



CEHMM

Conservation and Environmental Services

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

Monthly Report
July 2017



Vegetative Monitoring-July 2017-Dave Thomas

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Candidate Conservation Agreements (CCAs) allow the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Center of Excellence (CEHMM) to work in cooperation and consultation with private land owners and industry in support of conservation measures for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) (LPC) and the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*) (DSL), which were warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531, et seq.). CCAs:

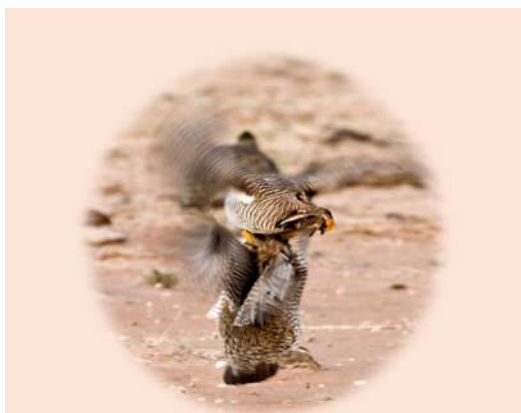
- Develop, coordinate, and implement conservation actions which reduce and/or eliminate known threats to the LPC and DSL in New Mexico on federal, state and private surface and minerals;
- Support ongoing efforts to re-establish and maintain viable populations of both species in currently occupied and suitable habitats;
- Encourage development and protection of suitable LPC and DSL habitat by giving Participating Cooperators incentives to implement specific conservation measures.

Under the CCA, federal lessees, operators, or permittees that join by voluntarily signing a Certificate of Participation (CP) receive a high degree of certainty that additional

restrictions would not be placed on their otherwise legal activities if either species is listed. The companion Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) provides incentives for voluntary conservation of species-at-risk on non-federal lands. Under the CCAA, the lessee, owner or permittee voluntarily commits to implement specific conservation measures on non-federal lands for the species by signing a Certificate of Inclusion (CI). Under the CCAA, if either species is listed, private landowners receive assurances



The Dunes Sagebrush Lizard is native to a small area of south-eastern New Mexico and West Texas.



The Lesser Prairie-Chicken is native to parts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

that additional restrictions would not be placed on their otherwise legal activities. Without regulatory assurances, landowners may be unwilling to initiate conservation measures for these species. In both cases, signing up for the CCA or CCAA is voluntary.

CEHMM is the permit holder for these agreements and is responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reporting on projects completed with CCA/A funds. CEHMM is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation based in Carlsbad, New Mexico. CEHMM participation allows for a federally approved, independently audited financial management system to provide for fund management and administration.

The following monthly report details projects funded and completed with CCA/A funds as well as every day implementation of the agreements including activities such as moving wells out of DSL habitat. For more details on the CCA programs, visit our website at www.cehmm.org.

Benefits of Candidate Conservation Agreement Programs

⇒ Voluntary

⇒ Provides on the ground conservation

⇒ Landscape based approach



⇒ Allows land-owners and industry to continue work on the ground

⇒ Aims to prevent listing



Photo courtesy Grant Beauprez

Conservation Activities and Monitoring

CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380

CEHMM installed 22 escape ramps on three ranches. Photos and waypoints were taken for all escape ramps.

CEHMM attended the Southeastern New Mexico Oil and Gas Association (SENMOGA) working group meeting.

CEHMM conducted an onsite with an enrolled company for four wells and a frac pond in historic LPC habitat. All locations were approved as proposed by the company.

CEHMM collected vegetation data on seven ranches, at 43 monitoring sites. All ranches where data was collected had either suitable or potentially suitable habitat for LPC and DSL. Initial observations in the field indicate that all seven ranches are following the conservation measures in the CCA/CCAA. Data will be analyzed in August to determine if grazing operations need to be modified. If modification to grazing is determined CEHMM will meet with the rancher to determine what the modifications will entail.

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

CEHMM personnel conducted quarterly inspections 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 Tank, D. Thomas Water #3, Marjorie Williamson Water Project and Williamson/Mohon Wildlife Waters . One enrollee was notified that two of their wildlife waters were empty; CEHMM will check those specific two waters in August. All other projects were functioning appropriately.

CEHMM and FWS have finalized an amendment for 320 additional acres on Jim Weaver's CI .

CEHMM personnel have prepared amendments for Mark Watts and Running N to add additional acres. Running N CI will add an additional 53,606 acres, Mark Watts' CI will add an additional 3,438 acres, and Mark Watts' CP will add an additional 326 acres. The documents are ready to be signed by the enrollees.

Conservation Activities and Monitoring

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

CEHMM personnel completed the annual monitoring on the Bresenham Reclamation.

