

QUARTERLY REPORT

2026

April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026



Candidate Conservation Agreements
for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken and the
Dunes Sagebrush Lizard in New Mexico

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Candidate Conservation Agreements

This report describes the activities conducted in the second quarter of 2026 for the Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*; hereafter LPC) and Dunes Sagebrush Lizard (*Sceloporus arenicolus*; hereafter DSL). The Center for Environmental Health Monitoring and Management (CEHMM) administers a CCA for federal lands and minerals and a CCAA for non-federal lands and minerals. The two agreements, collectively referred to as the CCA/A, allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and CEHMM to work in cooperation and in consultation with landowners and industry to support conservation measures for the LPC and the DSL. The purpose of the CCA/A is to:

- Develop, coordinate, and implement conservation actions to reduce and/or eliminate known threats to the LPC and the DSL in New Mexico on federal, state, and private surfaces and minerals
- Support ongoing efforts to re-establish and maintain viable populations of LPC and DSL in currently occupied and suitable habitats
- Encourage the development and protection of suitable LPC and DSL habitats by giving incentives to Participating Cooperators to implement specific conservation measures

Under the CCA, federal lessees, operators, or permittees, who joined by voluntarily signing a Certificate of Participation (CP), receive a high degree of certainty that additional restrictions are not to be placed on their otherwise legal activities with the federal listing of both species. The companion CCAA provides incentives for voluntary conservation of the LPC and the DSL on non-federal lands. By signing a Certificate of Inclusion (CI) under the CCAA, the lessee, owner, operator, or permittee voluntarily committed to implement specific conservation measures for the species on non-federal lands. Under the CCAA, private landowners receive assurances that additional restrictions cannot be placed on their otherwise legal activities on enrolled lands. In both cases, enrollment in the CCA or CCAA is voluntary. CEHMM is the federal permit holder for these agreements and is responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reporting on projects completed with CCA/A funds.

CEHMM is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation based in Carlsbad and Milnesand, New Mexico. CEHMM's participation allows for a federally approved, independently audited financial management system to provide funding for management and administration.

The following quarterly report details projects funded and completed with CCA/A funds. The report also details the daily implementation of the agreements including activities such as siting energy development outside DSL habitat, conducting presence/absence surveys to monitor the species, and evaluating participant conservation commitment. For more details on the CCA/A programs, visit our website at www.cephmm.org.

Benefits of Candidate Conservation Agreement Programs

- Voluntary enrollment
- Measurable on-the-ground conservation
- Landscape-based approach
- Allow landowners and industry to continue work on the ground

Species Status Updates

On May 20, 2024, the FWS published its final ruling for the listing of the DSL as federally endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531, et seq.). On June 20, 2024, the ruling went into effect, and the DSL is now considered endangered throughout its entire range of west Texas and southeast New Mexico. The Texas Attorney General filed a lawsuit soon after the DSL listing in 2024. In June 2026, a settlement was reached stating the Fish and Wildlife Service made an error in discounting habitat restoration efforts, and the government agreed to remove the DSL endangered species listing, pending a judge's approval. Until the judge's decision, the DSL remains federally listed as an endangered species. The decision process could take several months and enrollment into the DSL CCA/A programs remains closed until de-listing actions are published in the Federal Register. CEHMM is committed to keeping its stakeholders and enrollees informed of any changes

On August 12, 2025, a Texas federal court granted a motion to vacate the proposed rule listing the LPC under the Endangered Species Act and remand it to the FWS for further consideration. Under this finding it was determined that the distinction of the LPC into northern and southern distinct population segments was invalid. As a result, the LPC is currently delisted and subject to re-evaluation. CEHMM is in close communication with our regulatory partners and does not anticipate any changes to the current participants' operations. We will keep participants informed on all future updates. **This decision has effectively reopened enrollment into the CCA/A programs for LPC coverage.** Although LPC coverage can be pursued through the reopened CCA/A enrollment, DSL CCA/A enrollment remains closed due to the species' current endangered species listing status.

Habitat Conservation Plan Updates in Q2 of 2026

While the CCA/As have been successful, they are approaching their 20-year expiration date in 2028. With guidance from our partners at the FWS and BLM, CEHMM is currently exploring the development and implementation of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) with associated Incidental Take Permit. This type of program is more appropriate for working with listed species and will allow for updates to elements that have changed in the past 20 years (e.g., the addition of covered activities and land acquisition). These updates may include expanded coverage for renewable energy and transmission and allow for the purchase and management of conservation lands to offset take. To develop the plan, FWS has offered to extend coverage of our current CCA/A agreements until 2031. As of June 2026, first drafts of the first five chapters have been completed and are undergoing internal review. We are moving forward with a combined HCP that will include coverage for the LPC, DSL, and Texas hornshell mussel (THM). Drafting of the next chapters will begin once we establish a Plan of Action laying out specific roles and timelines to facilitate collaboration with the FWS, in July 2026.

Enrollment Numbers

The total number of enrollees in the LPC and DSL CCA/A programs can be found in Figure 1. Currently, there are 2,376,860.01 acres enrolled by ranching participants in the program (Figure 2). To date, industry participants have enrolled 3,904,461.56 acres in the CCA/A program (Figure 2). CEHMM is continuously updating enrolled acreage through the All-Activities method of enrollment, as participants can add or remove their covered acres at any time. In addition to this, CEHMM sometimes executes 1) new enrollments, 2) disenrollments, and/or 3) amendments (e.g., transfers, additions, removals, and name changes) to CCA/A agreements. During the second quarter of 2026, CEHMM executed several enrollment changes. CEHMM staff oversaw two industry transfers and two ranching transfers, one new industry enrollment (LPC-only), and one industry unenrollment in CCA/A programs (Figures 1-2).

