Can we stop cheatgrass?

Examples of success

Ted Koch, Field Supervisor
Reno Fish and Wildlife Office
Goal: Conserve Sagebrush Ecosystems
Challenge: Fire and Invasives

• Cheatgrass is biggest threat
  • Cheatgrass dominates at least 2 million ha in Great Basin
  • 28.1 million ha in Intermountain West have moderate to high probability of cheatgrass dominance in the future
Why? What has changed?

- “Fire and Invasives” are the primary factor for Sage-Grouse decline in the Great Basin
- Fire has been a natural part of sagebrush ecosystems for millennia
- Non-native Cheatgrass changed role of fire
Is It

Fire... and Invasives

Or is it

Invasives and Fire?
“I told [Interior] Secretary Jewell if she gave me $50 million more to fight fires I could put it to good use, but I’d rather use it to fight cheatgrass.”

Ron Dunton, Assistant Director for Fire & Aviation, Bureau of Land Management
"I listened carefully for clues on whether the West has accepted cheat as a necessary evil, to be lived with until kingdom come, or whether the West regards cheat as a challenge to rectify its past errors in land-use." **Cheat Takes Over.** A. Leopold, 1941
“I found the hopeless attitude almost universal. There is, as yet, no sense of pride in the husbandry of wild plants and animals, no sense of shame in the proprietorship of a sick landscape. We tilt windmills in behalf of conservation in convention halls and editorial offices, but on the back forty we disclaim even owning a lance.”

Can we stop it?
We can affect ecosystem function through management.

What about uplands and cheatgrass?

Batchelor et al. 2015
2 years post fire
Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge
Dry Gulch 2004
Elko Co, NV
2 years before Susie fire

Dry Gulch 2015
Elko Co, NV
Yes we can!