

LPC Conservation Leverages Habitat Conservation Plan to Protect Endangered Species on Kansas Prairie

Private Landowner Provides “Last of the Best” Prairie Grassland for Lesser Prairie Chicken

AUSTIN, TX, UNITED STATES, September 27, 2023 / EINPresswire.com/ -- LPC Conservation, LLC, a Texas-based collaborative of conservation bankers, who invest in permanent easements partnering with private ranchers for protecting endangered species, has leveraged a unique Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), approved by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, to permanently conserve approximately 3,000 acres of native prairie habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken in Gove County, Kansas.



the lesser prairie chicken has fewer than 500 birds remaining in eastern NM and TX

The HCP is resolving conflicts with protecting the lesser prairie-chicken under the Endangered Species Act and renewable energy permitting delays. LPC Conservation, LLC has advanced the

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Wayne Walker

bird's recovery, helped sustain a working ranch, and enabled a major clean energy transmission line to win approval. LPC Conservation operates in the five states where the lesser prairie-chicken is found: Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Wayne Walker, CEO of LPC Conservation, said: “Our business delivers robust legal protection under the Endangered Species Act for renewable energy, transmission and oil and gas projects. Our customers earn

that assurance by funding strategic, effective conservation approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Market-based payments reward ranchers for their stewardship as they continue

running cattle, hunting and working their lands.”

LPC Conservation’s first project under the Renewables and Transmission HCP paired the construction of a renewable energy power line in Colorado with habitat offsets in adjoining Kansas identified as among the last few strongholds of the largest populations of lesser prairie chicken supported by the best habitat quality.

Amy Lueders, Regional Director for the Southwest Region of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, noted: “This habitat conservation plan was designed to offset impacts from participating renewable energy projects and transmission lines by strategically conserving key lands for the lesser prairie-chicken in perpetuity. Collaborations like this play a vital role in conserving imperiled species and their habitats while providing needed regulatory certainty to support development. We congratulate LPC Conservation and their landowner partners in securing valuable native prairie habitat to offset this project.”

The transaction will allow additional clean energy to flow in Colorado to rural and underserved communities and help establish new habitat areas in Colorado.

Walker said, “We supported the Colorado powerline with Kansas habitat to ensure the last of the best habitat is secured first. Payments received are supporting our negotiations with Colorado ranchers to restore habitat there in the future.”

“We can now pay Colorado ranchers a market rate for permanent working easements and large-scale restoration on their property along with the other benefits that conservation banks afford.”

Stacy Hoeme is the rancher and beef producer who owns the habitat site in Kansas. His family is a winner of the Leopold award for his conservation practices in Kansas.

“We are glad to get it done,” said Hoeme, who plans to use the funds generated by the easement to keep the multi-generational ranch in his family. “We know the only way to save this iconic bird is to provide them with the very best grassland habitat remaining in the Southern Plains, and we have sustained those prairie grasses right here in Kansas. The deal is backed by an endowment to ensure its success.”

The powerline is a project of Xcel Energy-Colorado. The utility company has a proven record of conservation commitments for the Lesser Prairie Chicken and other wildlife species and is an industry leader in the transition to an economically beneficial clean energy generation fleet, supported by new transmission infrastructure for its customers.

Several other companies are involved in the transaction. Common Ground Capital, RiverBank Conservation, and RS Flat Swamp are entities within LPC Conservation. The Barn Group, a land conservation firm, holds the easement on the habitat site and played a supporting role in

securing credit release from USFWS. LPC Conservation, LLC is a special purpose joint venture or affiliate of Common Ground Capital.

About Xcel's Colorado Power Pathway

Colorado's Power Pathway has proposed a \$1.7 billion grid investment to boost the regional economy, which may grow to \$2 billion, to build a transmission backbone to tap into renewable resources, increase system resilience and heighten power reliability. Xcel's CPP is a long-term, coordinated planning effort guided by its company priorities to lead the clean energy transition, keep power bills low and enhance the customer experience. The CPP also helps fulfill President Biden's Clean Energy Program to revitalize energy communities and reduce dependency on foreign nations for America's clean energy future.

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