Ranching enrollees were divided into three groups for monitoring efforts. CEHMM is clipping inside the exclosures prior to growing season to ensure only one year of current growth within the cage. CEHMM personnel will return at the end of the growing season to clip inside and outside of the exclosures to determine utilization. Fifty cages on six ranches were clipped with 49 cages remaining on two ranches to be clipped by March 15, 2017.

CEHMM personnel conducted vegetative monitoring on two ranches as a base line; monitoring included Daubenmire, Robel and line point intersect. These two ranches requested no exclosures be erected and instead establish monitoring points.

CEHMM personnel also conducted vegetative monitoring on Dave Thomas Ranch which includes Daubenmire, Robel and line point intersect. This monitoring will be a base line as CEHMM has begun removing and replacing boundary fence on Thomas and recently completed a water project. In July 2018, we will replicate the vegetative monitoring protocol.

CCA/A – District 1 & 2

CEHMM attended the CCA/CCA ranking team meeting to rank projects for funding for the upcoming year. The team decided to re-evaluate the priorities for projects to ensure that future funded projects are providing the most benefit for the species of concern. The team will meet again in October to determine the priorities.

Completed Projects July 2017

CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380

No projects were completed this month.

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

David Thomas Water #3 – Work has been completed on this project with 1.75 miles of 1.25-inch water line completed the first week of March 2017 followed by the completion in July 2017 of the pit house , submersible pump, pitless adapter, pressure tank, and a 75-foot electric line for the pump. CEHMM personnel have established monitoring points

and utilization cages in all pastures and all ecological site descriptions to measure both the grazing utilization, forage composition and density for future comparison and trend.



Figures 1 & 2: Completed Pithouse & Submersible Pump

Completed Projects July 2017

CCA/A – District 2 – North of Hwy 380

TNC Mesquite Removal – CEHMM personnel have completed the dead standing mesquite eradication on 1,059 acres on The Nature Conservancy’s-Milnesand Prairie Preserve (MPP) CEHMM initiated mesquite eradication of the dead standing mesquite on January 11, 2017 and completed the treatment on July 31, 2017.

