Environmental Assessment for Disposal of a Portion of the McFarland Ranch Unit, Beaver County, Oklahoma

27 November 2018
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1 Introduction and Need for Action

1.1 Introduction

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the potential effects to physical, biological, and cultural resources and socioeconomic conditions which may result from the disposal of a 623.58-acre portion of the Beaver River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA), Beaver County, Oklahoma. This parcel of land does not meet the habitat needs of the species for which the larger parcel (McFarland Ranch) was purchased. This EA will be used by the USFWS to determine if the disposal of a portion of the BRWMA, as proposed, will be undertaken or if further analyses and/or additional mitigation measures are required.

Funds for the Proposed Action and the original purchase of the proposed disposal parcel have been provided through the State Wildlife Grants program administered by the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program, a division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The State Wildlife Grants program provides funds to the state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies for projects to restore, conserve, manage, and enhance sport fish, wild birds, mammals, species of greatest conservation need and their habitats. With the use of Federal funds, the Proposed Action is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations 155, et seq.) and U.S. Department of the Interior NEPA procedures. This EA also incorporates other federal, state, and local environmental policies and regulations.

1.2 Background

The Beaver River Wildlife Management Area was created through an initial acquisition of 15,542.49 acres in the late 1980s. In 2010, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation had an opportunity to expand the BRWMA with a 5,733.81 acre purchase known in the area as the McFarland Ranch. Before the acquisition, the McFarland Ranch was owned and managed by the McFarland family for over a century and was used primarily for cattle grazing and recreation. The ranch was known to support lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) habitat and at least one prairie chicken lek. When the McFarland family approached ODWC to express interest in selling the property, agency staff conducted a site inspection to confirm the potential acquisition area contained suitable habitat for various species of greatest conservation need. Once the inspection was completed and a purchase price was negotiated, ODWC completed the necessary steps to acquire fee-simple title of the McFarland Ranch using a combination of WSFR program funding and non-federal State funds (Figure 1). Once acquired, the property became the McFarland Ranch Unit of the BRWMA and has since been managed to provide high-quality native habitat and, in keeping with the primary purpose of the original Beaver River WMA acquisition (public hunting), incidental hunting (during times and in a manner that does not interfere with SGCN conservation) is allowed on the McFarland Unit. Due to safety
concerns, there is an area of approximately 1,070 acres on the east end of the McFarland Unit that lies in close proximity to Beaver Dunes State Park, several residences, and State Highway 270, where hunting is restricted to archery and shotgun with pellets (no slugs). Additionally, there is a safety zone along the south boundary of the restricted zone (in very close proximity to the Town of Beaver) where no hunting is allowed.

One of the ODWC’s highest conservation priorities in northwestern Oklahoma is the lesser prairie-chicken, a species of grouse that occurs in grassland and shrubland habitats in portions of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Since 1997, ODWC has engaged in several multi-state conservation efforts focused on the lesser prairie-chicken and its habitat, in an effort to stabilize what appears to be a declining population trend. The McFarland Ranch acquisition was a unique opportunity to conserve additional habitat for this species at a location known to support a local population. Since the McFarland Ranch acquisition, ODWC has managed the tract for the benefit of both game and nongame species identified as species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) within the Oklahoma Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (OCWCS).

The OCWCS is a statewide plan created to provide guidance for the proactive conservation of Oklahoma’s rare and declining species and their associated habitats (i.e., Conservation Landscapes). The SGCN identified within the OCWCS are those determined to be rare, uncommon, or declining, or whose long-term persistence is in question or in jeopardy. Using six selection criteria, SGCN species are classified into three tiers, with the highest conservation priority assigned to Tier 1 species. In addition to identifying at-risk species, the OCWCS created a strategy focused on the steps needed to protect, restore, and enhance conservation landscapes which may be at risk from various anthropogenic activities. The OCWCS identifies habitat loss and fragmentation as important conservation issues. Purchasing lands with the primary purpose of management for SGCN allows ODWC to protect and maintain important conservation landscapes.

Within the OCWCS, the state of Oklahoma is divided into six large regions to assist with setting regional priorities for SGCN. The McFarland Ranch, as well as the entire BRWMA, lies within the Shortgrass Prairie Region, which encompasses the panhandle counties (Cimarron, Texas, Beaver) as well as portions of Harper, Woodward and Ellis counties. The Shortgrass Prairie Region of the OCWCS corresponds to the High Plains Ecoregion in the Omernick (Environmental Protection Agency) Level III Ecoregion Classification System (Omernik and Griffith 2014). The OCWCS identifies seven important vegetation communities (i.e., habitat types) within the Shortgrass Prairie Region, five of which occur on the McFarland Ranch: Shortgrass Prairie, Mixed-grass Prairie, Sand Sagebrush / Little Bluestem Shrublands, Riparian Woodland, and Sand Plum / Skunk Brush Shrubland. Based upon the existing habitat, the McFarland Ranch was known to support or likely to support 8 Tier I and 15 Tier II species of greatest conservation need. The Tier I SGCN identified in the acquisition grant were lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), Bell’s vireo (*Vireo bellii*), Swainson’s hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*), Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*), and black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*). The Tier II SGCN identified were Cassin’s sparrow (*Aimophila cassini*), chestnut-collared longspur (*Calcarius ornatus*), McCown’s
longspur (Calcarius mccownii), ferruginous hawk (Buteo regalis), Sprague’s pipit (Anthus spragueii), painted bunting (Passerina ciris), upland sandpiper (Bartramia longicauda), Bullock’s oriole (Icterus bullockii), Harris’s sparrow (Zonotrichia querula), red-headed woodpecker (Melanerpes erythrocephalus), lesser earless lizard (Holbrookia maculata), long-nosed snake (Rhinocheilus lecontei), western massasauga (Sistrurus tergeminus), desert shrew (Notiosorex crawfordi), and Mexican free-tailed bat (Tadarida brasiliensis).

