

Factors to consider regarding additional SHA in Kansas

Regulatory factors:

The Service has used SHA in the past to expand existing reintroduction sites (the OO Ranch in Arizona is recently under SHA to provide additional habitat for Aubrey Valley).

Biological factors:

The area being considered for SHA has contained BFF habitat in the past and it was occupied by BFFs that dispersed from the main complex.

It fits into the definition of a 7km complex of prairie dogs with the primary site (Butte Creek), meaning that colonies are less than 7km away (edge-to-edge distance), and BFFs can and will move that distance. When these areas were mapped in 2006 (as part of the initial assessment of BFF reintroduction into the area) they were less than 5km apart.

The Butte Creek site is the largest known prairie dog area in Kansas and contributes significantly to BFF recovery as one of the top performing sites. Adding additional acreage to the site only increases the biological viability of this site to contribute to BFF recovery.

Observable maximum footprint of the SHA (see map) would add 400-500 additional Ha to the existing current 2200 Ha Butte Creek complex, a 19% increase in the complex size.

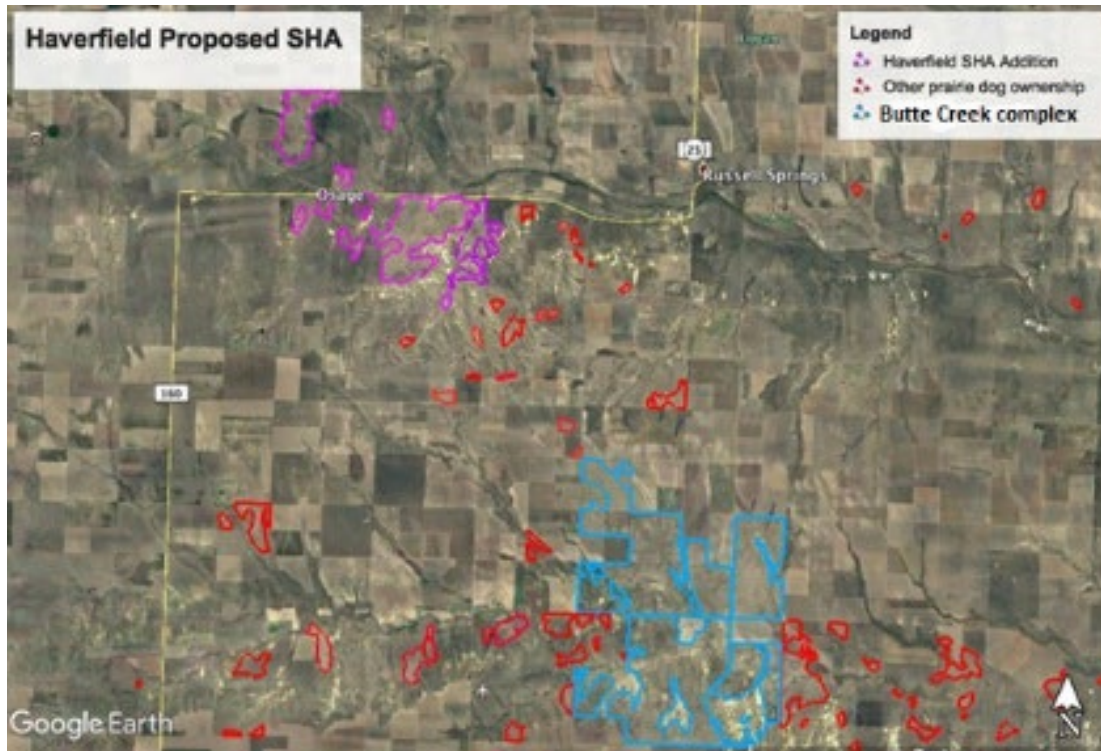
Would add habitat for an additional 3-4 breeding females, which would help stabilize the population dynamics of the site and bring it closer to contributing to recovery objectives.

Will allow monitoring and may already be occupied by ferrets, which are currently outside the programmatic management framework, and therefore could bring additional ferrets under umbrella of program.

Will reduce need for future augmentation (reduced cost).

The proposed SHA area contains more prairie dog acres than the SHA recently added in New Mexico (Moore Ranch).

This area continues to be free from known plague. Only 2 of the 30 BFF recovery sites have not documented plague.



Political/social factors:

May encourage other landowners to enroll in SHA.

Would relieve County Commission of obligation to continue to pursue compliance with nuisance ordinances.

Would relieve County Commission of obligation and expense of pre-treatment ferret surveys.

Haverfields report that no neighbors have raised any complaints with regard to status quo.