NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
New Mexico

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Conference Report

Required Conservation Measures

All practices listed below, which are planned within the lesser prairie chicken Action Area, will follow the conservation measures as outlined in the Conference Report; regardless of whether the client is participating in the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPCI).

With one exception: If a client chooses to implement Prescribed Grazing (528) without applying the conservation measures, the action will not be covered by the Endangered Species Act certainty provided by the Report.

Practice Name	*Evaluated in the Conference Report*[1]
Access Control (472)	X
Brush Management (314)	X
Cover Crop (340)	X
Critical Area Planting (342)	X
Fence (382)	X
Fire Break (394)	X
Forage and Biomass Planting (512)	X
Forage Harvest Management (511)	X
Grade Stabilization Structure (410)	X
Herbaceous Weed Control (315)	X
Obstruction Removal (500)	X
Pipeline (516)	X
Pond (378)	X
Prescribed Burning (338)	X
Prescribed Grazing (528) 528 is a required practice when participating in the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPCI), and when livestock are present.	X
Pumping Plant (533)	X
Range Planting (550)	X
Restoration/Mgmt of Rare/Declining Habitats (643)	X
Spring Development (574)	X
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) 645 is a required practice when participating in the Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative (LPCI).	X
Water Well (642)	X
Watering Facility (614)	X

[1] U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and NRCS's 2011 Lesser Prairie-Chicken Conference Report.

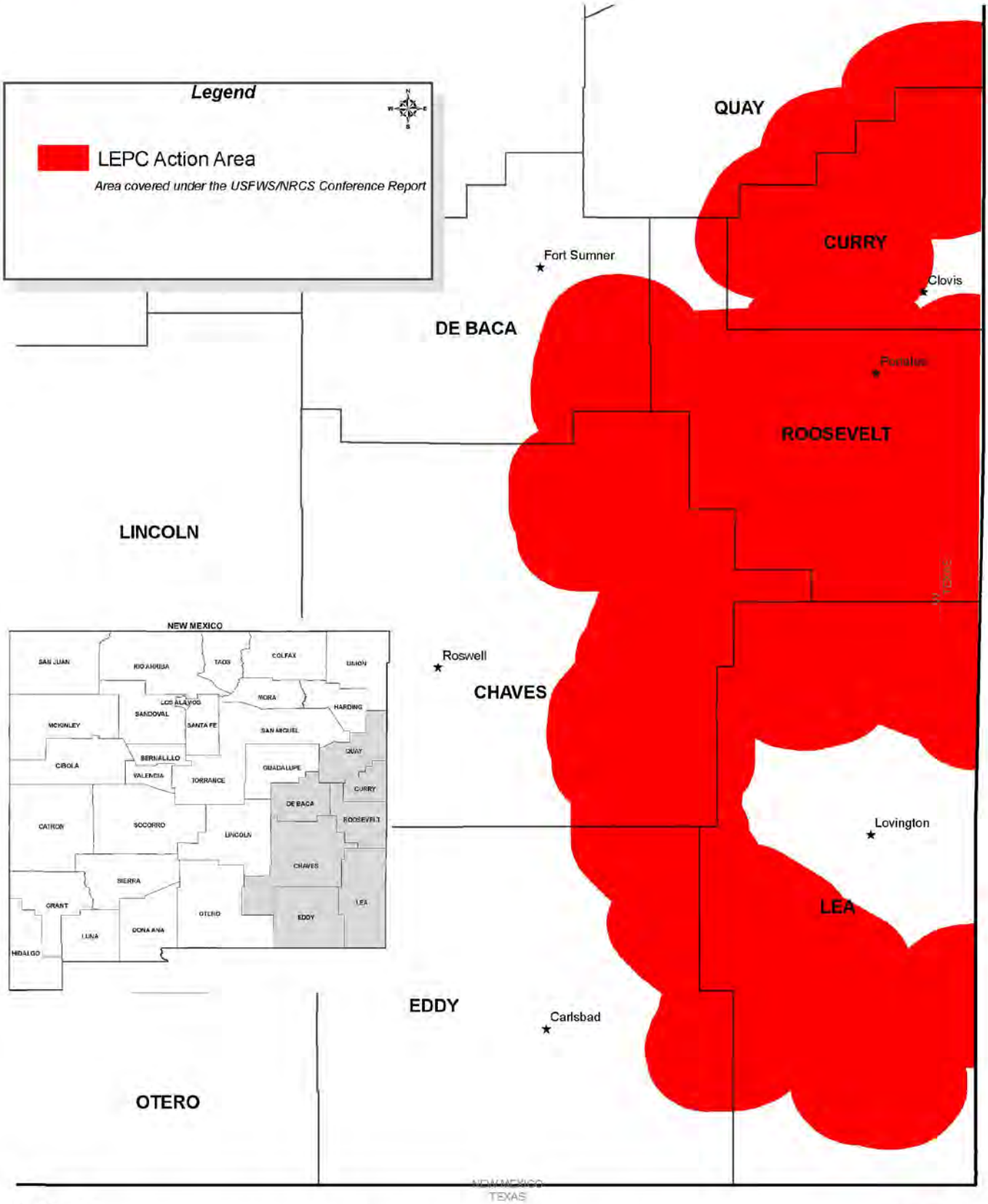
Note: if a practice is not listed, there are no LPC conservation measures for that practice.