At the time of the McFarland Ranch’s acquisition, the eight Tier I SGCN listed above were the highest regional priority species and the ones anticipated to benefit the most from the ranch’s acquisition. Since acquisition, periodic field surveys (both formal and informal) have been conducted to assess wildlife populations, including SGCN, on Beaver River WMA. At the present time, the McFarland Ranch Unit of the BRWMA continues to support a population of lesser prairie-chickens, and these birds seem to primarily use the sand sagebrush shrublands and mixed-grass prairie habitats. Texas horned lizards appear to be common across all of the upland habitats on the ranch and particularly in the sand sagebrush, mixed-grass prairie and shortgrass prairie habitats. Two colonies of black-tailed prairie dogs occur on the ranch unit in the sand sagebrush shubland habitat and both of these colonies harbor nesting pairs of burrowing owls during the summer months. Small numbers of Swainson’s hawks and loggerhead shrikes occur on the unit and appear to be most prevalent in the mixed-grass and shortgrass prairie habitats. Bell’s vireos are rare, but occur on the area during the summer months in the higher sand dunes on the north side of the unit where thickets of sand plums (Prunus angustifolia) occur. Long-billed Curlews migrate through the area during the spring and fall and sporadically use the mixed-grass and shortgrass prairie habitats as stopover sites, but their use of the area is temporally limited.

As with any large acquisition, it was understood that the 5,733.81 acre McFarland Ranch Unit contained both high-quality and low-quality habitats for SGCN; however, the sale was an all-or-nothing opportunity. The habitats which have the greatest value to SGCN and support the highest diversity of SGCN are the sand sagebrush shrubland vegetation community and the mixed-grass prairie vegetation community. The sand sagebrush community supports 13 of the Tier I and Tier II SGCN including the burrowing owl, Cassin’s sparrow, ferruginous hawk, lesser prairie-chicken, loggerhead shrike, Swainson’s hawk, Harris’s sparrow, Texas horned lizard, lesser earless lizard, long-nosed snake, western massasauga, black-tailed prairie dog, and desert shrew. The mixed-grass prairie community supports 13 of the Tier I and Tier II SGCN including burrowing owl, chestnut-collared longspur, ferruginous hawk, lesser prairie-chicken, loggerhead shrike, Sprague’s pipit, Swainson’s hawk, long-billed curlew, upland sandpiper, Texas horned lizard, long-nosed snake, western massasauga and black-tailed prairie dog. The McCown’s longspur has not been documented on the McFarland Ranch Unit, but is probably present and limited to the relatively small area of shortgrass prairie habitat on the south side of the property. The Bell’s vireo, painted bunting, Bullock’s oriole and red-headed woodpecker are limited to the sand plum (Prunus angustifolia) and skunk brush (Rhus aromatica) thickets and netleaf hackberry (Celtis reticulata) and plains cottonwood (Populus deltoides) groves that grow in the swales between and around the bases of the high dunes on the north side of the unit. The Beaver River and its floodplain appear to support the fewest SGCN in terms of abundance and diversity. The river itself has intermittent surface flow and doesn’t support any fish or amphibian SGCN. Small numbers of painted buntings, Bullock’s orioles, red-headed
woodpeckers and Harris’s sparrows (in the winter) use the river’s riparian habitat in places where there are cottonwood trees and sand plums. It is likely that migrating upland sandpipers and long-billed curlews use the river channel and seasonal herbaceous wetlands within the floodplain as stopover sites when surface water is present; but these conditions are infrequent. Most of the floodplain acreage is covered by a grassland community dominated by two grasses - alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) and inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) - that are tolerant of elevated soil salinity. This grassland community is very uniform in its structure and provides limited cover for wildlife. Furthermore, because it is strongly dominated by only two species, this grassland community provides limited food resources for most wildlife species.

![Figure 1. Map depicting the 5,733.81-acre McFarland Ranch Unit in relation to the original Beaver River Wildlife Management Area.](image)

### 1.3 Purpose and Need for Action

As stated above, the current habitat conditions on the proposed disposal property do not provide suitable habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken and other species of greatest conservation need. To provide improved habitat for lesser prairie chickens and other SGCN, the ODWC and USFWS propose to dispose of the 623.58 acre parcel, and in lieu of, acquire 641 acres of land adjacent to the BRWMA. This Environmental Assessment evaluates the impacts of a proposed disposal of 623.58 acres purchased as part of the 2010 acquisition of the McFarland Ranch Unit and the purchase of 641 acres of sand sagebrush shrubland and mixed grass prairie habitat (Figures 2 and 3). The overall result of the Proposed Action Alternative and acquisition of 641 acres would be to increase in the amount of ecologically important habitat on the BRWMA for lesser prairie-chickens and the other focal species of greatest conservation need, which would be consistent with the purpose of the original acquisition of the McFarland Ranch.
Figure 2. Aerial photograph depicting the proposed disposal tract (623.58 acres) outlined in black. As points of reference, two areas of high human activity are visible in the photograph. The Town of Beaver is shown immediately to the south and east of the proposed disposal property and the Beaver Dune Park is shown immediately to the northeast.

Figure 3. Relationship of the 623.58-acre Proposed Disposal Parcel to the McFarland Ranch Unit and the entire Beaver River WMA. Proposed Disposal Parcel is in the Southeast Corner of the McFarland Ranch Unit of the Beaver River WMA.
This EA evaluates a Proposed Action Alternative that would dispose of a 623.58-acre parcel on the southeast corner of the BRWMA adjacent to the town of Beaver. The tract proposed for disposal does not fulfill the objectives for which the larger McFarland Ranch property was acquired. It does not support any populations of, or habitat for, lesser prairie-chickens or the Tier I SGCN identified in the acquisition grant (e.g. Texas horned lizard, Bell’s vireo, burrowing owl, or black-tailed prairie dog). Due to the naturally-occurring soil salinity on the tract, ODWC lacks an effective or efficient method to improve habitat quality in order to better meet the ecological requirements of these and other SGCN. If the 623.58-acre tract is approved for disposal, the proceeds from that sale will be used to pursue a related action - the acquisition of 641 acres of sand sagebrush shrubland and mixed-grass prairie habitats adjacent to the existing BRWMA that will provide habitat of higher quality for lesser prairie-chickens and the other SGCN that were the focus of the original McFarland Ranch acquisition.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

2.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is defined as the subject parcel of 623.58 acres remaining a part of the Beaver River WMA. Under this alternative, no land would be disposed and no land ownership would change. Acres naturally limited to low quality wildlife habitat for SGCN would remain in protected conservation status in perpetuity, while nearby acres of higher quality wildlife habitat will lack similar protection. There would be no operational change to the property and its designated use would remain as wildlife habitat within a wildlife management area. Existing habitat management practices would continue such as periodic prescribed burning and seasonal cattle grazing. The parcel would remain open for hunting but limited to archery and shotguns using pellets, and a safety zone, where no hunting is allowed, would remain in effect on the acres in closest proximity to the town of Beaver.

