

**SUMMARY MINUTES**  
PECOS DISTRICT RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)  
LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN HABITAT PRESERVATION AREA OF CRITICAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (LPC ACEC) – LIVESTOCK GRAZING  
SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING  
NOVEMBER 4, 2014

Tish McDaniel, RAC member and Co-chair of the subcommittee welcomed all and explained that due to the rain and road conditions the full tour planned would not be possible and a shorter version would be taken. The idea is to see a working ranch where chicken habitat preservation has been put above cattle and that both are working well.

Kyle Dillard, who is working a cow/calf operation with chickens told the group that his has been a very workable operation and will be seen on the shorter tour. When asked for ideas of how to integrate chicken preservation, reduced stocking rates, leaving more grass for the chicken and using acceptable grazing was suggested.

During discussion, it was stated that there are challenges that go with different growing seasons. There is a need to address reasons for having stock in different places for different reasons and now must work with these issues. Rotations may need to be looked at closely.

On the ACEC, the Taylor Grazing Act is removed and bringing cattle back on would be used as a tool to enhance the area for the chicken preservation. It was reiterated that grazing is to be used only as a tool, not as an economic endeavor.

Ms. McDaniel explained that monitoring is done in enclosures and clipping is done. Clipping will be used both in outside and dry weight is done. Enclosures are moved every three years. Monitoring should be able to be done by whoever is running the cattle. To be able to do the best monitoring there should be only one sample spot in each pasture.

Mr. Willard Heck discussed management on the Weaver Ranch. They have had the property since 1987. It was in solid shinnery, with not much other grasses. The shinnery roots hold much water and other grasses were not getting enough. It was decided to use a sub-normal dose of Tebuthiuron. They wanted only the effect of allowing the grasses to return. They did 10-year monitoring, documenting changes in several study areas. Remarkable changes were seen, seven (7) times more grass in the first year. Over the years an average of four (4) times more occurred. When the shinnery was “knocked back”, much blue stem grass was seen.

It was stated that spraying is easy - good grazing management is necessary to maintain good grasses. No dunes were treated.

It was stated that neither the Center of Excellence nor BLM can currently use Tebuthiuron for treatment.

It was asked what percentage of shinnery is needed for the “chicken”. The answer was that it is needed for structure but must not be too high. There must be pathways. However, they are also in areas where there is no shrubbery.

It was again stated that spraying is effective but good management is paramount.

Stayed off area sprayed for 2 years. Areas where grazed after spraying seemed to show no blue stem. Annual take was 50%, after the 2 years. Seemed to take too much if didn't move fast enough on some areas.

Adam Ortega stated that the majority of the Sand Ranch has been treated. Blue stem occurred in some areas that have not been grazed. Also where fire occurred. The habitat in this area needs to be kept healthy for the chickens. A map with active leks was distributed. It is time for active management in this area to ensure keeping the area prime for chickens. The goal of the Committee is to advise best ways to accomplish this.

NMSU studies have shown that chickens will not use mesquite areas.

Discussion of elimination of ways to treat the land has been found to cause harm in many cases. All avenues should be looked at and properly used.

In 2004/2005 areas being grazed with only short blue stem were looked at and it became known that better management was necessary.

It was stated that no Teb treatments were funded by CEHMM in CCA/CCAA areas. Other areas have a 500 meter buffer.

Freeze and drought has suppressed much shinnery and grasses are growing better this year than in the previous few. Weather has played a large part.

Ms. McDaniel stated that in summary – do not want to ignore landscape and BLM is looking for tools to manage the area for the preservation of the Prairie Chicken. A manager must know grasses and when palatable, graze and move as necessary, learn what grasses to graze at what times.

It was stated that when the value of good management is seen, managers may be more willing to do what is necessary, as opposed to being told what they can do and when they can do it.

Ms. McDaniel stated that the Committee must keep in mind the best tools to be used for the Chicken, but must also look at total eco system.

The group then left to take a tour of areas where grazing is being used as a tool

LUNCH

The meeting reconvened and Adam asked the question, should we do grazing? Several answered "yes". He reviewed the who, what, where, when and why of the goals of the Subcommittee. He stated that 45% utilization is in the RMPA, District's goal is leave 65%.

The map of the Sand Ranch was reviewed and surrounding owners were mentioned. Several comments were made and are listed below.

Need to know how will graze, limitations, purpose –includes impacts on land, etc. which will then determine who is and who is not interested.

Limit to one or two lessees – easier to control

Hazards of opening up to bid – water issue

Adam was asked about limitations on BLM to advertise for leasing. He replied that BLM will go with whatever the RAC recommendation is.

It was stated that the recommendation to the RAC should include what is available and what parameters are so that anyone interested can look into the possibility of being a lessee and graze.

Discussion continued regarding who the “who” should be and that since water is an issue that Mr. Riley should be considered for lessee as he controls most of the water on the south end.

Further suggestions were made and discussed. These included:

- that there be 250 cows on the ACEC , monitoring, making known what needed or not, and flexibility built in

- that the lessee work with surrounding neighbors re rotating cattle

- that this would not really work.

- that whatever is done should always be a “fluid” operation.

- That understocking can be a detrimental factor, manage size of pasture to avoid under utilization and overgrazing

- electric fencing is a tool.

There was discussion of BLM wanting to look only at the south end of the ACEC currently, that it is not feasible to utilize the whole area. Fire could be used as a tool on the north end. Historical data is available

**CONCLUSIONS: Focus on grazing as a tool, using only south side to start, with a lessee who is willing to work with parameters, using fire and electric fencing as tools if necessary.**

When: Possible year round grazing, always having residual vegetation . More resting time is better. If grasses are recovering quickly, can go back in quicker. Identify species needs and work with, if don't graze enough.

There were questions regarding putting up more fences for small pastures, or just put more cows in one place and then move? If electric fencing is used just lay it down until needed again. Different types and gauges were discussed.

The next meeting will be at 1:00 pm on December 11, 2014, at the BLM office in Roswell.