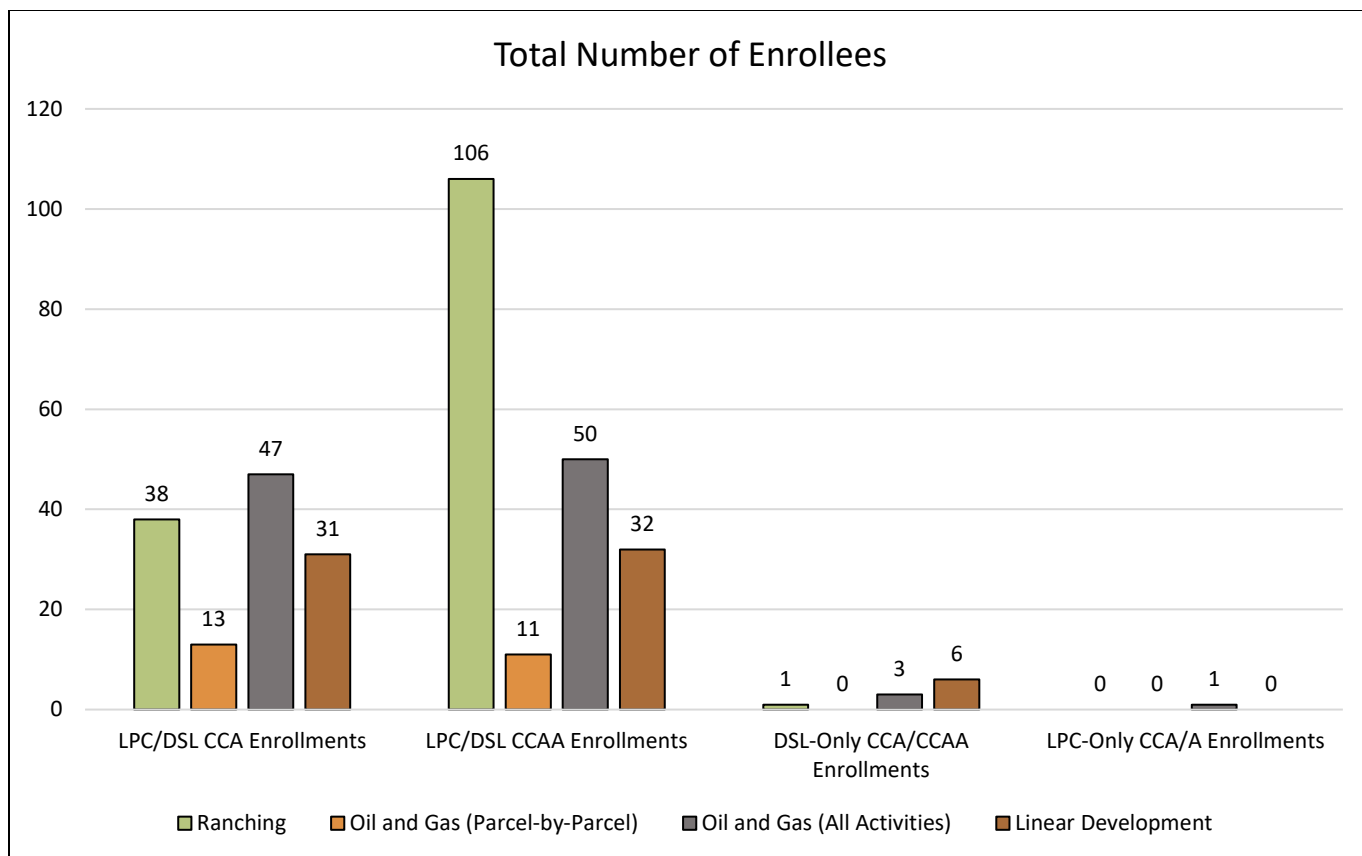


Figure 1. Current program enrollment numbers for LPC/DSL, DSL-only, and LPC-only CCAs and CCAAs for ranching, industry, and linear development. Industry enrollment is separated by parcel-by-parcel and all activities enrollment types.

