



Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution 11-10

Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation

A. BACKGROUND

1. The Lesser Prairie Chicken is a grassland obligate game bird that occurs in the mixed-grass and short-grass native rangelands of Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, Texas and New Mexico.
2. The populations of the Lesser Prairie Chicken, an iconic symbol of the mixed-grass prairie and an indicator species whose presence attests to the overall health of the grassland community in which it occurs, have been declining, rangewide, for many years.
3. The Lesser Prairie Chicken, a candidate, since 1998, for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened or endangered under the authority of the Endangered Species Act of 1976, due to its recently elevated listing priority status, is likely to be listed as threatened in the near future.
4. Today, the impact of listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken is largely unknown, but has potential to negatively impact the economy of the area in which it occurs by imposing additional regulations or restrictions on activities occurring within the range of the Lesser Prairie Chicken, which may hinder or curtail activities with potential to boost local economies.
5. The states of Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, Texas and New Mexico, with funding through the Western Governors' Association, have developed a five state Decision Support System (DSS) for the Lesser Prairie Chicken that identifies important habitat and movement corridors for the species across political jurisdictions. The Lesser Prairie Chicken DSS will be publically available in summer 2011 and will be maintained and updated over the long-term.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Governors support the development of a conservation plan for Lesser Prairie Chickens across their entire range to protect, enhance, and restore their habitat while also addressing other factors leading to their decline.
2. Western Governors' support cooperative management efforts among the states that will bring together agencies, researchers, landowners and industry leaders to cooperatively guide the efforts to restore Lesser Prairie Chicken populations while encouraging responsible development.

3. Western Governors recognize that cooperative conservation of the Lesser Prairie Chicken is desirable in order to help restore healthy populations of the Lesser Prairie Chicken.
4. The decline in Lesser Prairie Chicken populations can be minimized or curtailed in areas throughout their five-state range in a manner that is compatible with economic development. Western Governors support the work of the 5 states in developing a range-wide DSS for Lesser Prairie Chickens that is a cooperative, state-led management effort including all stakeholders with an interest in Lesser Prairie Chicken research, management, and conservation. Governors encourage the utilization of the LEPC DSS by federal and state agencies, industry, conservation groups and private citizens.
5. A Lesser Prairie Chicken conservation plan and planning tools like the DSS should be utilized by developers and decision makers to appropriately plan development in ways most beneficial to Lesser Prairie Chickens and their conservation, while still supporting necessary development. The governors further support ways to incentivize Lesser Prairie Chicken and habitat conservation, and encourage responsible development.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. Western Governors direct WGA to work with Congress, the Administration, and other appropriate entities to implement the policies contained in this resolution
2. This resolution will be posted on the WGA website to be referred to and distributed as necessary, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and relevant industry trade associations.

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