



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Working Lands for Wildlife



Photo by Linda Rockwell

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has entered into an agreement with the Department of Interior United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) referenced as the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership whereby land owners/producers will receive predictability, exempting them from any incidental take of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken caused by the implementation and maintenance of conservation practices in a conservation plan.

The USFWS announced a final listing of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on March 27, 2014. The special 4(d) rule issued by USFWS will allow landowners who are following conservation practices considered compliant with a WLFW conservation plan to receive ESA predictability. (See details on the back.)



Q&A

What does listing as Threatened mean?

The term “threatened species” means any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

What does this mean for land owners/operators?

Two-thirds of federally listed species have at least some habitat on private land, and some species have most of their remaining habitat on private land. The USFWS and NRCS have developed an array of tools and incentives to protect the interests of private landowners while encouraging management activities that benefit listed species and other at-risk species.

What tool/incentive does NRCS offer?

WLFW is a partnership between the NRCS, the USFWS, and private landowners. The voluntary effort:

- Provides farmers and ranchers with ESA predictability options through a conservation plan
- Helps restore populations of specific declining wildlife species, in this case the Lesser Prairie-Chicken
- Strengthens rural economies by protecting the productivity of working lands

What is ESA Predictability?

ESA Predictability protects the landowner from incidental take of Lesser Prairie-Chicken if it is listed, provided the landowner is applying conservation practices as planned in the WLFW plan.

What is exempt?

Exempt means that as long as practices are implemented according to NRCS standards and specifications and associated conservation measures no additional changes or requirements are needed or imposed later.

What is Incidental Take?

The ESA makes it unlawful for a person to take a listed animal without a permit. Take is defined as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in such conduct.” Through regulations, the term “harm” is defined as “an act which actually kills or injures wildlife.” Such an act may include significant habitat modification or degradation where it actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential breeding patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” Landowners who voluntarily sign up for WLFW receive the ESA Predictability that they will be exempted from any incidental take of the species caused by the implementation of WLFW conservation practices and associated conservation measures.

Where to go to find out more about Working Lands for Wildlife?

Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS Service Center. An NRCS planner will determine if habitat on the property is suitable or can be improved or created to benefit the Lesser Prairie-Chicken. If so, the NRCS planner and the landowner will jointly develop a conservation plan that will recommend a combination of conservation practices and measures for the landowner to apply in order to create or improve the habitat for the species.