

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Update



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Parks and Wildlife Commission April 5, 2024
Liza Rossi, Bird Conservation Coordinator

Southern Great Plains Boomer

- Adapted to wide open grasslands
- Large landscapes
- Primary habitats
 - Leks
 - Nesting
 - Brood-rearing
 - Non-breeding
- Extensive habitat loss

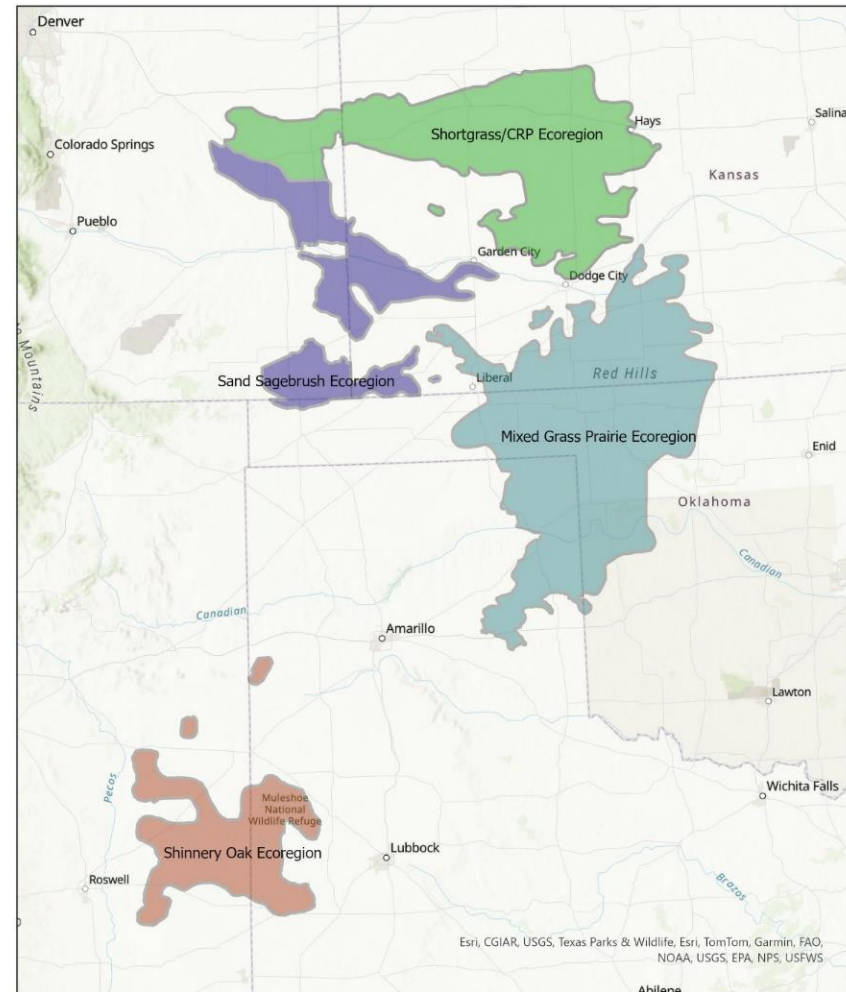


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Lesser Prairie-Chicken Status

