



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN

Status: Not listed, September 2015



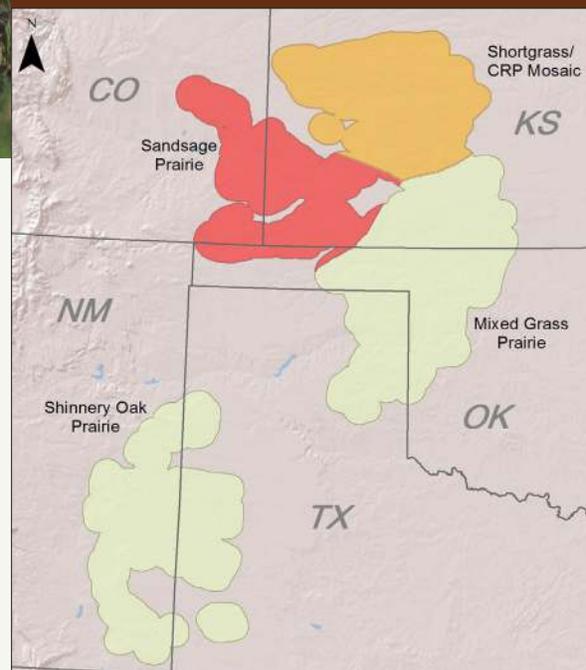
An icon of America’s grasslands, the lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) is a ground-nesting species of grouse found only in the southern Great Plains. Best known for their dramatic courtship display, lesser prairie-chickens depend on grassland habitats that have evolved under the interaction of fire and large herbivore grazing over the years. Primarily due to large-scale loss and fragmentation of habitat, their range distribution has been reduced by roughly 85 percent. Currently, lesser prairie-chickens inhabit portions of five states — Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado.

About 95 percent of the lesser prairie-chicken’s habitat is privately owned. With nearly all their habitat under private ownership, voluntary actions by private landowners are pivotal to the bird’s success.

NRCS and the Prairie Chicken

NRCS launched the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (LPCI) in 2010 to strategically focus conservation efforts to maximize biological benefits to prairie chicken populations. NRCS’ efforts are part of Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), through which NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help ranchers restore and protect habitat for prairie chickens in five Great Plains states to improve habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken and improve sustainability and productivity of grazing lands. WLFW also provides ranchers with regulatory predictability under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which ensures regulatory compliance for ranchers who continue to manage their ranches using NRCS-prescribed conservation practices for up to 30 years.

PROJECT BOUNDARY



Actions

- Support sustainable grazing management that provides nesting cover and supports native plants.
- Increase connectivity of habitat.
- Improve management of weeds and invasive species.
- Reduce tillage on agricultural fields.
- Protect, maintain and restore large tracts of grasslands and prairies.
- Maintain stability of land use and conserve shrub-dominated habitats near lek sites.

Outcomes and Impacts

WLFW is enhancing NRCS’ ongoing conservation efforts to support prairie chicken recovery by strategically focusing resources to promote healthy grazing lands management. Anticipated long-term outcomes of this initiative are improved rangeland health, greater connectivity of core prairie chicken habitat, and stabilization or recovery of prairie chicken populations.



Through conservation, ranchers are helping the prairie chicken and other wildlife while improving operations. Photo by Jeremy Roberts.

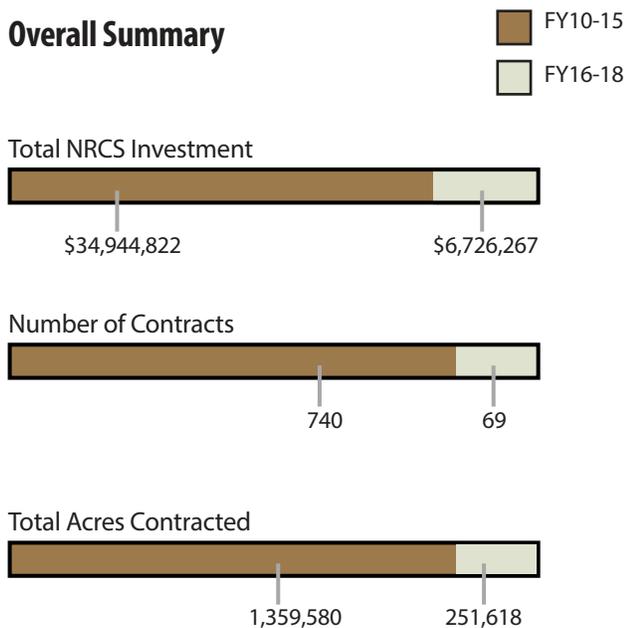
Fiscal Year 2018 Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance Contract Summary			
State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Colorado	4,479	\$117,302	2
Kansas	0	\$0	0
New Mexico	53,726	\$754,266	6
Oklahoma	2,265	\$173,063	5
Texas	22,812	\$605,785	10
Totals	83,282	\$1,650,416	23

Data source: NRCS Resource Economics, Analysis and Policy Division, October 2018.

NRCS Goals

Through LPCI, NRCS works with producers to restore habitat for lesser prairie-chicken to increase populations, provide habitat for other grassland and prairie species, and provide predictability to producers, ensuring they can continue managing their working lands. NRCS is working to address the following threats to prairie chicken: degraded rangeland health, invasive conifers, invasive mesquite, cultivation of grazing lands, and lack of fire in grassland habitats.

Overall Summary



FY16-18 Conservation

Strategy Milestones: Addressing Threats to Lesser Prairie-Chickens

