



Frequently Asked Questions: Lesser Prairie-Chicken Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement

Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas) www.fws.gov/southwest/

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Contacts: Lesli Gray, 972-569-8588, Lesli_Gray@fws.gov
Ryan Moehring, 303-236-0345, Ryan_Moehring@fws.gov

Q. What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) taking?

A. The Service has finalized a Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement submitted by LPC Conservation LLC (Wayne Walker, Common Ground Capital) for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken. The Service began working with LPC Conservation LLC, the Master Bank Sponsor for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement (LPC PCBA), in November 2013. This is the first Programmatic Conservation Bank to be approved by the Service.

The LPC PCBA will streamline the process of approval for individual bank parcels that serve to permanently conserve and manage lands for the benefit of the lesser prairie-chicken across the species range. The LPC PCBA is the umbrella that individual parcels will be approved under and that will provide available credits for purchase to developers that are impacting the lesser prairie-chicken or its habitat within the identified service areas. Landowners who voluntarily choose to conserve their lands in permanent conservation, through a conservation easement, will generate credits used to offset impacts elsewhere in the banks identified service area.

The Service is also announcing the inclusion of the first two parcels in the Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement. The two parcels total approximately 29,082 acres and are located in Kansas, which is currently the state with the largest lesser prairie-chicken population.

Q. How will the LPC Conservation LLC Conservation Bank benefit the lesser prairie-chicken?

A. The LPC PCBA hopes to create several contiguous habitat areas where now only scattered fragments exist. The lesser prairie-chicken will benefit from restoration and management of its habitat, as well as from efforts to reconnect the landscape through habitat corridors over time. The LPC PCBA will, over time, aid in efforts to recover the lesser prairie-chicken.

Q. What are Conservation Banks?

A. Conservation banks are permanently protected areas that contain natural resource values. Lands within conservation banks are conserved and permanently managed for species that are endangered, threatened, candidates for listing as endangered or threatened, or are otherwise at risk species. Conservation banks offset adverse impacts to these species that occur elsewhere, sometimes referred to as off-site mitigation. In exchange for permanently protecting the land and managing it for these

species, the Service approves a specified number of habitat or species credits that bank owners may sell. Developers or other project proponents who need to compensate for the unavoidable adverse impacts their projects have on species may purchase the credits from conservation bank owners to mitigate their impacts.

Q. How does a Programmatic Conservation Bank differ from a traditional Conservation Bank?

A. Programmatic conservation banks ultimately have the same function as a regular conservation bank. Programmatic conservation banks differ slightly in that they have a Master Bank Sponsor whose main role is to review applications for completeness, maintain bank parcel ledgers, and oversee that implementation and compliance of the programmatic conservation bank agreement is being met by the Bank Sponsor. The Bank Sponsor is solely responsible for the funding and management of each of their bank parcels for the species. Instead of having one Bank Sponsor or landowner under a conservation bank, the programmatic bank provides the opportunity to have multiple landowners and an unlimited amount of enrolled bank parcels to benefit one or more species that are endangered, threatened, candidates for listing as endangered or threatened, or are otherwise at risk species.

Q. Why should a landowner participate in a Conservation Bank?

A. A conservation bank is a voluntary market enterprise that offers landowners incentives to protect species and their habitat. Landowners benefit from selling habitat or species credits to parties who need to compensate for adverse impacts to these species. Landowners can generate income and keep large parcels of land intact.

Q. How can one participate in the LPC Programmatic Conservation Bank?

A. Bank Sponsors and landowners who wish to enroll their lands under the LPC Conservation LLC LPC PCBA can contact LPC Conservation LLC, www.commongroundcapital.com for an application and guidance.

Developers or industry that have activities which may impact the lesser prairie-chicken and require mitigation (credits) can go to the online tracking system, Regulatory In-Lieu Fee Bank Information Tracking System (RIBITS) available at the following link <http://geo.usace.army.mil/ribits/index.html>, to view the approved LPC programmatic conservation bank. RIBITS will allow users to access information on the programmatic bank contacts, service areas, credit type and availability, and credit ledgers.

Q. How does the Programmatic Conservation Bank relate to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Lesser Prairie-Chicken Range-wide Plan (RWP)?

A. The PCBA is one option for the administrator of the RWP to acquire any needed permanent offsets to fulfill the permanent conservation obligations prescribed within the RWP. Additional information on the Range-wide Plan is available at www.wafwa.org.