All practices will be completed and installed according to NM NRCS standards and specifications (FOTG Section IV).

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Conference Report
Action Area

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
New Mexico NRCS



Data Sources:
*Shapefile Layer Available At: NM Sharepoint/Biology/Lesser Prairie-Chicken or F:/geodata/wildlife

Scale: 1:1,550,000
Map Provided by C. Pettie 01/31/2012

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Lesser Prairie Chicken Conference Report 2011

Conservation Measures for Each Conservation Practice Standard

(excerpt from the original document)

Access Control (472)

472 Conservation Measures:

1] This practice standard will be designed to support other practices which will create the desired habitat conditions for the LPC as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).
- *All current NMDGF recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Routine follow-up will occur to monitor the effectiveness of the practice, at least annually.

3] If fence construction is needed to facilitate this practice, use practice 382 Fence conservation measures.

Brush Management (314)

314 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
- No treatment within 45 meters (150 feet) of Sand Hills ecological sites (i.e. dunes). See the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, Section II for detailed description of sand hills ecological sites. http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/fotg/section-2/esd.html
- Design will be in irregular shapes (mosaics), designed to blend into the natural landscape. Treatment will not be in large blocks or strips.
- Within the area allowed to be treated; no more than 50 percent of an individual management unit (pasture) will be treated during any two year period. This will reduce the impact on forb production; reduce the loss of winter forage resources for the LPC, and minimize the risk and uncertainty to the species due to climatic factors.
- Limited herbicide application rate will be used as identified in the NM Biology Technical Note No. 53 in the 314 Brush Management standard. Full control is not authorized within LPC or DSL habitat ranges.

2] This practice standard will be designed to support other practices which will create the desired habitat conditions for the LPC as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).
- *All current NMDGF recommendations are provided in this document.*

3] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
- An exception was provided on April 19, 2012 by NMDGF for the control of invasive honey mesquite by aerial herbicide application; to modify the deferment period to March 1 to June 1 to allow this action.
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

4] Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation. Avoid disturbing the soil on sensitive areas with a high potential for soil erosion.

5] On disturbed areas, use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's) with consideration to LPC habitat needs; as provided in the LPC Conference Report and other related guidance.

6] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use practice 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measure.

7] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

8] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion and invasion by undesirable plants during practice planning and design.

9] The practice will be designed to minimize or avoid unintentional damage to non-target plants.

10] The implementation plan shall *clearly identify* any special resources that need to be avoided; such as riparian areas, wetlands/playas, leks, or habitat of other at-risk species.
- Refer to the NM Biology Technical Note No. 53, located in NM FOTG Section I. This tech. note provides: **Additional criteria when working within Dunes Sagebrush Lizard Habitat (DSL).** DSL habitat range map.

10a] No treatment within 500 meters (1,640 feet) of any sand dunes. These areas will be determined at a landscape scale rather than a dune-by-dune scale and will also delineate corridors for movement between dune complexes.

