



# CEHMM

*Conservation and Environmental Services*

## Lesser Prairie-Chicken and Dunes Sagebrush Lizard Candidate Conservation Agreement and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances

Monthly Report  
April 2017



Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*)

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## Conservation Activities and Monitoring

### **CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380**

CEHMM conducted 11 days of Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) surveys on five ranches enrolled in the CCA/CCAA. During the surveys, two new leks were located with five and nine birds, respectively.

CEHMM conducted an onsite in occupied Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (DSL) habitat with Burnett Oil Co. for three wells. There was only room for one well to be staked, the other two wells did not have enough room to support the required CCA buffers and therefore no location was staked for pad development.

CEHMM conducted an onsite in DSL habitat with T.H. McElvain Oil and Gas LLLP. for eight wells. Four of the wells were moved due to occupied DSL habitat.

### **CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380**

CEHMM documented the condition of water projects on Running N 1, 2 and 3, Luman/Peterson Tank 1 and 2, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Solar, Lee Bilbrey Solar, Gerald Mathis Tank, Dwain Woody Water Project, Riley Tank and Solar, Bud Bilberry Water, Mohon-Williamson Wildlife Waters, and Marjorie Williamson Water Project. All water, solar, and storage additions are working properly.

Marjorie Williamson (Jim Williamson) signed an amendment to her voluntary Certificate of Inclusion (CI) agreement with CEHMM/FWS for an additional 254 acres. CEHMM is awaiting the signed paperwork from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

CEHMM personnel have completed the Spring 2017 LPC surveys. Surveys were conducted on 14 ranches, two New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) “Prairie Chicken Areas” (PCAs), three roadside surveys in the Lingo/Causey area, The Nature Conservancy’s Milnesand Prairie Preserve, and two routes for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for LPC presence and leks beginning on March 15, 2017. The results are:

- **Milnesand Prairie Preserve** - 29 active leks with 285 LPC
- **BLM route** - two leks with 38 LPC
- **PCAs** - birds were heard on surrounding properties and reported to NMDGF
- **Lingo-Causey roadside route** - one lek with five LPC
- **14 enrolled ranches** - 43 leks with 291 LPC

CEHMM personnel are currently working with five enrolled ranchers to develop project proposals for submission in June 2017. CEHMM personnel are also working with the newly formed High Plains Cooperative Weed Management Association to submit a proposal to the ranking committee in June targeting invasive plants in LPC habitat. CEHMM personnel will be meeting with Texas Tech University to discuss the possibility of research proposals.

## Conservation Activities and Monitoring

### **CCA/A – District 1 and District 2 Combined Efforts**

CEHMM personnel toured abandoned oil and gas pads and roads with the BLM and enrolled ranchers to determine the adequacy of past restoration efforts in regards to LPC habitat in the Milnesand area.

CEHMM personnel spoke at the Southeastern New Mexico Oil and Gas Association meeting in Artesia about CCA/A funded projects and the conservation benefits derived from these completed projects in District 1 and District 2. CEHMM personnel also expressed concerns about the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed wind farms in Roosevelt County and the threat this may have to the LPC.

### Completed Projects April 2017

#### **CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380**

No projects were completed this month.

#### **CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380**

No projects were completed this month due to timing stipulations for LPC lekking, nesting and brood rearing.

### Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

#### **CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380**

Pearce Water – Taylor Windmill and Submersible Pump Service could not provide the correct insurance certifications and removed themselves from conducting the work. Key's Drilling was the other contractor that submitted a bid. Key's was contacted and promptly sent the required paperwork to conduct the well drilling operation. CEHMM is waiting on Pearce Ranch to sign the well permit and project agreement prior to moving forward. A contract has been drafted for Key's drilling and will be sent as soon as the signed documents from Pearce Ranch are received.

Smith Water – CEHMM will develop a bid proposal for contractors. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has been initiated, and the archaeological clearance will be completed in May 2017.

James Water – CEHMM will develop a bid proposal for contractors. CEHMM has placed this project on hold temporarily, as the owner may be selling the ranch.

## Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

### **CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380**

Weaver Burn Plan – In March 2016, a 640 acre prescribed burn was successfully completed on Jim Weaver’s property. This burn was part of a burn plan funded through the CCA/A program for a burn plan on all of Weaver/Grasslans Charitable Foundation properties. The vendor, Don Kearney, completed a portion of the burn plan for the previously mentioned 640 acres and is to deliver the rest of the plan by the end of the fiscal year. US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), FWS Partners, Don Kearney, NM State Land Office (NMSLO), Jim Weaver, and Willard Heck met on April 17, 2017 to divide the property into units and discuss future plans for prescribed burns on Mr. Weaver’s properties, which are planned for 2018.

Riley Mesquite – CEHMM has yet to treat this acreage since the BLM had not approved Sendero in time for the herbicide treatment in 2016. In mid-August of 2016, Sendero was approved for use on federal lands. If conditions allow, CEHMM plans to complete this project in the 2017 growing season. CEHMM is coordinating with the BLM to conduct the aerial application. CEHMM will consult with Greg Alpers, Dow Chemical Representative, prior to application to verify condition of mesquite. CEHMM will conduct breeding bird surveys prior to application to buffer out nests. Mr. Riley has been notified concerning possible treatment in 2017 and stipulations for deferred grazing following treatment.