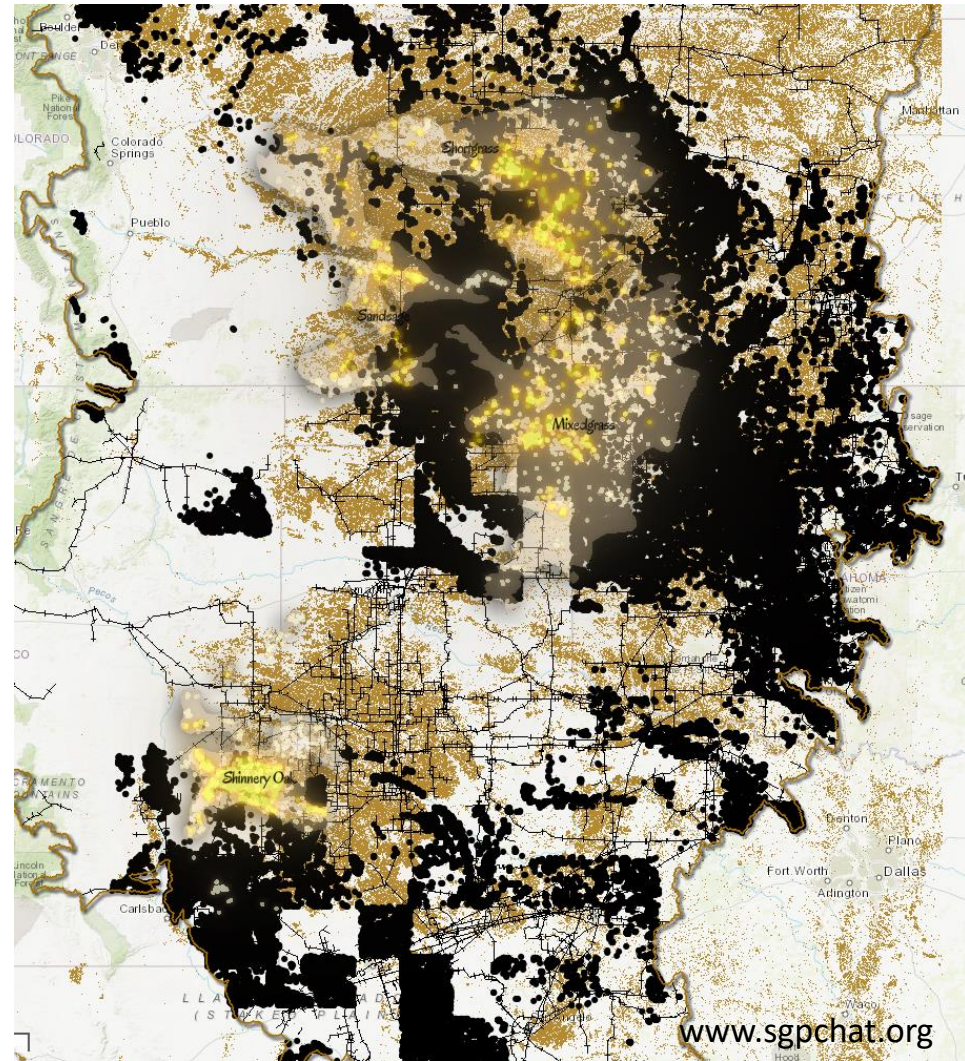
- Federal Listing March 27, 2023
 - Northern DPS - Threatened
 - Sand Sagebrush
 - Shortgrass/CRP Mosaic
 - Mixed Grass
 - Southern DPS - Endangered
 - Shinnery Oak
- Colorado
 - Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need
 - Colorado State Threatened

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Estimated Occupied Range



Range-wide Habitat Loss

- Cultivated Agriculture
- Infrastructure
 - Oil and gas
 - Renewable energy
- Tree encroachment
 - Eastern red cedar
 - Mesquite
- Climate Change - Drought