2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative is for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to dispose of 623.58 acres on the southeast corner of the McFarland Unit of the BRWMA. The property would be sold to a non-governmental entity based on the price determined by appraisal. It would no longer be a part of the Beaver River WMA and wildlife habitat management would no longer be the primary purpose. Cattle grazing would most likely become its primary land use, with the property being used as a holding pasture for livestock at a nearby auction facility.

As stated in the Section 1.2 above, the proposed disposal acreage is low in plant diversity and does not provide suitable habitat for the SGCN that were the focus of the McFarland Ranch acquisition. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the funds generated from the sale of the proposed disposal property would be used to purchase two tracts of land adjacent to the BRWMA which support 641 acres of sand sagebrush shrubland and mixed-grass prairie habitats. These vegetation communities provide higher quality habitat for SGCN including lesser prairie-chicken, Texas horned lizard, black-tailed prairie dog and burrowing owl. This EA does not
fully address the acquisition of the 641 acres because this action is covered under a NEPA Categorical Exclusion.

### 3.0 AFLFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment consists of the physical characteristics and biological resources potentially affected by implementing the proposed action alternative. Of particular interest are wildlife resources, threatened and endangered species, water resources and cultural resources.

The general action area lies in the eastern third of the Oklahoma panhandle in the High Plains / Shortgrass Prairie ecological region. This is a region of relatively level topography and clay to clay/loam soils. The average annual rainfall is approximately 22 inches with the wettest period between May and August (average of 11.7 inches of rainfall within those four months) (Oklahoma Climatological Survey). The historic vegetation community in the area was a mixed-grass to shortgrass prairie transition dominated by blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and tall dropseed (*Sporobolus asper*) (Hoagland 2000).

More specifically, the subject property occurs within the valley cut by the Beaver River in prehistoric times and its ancient floodplain when the river carried a greater volume of flow. The Beaver River floodplain averages a little over a mile in width and its elevation on the subject property ranges between 2,475 to 2,485 feet, which places it roughly 200 feet in elevation below the surrounding uplands. The floodplain is dominated by two plant communities - an inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*) - alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) grassland association and an Asian saltcedar (*Tamarix chinensis*) - inland saltgrass shrubland association (Hoagland 2000). The subject property forms the southeastern corner of the McFarland Ranch Unit of the Beaver River Wildlife Management Area and lies adjacent to the north boundary of the town of Beaver, Oklahoma.

Seven substantial components of the potentially affected environment were evaluated in this Environmental Assessment and are identified in Table 1. Two other components of the environment, air quality and wilderness areas, were not evaluated. With respect to air quality, Beaver County is not an area where air quality violations occur regularly. The potential impact to air quality caused by the proposed action alternative would not be measurable or significant and does not warrant detailed analysis. No designated wilderness areas occur in Beaver County or in adjacent counties in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas; therefore, potential impacts to wilderness areas do not warrant analysis.

Prior to the development of this Environmental Assessment, the ODWC assembled a team of biologists to conduct a biological survey of the proposed disposal property, as well as two potential acquisition tracts adjacent to the Beaver River WMA that have been offered for sale contingent upon the sale of the proposed disposal tract. This survey was conducted on July 11-13, 2016 and information was collected regarding the vegetation and fauna on the properties with an emphasis on detecting species of greatest conservation need and the habitats that are suitable for them. All wildlife seen or heard were identified and recorded as the biologists walked transects across the property. Because transects were used in the survey, all of the vegetation
communities (aka habitat types) present were surveyed in proportion to their abundance. This information was used to inform the analysis of the vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, water resources and land use components of the affected environment in this EA. Additional information obtained from the U.S. Geological Survey’s Water Resources Division, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Oklahoma Historical Society was used to inform the socioeconomic, cultural and historic resources, threatened and endangered species and water resources components of the affected environment.

Table 1. Resources Identified for Detailed Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Water Resources, Including Floodplains</td>
<td>How would the proposed action affect the Beaver River and its water resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Vegetation</td>
<td>How would the proposed action alter the vegetation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need</td>
<td>What impacts to the wildlife would the proposed action have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species</td>
<td>What impacts does the proposed action have on T&amp;E species and their habitats?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Cultural and Historic Resources</td>
<td>How would the Proposed Action affect cultural resources?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Land Use</td>
<td>How would the Proposed Action change the use of the land?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Local Socioeconomic Factors</td>
<td>How will the proposed action impact the economic activity of the county?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3.1 Water Resources, Including Floodplains

The Beaver River originates in southwestern Cimarron County, Oklahoma at the confluence of Cienequilla Creek (an intermittent stream originating in Union County, New Mexico) and Corrumpa Creek (a perennial stream which also enters Oklahoma from Union County, New Mexico). The Beaver River flows through south-central Cimarron County, then flows through the northern portion of Sherman County in the Texas panhandle for approximately 15 miles before re-entering Oklahoma in Texas County near the town of Texhoma. The Beaver River continues east through the Oklahoma panhandle and is impounded by the Optima Reservoir dam near Guymon. Water does not flow out of Optima Reservoir except as seepage below the dam. The river’s channel continues eastward through Beaver County (including through the BRWMA), Harper County, and ending in Woodward County at its confluence with Wolf Creek after which it is known as the North Canadian River. Throughout the Oklahoma panhandle, the river’s floodplain is an ancient, deep-sand formation. Most of its flow occurs underground and
its surface flow is only intermittent. Average annual rainfall is only 18 inches in the western portion of the Oklahoma panhandle and 24 inches in the eastern portion of the panhandle. The average annual rainfall on the BRWMA is approximately 22 inches, of which roughly two-thirds fall between May and September.

A U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) gauging station occurs on the Beaver River less than one mile downstream from the eastern boundary of the BRWMA (USGS Site 07234000). The water discharge data collected at this station illustrate the intermittent nature of the Beaver River’s flow. During the past 30 years (360 months between July 1988 and July 2018), the Beaver River’s average monthly discharge at the gauging station has been 0.00 cubic feet per second during 59 months, and between 0.01 and 1.00 cubic feet per second an additional 152 months. The highest average monthly flows occur between April and June and range between 11 and 22 cubic feet per second. Monthly average flows are lower and more variable from July through March and range from 7 to less than one cubic feet per second. Average monthly flow rarely exceeds 20 cubic feet/second (only 33 out of the past 360 months). Historically, the average monthly flows of the Beaver River were greater than they have been during the past thirty years (Wahl and Tortorelli 1997). The greatest contributing factor to this decline has been the pumping of groundwater from the alluvium underlying the Beaver River. Most of this groundwater removal has occurred for agricultural practices and the removal has taken place in all three of the panhandle counties upstream from the BRWMA.

