



LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN INITIATIVE

QUARTERLY PARTNERS' REPORT
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2018



Fall has finally arrived! I have been working on a variety of projects over the last three months through different programs. I have had the opportunity to have some one on one interactions with some of our Range/Wildlife conservationist to look at the variety of projects that they have been working on. We are also excited to add another position in Andrews, TX with the hiring of Ty Higginbotham. We look forward to the passion and knowledge of habitat conservation that he will be bring with him .

Some of the projects that I have been working on this quarter are LPCI EQIP which consist of multiple projects that are in my area. These contracts have been focusing on implementing their structural practices such as cross fence, livestock pipeline, water troughs and working with contractors to line out brush management to occur early in the fall. I have also been assisting with developing grazing plans for CRP/CCRP. Our area was placed under emergency grazing/haying for producers that chose to go this route with no penalty.

It has been a productive quarter and looking forward to the next Fiscal Year. I continue to enjoy working with landowners and various partners that are involved within LPCI and hope to continue this relationship down the road.

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Lesser Prairie Chicken
Range Coordinator

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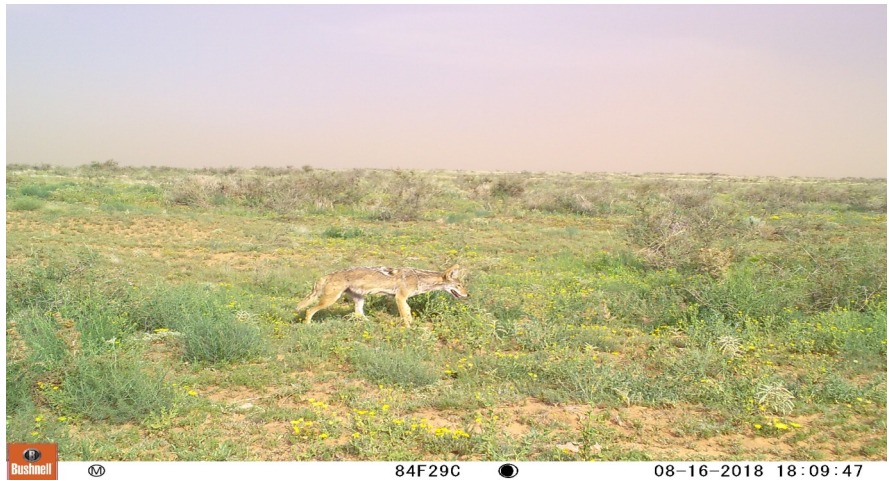
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Mule deer doe utilizing dirt tank overflow to get a drink in Bailey county, TX.

Pictures A-Field

- Landowner using game camera to monitor wildlife usage of property and to see diversity of wildlife on the landscape.



Training/ Presentation / Workshop	Location	Outcomes
PF/QF South Regional Meeting	Lake of the Ozarks, MO	Regional meeting to meet with other PF/QF colleagues that make up of the South Region. Talk and discuss initiatives that are taking place in across the region.
Wildlife Subcommittee Technical Meeting	Austin, TX	Attended the Texas NRCS State Technical meeting in Austin, TX on progress of farm bill programs and conservation strategies going into next FY for wildlife implications.

Other Programs	Conservation Planning (acres)	Certification of completed practice
EQIP	3,847	7,085 ft fence 5,823 livestock pipeline
Total acres impacted	3,847	12,908

*“Take nothing but memories,
leave nothing but footprints!”
Chief Seattle*

Landowner Contacts	10
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Vegetation Transects	9
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CRP/CCRP Practices	Acres impacted
CP 38E –SAFE	447
Total	447

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INITIATIVE



Drought has hit southeast Colorado hard over the past year, so emergency grazing and haying on CRP was authorized in all of my counties. I assisted with recommendations on emergency grazing requests in LPC CHAT areas, particularly those made in or adjacent to LPC occupied area. I also assisted in the development of grazing plans outside these areas as needed by my offices. Additionally, I began conducting status reviews on LPC SAFE contracts in sign-ups 48-50 to either certify establishment or document progress post planting and inform landowners if intervention may be necessary for establishment.

I have been active in outreach for both general and LPCI EQIP, and have received some interest in LPCI and fairly heavy interest in EQIP practice 327 (Conservation Cover), particularly for establishing monarch butterfly habitat. I have also had a fair number of producers interested in the associated CSP practice. The EQIP application deadline has yet to pass, so time will tell if these become active contracts. Producers are excited about the possibility of providing both pollinator habitat and great brood rearing habitat. If the applications do become funded contracts, I will supply updates in future quarterly reports!

In my spare time, I've been working on data entry from this past summer's LPCI vegetation monitoring and helping the conservation districts with some of their outreach programs. I also assisted with this year's Southeast Colorado FFA Range Judging contest in Rocky Ford, in which over 225 high school students from the region participated.

