The Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative’s approach to rangeland management helps keep lesser prairie-chickens booming. How? By growing healthy grasslands that benefit both livestock and native wildlife.

In 2010, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) launched the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative to help ranchers and farmers voluntarily enhance lesser prairie-chicken habitat while improving the long-term sustainability of their agricultural operations.

Part of a suite of NRCS landscape-level conservation initiatives across the country, LPCI applies Farm Bill funds to enhance habitat in the lesser prairie-chicken’s five-state range. With 95% of lesser prairie-chicken habitat on private lands, empowering landowners to improve rangelands is essential to conserving and expanding lesser prairie-chicken populations. Here’s how we do it:

Win-win Conservation. Offering financial and technical support, LPCI works with willing landowners to plan and implement practices that help lesser prairie-chickens and enhance agricultural operations.

Providing Predictability. LPCI’s message to ranchers is clear—when you enroll land with LPCI, follow a sustainable grazing plan, and complete other conservation practices to benefit lesser prairie-chickens, you can continue your agricultural operation without fear of Endangered Species Act regulation.

Success through Partnership. More than 30 agencies, nonprofit organizations, universities, and private businesses have pooled resources and know-how to conserve rural agriculture and provide habitat for native wildlife. Partners fund LPCI field staff members, who work one-on-one with private landowners.

Science-based Action. How do we know if range management strategies are working? LPCI-funded field research tracks lesser prairie-chicken populations and assesses the benefits of habitat improvements. Findings continually refine on-the-ground management practices.

Follow the LPCI Partnership
• www.lpcinitiative.org
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Estimated Occupied Range for Lesser Prairie-Chickens

LPCI Action Area

Keeping lesser prairie-chickens booming through sustainable range management.

Oklahoma

Colorado

New Mexico

Texas

Kansas

Estimated Occupied Range for Lesser Prairie-Chickens

LPCI Action Area

Leks Keep ‘em Booming!
For thousands of years, herds of large herbivores, namely bison and elk, have inhabited the Great Plains. Prairie plants and wildlife are adapted to periodic, intensive grazing. LPCI field staff work with ranchers to develop grazing strategies that mimic this natural dynamic. Carefully planned and managed livestock grazing can improve nesting and brood-rearing habitats for lesser prairie-chickens.

Woody Plant Removal: Maintaining Healthy Prairies

Invasive woody plants, such as eastern red cedar and mesquite, reduce the quality and extent of prairie habitat. What’s more, they give predators places to hide and perch. With LPCI financial and technical support, ranchers can remove woody invasives using mechanical and chemical methods, and utilize prescribed fire for control.

Fire—a natural part of the prairie ecosystem—invigorates native shrubs, grasses, and forbs that lesser prairie-chickens and other native prairie wildlife rely on for food and shelter.

Follow the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative in our collaborative conservation work across the Southern Great Plains. www.lpcinitiative.org

Conservation Reserve Program: Increasing Grassland Habitat

New grassland habitat can be created—that’s the inspiring message of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP offers financial and technical support to agricultural producers who take marginal cropland out of production and plant it back into grassland. The program encourages practices that promote wildlife habitat, like shallow disking and prescribed burning.

As a result, lesser prairie-chickens have returned to parts of their historical range, as well as to new areas they were not known to previously inhabit. CRP grasslands increase the connectivity of prairie habitats, which helps lesser prairie-chicken populations respond to drought and other stressors.

LPCI by the Numbers (2010-2014)

- More than 400 private landowners have enrolled 750,000+ acres in LPCI’s voluntary range-enhancement programs.
- Woody plant removal has improved prairie habitat on more than 170,000 acres of LPCI-enrolled land.
- Partner organizations pool funding to support up to 13 field staff working directly with ranchers to improve lesser prairie-chicken habitat.
- NRCS investments of more than $14 million have resulted in over $20 million in on-the-ground habitat conservation practices.
- Since 1998, the Farm Service Agency has enrolled more than 5.8 million acres of CRP lands in lesser prairie-chicken range.