Bresenham Mesquite – CEHMM plans to complete this project in the 2017 growing season. CEHMM is coordinating with the BLM to conduct the aerial application. CEHMM will consult with Greg Alpers, Dow Chemical Representative, prior to application to verify condition of mesquite. CEHMM will conduct breeding bird surveys prior to application to buffer out nests. Ms. Bresenham has been notified concerning possible treatment in 2017 and stipulations for deferred grazing following treatment.

TNC Mesquite Removal – Milnesand Prairie Preserve (MPP) has 1,059 acres of treated mesquite scheduled for removal in 2017. CEHMM initiated mesquite eradication of the dead standing mesquite on January 11, 2017 on the first treatment area in the 602-acre Tree Pasture on the south end of MPP. As of February 28, 2017, CEHMM has eradicated 420 acres. CEHMM has stopped work due to LPC timing stipulations and will resume work on July 16, 2017.

## Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

Five Fence Projects – CEHMM has contracted work on 20.5 miles of removal, disposal, and replacement of boundary fence and 1.72 miles of interior fence on the five approved projects. Bud Bilberry Boundary Fence was completed prior to work being halted during March 1 - July 15 in LPC habitat. Anticipated completion for these projects is Fall 2017. CEHMM has received all of the landowners' letters of agreement and is currently working on Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the neighboring ranches on each project. The following are the projects that will be included:

Luman Boundary Fence – Six and one-half miles of old boundary fence will be removed, disposed of, and replaced with wildlife-friendly fencing.

David Thomas Boundary Fence – Six and one-half miles of boundary fence will be removed, disposed of, and replaced with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Garth Coombes Atlee Boundary Fence – Six miles of boundary fence will be removed, disposed of, and replaced with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Running N Interior Fence – One and three-quarter miles of interior fence will be installed to separate one large pasture. The archaeological survey was completed in mid-January 2017 and resulted in no findings, which was reported to the BLM and NMSLO. This fence is on both federal and state trust lands. A Field Operations Division (FOD) was submitted to and accepted initially from NMSLO, and the BLM was contacted. CEHMM was recently instructed by NMSLO that the FOD is no longer the format required for CEHMM projects on state trust lands; the lessee is now required to submit an "Application for Permission to Make Improvements" to NMSLO. Ms. Jenny Clemmons submitted the paperwork and payment to NMSLO. CEHMM and Ms. Clemmons are now awaiting the approval from the Roswell District Resource Specialist, Field Operations Division, Kelli Fox, prior to proceeding.

David Thomas Water #3 – Work has begun on this project with 1.75 miles of 1.25-inch water line completed the first week of March 2017. Installation of a pithouse, submersible pump, pitless adapter, pressure tank, and a 75-foot electric line for the pump will be installed and buried later this spring. These improvements are near the Thomas home and can be worked on during this time period.

ACEC Dead Standing Mesquite Removal – The ranking team approved a project to remove 1,400 acres of dead standing mesquite (DSM) on the BLM's Sand Ranch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in three different treatment areas. By removing DSM in these three polygons, CEHMM will be improving the habitat specifically for six active leks. The archaeological survey was completed on December 20, 2016. CEHMM personnel will begin work on that acreage after The Nature Conservancy's MPP mesquite eradication is complete.

## Reclamation/Restoration

Total Acres Treated for Entire Project	
Roads and Pads Caliche Removal and Reseeding (Number)	154
Mesquite (Acres)	79,363
Dead Standing Mesquite Eradication (Acres)	420
Yucca (Acres)	120

## Operations Moved out of DSL Habitat

Year	Federal Wells	State Wells	ROWs	Seismic Data Acquisition (Acres)
<b>2009</b>	0	0	0	2,900
<b>2010</b>	79	0	0	1,454
<b>2011</b>	83	0	15	0
<b>2012</b>	65	22	1	0
<b>2013</b>	73	3	7	0
<b>2014</b>	77	6	1	0
<b>2015</b>	36	37	68	0
<b>2016</b>	80	15	0	0
<b>2017</b>	7	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>4,354</b>



## Research

Blake Grisham is assessing the impact of land management practices and environmental variability on vegetation communities in shinnery oak grassland communities in regard to the LPC population. Dr. Grisham was granted a no-cost extension through December 2017, with the final report expected by January 31, 2018.

## Education

Audubon of New Mexico conducted interviews in April for the education position with the CCA/A funded project “Engaging Community in Conservation Education”. Audubon has developed a fourth grade and high school environmental education program to be delivered to local students within historic and current Lesser Prairie-Chicken/Dunes Sagebrush Lizard habitat in New Mexico. This program will target the following New Mexico high schools: Dora, Floyd, Elida, Portales, and Carlsbad Early College High School with the intent to engage at least one class in each school by the end of the contract period.