During the 2016 field survey conducted for this EA, ODWC staff walked the channel of the Beaver River on the proposed disposal property. The river was dry throughout this reach except for one pool that was approximately 60 to 75 meters long and two to five meters wide. The water in the pool was clear and shallow (less than one meter deep), with cattails (*Typha* sp.) and bulrushes (*Schoenoplectus* sp.) growing around its upstream margin. A photograph of the pool, taken during a subsequent visit to the tract in October 2018 is shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4](image.png)

**Figure 4.** Photograph of the upstream portion of the only pool of water observed in the Beaver River channel within the proposed disposal property (photo taken October 2018).
In accordance with Title 60 Section 60 of the Oklahoma Statutes, stream water (i.e., water flowing in a definite stream) is considered a public water subject to appropriation. However, the Beaver River is not a reliable, perennial water source, and no local entities have obtained permits to pump water directly from the river.

3.2 Vegetation

Four general habitat types occur within the proposed disposal property: saltcedar-dominated riparian shrublands; floodplain grasslands dominated by inland saltgrass and alkali sacaton; an old-field type plant community dominated by annual forbs, and a community of shrubs and mixed-grass prairie plants growing on ridges and low sand dunes within the floodplain.

The first is a sparse riparian shrubland dominated by saltcedar (*Tamarix chinensis*), which grows along approximately 0.5 miles of current river channel as well as some remnants of historic channels created by the periodic meandering of the Beaver River across its floodplain. Collectively, these saltcedar shrublands comprise approximately 10% of the proposed disposal property acreage. In addition to saltcedar plants, the saltcedar shrublands are dominated by willow baccharis (*Baccharis salicina*), smooth horsetail (*Equisetum laevigatum*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), western wheatgrass (*Elymus smithii*), purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), and several forbs including wild licorice (*Glycyrrhiza lepidota*), sweetscent (*Pluchea odorata*), western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*), dogbane (*Apocynum cannabium*) and camphorweed (*Heterotheca latifolia*).

![Figure 5. Dry Beaver River Channel. Inland saltgrass and western ragweed are the dominant species within the channel and saltcedars dominate the riparian area (photo taken October 2018).](image-url)
Beyond the saltcedar-dominated riparian zone, is the second habitat type, which is a grassland dominated by inland saltgrass and alkali sacaton. These inland saltgrass and alkali sacaton grasslands occur on broad, level portions of the flood plain and occupy approximately 60% of the proposed disposal property. Relatively few other grasses and forbs co-occur with these dominant grasses except for slimleaf goosefoot (*Chenopodium leptophyllum*), salt heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*), saltmarsh aster (*Symphyotrichum sublatum*), and annual sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). In some areas, especially shallow topographic depressions, alkali sacaton has formed near-monocultures of uniform vegetation (Figures 6, 7 and 8 depict these stands of native grass). These plants indicate the soils across much of the river’s floodplain are slightly saline and/or alkaline.

**Figure 6.** Photograph of grassland dominated by alkali sacaton in the Beaver River floodplain (photo taken July 2016).
Figure 7. Photograph of an alkali sacaton-dominated grassland stand (center of photo). Low dune with sand sagebrush shrubland in foreground; saltcedar riparian zone in background (photo taken July 2016).

Figure 8. Photograph of grassland dominated by alkali sacaton just outside of the Beaver River saltcedar riparian zone (photo taken October 2018).
A third habitat type is a weedy, old-field plant community, which occurs in the southwest quarter of the proposed disposal property where agricultural fields once occurred. These are no longer cultivated and are now dominated by marestail (*Conyza canadensis*), annual sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), wax goldenweed (*Grindelia papposa*), velvety evening primrose (*Gaura parviflora*), kochia (*Kochia scoparia*) and prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*). This habitat occupies about 15% of the subject property’s acreage.

The fourth habitat type occupies the remaining 15% of the property where raised sand ridges and low dunes have formed in the floodplain (Figure 9). These accumulations of sand vary in height from approximately one to four feet and support the greatest diversity of plants, presumably because they provided a zone of clean growing substrate above the saline/alkaline soil in the flood plain. This plant community consists of widely scattered plains cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) and honey locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), small stands of sand plums (*Prunus angustifolia*), fragrant sumacs (*Rhus aromatica*), and sand sagebrush (*Artemisia filifolia*), with a diversity of herbaceous plants including western ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*), western spiderwort (*Tradescantia occidentalis*), slender dayflower (*Commelina erecta*), showy partridge pea, (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*), plains doze daisy (*Aphanostephus ramosissimus*), prairie sunflower (*Helianthus petiolaris*), sand lily (*Mentzelia decapetala*), silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*), narrowleaf four o’clock (*Mirabilis linearis*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), purple lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*), and purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*). This habitat, although relatively limited within the Beaver River floodplain, is common and the dominant habitat in the dunes and areas of sandy soil on the northern half of the McFarland Unit of the BRWMA.

![Figure 9](image.png)

**Figure 9.** Photograph of low dunes with sand plum thickets in the Beaver River floodplain; saltcedars along the Beaver River are visible in the background (photo taken July 2016).
3.3 Wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Species of Greatest Conservation Need:
None of the eight Tier I (highest priority) species of greatest conservation need that were identified at the time of the McFarland Ranch acquisition were found during the survey. The habitat within the proposed disposal area is not suitable for nesting or wintering populations of lesser prairie-chicken, Bell’s vireo, burrowing owl, Swainson’s hawk, Texas horned lizard or black-tailed prairie dog. Loggerhead shrikes were not observed during the survey, although the habitat is potentially suitable for this species year-round. Given the low density at which this species occurs in western Oklahoma, it is unlikely the disposal area would support more than a few pairs of shrikes (<5) under the best of conditions. Long-billed curlews only occur in Beaver County during their spring and fall migrations, and they typically seek out shortgrass prairie and shallow herbaceous wetlands as migration stopover sites. The disposal area has limited suitable habitat for long-billed curlews and this potentially would be used only briefly during migration.

