

CEHMM programs can help in the face of a listing decision by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

On May 26th, 2021, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced a proposed rule to list the Lesser Prairie-Chicken under the Endangered Species Act. The US Fish and Wildlife Service proposed the Southern Distinct Population Segment as endangered. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken is a prairie grouse species native to the southern Great Plains. Historically, Lesser Prairie-Chickens ranged across eastern New Mexico, with Milnesand, New Mexico, as the center of the state's population. Due to prolonged drought, habitat degradation, and habitat fragmentation, unfortunately, the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and its habitat have declined throughout its range. Each spring, male and female LPCs congregate at breeding grounds, called leks, where males engage in a unique, communal breeding display (a mating dance) to attract females.

CEHMM, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based out of Carlsbad, New Mexico, can help when the Endangered Species Act or an endangered species is mentioned. The typical response from people is fear and concern over what may happen on private land. CEHMM has worked tirelessly with local landowners, the oil and gas industries, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement conservation measures for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken through voluntary, cooperative agreements. These voluntary agreements, called the Candidate Conservation Agreement and the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard, provide a mechanism to conserve habitats on federal and nonfederal lands, respectively. Since implementing these agreements in 2008, used funds generated through oil and gas industry enrollments for on-the-ground conservation efforts throughout the range of the species in New Mexico. The beauty of these agreements and the benefit for enrollment is that if a listing is unavoidable, enrollees have assurances (on nonfederal lands) and a high degree of certainty (on federal lands) that additional restrictions will not be placed on them if they are following the conservation measures outlined in the agreements. In other words, the agreements are like an "insurance policy."

In addition to the "insurance policy", the agreements provide many other benefits. CEHMM's efforts, through funding received from industry's involvement in the agreements, focuses on landscape improvements. We replace windmills with solar powered pumps, install wildlife friendly fences, and install water tanks, providing water on the landscape not only to cattle but to wildlife. Enrolled ranchers can effectively manage their grazing operations through these improvements while simultaneously improving habitat for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and other grassland species. CEHMM's efforts in the Milnesand area most recently focus on mesquite eradication by treating and removing dead mesquite bushes. These efforts eliminate vertical structures that the Lesser Prairie-Chicken's avoid, allowing the native grasses to grow, which is necessary for grassland species such as the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and cattle.

CEHMM is here to help keep landowners and industry working! Candidate Conservation Agreements work; CEHMM is making a difference, not only for the species but also for our community! In the face of a listing decision, there is still time for those living and working in Southeastern New Mexico to enroll in one of our Conservation Programs or allow us to help your company with environmental services. For more information on how to enroll in our Conservation Programs or our to learn more about our Environmental Services Division, please visit <https://www.cehmm.org> or call Emily or Karla at 575-885-3700.

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Candidate Conservation Agreements



Taking actions to reduce and/or eliminate threats to the lesser prairie-chicken and dunes sagebrush lizard.

Program Purpose

- Promote collaborative conservation for existing populations
- Develop, coordinate, and implement conservation actions on federal, state, and private surface and minerals
- Support ongoing efforts to re-establish and maintain species viability
- Provide funding for projects to achieve desired conservation goals.

Benefits to the Landscape and its Users

- Voluntary enrollment
- Allows enrolled landowners and industry to continue working on the landscape
- Provides on-the-ground conservation and restoration initiatives
- Featuring landscape- and research-based approaches on private and public lands



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The ESA is enacted to conserve imperiled species and their habitat. **1973**

A petition is filed to list the LPC as Threatened under the ESA. **1995**

A species status review from FWS concludes that the Threatened status is warranted. **1998**

Stakeholders form a technical working group for the LPC and DSL. **2003**

The CCA and CCAA are executed between BLM, FWS, and CEHMM. **2008**

FWS proposes the LPC for Threatened listing. The DSL proposal is removed citing the CCA and CCAA programs. **2012**

Following a ruling by the U.S. District Court in Midland, Texas, the LPC is removed from listing. **2015**

A 12-month finding on the proposed listing for the LPC is underway at FWS. **2019**

In March, FWS publishes a Species Status Assessment for the LPC. **2021**

On May 26, 2021, FWS proposes to list the LPC under the ESA with two geographic distinctions: the northern range as Threatened and the southern range as Endangered.

A 12-month finding for the DSL is underway at FWS.



Maps of Current Enrollment

Collaborative Conservation

Industry Operators

- 42 enrollees
- 2,191,195 acres throughout the historic range

Ranchers

- 72 enrollees
- 1,876,348 acres throughout the historic range

On-the-Ground Initiatives

Brush Control

- Treated 83,936 acres of mesquite
- Removed dead, standing mesquite from 10,427 acres

Habitat Restoration

- 15,000 acres of habitat restored

Reclamation

- Reclaimed and reseeded 159 acres of roads and pads