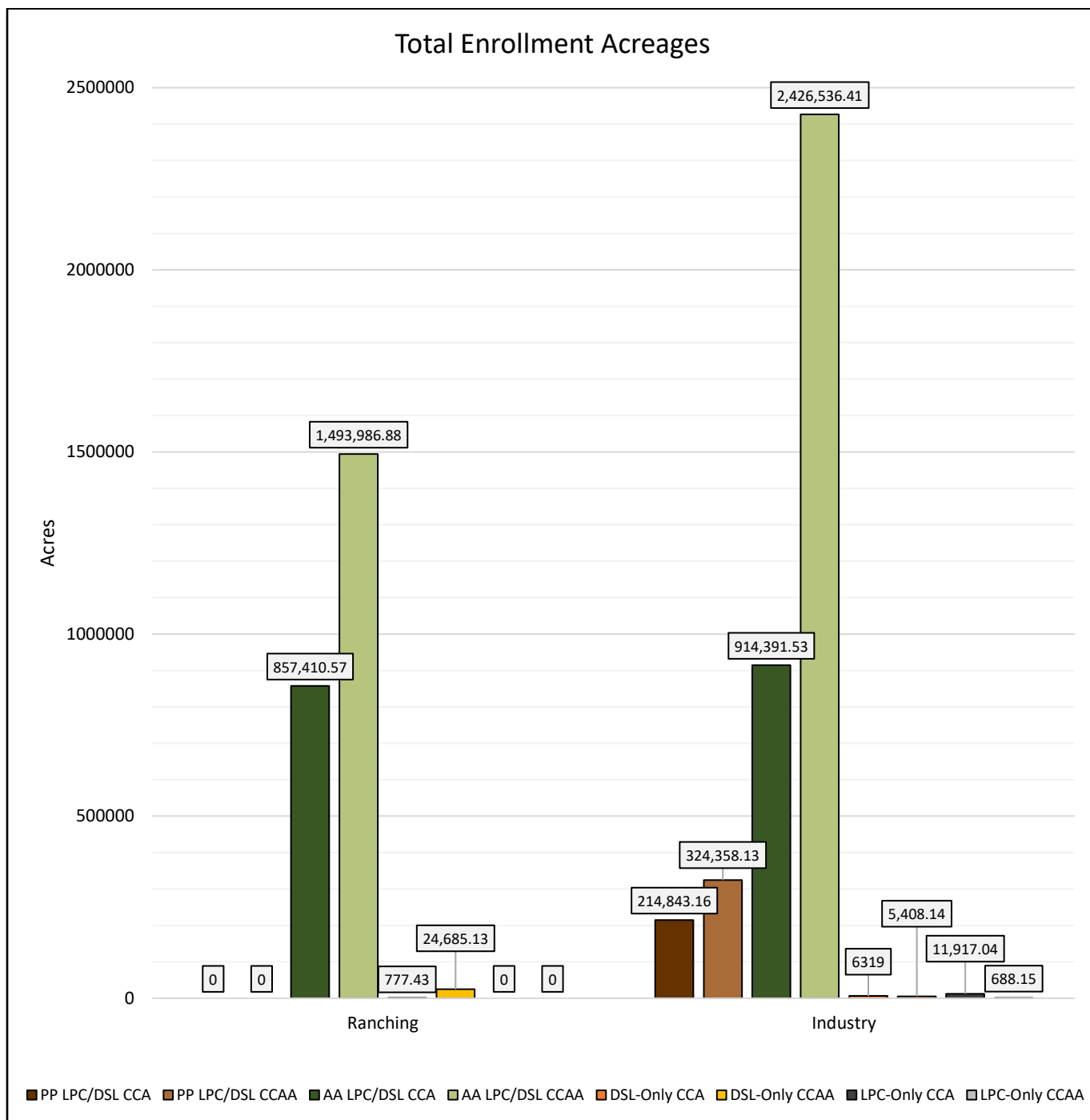


Figure 2. Current program enrollment acreages for LPC/DSL, DSL-only, and LPC-only CCAs and CCAAs for ranching, industry, and linear development participants. Industry enrollment is separated by parcel-by-parcel and all-activities enrollment types.



FUNDING

Habitat Conservation Fund

CEHMM establishes a Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) for each oil and gas operator, as well as each linear development operator, that executes a CP or CI. The contribution amount is determined by the number of acres enrolled within their CP or CI agreements. Once land-disturbing activities are identified and permitted in the operator's certificate, conservation fees are debited from their HCF. Approximately 29% of the funds received are allocated for overhead expenses. The remaining balance is used exclusively in support of the CCA/A programs. Supported activities include, but are not limited to, planning and implementation, on-sites, grazing programs, projects authorized by the ranking team, research, enrollments and amendments, project monitoring, education and outreach, and support services (e.g., vehicle and equipment procurement and maintenance).



Habitat Restoration Projects Completed in Q2 of 2026

Running N Kenna Fence

Completed: April 2026

Units: 6.9 miles of fence

Description: Removed approximately 6.9 miles of dilapidated boundary fencing and replaced it with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Berry Hand Mesquite Treatment

Approved and Funded: June 2026

Units: 55 acres

Description: Hand-treated approximately 55 acres of mesquite in near proximity to suitable DSL habitat.

Habitat Restoration Projects Funded and Awaiting Completion

Running N DSM

Approved & Funded: March 2022

Budget: \$148,777.39

Units: 5,800 acres

Description: Remove approximately 5,800 acres of DSM.

Bogle Fence Proposal

Approved and Funded: August 2023

Budget: \$375,410.28

Units: 9 miles of fence

Description: Remove approximately 5.5 miles of dilapidated interior fencing and 3.5 miles of dilapidated boundary fencing and replace it with wildlife-friendly fencing.

D2 Shop

Approved and Funded: September 2024

Budget: \$140,000.00

Units: 1 shop

Description: Install a shop on the Milnesand property to house all the equipment and tools needed for daily operations in District 2.

Derrick Water

Approved and Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$106,873.01

Units: 2.7 miles of pipeline; 1 water tank

Description: Install 2.7 miles of pipeline and 1 water tank.

TNC Fence

Approved and Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$623,199.25

Units: 19.2 miles of fence

Description: Remove approximately 19.2 miles of dilapidated boundary fencing and replace it with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Watts Fence

Approved and Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$70,936.83

Units: 1.5 miles of fence

Description: Remove approximately 1.5 miles of dilapidated boundary fencing and replace it with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Weaver DSM

Approved and Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$124,206.10

Units: 2,370 acres

Description: Remove approximately 2,370 acres of DSM.

Stockton Fence

Approved and Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$119,886.80

Units: 5 miles of fence

Description: Remove approximately 1.5 miles of boundary fence and 3.5 miles of interior fence and replace it with wildlife-friendly fencing.

Research Project Updates in Q2 of 2026

Dunes Sagebrush Lizard Population Monitoring

Approved & Funded: June 2018; October 2023

Budget: \$60,434.01

Description: The objective of this project is to implement a long-term monitoring study to assess DSL population dynamics across their range in New Mexico. Population monitoring began in 2018 and has continued through additional funding to track population parameters across multiple DSL populations. Additionally, research linking weather and microclimate to model population persistence of DSL will be conducted at established monitoring sites. This information will be used to create dynamic models by combining these data with habitat, microhabitat, and climate data to predict thermal microclimates throughout the entire range of the DSL. As of June 2026, CEHMM contractor(s) and CEHMM staff have monitored 7 population grids, with the expected completion of this year's monitoring by July 15, 2026.

Linking Weather and Microclimate to Model Population Persistence of the Dunes Sagebrush Lizard – Environmental Solutions & Innovations, Inc.

Approved & Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$163,621.50

Description: The goal of this project is to describe the thermal environment experienced by the DSL across both space and time. We propose a series of data collection and modeling approaches to describe small-scale variation in thermal environments experienced by the DSL, which can be extrapolated to the entire range via remote sensing and satellite imagery. This project represents the first step towards predictive models that will aid in future efforts to preserve and restore dunes that maximize DSL fitness and understand how populations may respond to climate change. In future work, outcomes of this project will complement physiological measurements (i.e., body temperature) to fully describe the energy budget of this species. Two specific objectives are proposed for the current work: 1) quantify microclimates at four sites with high spatial and temporal resolution and 2) create dynamic models to combine these data with habitat, microhabitat, and climate data to predict thermal microclimates throughout the entire range of the DSL. Since April 2026, weather stations and lizard models have been deployed and are collecting data across the population monitoring grids.

