Lesser Prairie Chicken: What and where is it?

- Member of the grouse family
- Endemic species found only in a 5 state region
- Habitat needs are large tracts (12-20,000 acres or more) of open grasslands
Over time, habitat loss, modification, degradation and fragmentation within the species range have contributed to a range-wide population decline.
The Lesser Prairie Chicken Range Wide Plan

- The plan was developed by the states, and is administered by the Western Association of (State) Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).

- Provide a voluntary pathway for industry to continue development in compliance with the ESA while targeting conservation to protect and improve LPC habitat.
  - Incentivize development in non-core habitat areas.
  - Mitigate for new impacts to habitat
  - Use mitigation funds to pay landowners for targeted habitat management programs to protect and improve LPC habitat.
  - All impacts and Conservation offset are tracked and balanced.
  - Impacts are offset with Conservation credits in a 1:2 ratio to not only conserve, but also increase LPC habitat.
Plan Objectives

• Ensure long-term existence of LPC through voluntary conservation
• Provide pathway to a timely delisting
• Provide take exemptions
• Retain state management authority for LPC
• No Federal funds needed for implementation

Project Website: http://www.wafwa.org/html/rangewide_lpc_conservation_plan.shtml
Population Goals

- Goals that dissolve state boundaries
- 10-yr avg. of 67,000 birds
  - 2012 estimate of ~35,200
  - 2013 estimate of ~18,700
  - 2014 estimate of ~22,400
  - 2015 estimate of ~29,000
Population Surveys

- Clearly defined goals
  - Ensure a pathway to recovery or delisting

- Statistically valid and repeatable

- Covers the entire range; 283 blocks flown
Priorities:
Focal areas, connectivity zones

- Focal areas support 75% of population goal
  7.1 million acres

- Connectivity Zones
  2.8 million acres

Priority areas <23.5% of EOR10 area

EOR10 = 63,061 sq. miles
Focal Areas and Corridors 14,868 sq. miles
**LPC Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT)**

![Map of LPC Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT)](http://kars.ku.edu/maps/sgpchat/)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAT Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAT 1</td>
<td>Focal Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAT 2</td>
<td>Connectivity Zones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAT 3</td>
<td>Known leks &amp; predicted habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAT 4</td>
<td>Remainder of range (+10 mi.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[http://kars.ku.edu/maps/sgpchat/](http://kars.ku.edu/maps/sgpchat/)
First Year Accomplishments
Industry Enrollment

- 181 companies currently enrolled
- Current enrollment acreage is about 11 million acres; 6.4 million acres of that enrollment is oil and gas
- 2015 enrollment and impacts fees collected are $42 million
  - Fee revenues are split 87.5% to a conservation trust for conservation offsets and 12.5% for administrative expenses of the plan.
Mitigation Analysis

- Over 1100 individual projects have been evaluated for mitigation cost
- About 70% of the project impacts are going into CHAT categories 3 & 4
- Estimates for quality of LPC habitat impacted is 23%
Conservation Delivery Framework

• Compliments existing conservation programs
  – CCAAs, Farm Bill programs, etc.

• Multiple options
  – Payments or no payments
  – Contract duration
  – Grazing or planted grass
  – Restoration practices

• Competitive payment rates that can be counted on
Conservation Implementation

Farming and Ranching Enrollment

- Applications were sought in February 2014. We received 65 applications encompassing over 400,000 acres and selected 10

- The approximate area covered by the selected applicants is 96,000 acres with over $14 million going to landowners.

- 1,604 acres of permanent conservation in the shinnery oak ecoregion

- Management Plans were developed

- Continuous enrollment
WAFWA Mitigation Units

September 3, 2015

- Impact Units
- Permanent Offset Units
- Term Offset Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecosystem</th>
<th>Impact Units</th>
<th>Permanent Offset Units</th>
<th>Term Offset Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shinnery</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>1,140</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Sagebrush</td>
<td>1,168</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Grass</td>
<td>14,785</td>
<td></td>
<td>30,059</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shortgrass</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>2,141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* 8,349 acres of restoration prescribed across all 12 agreements
Governance

WAFWA LPC Initiative Council –
Directors of Colorado, Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico and one named by the WAFWA executive committee
LPC Implementation Team

- LPC Program Manager – Cal Baca
- Industry Services Director – Sean Kyle
- Conservation Services Director – Jim Pitman
• Regional Biologists
  – Mike Mitchener; Oklahoma
  – Brad Odle; Kansas
  – Daryl Fisher; Colorado
  – Ryan Jonnes; Texas/New Mexico
Next Steps

- Continuing enrolling industry & accepting fees
- Prioritizing and finalizing landowner contracts
- Working towards permanent conservation opportunities
- Aerial surveys to monitor progress
Questions
WAFWA Voluntary Mitigation Framework

- Exemption from ‘take’ prohibition of ESA
- Conservation measures agreed upon at enrollment
- Cost certainty—limited to ± 10% per year
WAFWA Voluntary Mitigation Framework

Conservation Fee = 413.1 X $28.77: $11,884.89

Admin. Fee = $11,884.89 X 12.5%: + $1,485.61

Mitigation Fee = $13,370.50

8 acres = $6,291
31 acres = $24,381