

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances



Background

In November 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed a "threatened" listing for the lesser prairie chicken. A final ruling is expected by the end of September 2013. When a species is listed as federally endangered or threatened, additional federal regulations and oversight can apply to landowners that may affect what happens on their property or how it may be used.

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances Program

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) and the USFWS created the CCAA to provide assurances to landowners against certain liabilities and federal restrictions in the event that the lesser prairie chicken is listed as a threatened or endangered species.

- By participating in the voluntary program, landowners agree to perform certain habitat work to benefit lesser prairie chickens in exchange for the assurances provided.
- Participation is free for landowners, who may opt out at any time.
- Landowners and ODWC biologists will collaborate on a wildlife management plan specific to the property enrolled, which may include efforts such as red cedar removal, fence marking and grazing management.
- Conservation measures accomplished through the program could help convince the USFWS that a final listing is not warranted.
- Landowners with an approved management plan in place through the CCAA program before a final listing decision is made will have the guarantee of assurances that no additional conservation measures or land, water or resource use restrictions beyond those voluntarily agreed to in the CCAA management plan will be required should the lesser prairie chicken become listed as a federally endangered or threatened species in the future.
- Assurances are provided under the individual Certificate of Inclusion subject to approval by the ODWC and concurrence by the USFWS.
- Landowners do not receive incentive payments for participation in the program.

Eligibility

- Landowners in the following counties in western and northwest Oklahoma may be eligible for free participation in the CCAA: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods and Woodward.
- Eligibility is not dependent on the presence or absence of the lesser prairie chicken on the enrolled property.

How to Participate

More information and an application to enroll in the CCAA program can be found online at www.wildlifedepartment.com or contact one of the following ODWC staff:

- Doug Schoeling 405.590.2584
- Alva Gregory 580.334.4459
- Matt Fullerton 580.571.5820

The Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) Wildlife Credit Program provides cost-share dollars (\$8/acre) for five years to producers who implement a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA). OACD will obtain funding from private industry and other government and nongovernment organizations. To qualify, producers must first complete a CCAA from Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). Applicants will then be ranked, placing emphasis on the "core areas" identified by ODWC. OACD has pilot seed money to fund 10,000 acres for five years and additional funds will be distributed to producers upon expansion of the program.

For more information, contact:

Jordan Shearer 405.612.2843

Larry Wright 580.772.4192



Natural Resources Conservation Service Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative

The Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPCI) provides financial and technical assistance to landowners and operators for reducing threats to the species and enhancing and maintaining existing habitats in high priority areas. LPCI objectives will be funded by NRCS through the Conservation Technical Assistance Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

The primary focus for the LPCI is upland wildlife habitat management. Participants can receive technical and financial assistance to implement supporting conservation practices including brush management, prescribed grazing, range planting, prescribed burning and restoration of rare and declining habitats.

The following counties are offering signups under the statewide initiative: Alfalfa, Beaver, Beckham, Cimarron, Custer, Dewey, Ellis, Harper, Major, Roger Mills, Texas, Washita, Woods and Woodward.

Contact your local NRCS service center for more information.