Orphan Well Reclamation Protocol

Approved & Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$100,000

Description: This research aims to 1) develop a methodological avenue for selecting viable remediation/reclamation sites based on localized and landscape-level factors, 2) perform reclamation and species-specific habitat improvement at selected sites post-remediation, and 3) evaluate the success of reclamation by establishing a post-reclamation monitoring program

that utilizes tracking metrics designed to measure the responses of site rehabilitation for each species at different spatial and temporal scales. This method will provide a definitive protocol for well reclamation/restoration initiatives and will help determine the scenarios that maximize species benefits. This project is ongoing and CEHMM staff is currently working with the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division (NMOCD) to review potential reclamation sites. So far, we have received ~690 sites based and begun data analysis with on our developed methodology. Sites identified through these efforts will be evaluated for a reclamation decision within Q3 of 2026. CEHMM will continue to collaborate with OCD to get new orphan well locations for review and analyses.

Passive Acoustic Monitoring of Lesser Prairie-Chickens

Approved & Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$177,667.01

Description: The objective of this study is to assess the utility of acoustic recording units (ARUs) as a novel method for monitoring LPC populations and quantifying parameters that can be used to evaluate LPC habitat restoration efforts. This proposal aims to develop protocols for using ARUs as a method to survey for LPC; investigate the cost-effectiveness of LPC survey methodologies by comparing detectability metrics of ARUs and standardized ground-based survey methodologies; and explore the potential of ARUs to target future restoration efforts. We proposed a multi-faceted experiment that includes: 1) the deployment of up to 40 ARUs as well as simultaneous ground-based surveys, across ~70,948 acres of historic and currently occupied LPC habitat and 2) analyses of LPC detection probabilities, phenology, and density estimates (e.g., booming intensity) collected from passive acoustic monitoring and ground-based surveys (i.e., count data). Our primary goal is to explore advanced methodological strategies for monitoring LPC populations on state, federal, and private lands in New Mexico. Our secondary goal is to develop a noninvasive, cost-effective framework for targeting future restoration efforts. As of June 2026, all ARUs have been collected from the field. Preliminary results show that LPC have been detected at 20 of 40 sites, including at least one site where ground-based surveys failed to detect LPC. This finding demonstrates that combining this methodology with ground-based surveys can improve the detection of LPC, particularly when traditional survey efforts are limited by logistical challenges or when spatial coverage of surveys may not capture the full extent of range expansion. Currently, LPC call data are being analyzed to estimate daily detection probability and will be incorporated into a multi-covariate occupancy model. In July, we will conduct vegetation surveys at each ARU to quantify vegetative density and structure, which will serve as habitat covariates within the occupancy model.

Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to Quantify and Evaluate DSL Habitat

Approved & Funded: August 2025

Budget: \$24,068.00

Description: This project will use unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs; drones) to quantify the

physical and thermal structures of DSL habitat, providing a more detailed understanding of the species' habitat tolerances. This data will inform conservation decisions and help refine definitions of habitat quality. The project will be conducted for one year, across three sampling periods during peak DSL activity. Resulting data will be used to generate 3-D models of DSL habitat structure and thermal conditions, providing a framework for quantifying habitat suitability. These efforts will also support calibration of operating temperature models deployed at population sites, with fieldwork anticipated in April and May of 2027. Note: The original timeline to conduct work was in April and May 2026; however, logistical challenges prevented this from occurring and a new plan of action is being determined to utilize UAVs and meet project deliverables.



Vegetation Monitoring

As stated in previous reports, a total of 59 grazing exclosures, across 25 ranches, were deployed in the first quarter of 2026. In the second quarter of 2026, CEHMM staff began preparations for annual vegetation monitoring. Vegetation monitoring will be completed at all previously deployed locations within Q3 of 2026. Vegetation monitoring employs the combined use of two survey methodologies (i.e., Robel pole and line point-intercept) to determine basal cover, canopy cover, and plant density on CCA/A enrolled ranches. While all the grazing cages have been installed for 2026, CEHMM staff are still in the process of installing cages across the other newly enrolled properties. Updates on those locations will be provided in upcoming reports.

Weather Monitoring

Current climate models forecast a high likelihood of future extreme climatic conditions for southeastern New Mexico, including an increase in severe weather events and increased frequency and duration of drought conditions. These conditions may impact the lesser prairie-chicken and dunes sagebrush lizard, but they can also impact rangeland health and livestock production. Vegetation monitoring, in conjunction with the weather meters, can be used to better inform future grazing and wildlife management practices.

In April 2026, CEHMM installed weather stations in strategic locations across CCA/A enrolled lands. Given the utility of those data in making conservation and management decisions, CEHMM plans to continue (and potentially expand) these monitoring efforts, while also providing information and guidance to our ranching participants. Station locations have been anonymized; however, deployment currently spans the entire DSL range and a substantial reach of the LPC range in New Mexico. Regional locations are as follows: Station 1 covers southeastern Lea County; Station 2 covers southwestern Lea County; Station 3 covers northern Eddy County; Station 4 covers central Chaves County; Station 5 covers eastern Chaves County; Station 6 covers northeastern Lea County; Station 7 covers eastern Roosevelt County; and Station 8 covers northwestern Roosevelt County. Stations are programmed to collect a suite of real-time environmental variables (e.g., precipitation, air temperature, and wind speed; Figures 3-5).