## Enrollment Numbers

*\*NMDGF acres are included in the rancher numbers*

<b>TOTAL HABITAT ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
Total LPC/DSL habitat acres enrolled by Industry	1,885,190.72
Total LPC/DSL habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers	1,930,168.86
Total LPC/DSL CCA habitat acres enrolled by Industry and Ranchers	1,981,238.65
Total LPC/DSL CCAA habitat acres enrolled by Industry and Ranchers	1,220,861.44
Total LPC/DSL CCAA habitat acres enrolled by the NMSLO	404,594.75
Total LPC/DSL CCA/A habitat acres enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	3,019,208.49

<b>DSL</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total DSL habitat acres in NM	543,362	
DSL habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers CCA/A	415,220.39	76.4%
DSL habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in BLM RMPA	397,311.47	73.1%
DSL habitat acres enrolled by Industry CCA/A	466,211.88	85.8%
DSL habitat acres enrolled by Industry in the BLM RMPA	249,093.82	45.8%
DSL habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO	179,461.20	33.0%
Total DSL CCA/A habitat acres enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	489,235.14	90.0%

<b>LPC</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total LPC habitat acres in estimated occupied range (EOR)	2,120,672	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in EOR	496,885.90	23.4%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in EOR	951,960.54	44.8%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in EOR	349,149.97	16.4%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in EOR enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	1,218,052.07	57.4%

## Enrollment Numbers

*\*NMDGF acres are included in the rancher numbers*

Total LPC habitat acres in estimated occupied range + 10 mile buffer (EOR10)	6,874,894	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in EOR10	1,603,613.01	23.3%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in EOR10	1,704,319.71	24.7%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in the EOR10	404,594.75	5.8%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in EOR10 enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	2,611,553.26	37.9%
Total LPC habitat acres in historic range	13,650,507	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in historic range	1,860,018.92	13.6%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in historic range	1,924,730.05	14.1%
Total LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in BLM RMPA	928,274.08	6.8%
Total LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in BLM RMPA	1,256,502.87	9.2%

<b>CHAT 1</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total acres in CHAT 1	782,588.77	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in CHAT 1	138,599.62	17.7%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in CHAT 1	404,965.52	51.7%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in CHAT 1	153,913.06	19.6%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 1 enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	491,990.18	62.8%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 1 enrolled by Industry and Ranchers (and NMDGF)	464,385.91	59.3%

## Enrollment Numbers

*\*NMDGF acres are included in the rancher numbers*

<b>CHAT 2</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total acres in CHAT 2	704,393.55	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in CHAT 2	37,047.06	5.2%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in CHAT 2	64,519.22	9.1%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in CHAT 2	54,460.70	7.7%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 2 enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	134,321.98	19.0%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 2 enrolled by Industry and Ranchers (and NMDGF)	97,798.76	13.8%

<b>CHAT 3</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total acres in CHAT 3	3,712,981.05	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in CHAT 3	1,118,958.80	30.1%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in CHAT 3	1,089,136.27	29.3%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in CHAT 3	175,431.27	4.7%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 3 enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	1,579,107.66	42.5%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 3 enrolled by Industry and Ranchers (and NMDGF)	1,526,651.97	41.1%

<b>CHAT 4</b>	<b>ACRES</b>	<b>% ACRES ENROLLED</b>
Total acres in CHAT 4	1,494,366.95	
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Industry in CHAT 4	270,180.36	18.0%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by Ranchers in CHAT 4	122,205.41	8.1%
LPC habitat acres enrolled by NMSLO in CHAT 4	23,278.43	1.5%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 4 enrolled by Industry, Ranchers (and NMDGF), and NMSLO	360,467.18	24.1%
Total LPC CCA/A habitat acres in CHAT 4 enrolled by Industry and Ranchers (and NMDGF)	345,478.09	23.1%

## Additional Conservation Activity Involvement

The High Plains Cooperative Weed Management Area (High Plains CWMA) has recently submitted a grant proposal to NRCS/Conservation Innovation Grant to assist with funds for education, herbicide and application targeting African Rue invasion in disturbed areas. African Rue is present in LPC habitat on abandoned pads and roads, corrals and other degraded sites. The potential for this species to advance farther has been noted due to the proposed wind farms. A second educational program was held on April 6, 2017 at the Elida Community Building in Elida, NM. CEHMM personnel is working with Roosevelt Soil and Water Conservation District and the BLM to develop a proposal to address invasive species to present to the ranking team in June.

CEHMM recently hired Josh Ricklefs, a candidate for a range ecology degree in May 2017 from Oklahoma State University in range ecology. Mr. Ricklefs will begin work in District 2 on May 22, 2017.

CEHMM personnel spoke to the Wildlife/Natural Resource/Bio-Conservation Clubs from Texas Tech University at the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge concerning LPC issues and possible career opportunities in the fields of wildlife/range conservation. Twenty-five students, one professor, and three guests attended.

## Signature

If you have any questions, please call Tish McDaniel at (575) 675-2324 or Matt Mathis or Emily Wirth at (575) 885-3700.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Douglas C. Lynn, Executive Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_