

Crested Wheatgrass Diversification: Practical Experiences

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Over the last 8 years, BFI Native Seeds has participated in the diversification of approximately 1,500 acres of crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) fields in central Washington. Funding has been provided primarily by FSA's State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), CRP and the BLM, with the primary focus of creating high quality Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. Successful conversion of a crested wheatgrass field to a diverse native plant community entails an aggressive, multi-year process. Crested wheatgrass control and seedbed preparation requires 12-15 months and involves mowing, harrowing, and a chemical fallow. Planting occurs in stages; grasses are planted initially, and following one season of broadleaf weed control, forbs and shrubs are inter-seeded. In order to ensure long-term sustainability of the planting, locally native species and genetics are used to the extent practicable. Ultimately, diversification success depends on understanding the ecological constraints of a given site, close monitoring, and the flexibility to adapt the plan to changing conditions.