Statement of Virgil Moore, Director, State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game,
On Behalf of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests & Mining
Hearing on Collaborative Initiatives on Restoring Watersheds and Large Landscapes
Across Boundaries through State and Federal Partnerships
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Introduction

Chairman Lee and Senator Wyden, thank-you for the opportunity to testify before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining about Collaborative Initiatives focusing on restoring watersheds and large landscapes across boundaries through State and Federal partnerships.

I am Virgil Moore, vice-president of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) and the Director of Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Founded in 1902 to protect the authority of states to manage fish and wildlife within their borders, the Association has been an effective participant in all significant federal fish and wildlife legislation, federal executive branch rules, and related policy since inception of the Association. All 50 state fish and wildlife agencies are members. The Association advocates science-informed fish and wildlife management for sustainable use by hunters, anglers, and all citizens, which is delivered through partnerships with agencies, the federal government, and conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

I open my comments with a quote from Idaho's current senior senator, the Honorable Mike Crapo: "Collaboration breaks barriers. Collaboration brings people together to find common solutions."

In my tenure both with the Association and IDFG, I have been involved in collaborative endeavors at the state, regional, and national scale. I have found that structured collaboration can be an incredibly powerful and effective way for parties with overlapping authorities and interests, such as the State and Federal government, to achieve mutually important work that benefits sustainability of our landscapes to uphold the resources and values which are dependent on those landscapes. My perspective is that state sovereign authority to manage fish and wildlife is dependent on the sustainability of such landscapes. Really, although we call them collaboratives today, our history demonstrates a long-standing, cultural tradition of people and communities working together to achieve common objectives.

In this spirit, the Association of the Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Association) since its' founding has always been committed to an active working relationship with our partners in the federal government agencies. We recognize that wildlife is international, in addition to crossing state boundaries. States have broad police powers and statutory authority to manage fish and wildlife within their borders, including on most federal lands, which Congress has repeatedly affirmed. Because the federal government owns the public land and habitat, and the states manage the fish

and wildlife, cooperation is compelled in order to integrate fish and wildlife population objectives into the federal land/habitat management plans.

The Association was a key player in working with the State Department and what is now known as the US Fish and Wildlife Service to negotiate the Migratory Bird Treaty of 1916 with Canada. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 codified the treaty provisions and gave direction to the Secretary on migratory bird management including the provision of regulating hunting of migratory game birds. The MBTA recognizes that both the states and the federal government share jurisdictional responsibilities for migratory bird conservation.

As Congress enacted federal land management agencies' organic acts in the last century, Congress, at the urging of the Association, preserved the authority of the states to manage fish and wildlife on federal lands, with the exception of congressionally delegated National Parks. The federal land management agencies incorporated that Congressional direction into agency rules, guidance and manuals.

I would like to share some national examples of landscape conservation delivered by solid state-federal cooperation. The backdrop created by these national programs powers delivery of on-the-ground conservation in every state.

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures

Thirty years ago, there was no roadmap for Migratory Bird Joint Ventures. The early partnerships were forged with profound ingenuity to address the continental problem of declining waterfowl populations and rapid destruction of habitat. Today, the regional landscape-based Joint Ventures are collaborative partnerships of government agencies, non-profit organizations, corporations, tribes, and individuals that conserve habitat for priority bird species, other wildlife, and people in support of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Through voluntary, proactive conservation, Joint Ventures reduce the need for additional regulations by undertaking biological planning, conservation design, project implementation, monitoring, evaluation, research, and communications. In the United States, 18 habitat-based joint ventures have a long history of success in leveraging public and private resources and since the first Joint Venture was established in 1987, these partnerships have leveraged appropriated funds at a ratio of over 30:1 and have helped conserve 24 million acres of habitat. Joint Venture habitat conservation harnesses the interest and energy of the participating organizations and provides hunting and fishing opportunities, birdwatching, places to hike, camp, and enjoy nature, and create places where our future generations will be able to enjoy their natural heritage.

The US Forest Service (USFS) is a member of 7 Joint Venture Management Boards, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a member of 6 management boards. However, there are opportunities for both agencies to engage with more Joint Venture management boards or technical committees. There are numerous examples of highly successful collaboration, but I will focus on only a few of the more active partnerships. The Eastern Region of the US Forest Service and state partners are working with the Appalachian Mountains and Central Hardwood Joint Ventures on oak restoration and early successional habitat through workshops to train state, federal, and private landowners on management practices to benefit native wildlife, including

songbirds and game birds. The Region is also working with the Upper Mississippi River/Great Lakes Joint Venture to better coordinate migratory bird monitoring protocols and activities across agencies. The Alaska Region of the Forest Service is an active participant in the Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture promoting important conservation activities for the incredible migratory bird resource found in that region. The final example, is a self-directed partnership of federal and state agencies, non-government agencies, private land owners, and the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) that are all focused on the sagebrush ecosystem.

