

CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS FOR THE DUNES SAGEBRUSH LIZARD

New Mexico

In New Mexico (home to about 73 percent of total lizard habitat), the Service partnered in 2008 with the State, BLM and the Center of Excellence for Hazardous Materials Management, a not-for-profit scientific research organization, to develop a combined Candidate Conservation Agreement (CAA) and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for the conservation of the lesser-prairie chicken and the dunes sagebrush lizard. These agreements provide an effective mechanism for conservation by allowing oil and gas, and the ranching industry to participate and have their activities covered under this umbrella agreement.

In March, 2012, the New Mexico State Land Office enrolled all lizard habitat on State Trust lands under these agreements. At the same time, scores of ranching and oil and gas interests operating on private and BLM lands in New Mexico enrolled in the agreements, and BLM removed prime lizard habitat from eligibility for oil and gas leasing. As a result of these actions, 95 percent of the total dunes sagebrush lizard habitat in New Mexico is now protected under conservation agreements.

Texas

In Texas (home to about 27 percent of total lizard habitat), the Service signed a CCAA in February, 2012, with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts that provides for the conservation of the dunes sagebrush lizard in Texas while ensuring regulatory predictability for landowners. The CCAA itself constitutes a conservation plan developed with and administered by the Comptroller's Office. The Texas Plan also includes input from a variety of stakeholders, including federal, state, and private partners representing interests in natural resources, oil and gas, ranching, and agricultural industries.

Enrollment in the plan commits participants to a suite of conservation measures over 30 years that will avoid and minimize adverse effects to dunes sagebrush lizard habitat restore habitat that was previously developed. An estimated 71 percent of the lizard's habitat in Texas is now enrolled under the Texas Plan.