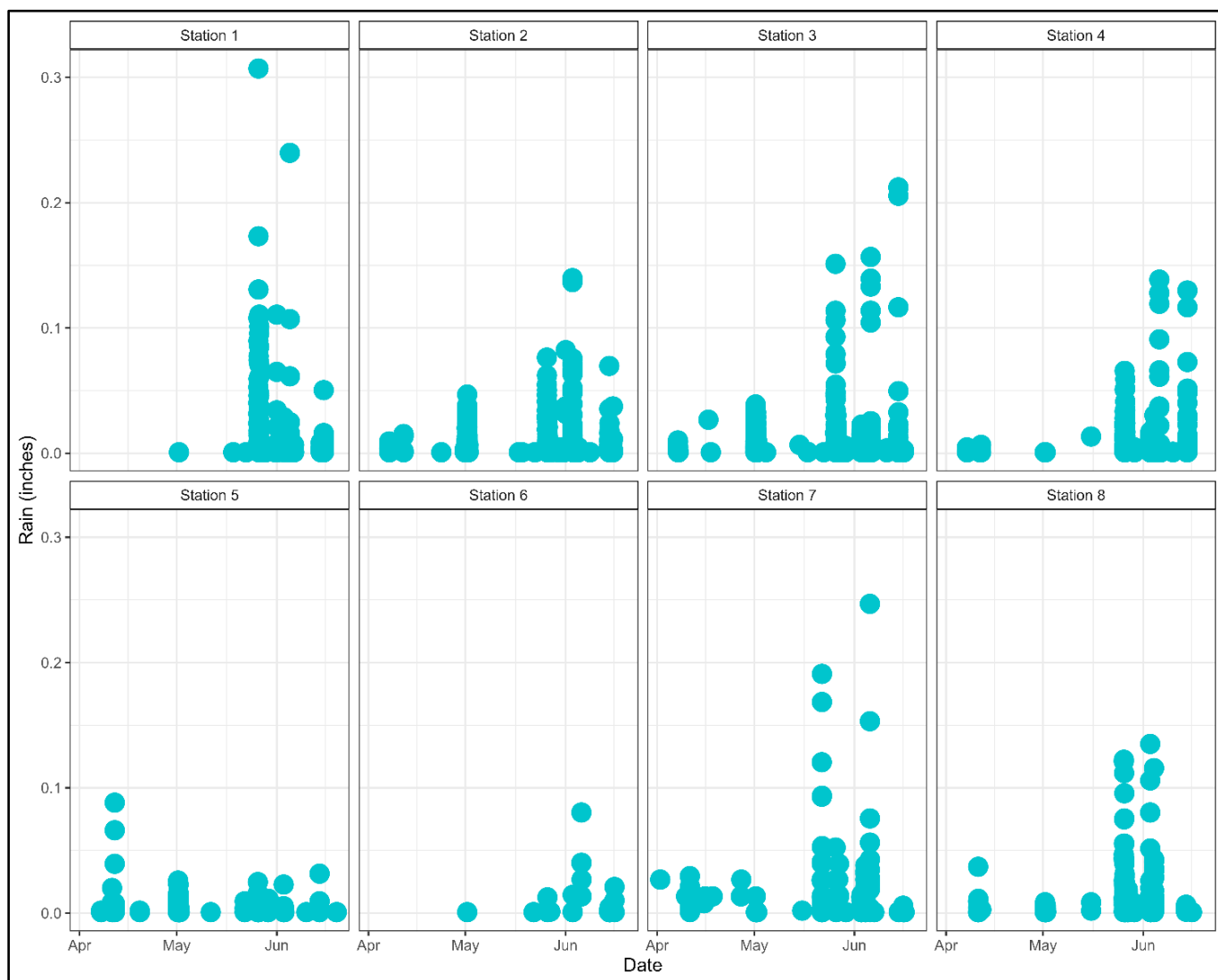


Figure 3. Monthly rainfall (in inches) for each station across the range of DSL. Station locations have been anonymized, but to put their locations in context: Station 1 is in southeastern Lea County, Station 2 is in southwestern Lea County, Station 3 is in northern Eddy County, Station 4 is in central Chaves County, Station 5 is in eastern Chaves County, Station 6 is in northeastern Lea County, Station 7 is in eastern Roosevelt County, Station 8 is in northwestern Roosevelt County.