Of the 15 Tier II SGCN, only two species were documented on the proposed disposal area - painted bunting and Bullock’s oriole. Two painted buntings and three Bullock’s orioles were seen and heard in zone of cottonwoods, honey locusts and sand plums on a sandy ridge south of the river channel during the survey. The available habitat on the proposed disposal area is limited for both species and no more than a few pairs of each could potentially be supported here. Based on the existing habitat and the known biology of the remaining 13 Tier II SGCN, there is a potential for small numbers of ferruginous hawks, chestnut-collared longspurs and Harris’s sparrows to use the disposal area during the winter months, for upland sandpipers and Sprague’s pipits to use it as a migration stopover during the spring and fall, and for long-nosed snakes to occupy the area year-round.

Table 2. Wildlife Species Documented on the Proposed Disposal Acreage; Tier I and Tier II Species of Greatest Conservation Need Are Shown in Bold Font; Numbers Seen Are Shown in Parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Tier I</th>
<th>Tier II</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Bobwhite (8)</td>
<td>Eastern Kingbird (1)</td>
<td>Eastern Meadowlark (13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Heron (1)</td>
<td>Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (2)</td>
<td>Red-winged Blackbird (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey Vulture (3)</td>
<td>Cliff Swallow (14)</td>
<td>Brown-headed Cowbird (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi Kite (4)</td>
<td>Bewick’s Wren (2)</td>
<td>Common Grackle (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-tailed Hawk (1)</td>
<td>Eastern Bluebird (1)</td>
<td><strong>Bullock’s Oriole (3)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasian Collared Dove (7)</td>
<td>American Robin (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mourning Dove (19)</td>
<td>Northern Mockingbird (9)</td>
<td>Eastern Mole (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2)</td>
<td>Brown Thrasher (2)</td>
<td>Eastern Cottontail (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Horned Owl (2)</td>
<td>Blue Grosbeak (2)</td>
<td>White-tailed Deer (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Nighthawk (1)</td>
<td><strong>Painted Bunting (2)</strong></td>
<td>Woodhouse’s Toad (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Northern Flicker (4)  Dickcissel (13)  Plains Leopard Frog (3)  
Eastern Phoebe (1)  Lark Sparrow (5)  Prairie Racerunner (1)  
Western Kingbird (9)  Field Sparrow (2)  

Birds:
Thirty-one species of birds were documented during this survey (Table 2). The most common of these were grassland or savannah species including northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), dickcissel (*Spiza americana*), eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), and red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). The proximity of this tract of land to the town of Beaver appeared to influence the presence and abundance of some species. For example, the cliff swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) we observed on the WMA were from a nesting colony in the town of Beaver. Similarly, many if not all of the Mississippi kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*), Eurasian collared doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*), mourning doves, western kingbirds and American robins (*Turdus migratorius*) were birds we observed flying between the WMA and trees within Beaver.

The former agricultural fields and the grasslands which were dominated by inland saltgrass and alkali sacaton comprised the largest proportion of the habitat, but had the fewest birds and lowest bird diversity. We observed only mourning doves, western kingbirds, dickcissels, eastern meadowlarks and red-winged blackbirds in those habitats. The greatest numbers and diversity of birds were observed in the shrub and grassland community which grew on the low dunes and sand ridges on the property. Although this comprised only a small percentage of the property (about 15%), it was the only habitat in which we observed yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), scissor-tailed flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), Bewick’s wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), brown thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), blue grosbeak (*Guainaca caerulea*), painted bunting (*Passerina ciris*), field sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) and Bullock’s oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). All of these species were seen in small numbers and only one to three pairs of each are likely to occur on the proposed disposal parcel. We observed one green heron fly through the property along the Beaver River channel, but the channel was dry except for one pool where we observed plains leopard frogs and mosquitofish. Each of the bird species observed during the survey has been documented elsewhere on the McFarland Unit and the Beaver River WMA as a whole; none were unique to the proposed disposal tract.

In addition to the breeding birds observed during this survey, we can reasonably estimate the wintering bird community based upon winter-season observations on the WMA and comparing these to the available habitat. During the winter months, it is likely dark-eyed juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), American tree sparrows (*Spizella arborea*), savannah sparrows (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), song sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) and white-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) will occupy the subject parcel. Of the birds which were observed during the breeding season, only the northern bobwhite, red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Eurasian collared dove, mourning dove, great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), northern flicker, eastern meadowlark and red-winged blackbird are likely to remain through the winter.
**Mammals:**
The presence of three species of mammals were confirmed during the July 2016 survey - eastern mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*), eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). Based upon other mammalian surveys which have taken place on Beaver River WMA during the past 15 years, we can surmise at least eleven other species are likely to occur on the subject parcel (Roehrs et al. 2008). These species include hispid pocket mouse (*Perognathus hispidus*), Ord’s kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys ordii*), plains pocket gopher (*Geomys bursarius*), white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), hispid cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*).

**Amphibians and Reptiles:**
Based on the results of other surveys on the Beaver River WMA (ODWC 2007), the amphibian and reptile community associated with the subject parcel is likely to contain the following species: Woodhouse’s toad (*Anaxyrus woodhousii*), New Mexico spadefoot toad (*Spea multiplicata*), spotted chorus frog (*Pseudacris clarkii*), plains leopard frog (*Lithobates blairi*), yellow mud turtle (*Kinosternon flavescens*), ornate box turtle (*Terrapene ornata*), prairie lizard (*Sceloporus consobrinus*), prairie racerunner (*Aspidoscelis sexlineatus*), Great Plains skink (*Plestiodon obsoletus*), Kansas glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*), yellow-bellied racer (*Coluber constrictor*), coachwhip (*Coluber flagellum*), ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*), Great Plains ratsnake (*Pantherophis emoryi*), western hog-nosed snake (*Heterodon nasicus*), speckled kingsnake (*Lampropeltis holbrooki*), bullsnake (*Pituophis catenifer sayi*), Marcy’s checkered gartersnake (*Thamnophis marcianus*), orange-striped ribbonsnake (*Thamnophis proximus*), plains gartersnake (*Thamnophis radix*) and prairie rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*). Three of these species (Woodhouse’s toad, plains leopard frog and prairie racerunner) were confirmed during the July 2016 survey. The publication *A Field Guide to Oklahoma’s Amphibians and Reptiles* (Sievert and Sievert 2011) was used as our primary resource for amphibian and reptile identification.

