

Peer Review Plan for the Species Status Assessment of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*)

About the Documents

Titles:

- 1) Species Status Assessment for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*)

Description of Documents:

The Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) (LEPC) is a species of prairie grouse that occurs in the prairies of the Southern Great Plains in parts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The LEPC has experienced substantial and protracted declines in distribution and abundance due to habitat loss and fragmentation across its range prompting concern about its status. This report summarizes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's SSA for the LEPC. The purpose of the SSA is to summarize the most relevant information regarding LEPC life history and ecology, document the current condition of the LEPC and its habitat, and forecast the future condition of LEPC and its habitat, taking into account the environmental factors that are most influencing the LEPC and its habitats.

The LEPC became a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1998 and was listed as a threatened species in 2014. The listing was vacated in 2015 following a lawsuit. In September 2016, we received a new petition to list the LEPC as endangered, and in November 2016, we made a 90-day petition finding that the petition provided substantial information that the petitioned action may be warranted. We are now evaluating the LEPC to make a 12-month petition finding to determine whether listing under the ESA is warranted. The SSA Report provides the biological information and analysis to inform the 12-month petition finding.

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Review: Individual letters

Number of reviewers: The peer review process will include written requests for peer review from at least six peer reviewers.

Selection of Peer Reviewers: The Service will select peer reviewers based on their expertise with the subject matter.

Reviewer expertise: Expertise that will be sought for the review includes familiarity with the life history, threats, and habitat requirements for the lesser prairie chicken, as well as experts in climate change; oil and gas; and other grouse species.

Estimated start date of peer review: August 28, 2020.

About Public Participation

Opportunities for the Public: If the 12-month finding results in a proposed rule, it would have a 60-day public comment period from approximately June 2021 to August 2021. The proposed rule would identify specific information requested from the public. Public comments would be

submitted electronically through www.regulations.gov.

Contact:

Sabrina West; sabrina_west@fws.gov

916-955-0890