The sagebrush ecosystem today is approximately half of its original size and it is considered one of America's most iconic ecosystems. It exemplifies a working landscape. This vast landscape covers eleven states and over 173 million acres and provides habitat for sage grouse and more than 350 other species. Public lands managed by the BLM and U.S. Forest Service make up more than half of all sage grouse habitat. The partnership model is based on three ingredients for success: (1) Putting science into practice; (2) Restoring and conserving sagebrush habitat for all users; and (3) Telling the story to garner support to further sagebrush conservation and management. This Sage Grouse Initiative is by far the largest and most active partnership between the Intermountain West Joint Venture, USFS, BLM, and USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. BLM is providing up to $5 million over five years (2016-2021) to scale up proactive, targeted sagebrush rangeland conservation on public and private lands and leverage other resources through partnerships and collaborative efforts.
http://mbjv.org/

National Fish Habitat Partnership

The National Fish Habitat Partnership, which was formalized in 2006 through the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, and State Fish and Wildlife Agencies has done some extraordinary work across the landscape through 20 regional partnerships established to protect, restore and enhance fish habitat benefitting anglers and our citizens across the country. Since 2006, nearly 700 projects have been implemented under the national partnership reversing and arresting declines in aquatic habitat. In addition to enhancing fish habitat, these projects contribute significantly to water purification for our citizens. Since its inception, the program has leveraged $66 million with nearly $115 million of state, local, and private funds directly benefitting on-the-ground conservation actions. A Secretarial MOU was also signed in 2012 between the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and the Interior to adopt the partnership program within Department agencies.

A few examples of projects that I would like to highlight include collaborations between our regional partnerships and the US Forest Service and BLM. The Western Native Trout Initiative, under the National Fish Habitat Partnership program is collaborating with the U.S. Forest Service (Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest), the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and numerous other partners on a large scale, highly leveraged public-private partnership on the Mill Creek Watershed Restoration Project (MCWRP) a multi-year project to improve native fish habitat in Mill Creek just outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. The Mill Creek Project objectives are to remove ten man-made barriers, removal of an unneeded bridge and an abandoned hydroelectric dam, redesign of the stream channel, improved fishing access, redesign of a small lake to include a spawning channel, replacement of seven undersized culverts that are partial fish

barriers, and the development of educational materials for the public about the importance of aquatic and terrestrial resources, including native fish. Project partners include the US Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the National Forest Foundation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Salt Lake Council of the Boy Scouts of America, PacifiCorp, Trout Unlimited Utah Council and Stonefly Society, Flying Cloud Enterprises Inc., Utah Habitat Council Watershed Restoration Initiative, and Salt Lake County.
http://www.fishhabitat.org/

White-nose Syndrome Bat Research

Good state-federal cooperation for key research is producing results for practitioners to deliver on the ground conservation results. A team of U. S. Forest Service Research and Development scientists have developed innovative methods to treat bats infected with deadly white-nose fungus, using chemicals found in soil bacteria. White-nose Syndrome, caused by the fungus, was introduced accidentally into the United States in 2006 and has since led directly to the deaths of over 5 million insect-eating bats in 30 U. S. states and 5 Canadian provinces. Populations of several North American species of bats have declined so precipitously that they have been considered for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. The USFS research team has worked closely with state fish and wildlife agencies and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to test methods for treating infected bats in the laboratory. The first group of successfully treated bats was released back into the wild at the Mark Twain Cave Complex in Missouri on May 20th, 2015.
https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/news/release/wns-treated-bats-released

Sage Grouse Initiative

Collaboration between diverse partners is what's working to save sage grouse as well as the vast sagebrush sea that sustains communities and 350+ species. The Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) is a new paradigm for conserving at-risk wildlife and America's western rangelands that works through voluntary cooperation, incentives, and community support. Launched in 2010, SGI is a partnership-based, science-driven effort which is led by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. SGI applies the power of the Farm Bill to target lands where habitats are intact and sage grouse numbers are highest. To date, SGI has partnered with 1,474 ranchers to conserve 5.6 million acres across 11 western states. While private lands are the primary focus, SGI also serves as a catalyst for public land enhancements such as a recent Bureau of Land Management 5-year agreement working cooperatively across boundaries to benefit both working public lands and wildlife across the sagebrush sea by implementing targeted conservation projects.
https://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com/