10b] Within DSL habitat range: Provide dispersal corridors between dunes within the dunes sagebrush lizard habitat. Do not treat the flats between occupied dunes and dunes suitable to be occupied that are separated by less than

2,000 meters (1.25 miles); to create a corridor at least 500 meters (1,640 feet) wide.

11] Large brush (>5 ft. tall) will be felled unless other considerations necessitate leaving them standing.

12] Woody slash shall be treated if significant buildup of fuels occurs. Slash piles shall be burned when wildfire risk is low (usually when soils are frozen or saturated). Follow state forestry laws, when applicable, for treating slash to minimize wildfire risk.

- NM Biology Technical Note No. 53 specifies that "Brush piles will be lopped-scattered, piled-and-burned, chipped or hauled off (i.e. not left in piles).

13] Treated sites may be deferred from livestock grazing for a period of time determined to be adequate based on pre and post site conditions (i.e. brush densities, potential for erosion, potential for plant community to improve in health, vigor and cover). NRCS with input from the State Technical Committee and the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) will identify appropriate deferment periods:

- NM Biology Technical Note No. 53 specifies that "rest or defer grazing for a minimum of one full growing season to ensure that the grass and forb community have an appropriate recovery period. A longer deferment period may be necessary to achieve the desired plant community conditions (i.e. drought or severely degraded range sites)".

14] This practice does not apply to removal of woody vegetation to facilitate a land use change.

15] NM Biology Technical Note No. 53 specifies that "A prescribed grazing plan will be applied, after the deferment period, that ensures: stocking rates are in balance with the forage supply; season of use is rotated through pastures to ensure plants have adequate reproduction opportunity; and that the plan is implemented to increase residual cover of perennial grasses and forbs. A mosaic of vegetation succession stages will be a goal of the grazing system".

15a] A drafted plan, developed with and agreed to by the cooperator, will be completed prior to implementing brush management; to ensure treatment success and longevity.

15b] The NRCS State Biologist will approve all grazing plans prior to implementation.

Cover Crop (340)

340 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.

- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. During installation, utilize soil erosion protection measures if potential for off-site soil erosion exists.

4] Monitor, evaluate and control New Mexico listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.

- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

5] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

6] Where practicable use of more than one cover crop species will provide greater benefit to LPC.

Critical Area Planting (342)

342 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.

- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. During installation, utilize soil erosion protection measures if potential for off-site soil erosion exists.

4] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions. Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications.

8] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

Fence (382)

382 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Alternatives to fencing will be evaluated prior to fence installation (e.g., water placement, placement of minerals, prescribed burning to achieve the desired outcome.

4] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

5] Shrub removal will only occur in a < 15 ft. wide swath where fences are being constructed.

6] Mark fences or use high visibility designs within 1/2 mile of a known lek when construction can't be avoided or relocated.
- Refer to the George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center (Sutton Center) guidelines provided online at: http://www.suttoncenter.org/pages/fence_marking_instructions
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

7] Temporary electric fencing may be used in some cases to minimize potential collision fatalities.

8] Permanent interior fence requires a maximum of 4 strands of wire < 42 inches high.

9] Permanent exterior fencing must meet local fence laws and insurance liability clauses.

10] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

Fire Break (394)

394 Conservation Measures:

1] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

2] Disked firebreaks will be allowed to re-establish or be seeded to beneficial grasses, forbs and legumes to provide bugging or brood rearing habitat.

3] State-listed noxious and invasive plants will be identified and controlled following firebreak installation.
   - USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

4] Firebreaks will only be installed as part of a grazing management or wildlife habitat plan.

5] Operate machinery in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape by methods such as starting operations in the middle of field and working outward, and/or by modify equipment with flush bar attachments.

Forage and Biomass Planting (512)

512 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

4] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications and NRCS biologist or New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) recommendations.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
   - USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] Operate machinery in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape by methods such as starting operations in the middle of field and working outward, and/or by modify equipment with flush bar attachments.

8] Control livestock access as needed to allow for initial establishment of new vegetative plantings and control weeds through flash grazing.