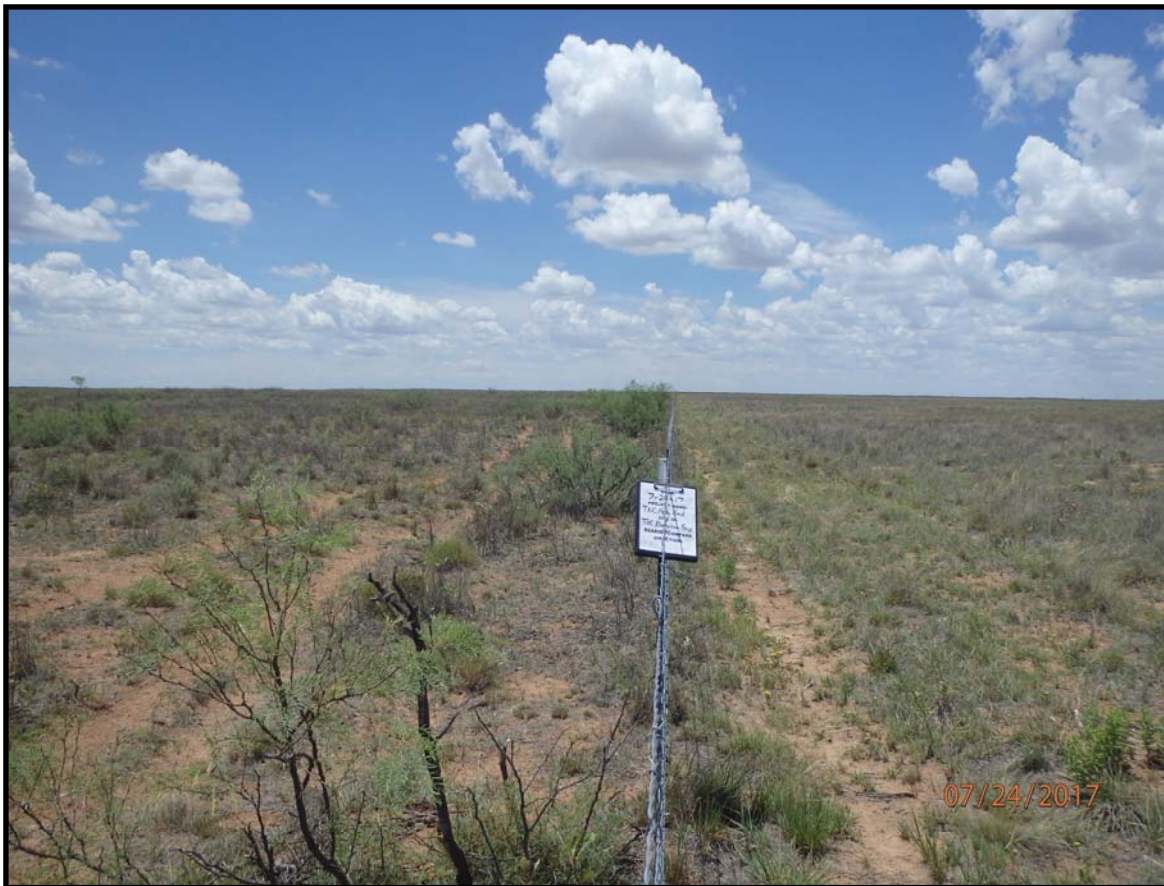


Figure 3: Fence line comparison: Dead Standing Mesquite Eradication-TNC, Right side

Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

CCA/A – District 1 – South of Hwy 380

Pearce Water – Taylor’s Water Well Service did not have the correct documentation required by CEHMM so their contract was pulled prior to work commencing. CEHMM will contract Key’s Drilling as soon as the well permit is issued.

Smith Water – CEHMM will develop a bid proposal for contractors. NEPA has been initiated, and the archaeological clearance will be completed in March 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

Riley Mesquite – CEHMM personnel determined that the insect damage was too severe on the honey mesquite to adequately absorb the herbicide; therefore, the project has been postponed until 2018.

Bresenham Mesquite – It has been determined that the proposed aerial application of Sendero to control mesquite on Bresenham is too close to their home and trees and will not be allowed per the protocol. CEHMM staff will revise the budget and request a hand application.

ACEC Dead Standing Mesquite Removal – On July 12, 2017, CEHMM personnel noted that the herbicide hand application for mesquite eradication on the ACEC was ineffective as there was less than a 5% kill. Therefore, CEHMM will not proceed with plans to use the skid steer to remove dead standing mesquite on the 1400 acres at this time. The ranking team had approved removal of dead standing mesquite (DSM) on the BLM’s Sand Ranch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in three different treatment areas. The plans were that with the eradication of DSM in these three polygons, CEHMM would be improving the habitat specifically for six active leks. The archaeological survey was completed on December 20, 2016. BLM will follow through with the contractor.

Funded Projects Awaiting Completion

Five Fence Projects – CEHMM has a contract for 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. Work has commenced on David Thomas and is expected to be completed in late August. 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. It was reported to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) as this fence is on both federal and state trust lands. The enrollee submitted paperwork and payment to NMSLO, and the project has been cleared by NMSLO. CEHMM is now waiting for clearance from the BLM.

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 Education/Outreach Manager is initiating Audubon's plans for the CCA/A funded project “Engaging Community in Conservation Education”. They are developing a 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.

Operations Moved out of DSL Habitat

Construction of well pads and roads for oil and gas development in DSL habitat poses a serious threat to a species which depends on a very specialized dynamic habitat. Due to the severity of the loss of DSL habitat from development, enrollees have agreed to conservation measures including no surface occupancy within 30 meters of suitable or occupied DSL habitat. CEHMM attends onsites with enrolled companies to help site roads, pads, pipelines, and power lines in areas that are in near proximity to suitable and occupied habitat. During the onsite CEHMM helps to determine suitability of the habitat and ensure that the companies avoid the dunes by the required 30 meter buffer. If the disturbance is within the 30 meter buffer then the enrolled company, in order to comply with their agreements, must relocate the disturbance to occur outside of the 30 meter buffer. The number of wells and ROWs moved out of DSL habitat below shows the importance of every day implementation of the CCA/As to the conservation of the species.

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	2	0	0	0
Total	495	83	92	4,354

Reclamation/Restoration

In areas of loose and sandy soil, oil and gas well pads and roads are constructed from caliche, which is a layer of calcium carbonate that is precipitated below the soil surface through evaporation in arid environments. Caliche makes an ideal substrate for roads; it becomes almost impenetrable when compacted with heavy equipment. When companies construct these roads and well pads in LPC and DSL habitat, this impenetrable layer fragments the habitat. Reclamation of these wells and pads removes the caliche from the surface using heavy equipment. By removing the caliche pads and roads, fragmentation in LPC and DSL habitat is reduced or eliminated. Once the caliche is removed, reseeding with native vegetation occurs which speeds up the process of rehabilitating the disturbed areas. The table below details the reclamation treated to date through the CCA/A agreements.

Total Acres Treated For Entire Project	
Roads and Pads Caliche Removal and Reseeding (Number)	154
Mesquite (Acres)	79,363
Dead Standing Mesquite Eradication (Acres)	1,059
Yucca (Acres)	120

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%

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: _____