

Service Approves Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Conservation Plan for Oil and Gas Development in the Great Plains

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved LPC Conservation LLC's habitat conservation plan (HCP) and associated incidental take permit. The HCP is designed to allow for the responsible development of oil and gas in the Great Plains while also contributing to the conservation of the lesser prairie-chicken.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires all incidental take permits (ITPs) to include HCPs that describe the anticipated effects of a proposed taking and how those impacts will be minimized or mitigated.

The HCP will cover oil and gas development across the lesser prairie-chicken's range in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. LPC Conservation LLC's HCP will fully offset impacts from enrolled projects while providing regulatory certainty for oil and gas development across its range, should the lesser prairie-chicken become listed under the ESA in the future.

Along with the final HCP, the Service is publishing a final Environmental Assessment (EA) that evaluates the effects of issuing the ITP and addresses comments received during the public comment period. Full implementation of the HCP is expected to potentially affect 500,000 acres of suitable lesser prairie-chicken habitat. Under the plan, industry participants will work with LPC Conservation LLC to ensure projects minimize impacts to the lesser prairie-chicken and mitigation is in place to voluntarily offset their project's impacts to the species and its habitat. The HCP and ITP will be in effect for 30 years.

Earlier this year, the Service approved LPC Conservation LLC's HCP and associated incidental take permit for renewable energy development in the Great Plains.

The final oil and gas HCP and EA can be found here: www.fws.gov/lpc.

The lesser prairie-chicken is a species of prairie grouse that occupies a five-state range including portions of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado. Lesser prairie-chicken populations require large tracts of relatively intact native grasslands and prairies to thrive.

On June 1, 2021, the Service released its proposal to list two distinct population segments of the lesser prairie-chicken under the ESA. The Service will make a final determination on the proposed listing in June 2022.

For more than two decades, the Service has prioritized efforts with our partners to employ all available tools to facilitate the conservation of the lesser prairie-chicken. Working with others is essential to protecting ecosystems that benefit wildlife and economies. The Service regularly engages conservation partners, the public, landowners, government agencies, and other stakeholders in our ongoing effort to identify innovative strategies for conserving species like the lesser prairie-chicken.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>. Connect with our Facebook page, follow our tweets, watch our YouTube Channel and download photos. from our Flickr page.