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## **Range-Wide HCP for Lesser Prairie Chicken Shows the Way to Achieve Species Conservation, Climate, & Biodiversity Goals in an Accountable & Efficient Manner**

Oklahoma City-- (April 14) -- On April 14, 2021 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published the first of two proposed range-wide habitat conservation plans (HCP) for public comment for the lesser prairie-chicken ("LPC"). This first HCP will provide range-wide regulatory assurances for wind, solar, electric transmission & distribution lines and communication towers for industry participants who wish to responsibly develop projects under any scenario that may occur once the USFWS releases its court-ordered review of the Endangered Species Act listing status on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

The HCP will enable a strategic, market-based connection with existing conservation banks as well as other mitigation options that meet the standards for performance detailed in the plan and mitigation standards recommended by the USFWS for the LPC. The HCP will be administered by LPC Conservation, LLC, a special purpose entity owned by Common Ground Capital, LLC of Oklahoma City Oklahoma, Restoration Systems of Raleigh North Carolina and a major equity investor that is active in the energy and real estate space across the country.

Wayne Walker, CEO of LPC Conservation stated: "Our team is excited to provide a best-in-class conservation plan that will deliver desperately needed strategic conservation strongholds and restoration for the LPC. We are using market-based business models employed every day by the vast majority of renewable energy and traditional energy and infrastructure developers who operate in and around the remaining landscapes of the LPC, a species that is a key indicator of health of these Southern Plains Ecosystems.

"We are grateful to the USFWS for the leadership and team execution to achieve this milestone. We would not be here without our private landowner partners in Kansas and in Texas and New Mexico through our partnership with RiverBank Conservation (Austin, Texas) whose ranches can deliver what this bird needs most-strategic and durable Strongholds of conservation in the right places. We are confident this plan will deliver the conservation guidance and potential compliance option that both industry project developers and the LPC need. At present, the species and industry lack a range-wide defensible program demonstrating both regulatory compliance and conservation benefits. In addition to meeting this need, we look forward to working with entities such as North American Grouse Partnership, USFWS, the states, NRCS, industry, private landowners, and other leading NGOs in a transparent and collaborative manner moving forward."

The programmatic HCP design will encompass the following key attributes:

\*A qualified program administrator and team that has a combined over 100 years of business experience in the energy and environmental preservation and restoration market space.

\*Availability of approximately 50,000 acres of advance mitigation credits, strategically located in areas that meet the USFWS stronghold criteria and are already approved by USFWS, with existing contracts with private landowner partners across multiple LPC ecosystems. Any mitigation purchased within these areas will immediately contribute to the USFWS stronghold goal also identified in the Range-Wide Plan.

\*A straightforward, clearly defined impact analysis approach for calculating impact mitigation needs for a proposed project. In addition, LPC Conservation will be launching a secure, web-enabled management dash board that allows program participants to quickly estimate their specific mitigation needs prior to formal enrollment in the program, and then track compliance metrics for any enrolled projects over time.

\*Up to 500,000 acres of project impacts can be enrolled and covered under the HCP/ITP during a 30-year ITP term.

\*A clearly-defined but simple monitoring program that relieves industry from managing ongoing day-to-day compliance efforts.

\*USFWS and 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit requirements provide transparency and ongoing collaboration in HCP implementation.

\*An adaptive management program and description of circumstances under which minimization and mitigation measures can respond to changes that may occur over the ITP term, including those which may reduce these measures.

For more information, please view the Federal Register website at:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/14/2021-07475/application-for-an-incidental-take-permit-renewable-wind-and-solar-energy-power-line-and>