Environmental DNA Sampling

In 2014, the U. S. Forest Service launched the National Genomics Center for Fish and Wildlife Conservation, based at the University of Montana in Missoula, to apply new and cutting-edge technologies to the practice of fish and wildlife management. The Center specializes in applications such as environmental DNA, or "eDNA," which uses small amounts of DNA

present in water samples to detect and monitor the presence of rare or invasive aquatic species. Modern eDNA methods are much cheaper and require less effort than traditional ways of sampling fish and other aquatic organisms. The Center also uses new genomics approaches to study population dynamics in terrestrial species of conservation or management interest, including greater sage-grouse, wolverine, and gray wolf. The Genomics Center is currently investigating greater sage-grouse genetic variation, population structure, and population connectivity. This research is providing scientific support for prioritizing conservation actions on the ground for the greater sage-grouse, such as identifying critical habitat and breeding grounds, or leks. Most importantly, the research from the Genomics Center will allow managers to evaluate how disturbances at individual leks influence the overall connectivity of the breeding network. The Genomics Center is analyzing genetic data from several thousand samples, collected from over 800 leks across Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. This work is being done in collaboration with other federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and eleven state fish and wildlife agencies.
https://www.fs.fed.us/research/genomics-center/

Prescribed Fire Restoration

Good state-federal cooperation is also occurring in the southeast. At Tallulah Gorge State Park in northeast Georgia, the mountainous terrain is so steep that much of it cannot be traversed with equipment, and some areas are too steep to travel by foot. Most of the forest in this area is dominated by fire-dependent Table Mountain pine and pitch pine and includes a number of rare fire dependent plant communities that are conservation priorities. Property lines between the Chattahoochee National Forest and Tallulah Gorge State Park traverse this steep terrain, making use of prescribed fire nearly impossible until recently. Collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has taken the pressure off burn managers to keep their fires 'in the lines' and opened up vast areas of the park and the adjoining national forest for habitat restoration with prescribed fire. Burns are now conducted as joint operations between the two agencies with fires traversing USFS and State Park lands. USFS and DNR lend expertise and share burn planning efforts in the year leading up to the burn as well as share fire equipment, personnel and even aviation resources on the day of burns. Whereas a few years ago fire had to stop at the property line, making many burn units simply too risky to attempt, in recent years thousands of acres have been burned by the two agencies operating seamlessly toward the common goal of putting fire back into the landscape surrounding Tallulah Gorge. This model is also being carried on a larger scale within the framework of Georgia's Interagency Burn Team (IBT), whose members include U.S. Forest Service and Georgia Department of Natural Resources among others. The outcome is increased capability to successfully implement prescribed fire on high priority conservation sites throughout Georgia to implement technically challenging burns on many other important conservation sites supporting high priority species and habitats.

Idaho

I'd like to put on my IDFG Director hat and provide you with a snapshot of some Idaho collaboratives. While many of our initial structured collaboratives were focused on U.S. Forest

Service (USFS) forest restoration to benefit multiple resources and values, a diversity of issues are being addressed.

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative

The Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI), of which the IDFG Commission is a member, is a USFS recognized collaborative. Stemming from the 1990s when virtually every natural resource topic was adversarial between one community and governmental sector or another, its focus is the development and selection of land management (timber harvest, fire management, road management) projects. The USFS provides funds to the Idaho Panhandle Forest to facilitate collaborative project development and implementation on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. It was initiated by a joint powers agreement between Boundary County, the City of Bonners Ferry, and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. Membership is very diverse representing several private and governmental sectors of the community. KVRI has been highly successful in removing barriers to communications, increased understanding of multiple perspectives, and engaged problem solving. Some notable successes include the development of a Kootenai River burbot conservation strategy, a wetland restoration "roadmap", and advancement of community awareness to advance grizzly bear recovery while being sensitive to community needs for enhanced land management. KVRI has fostered productive working relationships between state and federal agencies, the Kootenai Tribe, and the community.
https://www.nationalforests.org/assets/pdfs/Overcoming-Collaborative-Fatigue_Perry.pdf

Clearwater Bain Collaborative

The Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) mission statement is "working to enhance and protect the economic and ecological values of the Clearwater Basin of Idaho". With a foundation in the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, the intent was to treat priority landscapes that was at least 50,000 acres, comprised primarily of national forest System lands in need of active ecosystem restoration and in proximity to existing or proposed wood-processing infrastructure. The federal nexus is an MOU between the Clearwater Basin Collaborative and the U.S. Forest Service, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

The CBC, which includes IDFG, is guided by an agreement and workplan that addresses multiple elements, ranging from forest management to rural economic needs, important to the diverse array of parties. The workplan is a comprehensive approach designed to address diverse and often competing interests and formalizes the parties' commitment to work through these issues. CBC approaches its deliberations as a problem-solving body seeking to produce consensus recommendations that address, insofar as possible, the practical needs and interests of all participants. The group works jointly to educate and build understanding regarding participants values and interests.
http://clearwaterbasincollaborative.org/

