



PRESS RELEASE

Public Affairs Office
134 Union Blvd
Lakewood, CO 80228
303-236-7905
303-236-3815 FAX

December 17, 2013

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Leslie Ellwood, 303-236-4747 leslie_ellwood@fws.gov
Steve Segin, 303-236-4578 robert_segin@fws.gov

Draft Range-wide Lesser Prairie-chicken Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Oil and Gas Activities and Environmental Assessment

DENVER--The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is soliciting public comment on a draft Lesser Prairie-Chicken Range-wide Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for Oil and Gas Activities (LEPC CCAA) and draft environmental assessment. The LEPC CCAA provides conservation measures for the lesser prairie-chicken for oil and gas activities to be implemented on voluntarily enrolled non-Federal lands throughout the range of the lesser prairie-chicken.

On October 23, 2013, the Service endorsed the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Lesser Prairie-Chicken Range-Wide Conservation Plan. The range-wide plan (RWP) provides: 1) an incentive-based landowner program, and 2) a mitigation framework to reduce threats and provide resources for off-site conservation. The LEPC CCAA incorporates the Range-wide Plan's avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures that address impacts from oil and gas activities on enrolled lands. Oil and gas enrollment of lands into the LEPC CCAA would generate mitigation fees, which would provide significant funds for the implementation of conservation actions under the Range-wide Plan.

WAFWA would administer the CCAA and hold the permit, while oil and gas companies would enroll under the permit through certificates of inclusion. In return for volunteering to implement the LEPC CCAA, participants receive assurances that the Service will not impose further commitments or restrictions for the lesser prairie-chicken during the term of the permit, even if the species is listed. The proposed term of the LEPC CCAA is 30 years.

On December 11, 2012, the Service proposed to list the lesser prairie-chicken as threatened throughout its range. On May 6, 2013, the Service proposed a special rule, under the Endangered Species Act section 4(d), that would allow for take of the lesser prairie-chicken incidental to activities conducted under a Service-approved comprehensive conservation program developed by or in coordination with a State agency. On December 11, 2013, the Service published a revised proposed 4(d) special rule and

reopened the public comment period for the 4(d) special rule and the listing proposal. The Service will issue its final listing determination no later than March 30, 2014.

The draft LEPC CCAA and EA are available for comment until January 17, 2014. Copies of the LEPC CCAA and EA are available on line at <http://www.fws.gov/coloradoes/>. Written comments should be submitted by mail to Field Supervisor, Colorado Ecological Services Field Office, 134 Union Blvd., Ste. 670, Lakewood, CO 80228; or via email to lesserprairiechicken@fws.gov.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/>

Connect with our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/USFWSMountainPrairie>

Follow our tweets at <http://twitter.com/USFWSMtnPrairie>

Watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtnprairie/>

-FWS-