



Lesser Prairie-Chicken Coordination Call Minutes Oct. 18, 2012

MODERATOR: Barth Crouch

PARTICIPANTS: Monty Breneman, Chanda Pettie, Matt Smith, Sean Kyle, Chris Berens, Allison Arnold, Don Kahl, Kelly Corman, Chuck Kowaleski, Rod Winkler, Aron Flanders, Daly Edmunds, Ron Klataske, Zach Eddy, Mark Witecha, Allie Rath, Jon Haufler, Alex Renjel, Dave Mehlman, Jason Thomas, John Kuba, Steve Swaffar, Jon Ungerer, Christopher Rustay, Bob McCready

Folks can hit *6 to mute their phone while on the call.

USFWS UPDATE ON LEPC STATUS

Allison Arnold noted that a 60-day extension has been granted for proposing a rule for listing of the LEPC. The rule proposal will happen between now and Nov. 29. The final listing decision date of Sept. 28, 2013 will not change. There will be only 10 months between the proposed rule and the final rule and there will be extensive public comment period. The FWS is working with the state agencies, NRCS and FSA, to develop plans and strategies across the range.

A conference report has been completed between the FWS and NRCS. FWS is now working towards updating that into a conference opinion. FWS is also initiating work with FSA to develop a conference opinion. Any actions that agencies are engaged in will be analyzed and emergency haying and grazing will be addressed among those issues. A fact sheet on the new deadlines will be developed. Notices of this will be published and a press release has already been put on the FWS website. Other materials will be issued as soon as FWS can develop them. The dates of public meetings will be announced soon. Everything will be available on the FWS LEPC page.

NRCS LPCI UPDATE

Jon Ungerer noted that the NRCS met with FWS last week regarding developing a conference opinion. This will be an ongoing effort. One of the practices to be revised is CP 612 developed for beneficial shrub plantings in the range of the LEPC. Particulars on CP 612 will be sent out after a review with partners has been completed. After next week, a direction for 2013 LPCI will be determined.

LPC INTERSTATE WORKING GROUP (IWG) UPDATE

At the August meeting the IWG convened its Science Team which resulted in range-wide draft population goals. The goals will be supported and refined in the future. The IWG developed draft guidelines for LEPC habitat and the habitat needed in focal areas. They agreed on a path for a 3-part LEPC habitat evaluation process involving ecological site descriptions partly based on the NRCS wildlife habitat evaluation and a Habitat Suitability Index format. IWG and states are in the process of delineating draft habitat focal areas. Each state is designating an implementation team to review those focal areas. KS and CO have had their first meetings and OK has already completed this work.

There will be an IWG meeting in Wichita at end of October. They will discuss the status of the Range-Wide Plan and status of state focal areas, the habitat assessment protocol, they will draft metrics for habitat loss and discussing guidelines for voluntary offsets and other credit programs during the first day. Day two will be all about the CHAT revision and development of a range-wide LEPC habitat conservation tool and data delivery options

Question: How does the public find out about these future meetings? Each state may have a LEPC page. The IWG is trying to involve all partners to make the process is as transparent as possible. The website lesserprairiechicken.org will be going online in the next month or so. There will be opportunities to comment on drafts of the Range-wide Plan... let Jon Haufler know if you are interested. Send an email to janc@gci.net and Jan Caulfield will add you to that stakeholder list.

Range-wide Oil and Gas CCAA. States have been approached by reps of six Oil and Gas companies. Associations have been working on a CCAA draft agreement. Expect to hear more about this in the near future.

LEPC RANGE-WIDE PLAN UPDATE

Jon Haufler noted that the Range-wide plan would be discussed at the IWG meeting next week and initial work will be reviewed then. There will be state by state public meetings to comment on the plan. In Kansas, evening meetings will be Nov. 13-14-15 in Ness City, Ulysses, and Greensburg, respectively.

Information is being compiled right now as are draft focal area maps. Plans are for a complete Draft Plan to be out by Jan-Feb. Committees have been established to look at linkages, etc. through the IWG being developed in Wichita.

Each state is developing their own public meetings. EMRI is involved in the KS process. Texas will be having theirs soon. Colorado had their first meeting last week. NM will have their first meeting October 30. First or second week in November for Texas for the implementation team meetings.

Link to **GREAT PLAINS FIRE EXCHANGE** newsletter

<http://gpfirescience.us4.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=deaf74aa2fbf05a110fa8c9b8&id=d9968b6d7e>

OTHER ITEMS

Kirby Brown will no longer be on the LEPC calls. He has left the Texas Wildlife Association and has taken a position with Ducks Unlimited. His new contact information is kbrown@ducks.org and phone # is 210-213-2805.

Ron Klataske asked what might happen a year from now if the LEPC isn't listed? What will happen to all the conservation efforts?

First year of aerial surveys was started and FWS hopes that this will continue into the future. The efforts that have started now will have to be continued in order for an unwarranted decision to stand. States are also aware that they need to continue or Wild Earth Guardians or someone else will again sue to list. Companies such as oil and gas also are starting to realize this. Allison noted that if that situation were to come to pass that the commitments being made into the future would have no credibility if they weren't followed through to completion.

Next call will be November 15th due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.