
STATEMENT**The Institute for Applied Ecology Responds to Targeted Award Cancellations
by the U.S. Department of the Interior on Sept. 23**

Sept. 30. 2025

In response to the receipt of 30 federal award termination notices from agencies within the U.S. Department of the Interior, Keith Norris, executive director of the Institute for Applied Ecology issued the following statement:

“The Institute for Applied Ecology works in communities throughout the rural West to deliver resilient landscapes and safeguard private and public lands from harmful invasive species, wildfires, and more. We collaborate with a wide array of partners including federal employees, state, county and city officials, Soil and Water Conservation District staff, tribes, land trusts, private landowners, and volunteers. We were awarded these grants, via a competitive process, by the federal government because of our decades of experience and our boots-on-the-ground approach which delivers tangible results in land management and conservation. The sudden, unexplained cancellation of 30 grants will set us back years in caring for some of the West’s most treasured landscapes and species, and inflict harm on the people who have dedicated their lives to serving these rural communities.”

Our full statement is here:

On September 23, the Institute for Applied Ecology received 30 federal award cancellation notices from Department of the Interior agencies. These grants and agreements were with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and U.S. Geological Survey and focused on restoration of habitat, reintroduction of species, and seminal field research. We work in partnership with many federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners and other granting organizations interested in advancing the conservation of native species and their habitats.

Our experience managing an array of ecosystems help us innovate and deliver efficient, effective conservation for native species and ecosystems that are valued by federal agencies and the American public. Each notice indicated that the grant was being terminated immediately because it “no longer effectuates the priorities” of the agency. Our 25-year long track record of serving the West’s rural landscapes and communities contradicts this false notion. The grants cancelled on September 23 were delivering on-the-ground conservation key to [Department priorities](#). The sudden, unexplained cancellation of 30 grants hurts local communities and will set us back years in caring for some of the West’s most treasured landscapes and species.

Agreements with the federal government historically account for 70-80% of our annual operating budget. These are typically reimbursable agreements, in which we recover only our expenses and make no profits. The terminations cancel more than \$3,500,000 that was already obligated to the Institute for Applied Ecology for conservation, and millions more that was expected to be

awarded on these projects. Some of the agreements were awarded new funding by the agencies in August, highlight their alignment with current priorities—only to be terminated one month later.

Many of our federal agency contacts were also surprised to see the cancellation notices, and, indeed, indicated that the projects were key to their agency's efforts in the region.

The agreements noticed for termination were advancing conservation priorities, including:

- Restoring threatened, endangered, and at-risk species
 - Habitat restoration efforts to benefit lesser prairie-chicken, chestnut-collared and thick-billed longspurs, and monarch butterfly in New Mexico
 - Kincaid's lupine recovery on private lands and across its historical range
 - Seed production of threatened and endangered plants in the Willamette Valley
 - Range-wide recovery efforts for Taylor's checkerspot butterfly
 - Tracking populations to inform management actions for 12 rare plant species in New Mexico
- Aiding recovery from wildfires and other natural disasters by
 - Collecting wild native seed and increasing it in production fields for use in future restoration following a natural disturbance.
 - Growing sagebrush and other sage-steppe seedlings for direct planting in partnership with correctional facilities in Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, and Wyoming.
 - Evaluating new techniques for restoring native plants to America's rangelands following fuels reduction treatments
- Supporting habitat for elk, pollinators, migratory birds and other species by
 - Preventing the spread of invasive species, like the tree-killing Emerald Ash Borer
 - Riparian restoration of pollinator habitat along 200 miles of the Rio Grande River
 - Restoring prairies, meadows and other open areas cherished by the public
- Increasing conservation capacity and strategic outcomes, aiding rural economies by
 - Coordinating regional native seed partnerships and other networks
 - Providing financial and technical support to small farmers and contracts with large-scale farmers who product native seeds for use in restoration

These projects were supporting local, rural economies and farmers in New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, and Oregon. Because of these terminations, more than 26 contracts for farm production are lost—wasting large investments, impacting the bottom line for small-scale farmers, and leaving living organisms stranded. Plants grown for now-defunded restoration projects are sitting in staging areas with nowhere to go. Hundreds of pounds of native seeds are falling to the ground in fields with no funding to pay for their harvest. These terminations will have a significant impact on our lands, our natural resources, and our communities.

Our work speaks for itself. We know that the projects we have implemented, many in partnership with the federal government, have brought tremendous benefit to rural communities and the natural world across the West. Our people are the heart of what we do, and no matter where they come from or what they look like, we pull together, align for our work, and support

each other. If such a commitment is indeed the [government's motive](#) behind these cancellation notices, then we strongly disagree, and we resolutely stand by our values. We know that in the United States of America, no organization should ever be penalized for fostering the fundamental values of freedom, inclusion, and respect for each other.

Our programs, 45 staff, and dozens of seasonal employees span seven states across the West (Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming). The termination of these awards will result in substantial layoffs to our team members. We have a fantastic team. Our staff are experts in their fields, and committed to their work. They are passionate about conservation. They are also devoted family members and friends—with hopes, dreams and aspirations. We have staff that are growing young families, purchasing their first home, and sending kids to college. These cuts will impact their lives directly. The indiscriminate cancellation of these grants is not only wasteful, given the return on investment from IAE's work in conservation, but is harming everyday people who have dedicated their lives to serving these rural landscapes and communities.

About Institute for Applied Ecology

The Institute for Applied Ecology is a mission-driven non-profit organization that works to restore species and save ecosystems. Founded in 1999, IAE fills a unique niche in conservation and works with a diverse group of partners to conserve native species and habitats through restoration, research, and education. Our team of botanists, ecologists, educators, and restoration professionals advances our mission across the western U.S. from our headquarters in Corvallis, Oregon and our branch office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Learn more at appliedeco.org.