Forage Harvest Management (511)

511 Conservation Measures:

1] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March I through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

2] Operate machinery in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape by methods such as starting operations in the middle of field and working outward, and/or by modify equipment with flush bar attachments.

3] Leave corners, field borders, and odd areas un-harvested for supplemental cover and brood rearing habitat.

Grade Stabilization Structure (410)

410 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.

- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. During installation, utilize soil erosion protection measures if potential for off-site soil erosion exists.

4] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
   - USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications.

8] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

9] Ingress/egress routes will avoid nesting/brood-rearing/lek areas as mortality may occur on routes.

10] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

Herbaceous Weed Control (315)

315 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March I through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Spot treatment should be utilized where practicable.

4] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
   - USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

8] Operate machinery in a manner that allows wildlife to flush and escape by methods such as starting operations in the middle of field and working outward, and/or by modify equipment with flush bar attachments.

Obstruction Removal (500)

500 Conservation Measures:

1] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

2] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. During installation, utilize soil erosion protection measures if potential for off-site soil erosion exists.

3] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

4] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

5] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

6] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

7] Ingress/egress routes will avoid nesting/brood-rearing/lek areas as mortality may occur on routes.

8] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

Pipeline (516)

516 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

4] Design the pipeline route to minimize or avoid the loss of desirable shrubs during practice installation.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications.

8] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

9] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

Pond (378)

378 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

4] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

5] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

6] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

7] This practice will only be applied where needed to meet the daily water requirements of livestock and to facilitate prescribed livestock grazing distribution.

Prescribed Burning (338)

338 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] This practice standard will be designed to support other practices which will create the desired habitat conditions for the LPC as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).

3] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

Prescribed Grazing (528) - LPCI Core Supporting Management Practice

Note: For practices implemented through the Lesser Prairie-chicken Initiative (LPCI), the core practices Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) and Prescribed Grazing (528), when livestock are present, shall be used in all LPCI conservation plans in order to determine which, if any, facilitating conservation practices are needed, as well as the extent, location, and timing of facilitating practices to ensure that LPC habitat is maintained or improved following application.

528 Conservation Measures:

4] Implementation of grazing management plans, to the extent practicable, will meet habitat conditions for each habitat type as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).

5] Frequency-Grazing recurrence will occur at a rate necessary to create or maintain desired habitat structure. Grazing systems which prescribe high intensity or rapid forage removal will allow for adequate recovery time (non-grazed periods) to meet LPC habitat needs as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).

6] Duration-Grazing periods (days, weeks, or months) for scheduled grazing events will be designed to address limiting habitat factors as identified by the habitat assessments for the LPC. Scheduled grazing periods will also be used to manipulate or create desired or targeted habitat conditions as recommended by the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF).

7] Timing-Grazing events will be scheduled when possible to avoid potential disturbance to known breeding or lek sites.

8] Intensity-The amount of forage removed (or left) during any particular grazing cycle will be in keeping with the specific life cycle requirements (i.e. nesting, leking, brood rearing, etc.)

Pumping Plant (533)

533 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation

practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.

- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March I through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.

- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

4] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

5] Limit construction and access footprint and future vehicle traffic access to one vehicle width.

6] Windmills for pumping or power generation will not be used within the Action Area (unless individually approved by the Service).

7] Design solar panel mounting pole as short as possible to avoid use as raptor perch.

8] Minimize noise levels of fuel- powered plants to less than 40dbA.

Range Planting (550)

550 Conservation Measures:

9] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.

- *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

10] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.

- Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.
- State guidance was provided on April 19, 2012 on the options available when planning to convert non-native lovegrass stands to a more native rangeland, where conflicts arise with this deferment period. Refer to Appendix 2.

11] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion and invasion by undesirable plants during practice planning and design. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. Utilize soil erosion protection measures, if potential for soil erosion exists (silt fences etc.).

12] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

13] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications and NRCS biologist or New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) recommendations.

14] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.

- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

15] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

16] Control livestock access as needed to allow for initial establishment of new vegetative plantings and control weeds through flash grazing.

Restoration/Mgmt of Rare/Declining Habitats (643)

643 Conservation Measures:

1] The conservation measures identified under the core practice of Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) shall be used. In addition, any vegetative or structural facilitating practices used to implement this management practice will follow the conservation measures of the practice used.

2] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

3] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March I through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

Spring Development (574)

574 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identity appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion and invasion by undesirable plants during practice planning and design. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. Utilize soil erosion protection measures, if potential for soil erosion exists (silt fences etc).

4] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

5] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
   - USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

6] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

7] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications.

8] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

9] Ingress/egress routes will avoid nesting/brood-rearing/lek areas as mortality may occur on routes resulting from bird-vehicle collisions.

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) - LPCI Core Management Practice

Note: For practices implemented through the Lesser Prairie-chicken Initiative (LPCI), the core practices Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) and Prescribed Grazing (528), when livestock are present, shall be used in all LPCI conservation plans in order to determine which, if any, facilitating conservation practices are needed, as well as the extent, location, and timing of facilitating practices to ensure that LPC habitat is maintained or improved following application.

645 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] The best scientific data available will guide the development of this practice; to ensure effectiveness, adaptability and increased knowledge.

3] Utilize acceptable habitat evaluation tools and monitoring protocol such as the WHEG to evaluate habitat conditions, on a regular basis, to ensure the conservation plan is adapted to meet the habitat and wildlife needs.
   - Refer to the NM Biology Technical Note No. 62, located in NM FOTG Section I. Two WHEG's are provided: Sand Sagebrush Grassland and Shinnery-oak Grassland.

4] Ensure all facilitating practices include critical non-disturbance dates (March 1 through July 15) to minimize their effects on leks and nesting periods, as appropriate to the practice.

5] This practice may be used to modify existing infrastructure to reduce or eliminate potential adverse effects resulting from those structures; including installation of wildlife escape ramps in open water sources or in open trenches/pits, and marking fence lines to prevent bird collision in critical areas.
   - Refer to the NM Biology Technical Note No. 55, located in NM FOTG Section I.

6] NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are prepared by persons with adequate training in the fields of wildlife management, biology or range ecology.

7] For the purposes of the LPCI, NRCS will encourage the establishment of "permanent" photo points to serve as visual documentation of changing habitat conditions over a period of time for the life of the management system.
   - Refer to the NM Biology Technical Note No. 61, located in NM FOTG Section I.

8] NRCS will work with conservation partners to implement strategies to determine habitat use by wildlife species and/or to determine estimates/indices of abundance where possible.

Water Well (642)

642 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Install low profile pumping devices and housings and use solar pumps whenever practicable, as the power source for wells rather than electric lines.

4] Place wells and infrastructure as close as possible to existing structures rather than creating new vertical structure in areas presently devoid of such features. These measures will reduce the presence of raptor perch sites and prevent habitat fragmentation by allowing continued use of suitable habitat.

5] Design the water well to minimize or avoid the loss of desirable shrubs during practice installation.

6] In areas where reseeding disturbed areas is needed, use the 342 Critical Area Planting conservation measures.

7] Design solar panel mounting pole as short as possible to avoid use as raptor perch.

Watering Facility (614)

614 Conservation Measures:

1] NRCS shall coordinate with the New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) and confer with the State Technical Committees to identify appropriate restrictions on the placement, extent, configuration, and timing of this conservation practice standard and the area where these practice restrictions would apply so as to avoid or minimize adverse effects to the LPC and supporting habitat conditions.
   - *All current NMDGF and State Technical Committee recommendations are provided in this document.*

2] Defer implementation of this conservation practice within 1/2 mile to known leks and nest sites until all breeding and nesting activities are completed, typically March 1 through July 15, or as modified by New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (NMDGF) or State Technical Committee recommendations.
   - Refer to NM Biology Technical Note No. 62 - SGP CHAT, located in NM FOTG Section I, for guidance on determining project proximity to known leks and nest sites; those areas have a Crucial Habitat Index of 1 or 2.

3] Evaluate the site's potential for soil erosion and invasion by undesirable plants during practice planning and design. Minimize soil and vegetative disturbances during installation of conservation practices. Utilize soil erosion protection

measures, if potential for soil erosion exists (silt fences etc.).

4] Design conservation practice to minimize or avoid loss of shrubs during practice installation.

