



# News Release

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**Southwest Region (Arizona • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas)** [www.fws.gov/southwest/](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/)

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## **Service Approves Lesser Prairie-Chicken Programmatic Conservation Bank**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has approved LPC Conservation LLC (Wayne Walker, Common Ground Capital)'s Programmatic Conservation Bank for the lesser prairie-chicken. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement (LPC PCBA) is the first of its kind and will assist in the recovery of the lesser prairie-chicken while providing benefits to landowners who are interested in conserving their lands and to those undertaking projects that may impact the species. The first two LPC PCBA approved parcels, totaling approximately 29,082 acres, are located in Kansas, which is currently the state with the largest lesser prairie-chicken population.

"The Service commends LPC Conservation LLC for taking a landscape approach to conservation banking," said Benjamin Tuggle, the Service's Southwest Regional Director. "The Programmatic Conservation Bank Agreement promotes long-term conservation of the lesser prairie-chicken and its habitat. In conjunction with other efforts, including the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies LPC Range-wide Plan, it will result in unprecedented conservation for the chicken while allowing on-the-ground projects to move forward."

The LPC PCBA covers the lesser prairie-chicken's five range states: Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and Kansas. It will help ensure lands used for ranching, farming or other agricultural purposes can also function as viable habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken across its range. It will assist in the restoration and management of lesser prairie-chicken habitat and will reconnect important chicken habitat as additional large parcels are approved across the landscape. This benefits landowners, developers, the species and the natural history of the Southern Great Plains ecosystem.

Through conservation banks, the Service works with landowners across the country to conserve species and their habitats. Lands within conservation banks are protected and permanently managed for species that are endangered, threatened, candidates for potential listing in the future as endangered or threatened, or are otherwise at-risk species. Conservation banks offset unavoidable 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 unavoidable adverse impacts their projects have on species may purchase the credits from conservation bank owners to mitigate their impacts.

The Service and LPC Conservation LLC began working together on the LPC PCBA in November 2013. LPC Conservation LLC is a private organization working to permanently protect and restore habitat for species such as the lesser prairie-chicken and the American burying beetle.

The Service has considered the lesser prairie-chicken, a species of prairie grouse commonly recognized for its colorful spring mating display and stout build, to be a species in trouble for the past 15 years. Its population is in rapid decline, due largely to habitat loss and fragmentation and the ongoing drought in the southern Great Plains. Once abundant across much of the five range states of Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado, the lesser prairie-chicken's historical range of native grasslands and prairies has been reduced by an estimated 84 percent. On April 10, 2014, the Service listed the lesser prairie-chicken as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

For more information on the lesser prairie-chicken, please visit

[www.fws.gov/southwest/es/LPC.html](http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/LPC.html). Additional information on LPC Conservation LLC and the LPC PCBA are available at [www.commongroundcapital.com](http://www.commongroundcapital.com).

America's fish, wildlife, and plant resources belong to all of us, and ensuring the health or imperiled species is a shared responsibility. We're working to actively engage conservation partners and the public in the search for improved and innovative ways to conserve and recover imperiled species.

*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, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels:*

