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March 1, 2012

NEW MEXICO BULLETIN NO. 190-12-02

SUBJECT: EQIP LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN INITIATIVE (LPCI)

TO: All Field Office Employees

Purpose. To provide guidance on planning and contracting grazing management within the LPCI Area.

Expiration Date. December 31, 2012

The following guidance is provided for planning and contracting LPCI EQIP Contracts:

**Q1 - Do Practices (528) Prescribed Grazing and (645) Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt. have to be included in LPCI EQIP contract?**

No. However, a conservation plan supporting the EQIP contract must be developed which includes the LPCI core practices of 645 and/or 528 that are either planned within the contract period or already planned and applied on the land under contract (528 is required in the plan if grazing will occur within the contracted acres).

**Q2 – Do producers that participate in the initiative have to adhere to conservation measures in the Conference Report?**

Yes. Producers participating in the LPCI must agree to implement practices according to Standards and Specification and the Conference Report in order to address Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) needs while maintaining producer sustainability. In addition, Job sheets provided to the producer will include and/or incorporate Conference Report Conservation Measures for the specific practice as well as meet NRCS practice standards and specifications.

**Q3 - Can payments for both 645 SGI Grazing and 645 SGI Grazing Nesting Habitat be contracted?**

Yes, both can be contracted. We are allowed to use the closest technical scenario available in the payment schedule. All practices approved<sup>Q31</sup> for the LPCI may be used, and all payment scenarios for those practices are available for contracting. However, duplicate payments are not allowed. SGI Grazing and SGI Grazing Nesting may not be used on the same land, in the same year. (Please note that SGI refers to the Sage Grouse Initiative, but will also be used for LPCI).

**Q3a: What's the difference between the two 645 payment scenarios?**

SGI Grazing Nesting Habitat payment may apply to the entire ranch; where nesting area/habitat has LPC limiting factors and where a habitat evaluation (WHEG) indicates prescribed grazing will improve habitat.

(MORE)

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This payment requires an *average* 20% deferment of the contracted acres, for each year it is contracted. Using an average percentage provides management flexibility, but does require that no less than 15% is deferred in any year, and that any reduction must be made-up by the end of the contract. *For example: Year 1 deferred 18% and Year 2 deferred 16%, so Year 3 must defer at least 26% (2% made-up from Year 1, and 4% made-up from Year 2).*

Due to the deferment requirement, this payment has a higher rate than SGI Grazing (no deferment requirement) or 528. The SGI Grazing has the same requirements as above, but does not require a deferment.

**Q3b: Can we still contract 528 through the LPCI?**

Yes, utilize the payment that reflects the goals and objectives of the plan. Again, there can be no duplication of payments. Both 528 and 645 are grazing management payments.

**Q4 – What are the approved LPCI practices?**

All practices included in the FY12 LPCI payment schedule are approved, except: Dam, Diversion (348) and Structure for Water Control (587). These practices are not approved for the LPCI.

**Q5 - For payment 528 with a workshop, what are the requirements?**

The cooperator attends a grazing management workshop to acquire technological knowledge. Knowledge acquired in the workshop must then be used to implement grazing management improvements. This must be documented to receive payment. The cooperator will document grazing management workshop by providing a copy of training certificate and agenda and/or attendance sign-in sheet with agenda.

**Q6 - How do we determine AUM's for the 645 payments?**

*Use the guidance provided below:*

1. Determine the estimated Acres per Animal Unit Year (Acres/AUY) by using the “New Mexico Grazing Capacities under Average Rainfall and Management Conditions” (SCS, 1972). Source: Department of Agriculture Economics and Agricultural Business, Agricultural Experiment Station, and New Mexico State University.

**Data:** The original data source (map/table) is attached, and a shapefile layer of the data will be provided on the F drive at F:\geodata\conservation\_practices as a polygon shapefile named **Grazing\_Capacities\_1972.shp**. This data can also be found on the Biology Sharepoint.

2. Convert Acres/AUY to Acres per Animal Unit Month (Acres/AUM) using the table below:

**Acres Per Animal Unit Year/AUM Conversions**

Acres Per Animal Unit Year	Acres Per AUM
30-41	3
42-53	4
54-65	5
66-77	6
77-90	7
90-101	8
102-112	9

3.

3. Divide the contracted acres by the Acres/AUM, to give you the AUM's to contract.

*Example:* A 5,000 acre ranch where the producer agrees to a prescribed grazing system that will promote LPC habitat and will defer 1,000 acres (20%) of nesting habitat each year. On the grazing capacities map (SCS, 1972) the ranch falls within the Melrose 46 Acres/AUY. Convert Acres/AUY to Acres/AUM's by using the table above; Melrose 46 falls between the table's range of 42 and 53, so use 4 acres per AUM. Then divide the contracted acres (5,000 acres) by 4 Acres/AUM, to give you 1,250 AUM's that may be contracted under 645 SGI Grazing or 645 SGI Grazing Nesting Habitat.

If the ranch or land unit falls within more than one grazing capacity area on the map, use the grazing capacity that corresponds or represents the most acres on the ranch. Only use one AUM Conversion for the entire ranch or unit you are contracting.

This process will only be used for contracting purposes. The development of suggested stocking rates in the grazing plan will follow the Policies and Procedures in the National Planning Procedures Manual, National Range and Pasture handbook and Practice Standard 528 Prescribed Grazing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact George Chavez, State Resource Conservationist at (505) 761-4421 or Norman Vigil, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs at (505) 761-4445.

*Cliff E. Sanchez, ACTING*

J. XAVIER MONTOYA  
State Conservationist

*Attachment:*  
*1972 Grazing Capacities Map*