5] If access for operation and maintenance is required, limit access to one side of disturbance and a limit access to one vehicle width.

6] Use site specific reclamation strategies developed using ecological site descriptions (ESD's). Native species will be used whenever possible to meet practice objectives with preference to forbs, grasses and grass-like plants preferred by the LPC as well as those plants that reflect the potential of the specific ecological site to optimize LPC habitat needs. Seed mixes should be State-certified, meeting the appropriate State certification criteria as being free of state declared noxious and invasive vegetative material.

7] Monitor, evaluate and control State listed invasive and noxious plants during practice planning and design.
- USDA Plants Database: New Mexico State Noxious Weed List.

8] Machinery associated with the practice should be clean and free of vegetative debris prior to use to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

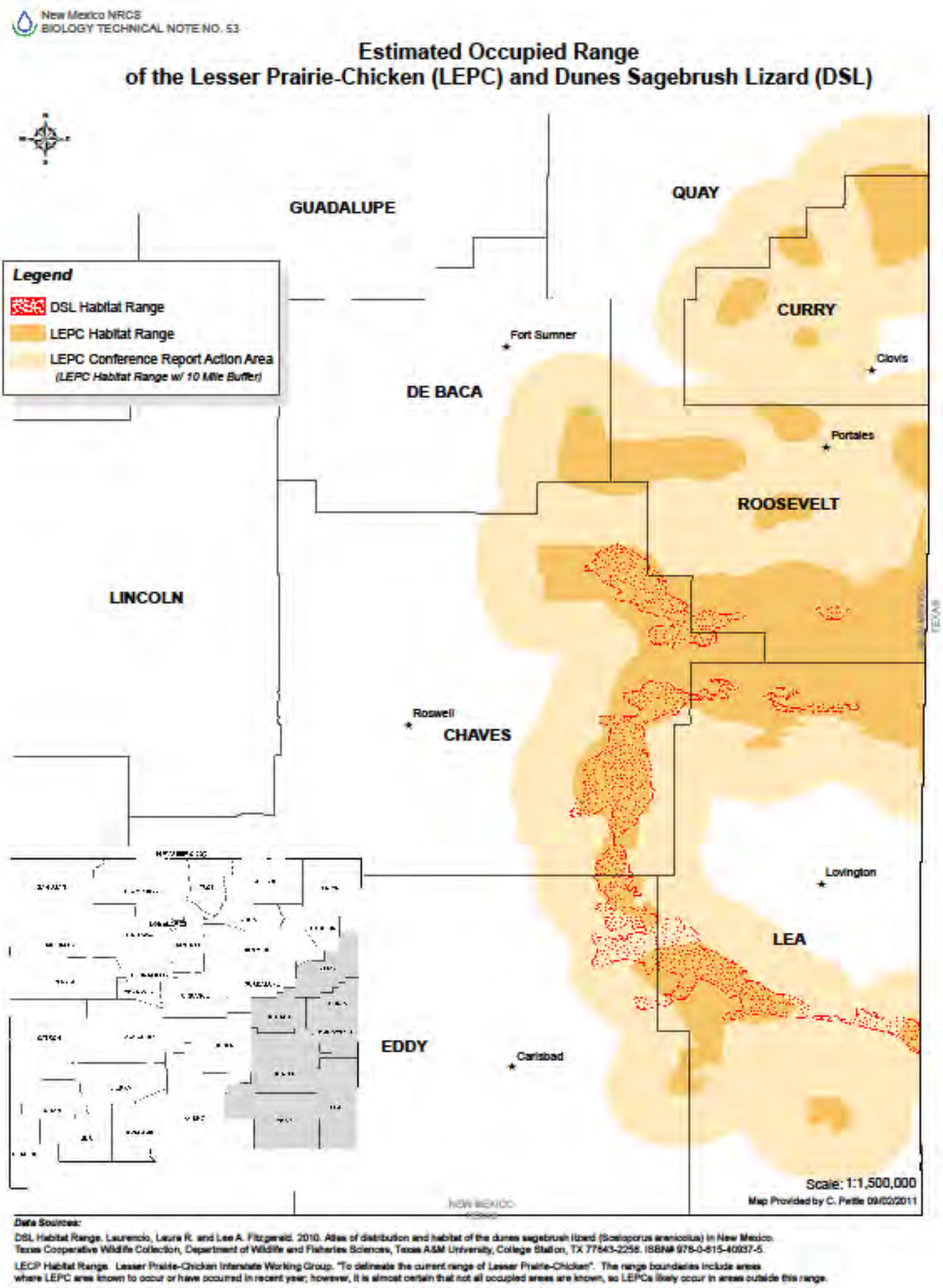
9] Timing of planting and post-establishment vegetation management will be designed as per local site conditions to meet NRCS practice specifications.