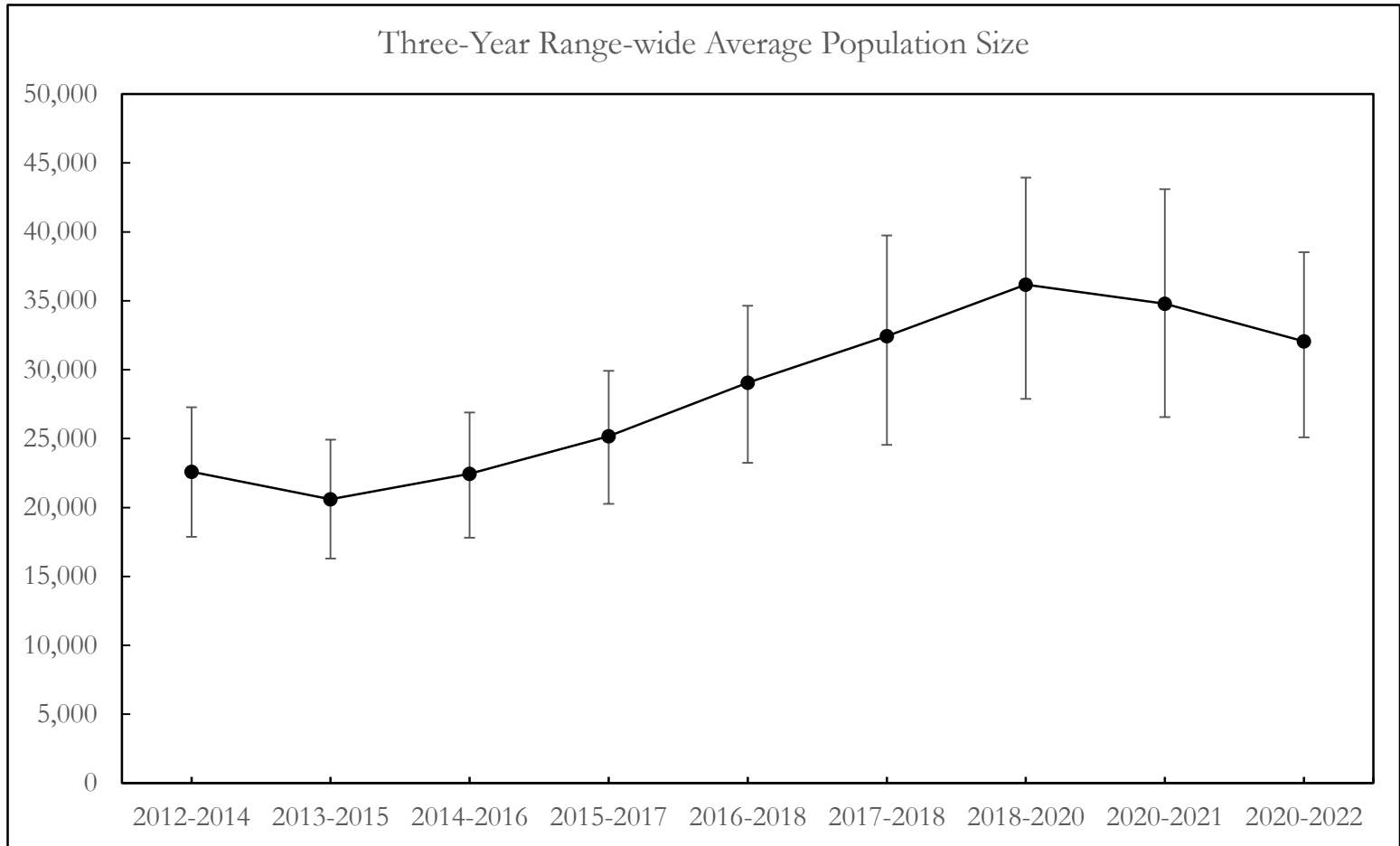
Range-wide Partnerships

- Interstate Working Group (IWG)
- Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Farm Bill Partners
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- LPC Landowners Alliance and North American Grouse Partnership



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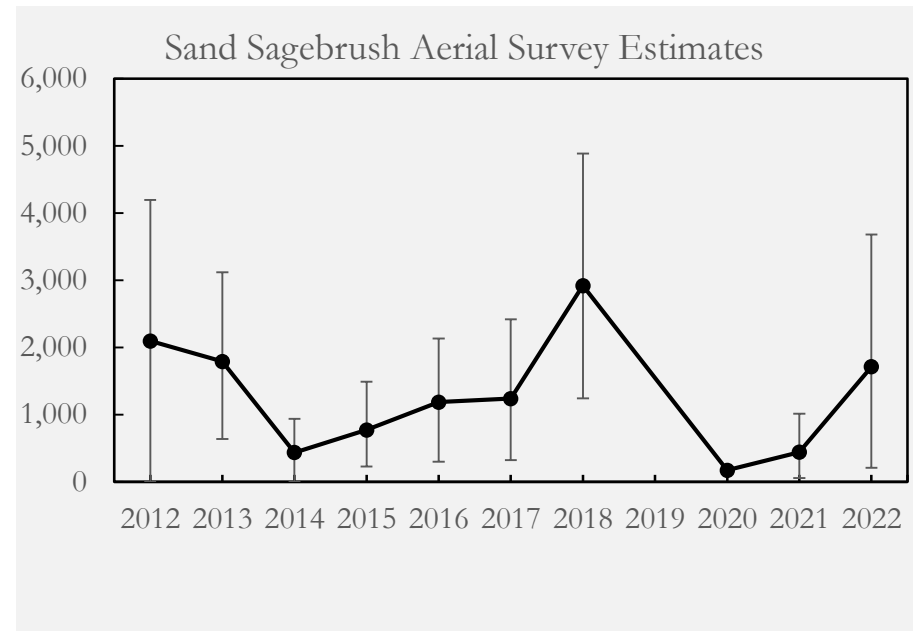
Range-Wide Aerial Surveys



