's national energy, security and environmental missions.

One of the 13 conservation measures coming out of this collaboration is the need to maintain an adequate amount of high-quality sagebrush-dominated habitat that sage-grouse and other native wildlife require, by reestablishing sagebrush on areas burned by wildland fires over the past 20 years.

Fire is the greatest threat to sagebrush habitat. This impacts not only sage-grouse on the INL site but also many other species of wildlife that require sagebrush for habitat. Although native grasses and wildflowers recover in just a few years after fire, it can take up to a century for sagebrush to return.

One way to speed that recovery is to plant sagebrush seedlings. The process began in the fall of 2014 with field crews collecting seed heads from mature native sagebrush plants on the INL site.

The seed heads were sent to a greenhouse nursery, operated by the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes, where the seed was removed from the heads, cleaned and prepared for planting. Seeds were planted into tubular containers and grown in the greenhouse for eight to nine months.

A video documenting the planting of sagebrush seedlings on the INL site in 2015 can be viewed on the INL YouTube channel at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlqcL\\_4aIno](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NlqcL_4aIno).