10] Regularly monitor the site after implementation to ensure erosion and weed issues are addressed quickly.

11] Install wildlife escape ramps.
- Refer to the NM Biology Technical Note No. 55, located in NM FOTG Section I.

12] Limit duration of construction period to the minimum practicable.

APPENDIX 1 - Dunes Sagebrush Habitat



APPENDIX 2 - State Guidance for Range Planting - Lovegrass Conversion

Question: *Implementation of 550-Range Planting to convert non-native lovegrass stands to a more native rangeland needs to occur within the conservation measure deferment period (March 1st through July 15th). What are our options?* There are several scenarios with different answers (see below).

Provided below are the steps used to evaluate and document in the Environmental Evaluation (NRCS-CPA-52).

T&E Worksheet Step 1

Are there any endangered or threatened species, designated critical habitat(s), proposed species/habitats, or State/Tribal species of concern protected by law or regulation present, or potentially present, in the area of potential effect?

- *Scenario 1*. Through the conferencing process, the "action area" was broadly determined to be the area where LPC have the potential to be present. If scenarios 2 or 3 do not apply, then answer "**Yes"** and go to step 5.
- *Scenario 2*. If NRCS determines that that there is no potential for LPC to occur in the area of potential effect, then answer "**No**" and document why/how the determination was made on the NRCS-CPA-52 and proceed with planning. Examples would be cropland, tree areas, or bare ground (areas identified as Not Suitable Habitat).
- *Scenario 3.* If uncertain whether or not LPC may potentially be present in the area of potential effect, then ask your State Biologist or contact the lead agency in charge of the species.

  In lovegrass stands there is the potential for LPC to occur. The answer would be **"Yes"** they have the potential to occur; *unless*, we had further justification that LPC do not occur on the specific area in question. We may consult with NMDGF to verify that the site would have no potential for LPC to occur. In that case, answer "**No**", document why/how the determination was made on the NRCS-CPA-52, and proceed with planning.

T&E Worksheet Step 5

What are the short and long-term impacts of the proposed action or alternative on proposed species or their proposed critical habitat? **550-Range Seeding disturbance during the nesting season was identified as having a short-term negative impact.**

- Scenario 1a. Follow the 550-conference measure of deferring implementation from March 1st through July 15th. This is a mitigation action to avoid a potential adverse effect. If this conservation measure is followed, the answer to this question would be "**No Effect**". Document this in the mitigation section of the NRCS-CPA-52 and reference that the planned action is following the LPC Conference Report, and proceed with planning.
- Scenario 1b. Develop a "**No Effect**" alternative mitigation measure to ensure no disturbance during the nesting season. An option would be to ensure there is no potential LPC nesting habitat going into the nesting season (in the year of planned implementation). An example may be to mow the lovegrass stand prior to LPC nest site selection (March 1st). Mowing could even be accomplished the previous fall (anytime after July 15th). If the result is that there is no potential nesting habitat going into the nesting season, then the activity would have no disturbance to nesting. Answer "**No Effect**", document this in the mitigation section of the NRCS-CPA-52, and proceed with planning.

  Note: this does not apply to lekking habitat. If if there is a lek on-site, deferment must be made until lekking activities have ceased.
- Scenario 1c. Identify that there may be a "**Potential Adverse Effect**" by implementing 550-Range Seeding (which may include the site preparation) during the nesting season (03/01-07/15). Proceed to step 6.

  Note: all options through this scenario result in NRCS either following the conservation report measures or otherwise avoiding adverse impacts (as mentioned above).