**Fish:**
At the present time, the Beaver River in Beaver County supports a low-diversity fish community. This is most likely the result of its intermittent flow, harsh environmental conditions (e.g. high summer water temperatures) and low diversity of substrates and in-channel microhabitats. Sixteen species of fish were documented during a 1981 seining-survey of the Beaver River at two locations in Beaver County (Pigg 1987). Four species comprised more than 94% of the fish captured during that survey - Northern Plains Killifish (*Fundulus kansae*), Western Mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), Red Shiner (*Cyprinella lutrensis*) and Sand Shiner (*Notropis stramineus*). Neither survey site was located on the proposed disposal tract, but occurred in flowing sections upstream and downstream from the tract. During our survey of the proposed disposal property, the Beaver River was not flowing on the surface. The only water we observed in the river channel was a small pool less than 75 meters long, which contained a small number of Western Mosquitofish. Other species may occur in the river during periods of surface flow, but there does not appear to be a substantial refugium for fish on the disposal property during periods of low flow.
3.4 Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system, the following species list shows all federal Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate species which have the potential to occur in Beaver County, Oklahoma (DOI 2018):

- Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*) – endangered
- Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) - endangered
- Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) - threatened
- Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) - threatened
- Arkansas River Shiner (*Notropis girardi*) – threatened, incl. critical habitat
- Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) - proposed threatened
- Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – under review
- Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) - under review

The whooping crane is the tallest North American bird, standing at nearly 5 feet in height and having a wingspan of 90 inches. Adults have predominantly white plumage with black feathers on the end of each wing and red markings on the face and crown. Juvenile birds have varying amounts of reddish-cinnamon coloration on the neck and back. This species is a spring (late March through mid-April) and fall (mid-October through mid-November) migrant through western Oklahoma. The proposed disposal property is entirely within the 95% migration corridor for the Aransas-Wood Buffalo Park wild flock (DOI 2007). However, less than 5 confirmed records exist for whooping cranes in Beaver County. While cranes could potentially use portions of the Beaver River flood plain as roosting and foraging habitat, they typically prefer wetlands as foraging sites and open sandbars and mudflats as roosting sites. The proposed disposal land provides poor habitat for whooping cranes because it does not contain any ponds or wetlands other than the Beaver River channel. Additionally, the segment of the Beaver River which passes through this property is bordered by a dense stand of saltcedar (*Tamarix* sp.) and lacks the open characteristics which cranes look for when choosing roosting sites. Open river banks are preferred by the cranes because they allow cranes to see potential predators such as coyotes and bobcats which might ambush them on the roost.

The *rufa* red knot and the piping plover are both seasonal migrants through Beaver County and move through the area between mid-April and mid-May in the spring and early August through early September in the fall. The red knot is a species of sandpiper which is approximately 9-10 inches long with a 23 inch wingspan. Mature birds in breeding plumage are rusty in color over parts of the head, breast, and flanks. Red knots are high-flying migrants which breed along the shores of the Arctic Tundra in the Hudson Bay area of Canada and feed primarily on shellfish (DOI 2013). They stop very infrequently in Oklahoma, with less than 45 confirmed records existing statewide. The piping plover is also a species of sandpiper which breeds along shorelines of rivers and lakes from Kansas to Canada, with only one nesting record existing in Oklahoma. Piping plovers are 5 ½ inches long with a wingspan of 19 inches. Plumage characteristics include a sand-colored back, a white underside, and orange legs. As with the *rufa* red knot, piping plover stopovers are usually brief and uncommon along reservoirs and wetlands during spring and fall migration periods.
The interior least tern is the smallest member of the gull family, with adults averaging 9 inches in length and having a wingspan of 20 inches. Mature birds have gray plumage, a black crown, and a yellow bill. Least terns nest along sandbars on the Cimarron River in the northeastern portion of the county and may have historically nested near the Beaver River (Lott 2006). However, no nesting records have been recorded on the Beaver River in recent decades. The Beaver River, particularly on the proposed disposal tract, provides limited habitat for red knots, piping plovers, and interior least terns because its flow is intermittent and its riparian zone is dominated by saltcedars, alkali sacaton grass (*Sporobolus airoides*), and inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*). All three species prefer shallow wetlands, open shorelines, and sandbars for foraging, roosting and potential nesting (in the case of the least tern).

The Arkansas River shiner is a small, streamlined, tan minnow which is approximately two inches in length. This species occurred in the Beaver River historically; however it appears to have been extirpated from the river in the 1960s (Pigg 1991). The Arkansas River shiner is a pelagic, broadcast spawning species, which means the fish scatter their eggs when they are laid and the eggs are buoyant and drift downstream as they develop. Recent research suggests the Arkansas River Shiner requires at least 90 km of unobstructed flow for their eggs to develop. The intermittent nature of the upper reaches of the Beaver River limit their quality for Arkansas River shiners and the construction of Canton and Overholser Reservoirs downstream have reduced the length of free-flowing river below a distance threshold needed by the shiner's eggs to develop. As a result, the Arkansas River shiner no longer exists in the Beaver River and re-establishment of this species is not feasible under current conditions. As previously mentioned the Cimarron River occurs in the northeastern portion of Beaver County and is designated critical habitat for the Arkansas River shiner. However, this river system is over 12 miles away from the proposed disposal tract. See Table 3 for a summary of the effects determinations for the federally-threatened and endangered species that may occur within the proposed disposal tract. No federal candidate species occur within the proposed disposal tract.

The black rail is currently proposed as a threatened species and is the smallest species of rail in North America, with adults weighing approximately 35 grams (DOI 2018). Mature birds have dark gray plumage and red eyes. Black rails migrate through Oklahoma and have been documented using ephemeral wetlands with dense stands of cattails (*Typha* sp.), sedges (*Carex* sp.), bulrushes (*Scirpus* sp.), and spike sedge (*Eleocharis* sp.). While black rails may occasionally breed in the state, only one confirmed nesting record has been recorded. Black rail habitat may exist to a limited extent elsewhere along the Beaver River, but a survey of the river reach within the proposed disposal property in July of 2016, did not find any evidence of suitable, marsh habitat. This reach of the Beaver River appears to be a losing reach with minimal surface flow. Only one pool of water, with some wetland vegetation, was observed.

The lesser prairie-chicken (LEPC) is a species of grouse currently under review for a federal listing. Adults are approximately 15-16 inches long and weigh 2 ½ lbs. This species requires high-quality mixed-grass prairie and sand sagebrush shrubland habitats and has been found over a large portion of the Beaver River WMA and the surrounding landscape (Copelin 1963). Although lesser prairie chickens occur in the vicinity of the proposed disposal property, they have not been observed on this property and they typically avoid areas with medium-to-high tree
densities due to the threat of depredation by raptors and mammalian carnivores. Much of the disposal tract is unsuitable for LEPCs due to high densities of saltcedar and low distribution of preferred herbaceous ground cover such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and native forbs. The proposed disposal property’s close proximity to the town of Beaver and Beaver Dunes Park further reduces its suitability for LEPCs due to the continual presence of human activity and the abundance of buildings and trees (primarily Siberian elms (*Ulmus pumila*).