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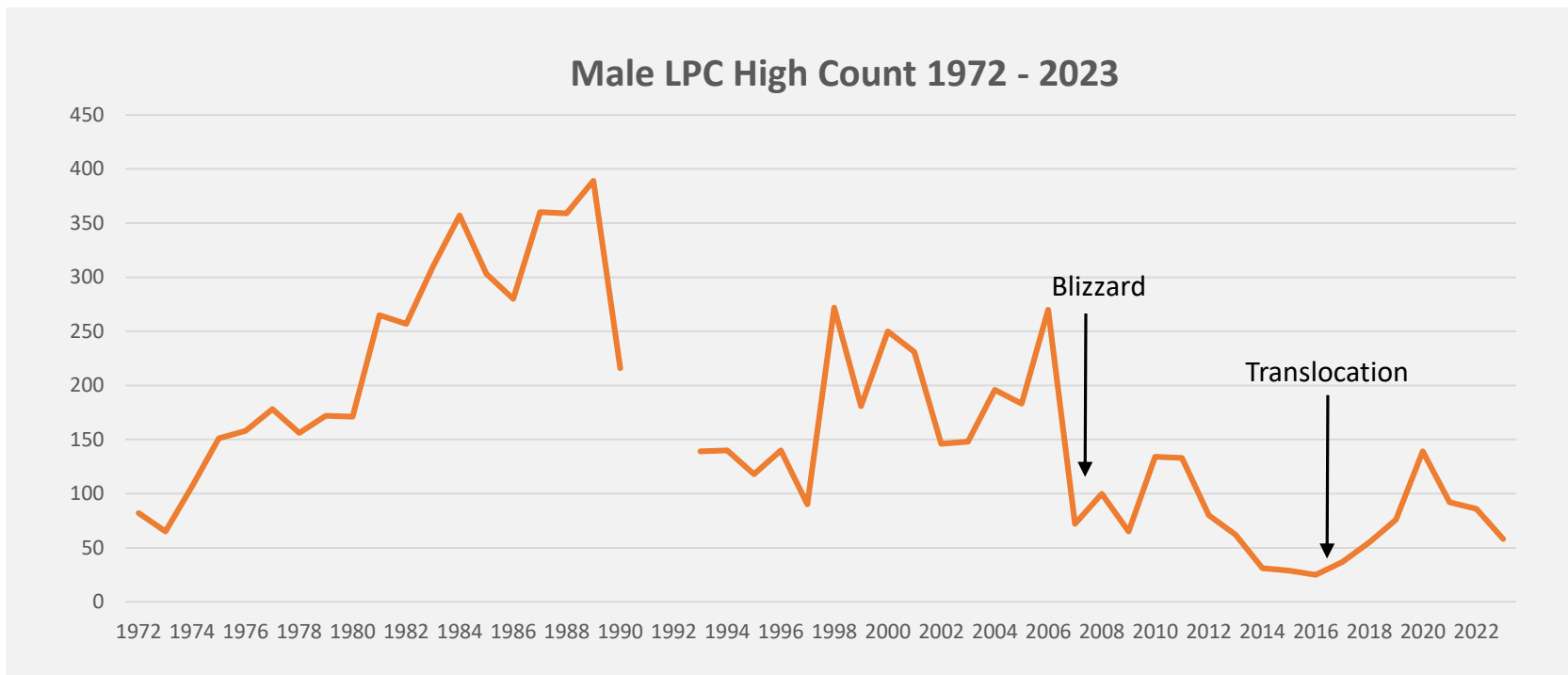
Sand Sagebrush Ecoregion