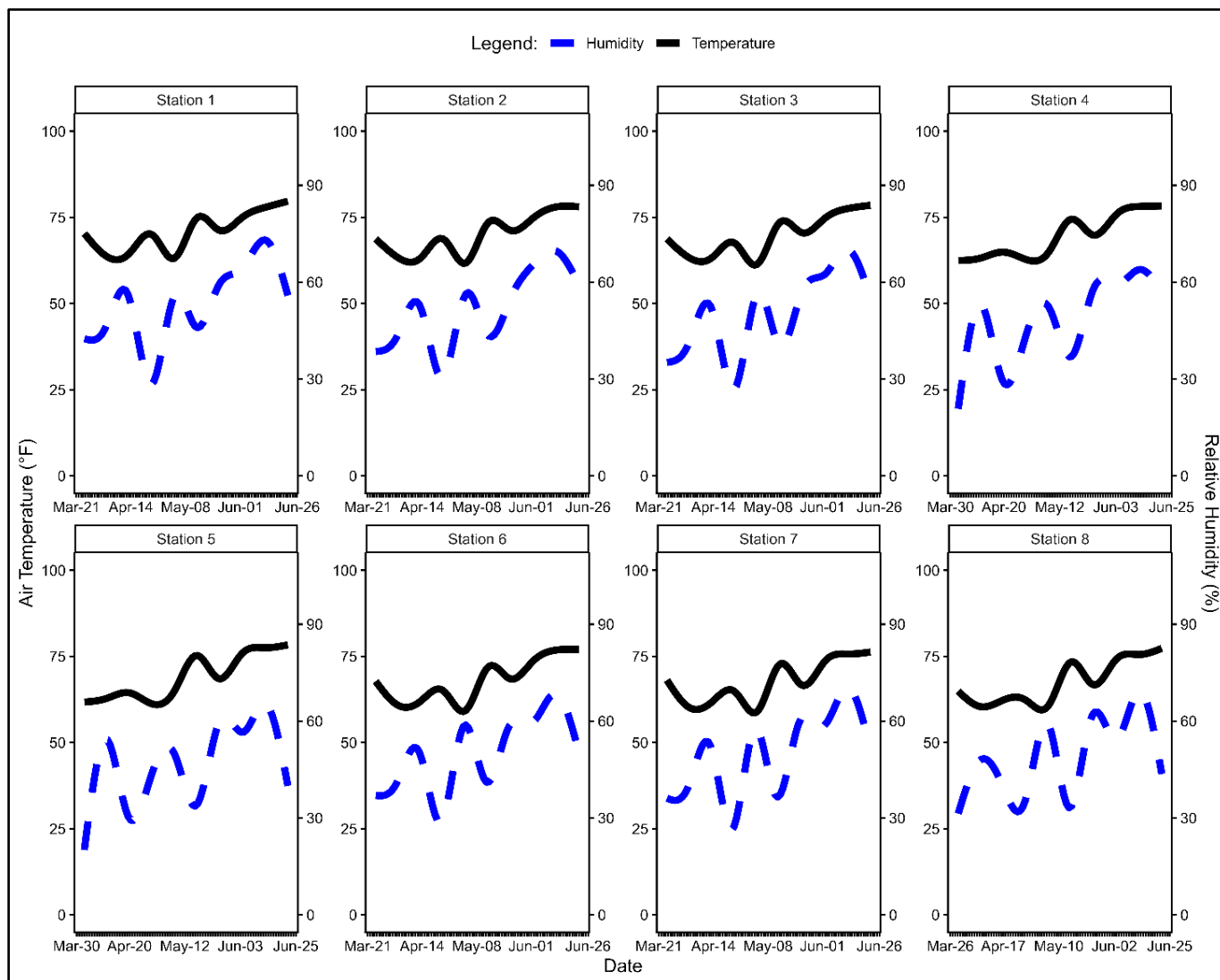


Figure 4. Temperature and humidity by date for each station across the range of DSL. Station locations have been anonymized, but to put their locations in context: Station 1 is in southeastern Lea County, Station 2 is in southwestern Lea County, Station 3 is in northern Eddy County, Station 4 is in central Chaves County, Station 5 is in eastern Chaves County, Station 6 is in northeastern Lea County, Station 7 is in eastern Roosevelt County, Station 8 is in northwestern Roosevelt County.

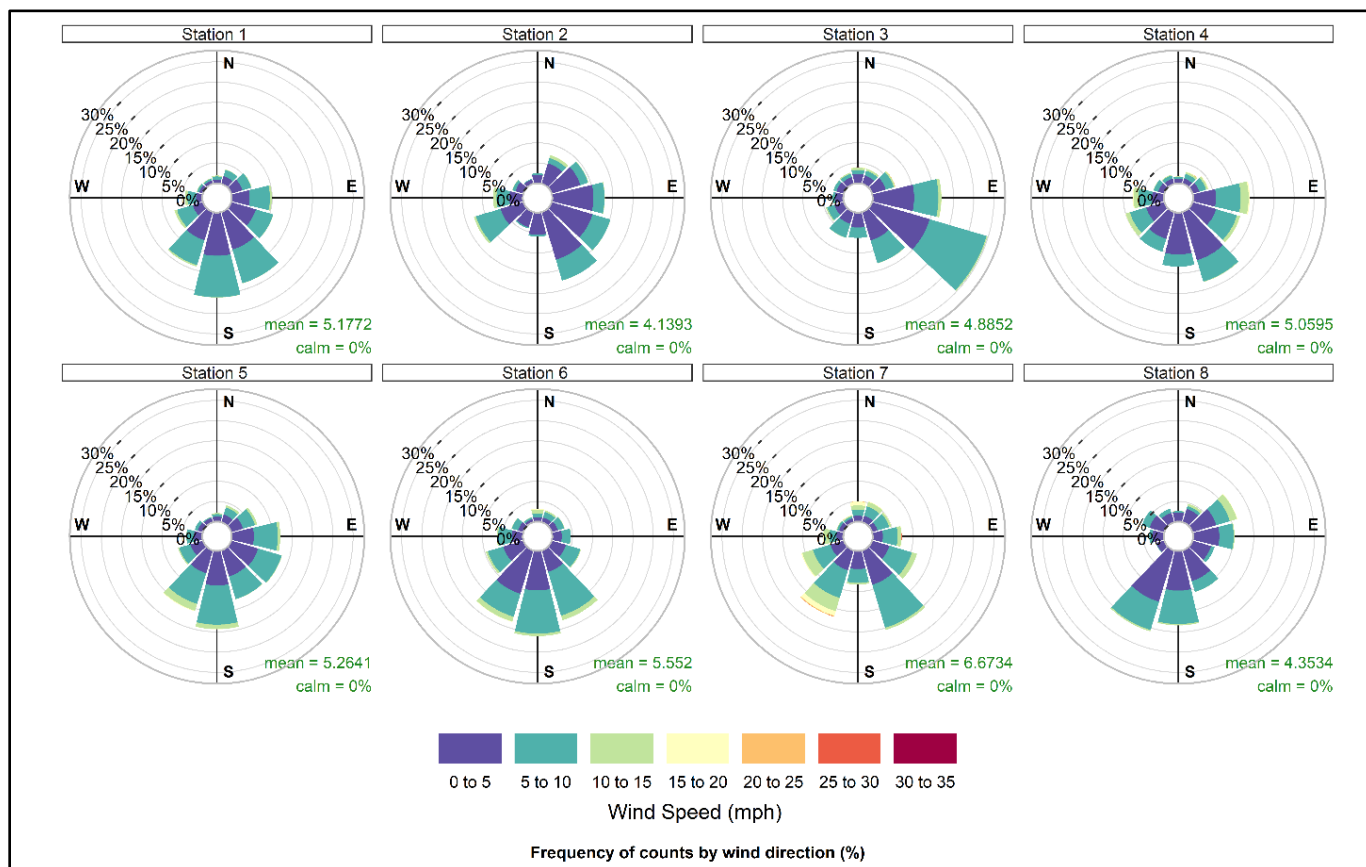


Figure 5. Wind roses showing the strength and direction of wind at each station in the DSL range. Note that direction assumes the stations have remained pointing in the correct direction since deployment and have not been jostled out of place. Station locations have been anonymized, but to put their locations in context: Station 1 is in southeastern Lea County, Station 2 is in southwestern Lea County, Station 3 is in northern Eddy County, Station 4 is in central Chaves County, Station 5 is in eastern Chaves County, Station 6 is in northeastern Lea County, Station 7 is in eastern Roosevelt County, Station 8 is in northwestern Roosevelt County.

DSL Monitoring

DSL monitoring efforts began in March 2026. These include visual encounter surveys (VES) in areas of suitable habitat where historic vouchers were recorded and locations where DSL population occurrence was unknown. These surveys provide a foundation for the planning of current and future monitoring efforts in strategic or sensitive areas and aid in ground truthing efforts. As of June 30, 2026, CEHMM staff have completed a total of 116 VES. A total of 1,376 lizards were observed across all surveys (Figure 6). Out of the surveyed sites, DSL were observed at five of those VES locations. In total, six additional VES were conducted across those locations and 17 DSL were observed.

