

A group of 15 wind energy companies, the **Wind Energy Whooping Crane Action Group (WEWAG)**, in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and nine state wildlife agencies, is developing a programmatic **habitat conservation plan (HCP)** to address the potential impacts of wind energy development on several threatened and endangered species in the central United States. This area of the country provides important habitat and a corridor for migration, while also containing significant wind energy resources. Through the HCP process, WEWAG member companies hope to create environmentally-responsible wind energy generation in this region. The Great Plains Wind Energy HCP, when approved, will help meet national policy goals for domestic renewable energy, greatly enhance wildlife conservation efforts, and develop a more efficient permitting process for these projects. This is the **first regional, multi-species HCP** to address the impacts of wind energy development on a landscape scale.

What is an HCP?

HCPs are an integral component of an application for an **Incidental Take Permit (ITP)** under the **federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)**. ITPs are a voluntary tool that non-federal entities may use to receive authorization for “take” of federally-listed (i.e., officially recognized as endangered or threatened) species of wildlife that may occur in connection with otherwise lawful activity. “Take” is defined in the ESA as, “...to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct” with respect to federally-listed endangered species.



The Great Plains Wind Energy HCP is a voluntary effort by WEWAG to comprehensively address potential regional energy development impacts to federally-listed or sensitive species, rather than address them on a project-by-project basis. Since 2009, WEWAG has been working in partnership with Region 2 (the Southwest) and Region 6 (Mountain-Prairie) of the Service to develop the HCP and the terms of the ITP. Should the Service approve the final HCP and the ITP application, the Service will issue an ITP authorizing incidental take of the covered species in connection with wind energy development in the specified area, as long as that take complies with the conservation measures in the HCP.

What species are addressed in the Great Plains Wind Energy HCP?

The species currently considered for inclusion in the HCP are the whooping crane, the lesser prairie-chicken, the interior least tern, and the piping plover. The whooping crane, interior least tern, and piping plover are federally endangered species, and the lesser prairie-chicken is proposed for federal listing. The HCP would address incidental take of the covered species within the 200-mile wide, approximately 1,500-mile long whooping crane migratory corridor (the area the whooping cranes migrate through), and the range (or habitat) of the lesser prairie-chicken. This area spans from the Gulf Coast of Texas north to the Canadian border, and covers portions of the following states: **Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Texas.**



WEWAG MEMBERS

Acciona North America
Allete
BP Wind Energy
Competitive Power Ventures, Inc.
Duke Energy Renewables
Element Power
EDF Renewable Services
EDP Renewables North America
Iberdrola Renewables
Infinity Wind Power
MAP Royalty
NextEra Energy Resources
RES Americas
Trade Wind Energy
Wind Capital Group



Lesser prairie-chicken *



Whooping crane *

Why are WEWAG and the Service developing this HCP?

Development and implementation of a regional HCP will create a more efficient and effective permitting process, allowing both the Service and wind energy developers to direct resources towards a broad-scale conservation effort across a significant portion of species' ranges, rather than project-by-project.



Piping plover *



Interior least tern *

Conservation benefits of the HCP:

- Scientific rigor and the best available biological information are used to develop and maintain the conservation program.
- Clearly stated, unambiguous biological goals and objectives developed by species experts and scientists can be supported by industry, agencies, and conservationists.
- Results of the conservation program will be comprehensively evaluated and carefully monitored, and conservation measures will be adjusted to ensure ongoing effectiveness and compliance.
- Conservation measures benefiting the species are supported by a long-term financial and legal commitment, ensuring they will be carried out.

* The final list of covered species may include all these species, a subset of them, or additional species, based on the outcome of the planning process.
All photos courtesy of the Service.

WEWAG MISSION STATEMENT

“The development of wind power is an essential and growing component of the Nation’s electricity supply. Wind power is a source of clean, renewable energy that emits no greenhouse gases, does not contribute to global warming, and is playing an increasing role in energy security. The wind industry and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service affirm their mutual support of the responsible development of wind energy through the development of this HCP. As participants in this HCP, we agree to work cooperatively, to exercise flexibility and ingenuity, and to devote the necessary resources to craft a scientifically and legally defensible HCP that provides a means for reasonable wind power development in the planning area, that will support the survival and recovery of the species covered in the HCP.”

For more information:

Please participate in the NEPA public comment process to ensure your voice is heard. Visit www.fws.gov/southwest or contact Luella Roberts at (505) 248-6654 or via email at Luella_Roberts@fws.gov.