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March 30, 2012

## **KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-12-45**

### **SUBJECT: LTP–Fiscal Year 2012 Working Lands for Wildlife**

**Action required by:** May 23, 2012 (Field Offices [FOs])  
June 22, 2012

**Action required by:** June 29, 2012 (Area Offices [AOs])

**Action required by:** May 25, 2012 (State Office [SO])

**Purpose:** To provide guidance for the implementation of Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), available through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

**Expiration Date:** September 30, 2013

#### **General Guidance**

WLFW is an effort between the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) that leverages capabilities and resources, targets assistance where it is most needed, cooperatively engages state and local partners, and works collaboratively with agricultural producers, forest land managers, and Tribes. The NRCS and the USFWS initially selected seven at-risk species whose decline can be reversed given sufficient resources and landowner participation. The WLFW promotes voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private and Tribal lands.

The primary objectives of WLFW are to:

- Provide landowners with financial and technical assistance to help them improve their lands through wildlife habitat management and protection.
- Implement conservation practices that will help restore populations of declining wildlife species (candidate, federally listed endangered and threatened or other at-risk wildlife species).
- Provide landowners with Endangered Species Act regulatory certainty and confidence that conservation investments they make on their lands today can help sustain their operations over the long term.

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, Franklin, Burr, Mitchener (KDWPT)

WLFW applicants are subject to all the NRCS WHIP rules and regulations. FOs are to accept applications on a continuous basis. Refer to Bulletin KS300-12-43 for guidance on new and existing WHIP applications that do not fall within the scope of WLFW.

**NOTE:** Eligible WHIP General, WHIP Lesser Prairie–Chicken Initiative (LPCI), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) LPCI applicants who meet the WLFW criteria may apply.

### **Application Period**

Applications for WHIP are accepted year-round. **All eligible applications received by the evaluation period cutoff date of April 30, 2012, will be assigned a priority and ranked.** If funds are available, and if national headquarters determines that a second application cutoff date is needed, the second evaluation period cutoff date will be May 30, 2012.

### **Target Species**

The following seven wildlife species are selected for fiscal year 2012 WLFW:

1. Bog Turtle
2. Golden-Winged Warbler
3. Gopher Tortoise
4. Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC)\*
5. New England Cottontail
6. Greater Sage Grouse
7. Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

\*The LPC is the only eligible at-risk species in the state of Kansas.

### **Priority Areas**

Applications will be considered HIGH priority if the offered acreage is located within the Kansas LPC current range and within high priority areas (either "irreplaceable" or "limiting") as defined by the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT). Applications will be considered MEDIUM priority if the offered acreage is either: (1) within the action area and is classified as "significant" (as defined by the CHAT), or (2) outside of the action area but classified as "irreplaceable" or "limiting" (as defined by the CHAT) AND has data indicating the presence of LPC use. All other applications outside of the above described "Screening Criteria" are **INELIGIBLE**. See Attachment 1 for priority areas.

### **Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Ranking Tool**

All conservation plans developed must include documentation that an alternative containing the core conservation practices (CPs) was presented to the decision maker. All WLFW applicants must agree to follow the conservation practice standards and treatment measures as described in the USFWS 2011 LPCI Conference Report in order to be eligible for screening and ranking (this report is online at [http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1044884.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1044884.pdf)).

The ProTracts fund code for WLFW is LPCI. Attachment 2 is the WLFW state and local issue ranking questions. National questions are the same as General WHIP (refer to Kansas Bulletin KS300-12-12).

**NOTE:** State issue question number one refers to active leks. Lek data provided in the LPCI Conservation Programs Geographic Information System [GIS] Interface [CPGI] tool is for all known LEPC leks, not necessarily all ACTIVE LEPC leks. This data is provided to assist in answering LPCI state question number 1. Answering “yes” to this question will NOT be solely based on the CPGI data.

If a producer has identified an undocumented (not shown in GIS CPGI tool data) active lek on their operation, ranking points may be obtained if the active lek is confirmed by a Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) area biologist and a NRCS range conservationist.

Participants must be willing to share this information (documented in CPGI or undocumented) to receive points. Under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, certain parts of the NRCS case file can be released.

### **Eligible Conservation Practices**

The WLFW contracts developed using WHIP financial assistance (FA) must include core CP 645 in all plans and CP 528 where grazed. Core CPs may be financially supported; otherwise the core CPs shall be in the contract as non cost-share practices. Supporting CPs are eligible for WLFW WHIP FA to the extent that they are needed to support the core CPs. Attachment 3 identifies eligible core and supporting CPs.

ProTracts and Toolkit payment schedules will be uploaded to FO servers for WLFW once they are finalized.

### **Technical Assistance**

KDWPT area biologists will assist with LPC habitat assessments. Contract development, contract administration, contract reviews, and follow-up for WLFW contracts is the responsibility of the NRCS.

### **Deadlines**

April 30, 2012	Application evaluation period cutoff date
May 23, 2012	All WLFW applications must be ranked from the first cutoff date
May 25, 2012	SO Programs Staff will complete funding decisions
June 22, 2012	All documents will be uploaded to electronic contracts system (eContracts) for second level review
June 29, 2012	All WLFW funds must be obligated

**Contact.** Forward all questions through established channels to Joni' Y. Franklin, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 823-4556, or [joni.franklin@ks.usda.gov](mailto:joni.franklin@ks.usda.gov).

*(Signed)*

ERIC B. BANKS  
State Conservationist

Attachments