LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN
Conservation Priority
• Species with large-scale, specific habitat requirements
• Scope is broad geographically and administratively
• Existing threats
• Population Status – need comprehensive range-wide information
• More threats are on the horizon
• Change in Listing Priority Number
• Limited time to implement conservation actions before a final listing decision is due (September 2013)
The lesser prairie-chicken needs large tracts of relatively intact native grasslands and prairies to thrive. Habitat loss, modification, degradation, and fragmentation within the species range are the major threats to the species.
Potential impacts of climate change remain unknown, but of concern.
Areas of Historical Oil and Gas Exploration and Production in the United States

OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION

By Laura R.H. Biewick, 2008

STRESSORS
HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Candidate Review History

- **October 1995**: Petitioned to list the LPC
- **July 1997**: Positive 90 day finding
- **July 1998**: 12 month finding warranted but precluded
- **December 2008**: LPN 8 to 2
- **November 2010**: Most recent Candidate Notice published
- **September 2012**: Proposed Rule due

Service technical and financial assistance to private landowners

Conservation Agreement for Ag TX 2006

Conservation Agreements for Ag NM, KS

Conservation Agreement for Ag OK 2006
FIVE FACTOR THREATS ANALYSIS
ESA LISTING DECISIONS

A. Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the species range or habitat
B. Over-use for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes
C. Disease or predation
D. Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms
E. Other natural or man-made factors affecting the continued existence of the species
ESA LISTING PROCESS

• January 2011- March 2012: information gathering and status assessment
• April – September 2012: draft Proposed Rule for Service review process
• September 2012: Publish proposed rule to list species as endangered or threatened in Federal Register (per MDL/Service settlement terms)
• Public comment period (minimum 60 days); public meetings, if requested
• Respond to public comment, make final determination and publish a final rule within one year (September 2013):
  • List as Endangered/Threatened, OR
  • Withdraw proposed rule, OR
  • Grant 6-month extension “significant scientific disagreement”
• Will Conservation Agreements be enough to preclude listing at the final listing decision point (2013) ?
POLICY FOR THE EVALUATION OF CONSERVATION EFFORTS (PECE)

The Policy for the Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions (PECE) was published in the Federal Register by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service (Services) on March 28, 2003 (68 FR 15100)

Origin of the Policy

Under the ESA, a determination of whether a species is threatened or endangered must be made solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available after conducting a review of the status of the species and “after taking into account those efforts, if any, being made…to protect such species, whether by predator control, protection of habitat and food supply, or other conservation practices” (applies also to efforts being made by other federal agencies, tribal governments, or private entities)

Courts have upheld consideration of existing conservation efforts where the administrative record clearly showed an effort had reduced or removed a threat to the species.
PECE may also guide the development of conservation efforts that sufficiently improve a species’ status so as to make listing the species as threatened or endangered unnecessary.”

PECE does not establish standards for how much conservation is needed to make listing unnecessary; rather, it is a process for identifying whether a conservation effort that has not been implemented or has not yet demonstrated effectiveness can be considered as part of a basis for a listing determination (68 FR 15112, Policy, Policy Purpose)

**Evaluation Criteria**

**A. Certainty that the Conservation Effort Will Be Implemented**

9 evaluation criteria (e.g. funding, legal authorizations, qualifications, parties agree?)

**B. Certainty that the Conservation Effort Will Be Effective**

6 evaluation criteria (e.g. steps, goals and objectives, scientifically quantifiable?, monitoring, adaptive management)
What are the conservation action priorities?

How are we going to achieve them together?
CONSERVATION PRIORITY CRITERIA

- Severity of the threats warrants prioritization of conservation actions that focus on recovery, restoration, and re-connection. Avoidance is likely not enough.
- In order to understand the effects of conservation actions, scientifically defensible range-wide metrics must be established (e.g. persistent annual range-wide surveys, spatial population viability assessment)
- Range-wide metrics can be used to develop a rigorous targeting program to define areas for conservation as well as areas for development
To increase the likelihood of success, build off of existing occupied areas with minimum blocks of 20,000 acres (based on what we know about grouse).

LPC have responded to the addition of native CRP grasslands on the landscape, especially where those stands are in relatively close (0 – 2 miles) proximity to native prairie.
The overall conservation strategy should render benefits to representative species, such as bob-white quail, to achieve a robust conservation strategy at the ecosystem level.

Need alignment among Partners to effectively conserve the species with a five-state comprehensive range-wide strategy.

To achieve these things in the near future, State representatives on the LPC Interstate Working Group need to continue to move forward with the authority of State Agency leadership to benefit the LPC.

Identify an LPC point-of-contact and make it a workload priority.

CONSERVATION PRIORITY CRITERIA
PARTNERSHIPS

- State wildlife agencies – TPWD, NMGF, ODWC, KWPT, CDO, WAFWA, AFWA, LPCIWG

- Other state agencies – WGA, TX Comptroller, OK Comptroller, OK Secretary of Environment, state land offices, TDA

- Federal agencies – NRCS (state and DC offices), FSA (state and DC offices), USFS/National Grasslands, USGS, SC/NC CFCs, BLM

- NGO’s and other partnerships – TNC, Audubon, Wood Foundation, PLJV, Pheasants Forever, NWTF, TWA, GPLCC

- Universities – TTU, TAMU-K, Sutton Center, OSU, KSU, Co-op Units

- Industry – WEWAG (19 wind companies in HCP), PPROA, OG&E, NMOGA, TXOGA, APLIC
LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN
Conservation Priority

QUESTIONS?