

## **Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCP - 1905) Eastern New Mexico Prairie Grassland Initiative.**

The New Mexico Prairie Grassland Initiative started in 2021. The initiative is designed to increase suitable and occupied habitat to meet the life cycle needs of Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) while promoting long term sustainability and profitability of agricultural operations. NMACD was approved \$1.5 million to fund conservation work on ranches within 5 priority LPC areas. Habitat improvements include chemical and physical destruction of mesquite patches across five priority areas identified using a mesquite density model and a study by scientists at New Mexico State University.

The Lesser Prairie Chicken are listed as endangered. This RCP project builds upon efforts that began in 1989 when the first geographical priority areas were targeted for treatment to specifically benefit LPC and LPC habitat. Working partnerships across a range of stakeholders has been key to our success. Local experience determined that chemical mesquite treatments that leave residual woody material standing are not readily used by LPC.

Experience from FWS, NMDGF and NMSLO has proven that when chemical treated areas are masticated and woody materials flattened to the ground, LPC will colonize those sites quickly. This treatment combination is the central feature of this initiative.

The RCP leverages resources from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO), New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts (NMACD) and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's).

The five priority areas for Lesser Prairie Chicken (LPC) are within Chaves, Lea and Roosevelt Counties. **See Map.**

Nearly \$1.3 million Financial Assistance has been approved by NRCS with another round of funding to be advertised in the summer of 2025. In addition, the partners have already leveraged \$2 million for land treatment within the 5 priority areas.

# NRCS - New Mexico

## Lesser Prairie Chicken Planning Areas 2021