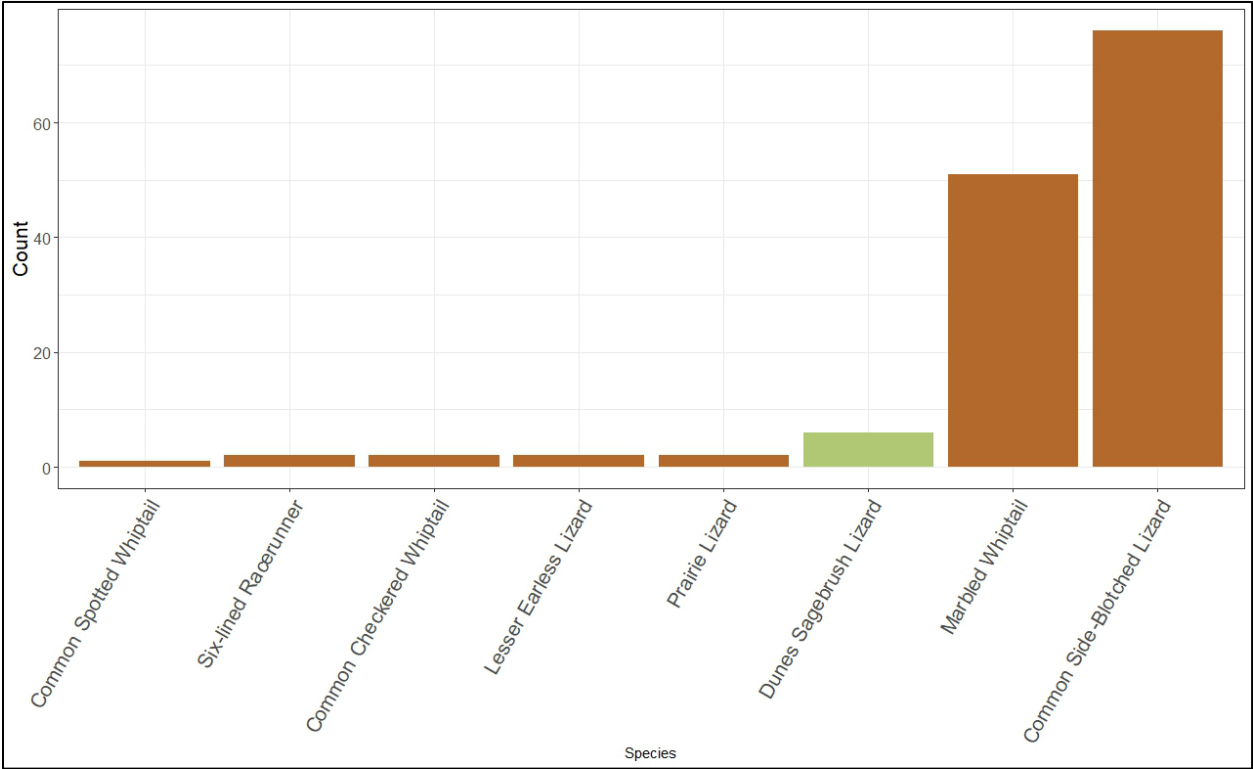


Figure 6. Number of lizards seen during Visual Encounter Surveys as of June 2026. So far, 79 short VES have been conducted across 21 larger sites.

In addition to VES, CEHMM staff are simultaneously running pitfall trap microgrids (i.e., nine 5-gallon buckets installed in a 3x3 grid formation) to detect and monitor historic or previously unknown DSL populations within the known range. (VES was used to determine locations for microgrids). In total, six separate areas were selected for monitoring this year. A total of 18 microgrids were installed this quarter. As of June 2026, CEHMM staff surveyed 15 of the microgrids, completing a total of 1,215 trap nights. Across all surveys, a total of 11 DSL individuals were captured in three different pitfall trap microgrids (Figure 7). A suite of trait data describing morphology, demographics, and reproductive status were collected on all captured lizards (i.e., all species including DSL).

When installing pitfall traps, 5-gallon buckets are installed flush with the ground and placed 10 meters apart. A piece of plywood is then placed over the buckets, creating shade that entices animals to fall into the traps. Once installed and opened, these grids are checked daily for a 5-day period (buckets are checked and closed on the last day). Any lizard that is captured in a pitfall trap is given an identification mark and then data is collected on that individual (e.g., species, life stage, sex, mass, and snout-to-vent length). All other animals caught in pitfall traps (e.g., small mammals, amphibians, invertebrates, and other reptiles) are recorded and then released.

