

# Land and Water Conservation Fund *Giving Back to You and Your Community*



Range Management Specialist provides technical assistance to rancher. Photo: U.S. Department of Agriculture

## Partnering with Ranchers to Save Threatened Species

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Preservation Area of Critical Environmental Concern, New Mexico

Drought, habitat loss and degradation from competing land uses are the most severe threats to the lesser prairie-chicken, a grassland-nesting upland bird native to the Southern Great Plains. In an effort to combat these threats and protect the species, public land managers working together with farmers and ranchers have improved wildlife habitat across the bird's five-state range while increasing productivity and profitability of agricultural operations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (LPCI) provides financial and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers maintain the viability and profitability of their operations and improve lesser prairie-chicken habitat. Investments through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other programs complement the LPCI to restore habitat and aid in this bird's recovery.

In December 2012, with funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Bureau of Land Management purchased the 1,789-acre Sand Ranch in southeastern New Mexico, a critical parcel within the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Preservation Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Located in the transition zone between the southern Great Plains and the Chihuahuan Desert, the 58,000-acre Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Preservation ACEC is prime habitat for both the lesser prairie-chicken and the sand dune lizard. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Preservation ACEC contains 16 active mating grounds representing 32% of the occupied lesser prairie-chicken breeding habitat in southeast New Mexico.

The Sand Ranch purchase, combined with 17,700 acres previously



Lesser prairie-chicken  
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



**880,000 JOBS**  
are created through recreation activities on your federal lands <sup>1</sup>

For every **\$1** spent on the LWCF, communities receive **\$4** in **ECONOMIC BENEFIT** <sup>2</sup>



The LWCF has invested in community projects for **EVERY COUNTY** in the United States <sup>3</sup>

The LWCF uses **ZERO TAXPAYER DOLLARS**



### ABOUT Land and Water Conservation Fund

Using zero taxpayer dollars, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) uses earnings from offshore oil and gas leasing to help preserve our history and protect our lands. The LWCF is a balanced approach between using and preserving our natural resources, while giving back to American communities.



## Protects Wildlife



Volunteer with baby loggerhead turtle.  
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

acquired, created the first of four “strongholds” of lesser prairie-chicken habitat. These “strongholds” have been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as necessary to prevent a future “endangered” listing of the lesser prairie-chicken under the Endangered Species Act (it is currently listed as “threatened”). Programs such as LPCI and the Land and Water Conservation Fund help foster partnerships with ranchers and farmers to provide a healthy wildlife-ranchland ecosystem.

## Providing Grants that Protect Species and Improve Local Economies

### Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, California

Since 2001, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has received more than \$58 million in grants provided through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF), one of three grant programs that receive funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The CESCF grants support the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). This plan was developed locally by land use agencies, landowners, and other partners to protect large blocks of coastal sage scrub, chaparral and grassland habitats, and one of the most ecologically significant complexes of vernal pools in southern California. These proactive investments benefit the protection and recovery of numerous sensitive species, including federally listed species like the coastal California gnatcatcher, arroyo toad and quino checkerspot butterfly.



Coastal California Gnatcatcher  
Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) are voluntary conservation agreements through which local stakeholders work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to proactively address the long-term conservation needs of federally and state listed species, other rare and sensitive species, and their habitats. This agreement also assists in maintaining local control over land use and balancing economic growth. Under the Western Riverside County MSHCP, landowners are provided an alternative process to attaining Endangered Species Act compliance by either the payment of fees or providing other specific conservation measures designed to protect the species and habitats covered by the plan. In exchange, landowners can proceed with otherwise lawful activities related to land use or economic development.

The Western Riverside County MSHCP is one of 14 approved regional HCPs in California. Together, these regional HCPs are expected to provide landscape-scale level conservation of more than 2 million acres of land near large urban areas and provide streamlined permitting for thousands of projects with a combined economic value of \$1.6 trillion.

<sup>1</sup> Federal Interagency Council on Recreation, Fact Sheet on Outdoor Recreation: Jobs and Income, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The Trust for Public Land, Return on the Investment from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> LWCF NPS Grant Program, <http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/lwcf/history.html>, retrieved 2014.