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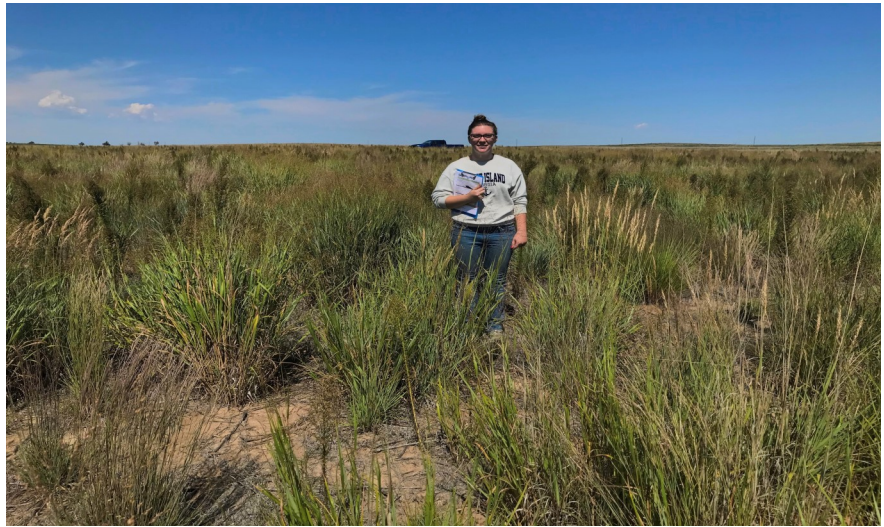
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Monarch butterflies migrating through SE Colorado

Pictures A-Field

- A CRP field check in Cheyenne County, CO.



Training/ Presentation / Workshop	Location	Outcomes
Camp Rocky	Divide, CO	Wildlife instructor for youth outdoor and conservation summer camp.
SE CO FFA Range Judging Contest	Lamar, CO	Assisted with the FFA Range Judging event that took place in Lamar, CO that consisted of 225 high school students .

Other Programs	Conservation Planning (acres)
EQIP Brush mgmt., Upland Wildlife Habitat mgmt., Prescribe grazing, shrub establishment	3,099
LPCHIP Non CRP Establishment Rangeland enhancement exclosures	1,998
Total acres impacted	5097

“A Pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”

Winston Churchill

Landowner Contacts	9
Vegetation Transects	33
CRP/CCRP Practices	Acres impacted
CP 38E New Plan	67.5
CP 38E Revision	16,243.5
Total	2492.29

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This quarter I attended several meetings and workshops including a Partners Meeting where we discussed expectations for this position in the coming year. I also attended multiple NRCS Team 11 meetings and the Curry/Roosevelt Counties Local Work Group Meetings where we voted on ranking criteria for the EQIP 2019 applications. Furthermore, I attended the NMSU Ag Science Field Day where I was able to meet local land owners as we learned about the on-going research over cover crops, rotational systems, and irrigation systems. I also listened in on a Rangeland Analysis Webinar as they informed us of the new analysis platform. I hope to find a way to put this new technology to good use here in Eastern New Mexico.

Throughout the quarter I also had the opportunity to attend various trainings. For example, I attended a week long NRCS Conservation Planner Training where we learned the ins and outs of the planning process in addition to identifying, addressing, and providing alternatives to resource concerns as a team in two real-life scenarios. I also attended the Team 11 QAR Findings Review, Reasonable Accommodations training, and a two-part ROHVA training over the proper and safe use of Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles.

I closed out the field season by wrapping up the last of NRCS vegetation monitoring for LPCI contracts, helping with several similarity indexes, and assisting NMDGF with monitoring on various Prairie Chicken Areas (PCA's). I was also able to assist NMDGF with fencing on two PCA's. This taught me how to repair barbed wire fencing as well as how to secure barbed wire fencing to t-posts, lessons I am still excited and grateful for.

Aside from trainings, workshops, and field work, this quarter saw copious amounts of Conservation Technical Assistance. Anything from irrigation parts, to CSP documentation, to CRP Emergency Grazing, to general wildlife inquiries, and of course EQIP assistance; we just about covered it all.

Overall, this quarter and the experience it brought was enjoyable. Every opportunity to work alongside the Partners and interact with landowners is definitely appreciated. I look forward to the opportunities, experiences, and cooler weather this next quarter will bring!

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Sunrise on Lek survey route in Eastern NM.

Pictures A-Field

- Conducting vegetation monitoring on current LPCI contract in New Mexico.



Training/ Presentation / Workshop	Location	Outcomes
NRCS Conservation Planning	Las Cruces, NM	Attended NRCS conservation planning in Las Cruces, NM to learn about the nine step process. Learned about the different resource concerns and how to potentially address those with producers.
Rangeland Analysis Platform	Portales, NM	Listened in on the webinar for RAP, hoping to utilized this tool in the future for monitoring.