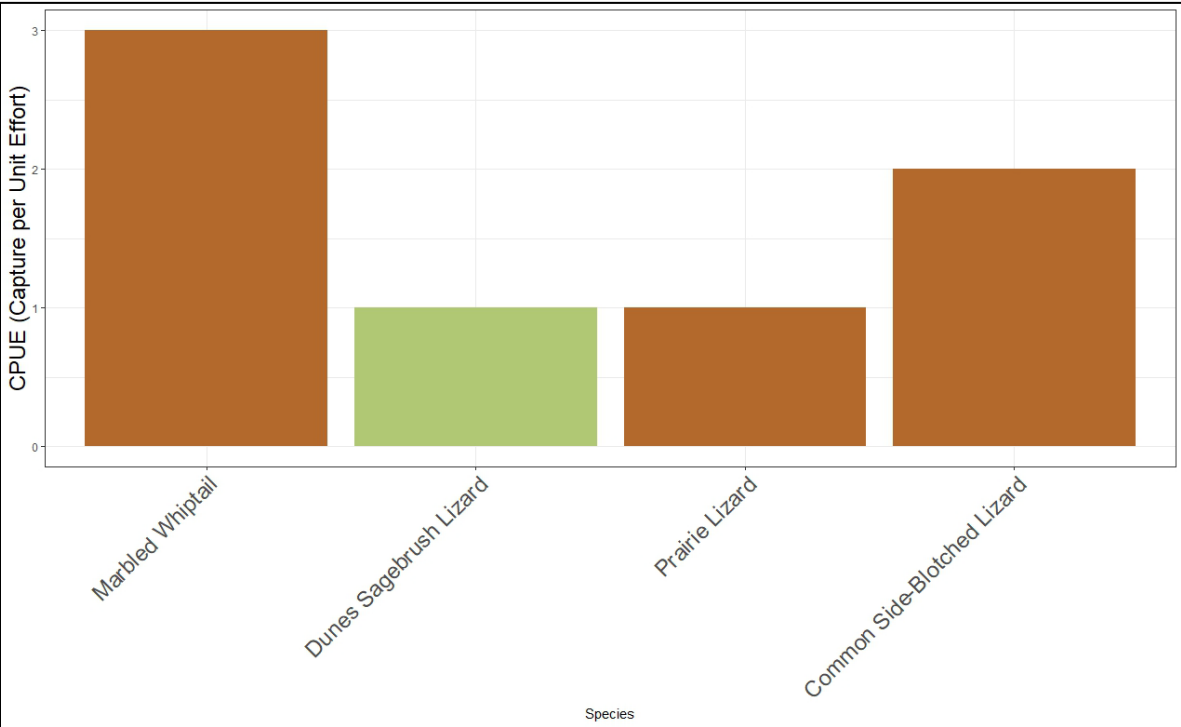


Figure 7. Proportions of lizards (separated by species) captured by pitfall traps as of June 2026. These counts are corrected by units of trap effort (i.e., CPUE from trap nights).

LPC Monitoring

Lek surveys are completed on enrolled ranches. Lek surveys consist of visiting historic and active leks to determine the current LPC count for each existing lek. Surveys are initiated 30 minutes prior to sunrise and conclude at 9:00 a.m. If wind speeds exceed 15 miles per hour, surveys are stopped and continued the following day. This is because high wind speeds inhibit surveyors

from hearing LPCs, thus increasing the possibility of false negative observations.

As of June 2026, the LPC monitoring has concluded for the year. CEHMM staff completed 454 survey stops across 45 enrolled ranches and observed a total of 1,118 LPC individuals across 112 leks. CEHMM staff have also begun to analyze historic data from previous CEHMM surveys, specifically to estimate and compare past trends in LPC abundance with current data trends.

During LPC surveys (including road surveys and lek surveys), the following data is collected: survey area (i.e., ranch name), presence of LPCs, direction of LPCs, time, temperature, wind speed, cloud cover, noise sources, noise levels, and other wildlife observed or heard. During roadside surveys, surveyors stand outside of the vehicle and listen for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, all environmental data is collected. When the 10 minutes have expired, the surveyor returns to their vehicle, drives one mile down the road, and repeats the process. When LPCs are heard on a roadside survey, a bearing is taken in the direction of the LPC; then another bearing is taken at the next stop. This allows the approximate location of the LPC to be triangulated. The surveyors walk to the lek and flush the individuals. This allows a count to be taken and the lek coordinates to be recorded.



INDUSTRY MEASURES

Mitigation of Impacts to Habitat

Oil and gas development and associated infrastructure can pose a serious threat to DSL, LPC, and many other species. Due to the potential of habitat loss and fragmentation in the wake of development, enrollees have agreed to implement certain conservation measures to offset further decline. This includes no surface occupancy within 30 meters of suitable or occupied DSL habitat, as well as no new powerlines within one mile of a historic LPC lek, and two miles from an active LPC lek (where LPC have been found within the past 5 years). There are four types of evaluations (i.e., field consultations, desktop block reviews, linear development desktop consultations, and pad desktop consultations) conducted by CEHMM staff to ensure infrastructure does not fall within these buffers. Field consultations include on-site visits with enrolled companies to appropriately relocate proposed developments that occur in or near suitable or occupied habitat to help ensure that DSL dune habitats and LPC leks are avoided. The remaining three assessment types are conducted via desktop analysis in which CEHMM staff utilize a variety of spatial data (e.g. aerial imagery, soil layers, species distribution models, and habitat suitability models) to 1) delineate suitable habitat, 2) reroute linear infrastructure, and/or 3) relocate pads or similar surface disturbances. The number of wells and rights-of-way (ROW) moved out of DSL habitat in Q2 of 2026 is shown in Table 1. It is important to note that not all the consultations depicted in the table below were located within suitable DSL habitat. Failure to report projects in the Plan of Development Stage, or failure to adhere to conservation measures outlined in CI and CP agreements may result in a Conservation Measure Violation (CMV). These violations are designed to document nonadherence and provide corrective action(s) to alleviate or mitigate impacts brought on by the violation. In Q2 of 2026, CEHMM issued one CMV.

Table 1. Initial development reviews and relocated developments in Q2 of 2026 across evaluation type categories including desktop block reviews, linear development consultations, and pad/other surface consultations. Also included is the total number of initial development reviews and developments relocated out of habitat that were field evaluated by CEHMM biologists as part of the review process. Note that desktop block reviews often may require additional evaluation including desktop consultations and/or field consultations.

	Desktop Block Reviews	Linear Development Consultations	Pad / Other Surface Consultations	Field Evaluated	TOTAL
Initial Development Reviews	7	61	14	32	75
Developments Relocated Out of Habitat	–	37	6	–	43



STEM Night at Southeastern New Mexico College (SENMC)

In April 2026, CEHMM staff attended a family STEM night at SENMC and presented an activity highlighting the different traits of local bird species and how these traits help them survive.

Brush Partners Meeting

In May 2026, CEHMM staff attended the annual New Mexico Brush Partners Meeting at the BLM Roswell Field Office. Here we provided updates on the mesquite treatments being implemented by CEHMM across CCA/A enrolled lands.

Whiteface Elementary School Outreach

In May 2026, CEHMM staff presented to students of Whiteface Elementary School, sharing the biology and natural history of species CEHMM works with, what it means to be a biologist, and the importance of conservation.

Executive Director Signature

Signed:

Signed by:

Emily K Wirth

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Emily K. Wirth, Executive Director

Date: 7/26/2026

If you have any questions, please contact Connor Adams at (575) 885-3700 or Kyle Dillard at (575) 675-2324.