- Extirpated during Dust Bowl
- By 1970s - highest estimated numbers across range
 - 1975 >80,000 birds
- Steep decline in leks/birds
 - Both Colorado and Kansas



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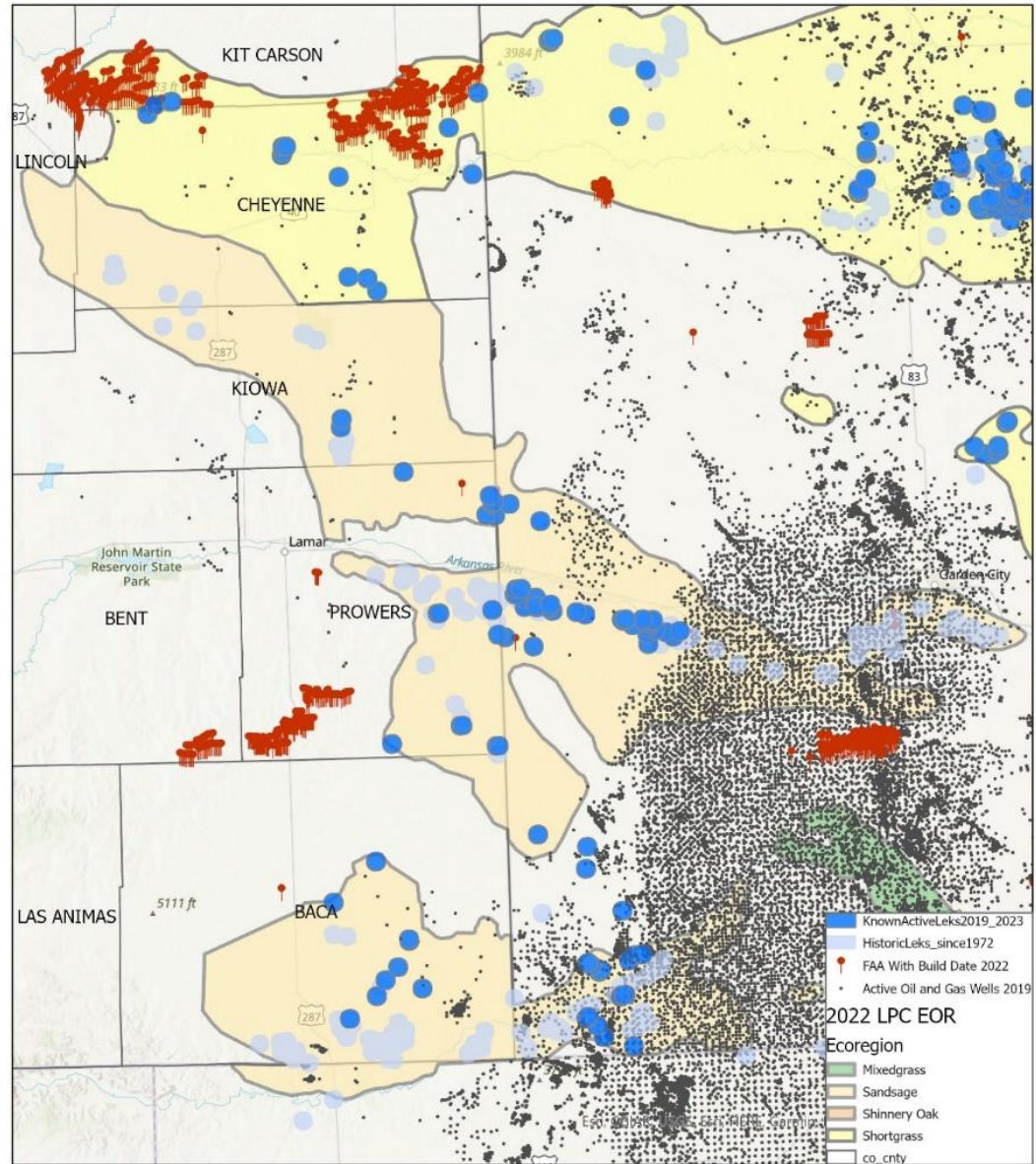
Colorado Lek Counts