Programs	Conservation Planning (acres)	Certification of completed practice
EQIP	—	—
Total acres impacted	N/A	N/A

“Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife, are in fact plans to protect man.”

— [Stewart L. Udall](#)

Vegetation transects	32
Landowner contacts	8
CRP/CCRP Practices	Acres impacted
CP 38E New Plan	4014
CP 38E Revision	—
Total	4014

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I can't believe I joined the Oklahoma team a year ago! The past 14 months have flown by. I am grateful for all the opportunities to learn from the partners and look forward to learning much more.

July found me continuing my education of NRCS with conservation planning at Stillwater. The course gave me the opportunity to meet other partner biologists in addition to learning the proper methods for NRCS conservation planning. I also spent time wrapping up Monarch and Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative habitat management and grazing plans.

In the beginning of August, I was honored to participate in a Growing Season Prescribed Fire Field Day hosted by the Noble Research Institute. There is no better teacher than experience and the field day provided it! Participants were able to assist on two burns totaling 54 acres. The burns were very different and showed just how important fuel composition and fuel moisture are when planning a burn. The afternoon burn acted like a dormant season fire because of the hot temperatures and low fuel moisture. Overall, it was a very educational day in the field and I hope to use that knowledge to encourage others to implement growing season burns.

One of the most exciting events of the quarter, was a round table discussion on Precision Agriculture. Thanks to the interest of chapter members in Medford, we were able to host a discussion with local professionals, farmers, and PF/QF staff. We covered everything from the challenges in getting producers on-board to the dollars gained by implementing new practices. Several local chapter members are going to work on a small pilot project to demonstrate not only the benefits to the farmers' bottom-line, but also the upland birds we all love to see. Often times, by "farming the best and leaving the rest", producers can increase profits while improving wildlife habitat. Precision Agri-

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There is no better tool in land management than prescribed fire! During a visit to the Lazy KT Ranch in Northwest Woods county the proof was right in front of us. This photo was taken on September 12. It shows the results of two burns, one in April (left) and one just a month prior in August (right).

Pictures A-Field

- I found this monarch caterpillar on a plains milkweed while conducting a follow-up WHEG on a Monarch contract.



Training/ Presentation / Workshop	Location	Outcomes
NRCS Conservation Planning	Stillwater, OK	Biologists and staff in partnership positions with NRCS gathered in Stillwater for instruction on conservation planning for NRCS. This is a requirement for apprentice level certification.
Precision Agriculture Round Table	North Central, OK	Wildlife professionals and local landowners gathered at ODWC's Beaver WMA to discuss wildlife management for quail, turkey and deer. We looked at the removal of invasive salt cedar to restore cottonwoods for wild turkey, shrub preferences for quail, effects of strip disking, and supplemental water for wildlife.

Programs	Conservation Planning EQIP (acres)	OLAP Site visits
EQIP	12,474	1,074
Conservation impacted	12,474	1,074

“Only the mountains have lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of the wolf.”

— [Aldo Leopold](#)

Landowner Contacts

14

Vegetation Monitoring
Transects

2

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I started with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever (PF/QF) on September 10th in the Andrews, TX Field Office as the new Range and Wildlife Conservationist. My first couple of weeks were spent driving around the surrounding counties visiting other NRCS offices within the area that I would be working in. This included Andrews, Midland, Ector, Crane, Gaines, and Martin counties. I also got to spend time with the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and was able to get in contact with local Texas Parks and Wildlife employees and introduce myself to them.

Since September 10th I have had the opportunity to give technical guidance on seed mixes for some local ranches, as well as answer questions and address concerns of multiple land owners in the area over current quail populations, general mule deer information, and other various wildlife related topics. I was also able to go out and help certify a water trough/solar pump for an EQIP payment on a University Lands Lease. On the September 25th I also listened in on a webinar over the newly released Rangeland Analysis Platform using the google maps interface.

In the coming month(s) I will continue to meet with the rest of the NRCS employees along with the other SWCD's, introducing them to my position and start making some large strides to get more conservation on the ground. I look forward to working with all my partners and the different wildlife/natural resource organizations in the area to further improve the habitat for both wildlife and the landowners.

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Some Sand dunes of the side of the Hwy. I found while learning about the county.

Pictures A-Field

- Fresh grasshopper impaled on a barb wired fence by a Loggerhead Shrike flying around the area.



Training/ Presentation / Workshop	Location	Outcomes
Rangeland Analysis Platform	Andrews, TX	Listened in on the webinar for RAP, hoping to utilize this tool in the future for monitoring.

Programs	Certification of practices	Site visits
EQIP	4	5
Conservation impacted	N/A	N/A

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts”
— Winston Churchill

Landowner contacts	5
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