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations

The power and success of state, federal, and private entities collaborating together to effect multiple use benefits from our federally managed lands has expanded beyond forestry projects. I

point to Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) in Idaho. Prior to 2012, ranchers could not legally fight rangeland fires that threatened their livelihood and sage-grouse habitat even though they could provide swift initial response because of their knowledge of the land and proximity to the fires. A collaborative effort between local ranchers, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Idaho Department of Lands created the RFPAs which also receive financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For the 2016 fire season, there were 250 ranchers that were members of 8 different RFPAs, protecting over 7.7 million acres. Meeting the important principle that collaborations succeed when outcomes fulfill mutual interests, RFPAs allow ranchers to be active participants in protecting the forage needed for their livelihood, satisfy fire manager's safety concerns regarding training, equipment, and communications, support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to fire suppression in Idaho, and enhance efforts to protect sage grouse habitat, a benefit not only to Idaho, but also to the nation.
https://www.idl.idaho.gov/fire/rfpa/

Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program

The watershed program arose from the "Model Watershed" of the early 1990s, which originated form the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's strategy for salmon recovery, and is currently led by the Idaho Office of Species Conservation. Originally focused on certain key tributaries in the upper Salmon Basin, the areas was expanded to the entire Upper Salmon River Basin in 2000. This collaborative program focuses on projects such as riparian habitat restoration, fish migration barrier removal, and instream flow enhancement in priority watersheds for anadromous fish that result in more resilient watersheds that contribute to Snake River salmon and steelhead recovery and are compatible with local agriculture needs for water and private working landscapes. What could be more controversial than water in a western state – yet since 1993, the program has accomplished 544 restoration projects, many of which are on private land. Unlike many of the federal land-focused collaboratives, partnership with private landowners is essential to this program. Federal managers in the area, such as NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management are members of the program along with IDFG and other state agencies, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, local community groups such as the Salmon Valley Stewardship, and other non-governmental organizations engaged in natural resource issues such as the Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited.
http://modelwatershed.org/

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT)

I have provided you with some examples of national and Idaho collaboratives that I think serve as models of success to achieve state and federal priorities focused on-the-ground. I'll pivot and offer a glimpse of another important type of collaboration – shared data consistently presented to ensure better integration of state fish and wildlife information into landscape-scale decisions and planning.

In 2013, the Western Governors Association (WGA) unveiled an unprecedented and cooperative effort of 16 Western states to provide the public and industry an overview of "crucial habitat"

across the West, called the CHAT. This landscape map developed from state-led data provided a "30,000-foot view" of habitat for pre-planning that could be used for projects as varied as "macro-siting" energy corridors and transmission routes, to comparing fish and wildlife habitat across the West. Significant federal funding and partnership enabled states to come together to fulfil the WGA vision.

The CHAT is now a new initiative of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). WAFWA and the western states remain committed to providing comparable and cohesive state-based fish and wildlife information across the landscape and to creating a multi-faceted tool providing accurate and objective fish and wildlife information to guide landscape planning decisions of tomorrow. WAFWA is currently working with western states and federal partners, such as a recent grant from the Network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to facilitate continued CHAT data integration into land use decisions and explore new cross-state data sharing tools that benefits states and other conservation and management partners.

Structural Success

I point to structural components of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative that beget success. The collaborative is a self-formed and self-governing group with representation from individuals with a diversity of interests and backgrounds. The group operates in accordance with a specific set of protocols, and members are responsible to act in good faith to develop workable solutions that the address the needs of all interest at the table. Part of what makes it tick are committed co-chairs, committed members, and a belief and understanding by all participants that collaboration is the way to move the ball forward in the Clearwater Basin. The group is committed to meeting regularly and operates under a no-surprises principle in the public eye. It holds itself accountable to a workplan and defined objectives. Federal funding supports this structure.

My personal observations about what fosters success generally mirror observations detailed in *Getting Together in Idaho: A Survey of Six Collaborative Efforts on Public Lands* (C. Weiland, 2002).

●There must be strong incentives to bring diverse and competing interests together and to stay committed at the table to create mutual outcomes; there must be strong disincentive to "hijack" the process to favor a particular interest.

●There must be balanced representation of interests that is understanding and respectful of sovereign authorities, including management of public trust assets.

●There must be clear objectives, i.e. is the collaborative designed for recommendations? For decisions and implementation?

●Process must be consistent and transparent and process challenges and complexities must be clearly articulated up front.

●There must be sufficient fiscal and human infrastructure support.

In closing, thank-you for the opportunity to offer information and perspectives about collaboratives on behalf of the Association and Idaho. I would be pleased to answer any questions and I am available for any further inquiry or follow-up from the Subcommittee.