



CEHMM

Conservation and Environmental Services

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

Monthly Report
May 2017



Installing lizard pitfall traps

Table of Contents

<u>Conservation Activities and Monitoring</u>	1
<u>Completed Projects May 2017</u>	2
<u>Funded Projects Awaiting Completion</u>	2
<u>Reclamation/Restoration</u>	4
<u>Operations Moved out of DSL Habitat</u>	4
<u>Research</u>	5
<u>Education</u>	5
<u>Enrollment Numbers</u>	6
<u>Additional Conservation Activity Involvement</u>	9
<u>Signature</u>	10

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Conservation Activities and Monitoring

CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380

CEHMM conducted an onsite with an enrolled company for two wells. Both wells were moved due to suitable Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (DSL) habitat.

CEHMM placed three sets of pitfall traps, with five traps per set, in suitable DSL habitat in an attempt to capture DSL. The traps were checked daily for three weeks. No DSL were captured. The only species of lizard captured was the Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana*).

CEHMM hired a summer intern from New Mexico State University (NMSU) who is pursuing a degree in wildlife. She will be assisting with DSL surveys, range surveys, and mesquite clearing activities.

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

CEHMM personnel 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, and Marjorie Williamson Water Project. All water, solar, and storage additions are working properly.

An enrolled rancher signed an amendment to the voluntary Certificate of Inclusion (CI) agreement with CEHMM/FWS for an additional 254 acres. All signatures have been received on this document.

CEHMM personnel met with five enrolled ranchers to develop project proposals for submission in June 2017. CEHMM personnel also assisted the newly formed High Plains Cooperative Weed Management Association on their submission of a proposal to the ranking committee targeting invasive plants in Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) habitat. All proposals have been submitted for review.

Completed Projects May 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 – CEHMM received the signed well permit from Pearce ranch. CEHMM is still awaiting the signed project agreement from Pearce ranch to move forward.

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.

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 – 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 has scheduled a meeting with Greg Alpers, Dow Chemical Representative, in early July 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.

Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

Bresenham Mesquite – CEHMM plans to complete this project in the 2017 growing season. CEHMM is coordinating with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to conduct the aerial application. CEHMM has scheduled a meeting with Greg Alpers, Dow Chemical Representative, to verify condition of mesquite prior to application. 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.

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 New Mexico State Land Office (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. The enrollee submitted the paperwork and payment to NMSLO. CEHMM and the enrollee are now awaiting the approval from the Roswell District Resource Specialist, Field Operations Division, prior to proceeding.

Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

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 in mid-July.

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)
2009	0	0	0	2,900
2010	79	0	0	1,454
2011	83	0	15	0
2012	65	22	1	0
2013	73	3	7	0
2014	77	6	1	0
2015	36	37	68	0
2016	80	15	0	0
2017	9	0	0	0
Total	502	83	92	4,354

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 recently hired Mark Madsen as their Education/Outreach Manager 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*

TOTAL HABITAT ENROLLMENT	ACRES
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

DSL	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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%

LPC	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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%

CHAT 1	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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*

CHAT 2	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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%

CHAT 3	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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%

CHAT 4	ACRES	% ACRES ENROLLED
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

Josh Ricklefs, a recent graduate from Oklahoma State University with a range ecology degree , began work in late May as a Field Technician in District 2.

CEHMM personnel participated in two “Big Bird Days” in eastern NM. On May 6th, a survey was conducted on The Nature Conservancy’s Milnesand Prairie Preserve resulting in 42 species. On May 13th personnel surveyed Curry County and 109 species were reported.

CEHMM personnel attended a training for “point count” bird surveys on Muleshoe Wildlife Refuge.

CEHMM personnel met with Audubon/NM personnel to discuss the possibility of a High Plains Prairie Chicken Festival in the spring of 2018.

CEHMM personnel met with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), Grasslans Charitable Foundation, Texas Tech University, and local ranchers to discuss the possibility of a festival for 2018. Habitat restoration, lesser prairie-chicken survey methods and impending fragmentation was also discussed.

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: _____