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## **Governor Mary Fallin Comments on Lesser Prairie Chicken Being Listed as a Threatened Species**

OKLAHOMA CITY – Governor Mary Fallin today commented on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s decision to list the Lesser Prairie Chicken as a Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The governor expressed optimism at the unprecedented option included in the decision that allows landowners and industry to receive protections from harming the species by enrolling in the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies’ Range Wide Plan and taking steps to allow for conservation:

“While I had asked the Fish and Wildlife Service to not list the Lesser Prairie Chicken under the ESA, due in large part to Oklahoma’s efforts to develop and implement the Range Wide Plan, I believe we have a unique opportunity to show how a plan based in state management of this species can allow for a quick recovery,” said Fallin. “I appreciate the outstanding work of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to develop a new conservation model that keeps states in charge of managing species, like the Lesser Prairie Chicken, rather than the federal government taking over all management control.

“The potential impact of this listing, without the Range Wide Plan, could have resulted in damaging hits to our state’s economy, particularly our energy and agriculture industries. With a large amount of conservation already taking place, my administration will take all steps to continue to implement this plan and work with the Service to de-list this species as soon as possible. I am very excited to see industry and the states continue to work together on conserving this bird with our jointly developed conservation strategies.”

The Range Wide Plan was developed based on the Oklahoma Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Plan and the support of stakeholders across the entire range, which covers the

entire 40-million acre range of the species across Oklahoma, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico and Texas. As part of the Fish and Wildlife Service's listing decision, an exception to the take prohibition was issued to those who enroll and follow the Range Wide Plan. This represents a historic new option for landowners and industry to have available to them. Today, more than 25 percent of the species habitat is under conservation practices that follow the Range Wide Plan.

Enrollment in the Range Wide Plan will continue and allow for enrollees to receive take protection and continue to be managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation rather than the federal government. For more information on enrollment in the plan, contact Allan Janus at (405) 744-9527. Additional enrollments will allow for a record to be built to facilitate a quicker recovery and delisting of the Lesser Prairie Chicken.

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