

# Lesser Prairie-Chicken Coordination Call Minutes July , 18 2013

MODERATOR: Barth Crouch

**PARTICIPANTS:** Mike Corn, Noe Marymore, Dave Walker, Zac Eddy, Philip Barbour, Carol Beidleman, Steve Tryon, Allison Arnold, Chris Berens, Jon Haufler, Aron Flanders, Patty Knupp, Mark Witecha, Michele Witecha, Wayne Walker, David Hoge, Peter McDonald, Eileen Day, Sean Kyle, Jon Ungerer, Christian Hagen, Bob McCready, Chuck Kowaleski, Peter McDonald and at least 12 others not recognized

## Update on Listing Extension - Allison Arnold

July 9, the USFWS announced a 6 mos. extension for final listing decision which will now be no later than March 30, 2014. We are now in a 30-day open comment period which will end in early August.

# **Update on the FWS/NRCS/FSA Conference Opinion Process** - David Hoge, Dave Walker and Jon Ungerer

Good progress on developing both conference opinions -- both the NRCS/USFWS and the FSA/USFWS processes. With NRCS, that Conf Opinion is nearly complete and should enter into final R2 approval process very soon. The FSA process benefitted from the NRCS document and has worked through some unique challenges presented by CRP such as emergency haying and grazing, but making good progress. The 5-state plan has proved to be a very helpful document in producing both documents. Q: any opportunity for comment from state agencies or others? There is usually an opportunity for the federal agency (i.e., FSA and NRCS in this case) at their discretion to distribute the Conf. Opinion docs to others for review. There is no federal register process because this is not a NEPA process. Those involved will attempt to get the opinions out to states for review.

#### Update on how the recent CRP General signup went for LEPC - David Hoge

An announcement regarding numbers of accepted offers and acres should be coming in the very near future in order to give time for all the accepted contract offer conservation plans to be written before September 30th.

#### Update on the LPCI and partner input on LPCI process - Jon Ungerer

NRCS is evaluating their many special initiatives and would like to get input on each initiative. Partners will be asked to provide input regarding the LCPI. Specifically, prior to the next call, Jon

will send out a survey sheet document detailing the process and on the next call, participants can provide their feedback. Q: Would this be a good process to propose new practices that would benefit LEPC conservation? Yes, this would definitely be a great place to suggest new practices. There will also be an effort to engage partners with the goal of extending the SWAT private land biologist positions. Maintaining the continuity of these positions is a priority since they are only funded through mid 2014. A significant portion of the upcoming August 22nd LEPC Coordination Call will be devoted to this exercise so be sure to review the survey when it comes and come on the call prepared to participate.

### **Update on LPCIWG activities** - Sean Kyle

LPCIWG continues to work on draft 4 of range-wide plan and is hoping to release this around August 1st along with the new version of the CHAT. The new CHAT will essentially be the spatial representation of the focal areas and other parts of the 5 state plan. Expect significantly more info in the CHAT that will support siting decisions, mitigation, etc.

## Results of spring lek surveys as compiled - Sean Kyle

IWG just received the draft report and are reviewing the results of the spring helicopter surveys. General impression of results - numbers were down both from ground and helicopter surveys. LPCIWG will give more detail on results after reviewing the report.

### Discussion on CRP emergency hay/graze in LEPC areas

In TX, TPWD was not informed that emergency haying and grazing would be permitted which was problematic. At this point, they don't have numbers of acres that were actually hayed or grazed, but the numbers may be quite small. It is raining now and has significantly rained in some areas in west Texas and eastern New Mexico which may help alleviate cover problems for the birds.

### Discussion on Vegetative Sampling, what did LEPC hens have to nest in?

From some of the surveys in West Central KS conducted, conditions were quite good, especially in early June. In Hodgeman and Ness County, KS the native range was in rough condition but the expired CRP was in much better and providing excellent cover. Similar conditions of native range and CRP were observed in South Central KS.

NEXT CALL IS August 22th, call 719-457-0816 and use 127349 for access to the call!

A reminder to call participants-Please mute your phone if you are not talking on the call, this call had a loud side conversation that made it hard to hear the presenters!