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Shrinking Distribution

- Kansas
 - Eastern leks gone
- Colorado
 - Very few birds



CPW Investment

- Personnel Time
 - Lek Counts
 - Land Use Consultation
 - Technical Assistance - Landowners, NRCS, USFS
 - Interstate Working Group
- LPC Habitat Improvement Program
- Range-wide aerial surveys
- 2016-2019 Sand Sagebrush Translocation

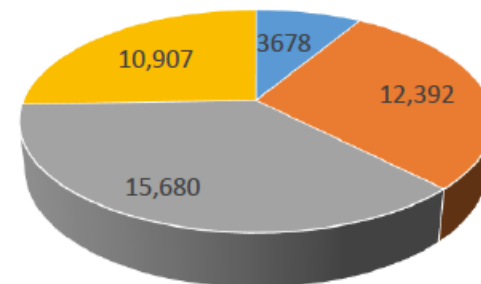


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Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Improvement Program

- 42,657 acres of habitat treatment since 2009
- Species Conservation Trust Funding
- CPW base budget
- Projects
 - CRP SAFE incentive
 - CRP enhancement
 - Grazing exclusion
 - Grass establishment

Lesser Prairie-chicken Habitat Improvement Program acre accomplishments by type-Total
42,657



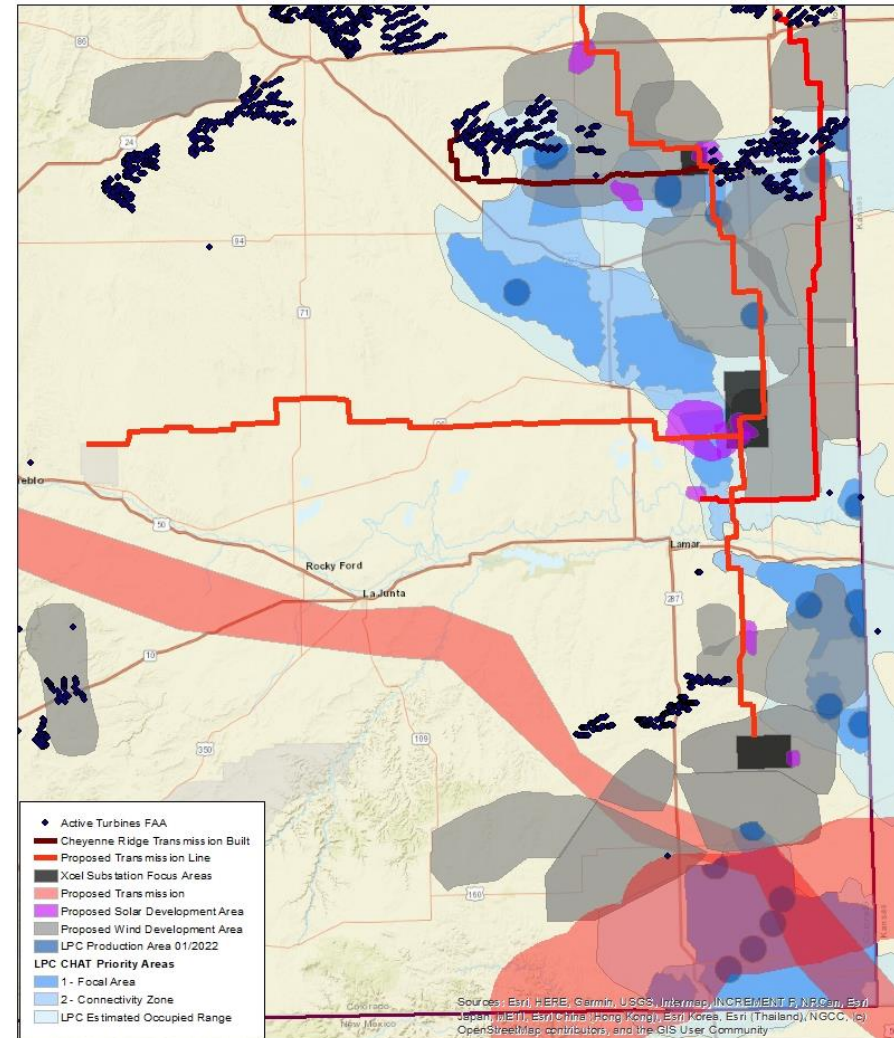
■ CRP SAFE incentive ■ CRP enhancement ■ Grazing exclusion ■ Grass establishment



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Threats - Renewable Energy

- Xcel Power Pathway and TriState Line
- Additional transmission lines proposed
- Multiple wind proposals overlap range
- Wind leases over majority of leks
- Solar proposed along transmission lines
- Cumulative impacts



This map is of lesser prairie-chicken range in southeast Colorado. It includes all of the renewable energy proposals that have come to CPW for consultation. This includes the Xcel Power Pathway as well as other potential transmission lines. Of more concern are the wind development proposals that overlap nearly the entire LPC range in Colorado. Solar development projects are also associated with the transmission lines. We expect broad cumulative impacts.

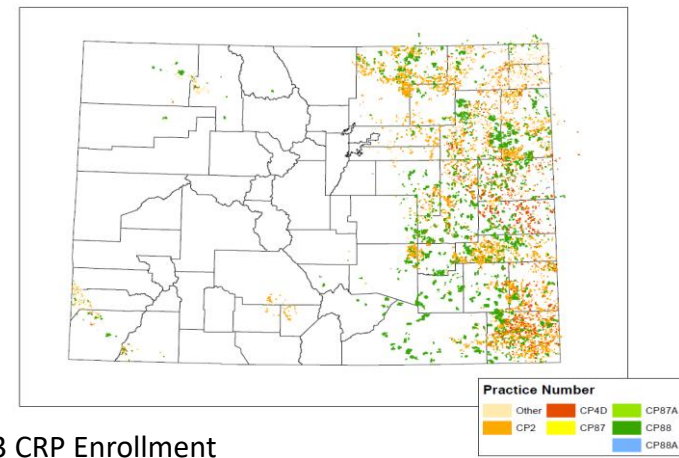
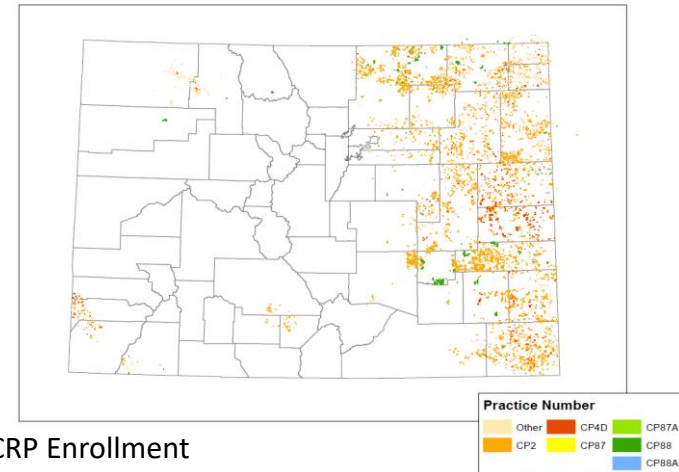
Map contains confidential information. Do not distribute.



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Threats - Changes to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- CRP provides important habitat
- Fundamental shift in CRP management
 - Emergency grazing/haying
 - Rental rates dramatically reduced
 - Sign-up incentives gone
- Loss of General CRP
- Shift to Grassland CRP



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Targeted Approach

- CPW Structured Decision Making
- Focus on private lands incentives
- Stronghold approach
- Partner with TNC - Generational Grasslands
- Sand Sagebrush mitigation bank



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Photo Credit: Grant Beauprez



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