The monarch is a large, orange and black butterfly which is also under review for a federal listing. This species has a wingspan of approximately 3-4 inches. Its annual life cycle contains 4-5 generations which begin in spring (April-May) when 4th and 5th generation adults from the previous year migrate north from overwintering grounds in Mexico (Cockrell et al. 1993). The species relies almost entirely on milkweeds (*Asclepias* sp.) for host plants. Monarchs can potentially be found statewide during spring (April - May) and fall (August - October) migration periods, and some individuals will remain in the state year round (Baum 2018, unpublished). Milkweeds are sparse on the proposed disposal tract, though at least two species have been observed on the property (*Asclepias latifolia*, *A. pumila* and potentially *A. stenophylla*).

The State of Oklahoma maintains authority over three state-listed threatened or endangered species under Title 800 of the Oklahoma Administrative Code (800-25:19). These include the endangered longnose darter (*Percina nasuta*), endangered Oklahoma cave crayfish (*Cambarus tartarus*) and threatened blackside darter (*P. maculata*). There are no state-listed threatened or endangered species within the proposed disposal tract.

### 3.5 Cultural and Historic Resources

The earliest history of Beaver County is sparsely documented. Paleo-Indian cultures are assumed to have lived in the region as long as 6,000 years ago. The earliest known dwellings in the county date back to about 1,000 - 1,500 A.D. Beaver County was a part of the land occupied by the Comanche, Apache, Cheyenne and Kiowa cultures as hunting grounds, but it does not appear these tribes established any permanent settlements. As a result of its seasonal use by Native American cultures, few artifacts and sites of cultural significance have been discovered. In the mid-1800s, Beaver County and the rest of the modern-day Oklahoma panhandle was known as No Man’s Land or the Neutral Strip. In the late 1800s, it became the Cimarron Territory but was separate from Indian Territory whose western boundary was the 100th Meridian. In 1890 it was incorporated into Oklahoma Territory until statehood in 1907 (Oklahoma Historical Society 2018).

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 provides for the protection, preservation, and consideration of historic and archaeological resources on federal lands, or lands affected by federal actions through permits, grants or easements. Federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have the responsibility to protect these resources, pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. Under delegated authority from the USFWS, ODWC sent consultation letters to the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey (OAS) and the State Historic Preservation Office of the Oklahoma Historical Society (SHPO) regarding the proposed disposal. The OAS recommended a survey of the property and the SHPO concurred. On June 13-17, 2018, Cojeen Archaeological Services, LLC conducted a cultural resources survey investigation.
for the proposed project area. Five new archeological sites were located during the course of the study. No diagnostic artifacts or features were observed on the surface or in shovel tests, and no further archeological investigations were recommended. The report was submitted to the OAS and SHPO on July 26, 2018. The OAS concurred with the surveyors’ findings for three sites and deferred to the SHPO for their determination for the remaining two sites. The SHPO requested additional information for these two sites, and the surveyors prepared an addendum to their report to address the SHPO’s request. On November 7, 2018, the SHPO sent a letter stating that they had reviewed the information provided to them and determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed land disposal (Appendix B).

3.6 Land Use

Beaver County is predominantly an agriculture-based community (U.S. Census Bureau 2018). The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s statistics for the county indicate that slightly more than 60% of the county is used for livestock grazing and slightly more than 30% of the county’s acreage is used for grain production. Winter wheat accounts for approximately 70% of crop production in the county, while sorghum, feed corn, canola and alfalfa comprise most of the remaining cropland.

The land proposed for disposal was originally part of a privately owned ranch before it was purchased by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Throughout its recent history, it was used as rangeland for grazing cattle. The primary uses of the land now are to provide habitat for wildlife, as well as to provide recreational activities such as hunting. Habitat management on the property is currently accomplished with periodic prescribed burning during the dormant season and seasonal livestock grazing between April and September biennially. Cattle are stocked at a low rate in the spring and removed in the early fall every other year. Prescribed burning during the dormant season is a desired management practice to control woody vegetation and grass in order to diversify forbs and the overall plant community; however, it is more difficult to implement and is used less frequently than desired on the subject tract because of the physical obstacles created by the tract’s proximity to the town of Beaver. Hunting occurs on the subject property, but due to safety concerns at neighboring residences, hunting is limited to archery equipment and shotguns using pellets. Hunting is prohibited completely in the portion of the proposed disposal tract that is closest to the town of Beaver.

The property proposed for disposal is bordered on the north and west by the McFarland Unit of the BRWMA. On the east side, the property is bordered by a state highway and the land across the highway is privately owned and used for cattle grazing. The land bordering the subject property to the south consists of several privately owned tracts which are either used for grazing cattle or contain residences which are part of the town of Beaver. The easternmost tract of land on the property’s southern border contains a cattle stockyard/auction yard. Beaver Dune Park lies a half-mile north of the subject property. This park is approximately 520 acres in size with a golf course, camping area and dune buggy riding on 300 acres of sand hills. The town of Beaver lies less than a quarter mile south of the proposed disposal property.
3.7 Local Socioeconomic Factors

Beaver County is one of Oklahoma’s largest counties at 1,818 square miles. It is primarily rural with a population of only 5,400 people, and is one of Oklahoma’s least densely populated counties (approximately 3 residents per square mile). The town of Beaver is the county seat of Beaver County and its population was 1,515 according to data from the 2010 U.S. Census. The U.S. Census Bureau data indicates Beaver County has a declining population trend. Agriculture is the dominant land use and form of employment in the county; cattle ranching and winter wheat farming are the two most prevalent forms of agriculture (Okla. Historical Society). The median household income is approximately $37,560 and the percentage of the population below the poverty level is 10.2%. The 2010 U.S. Census data indicate approximately 82% of the population of Beaver County was non-Hispanic White, 14% was Hispanic, and the remaining 4% were of other races or of mixed racial heritage.

Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” requires federal agencies to identify and address disproportionate adverse effects of proposed actions on minority populations and low-income communities. The proportions of non-Hispanic White and Hispanic residents in the town of Beaver are 77% and 20% respectively, which is comparable to their percentages for the county as a whole. Approximately 8.5% of the residents in the town of Beaver live below the poverty level, which is comparable to the percentage in the Beaver County as a whole (10.2%). These Census data do not indicate the presence of a substantial minority or low-income community within the town of Beaver as compared to the entire county.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Water Resources, Including Floodplains

4.1.1 No Action Alternative
Under the No Action alternative, the quantity and use of water resources will not change from current conditions on the proposed disposal tract. As described in Section 3.1, surface flow is intermittent in the Beaver River, and both the surface and subsurface flows are influenced by upstream groundwater pumping. ODWC has no control over the rate of upstream groundwater withdrawal and the current management actions for the proposed disposal tract will not influence those factors.

4.1.2 Proposed Action Alternative.
Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the ownership of the proposed disposal tract would be sold to an adjacent landowner who would use the property for the grazing of cattle and holding cattle for the Beaver County Stockyard. The stockyard owners already have access to the Beaver River through ownership of approximately half a mile of the river channel immediately downstream from the proposed disposal tract. Water is not currently withdrawn from the proposed disposal tract and a change in ownership is unlikely to alter water use. The proposed new ownership is unlikely to influence the surface or subsurface flows of the Beaver River. An
increased or highly variable stocking rate on the property could influence surface vegetation, but would have a minimal effect on water quality or quantity because the river flow is primarily subsurface.

4.2 Vegetation

4.2.1 No Action Alternative
Under the No Action Alternative, the vegetation structure and plant communities will remain unchanged as there will be no changes to the land ownership or management. The composition and structure of vegetation communities on the BRWMA are shaped by rainfall, soil type, soil chemistry (e.g. salinity), and management practices such as grazing and burning. These factors will not change under the No Action Alternative; therefore, we expect the existing vegetation conditions will persist unchanged. Because the existing vegetation does not provide suitable habitat for lesser prairie-chickens and other SGCN of high concern, the land will continue to not support these species.

4.2.2 Proposed Action Alternative
Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there should be little to no change to the composition of the current vegetation communities on the proposed disposal tract; however, there may be modest changes to vegetation structure as a result of potentially greater stocking rates and grazing intensity. The species compositions of the existing plant communities on the proposed disposal tract are unlikely to change because these are determined primarily by soil moisture/rainfall, soil type and soil salinity. The soils across most of the Beaver River floodplain, and most of the disposal tract, are sufficiently saline to drive the plant community in favor of a few species of salt-tolerant grasses and forbs (primarily alkali sacaton and inland saltgrass). These plants will continue to dominate most of the acreage on the proposed disposal tract regardless of changes in grazing intensity or seasonality.

4.3 Wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need

4.3.1 No Action Alternative
Under the No Action Alternative, the habitat conditions on the proposed disposal tract will remain unchanged and the property will continue to support the grassland and shrubland species which currently reside there. The property will continue to provide unsuitable habitat for most species of greatest conservation need except for a small acreage of habitat for painted buntings and Bullock’s orioles.

4.3.2 Proposed Action Alternative
Wildlife resources will be affected minimally under the Proposed Action Alternative because no dramatic changes are likely to occur in habitat or land use. Livestock grazing will continue on the property, although at stocking rates which may be higher or longer in duration than the current condition. The potential changes to the vegetation and wildlife habitat should be small and generally limited to reductions in the height and density of ground-level herbaceous vegetation. The common grassland- and shrubland-adapted animals (e.g. mourning dove, eastern meadowlark, dickcissel, northern bobwhite, western kingbird, prairie racerunner, Woodhouse’s
toad) should be minimally affected. Additionally, the disposal of the subject property would facilitate the purchase of 641 acres of sand sagebrush shrubland and mixed-grass prairie in two tracts which would not otherwise be for sale. The placement of these acres under conservation ownership would ensure they are managed for the benefit of wildlife including those species of greatest conservation need which are known to occur on one or both of these properties (e.g. lesser prairie chicken, burrowing owl, black-tailed prairie dog and Texas horned lizard).

The anticipated effects of the Proposed Action Alternative on species of greatest conservation need will be neutral or positive depending upon the species, and no species would experience substantial negative effects. Table 3 summarizes the anticipated effect on the eight highest concern species of greatest conservation need at the time of the McFarland Ranch acquisition. The lesser prairie-chicken, Bell’s vireo, burrowing owl, and black-tailed prairie dog have not been documented on the proposed disposal property and are unlikely to occur there because the existing habitats are not suitable. The loggerhead shrike, Swainson’s hawk, long-billed curlew and Texas horned lizard have the potential to occur on the disposal property although their presence has not been formally documented. One or more of the habitat types on the property is suitable for each species and none of these species is likely to be affected substantially by the continuation of grazing after the land disposal. Loggerhead shrikes are predatory songbirds which employ a sit-and-wait hunting strategy in which they perch on an elevated observation site (tree branch or fence) and scan the ground around them for insects, small reptiles and rodents (Yosef 1996). They could potentially occur on the property year-round and, because of their preference for habitats which have short ground-level vegetation, their use of the property is unlikely to be altered by grazing. Swainson’s hawks feed on large insects, rodents and reptiles which they capture on the ground in open, grassland habitats. They potentially use the property during their summer nesting season and neither their habitat nor their prey base are likely to be affected by continued or increased grazing. The long-billed curlew is a migratory shorebird which occupies shortgrass prairies where they feed on grasshoppers and burrowing insects (Dugger and Dugger 2002). They do not nest in Beaver County, but migrate through the area during the spring (March/April) and fall (September/October). The disposal property could be used by long-billed curlews as a stopover foraging area during migration, but the quality of the habitat for this species and its prey base is not likely to be affected by continued or increased grazing. The Texas horned lizard has not been documented on the property, but could be present year-round in the shrub and native grass community which grows on the low sandy dunes and ridges. Texas horned lizards are adapted to a wide range of warm-season grassland communities including sparse, shortgrass prairie. They appear to be tolerant of grazing and a range of grazing intensities, including heavy grazing, and should not be affected by continued or increased grazing following the proposed action.

In addition to potential effects on the disposal property, six of these eight species of greatest conservation need are likely to benefit from the conservation of the 641 acres of mixed-grass prairie and sand sagebrush shrubland habitat which would be purchased as a related action with the funds generated by the sale of the disposal tract. The loggerhead shrike, burrowing owl, Swainson’s hawk, Texas horned lizard and black-tailed prairie dog have been documented on one or both of the potential acquisition tracts and would receive some benefit in terms of habitat conservation if these tracts were acquired subsequent to the Proposed Action Alternative. Additionally, the presence of lesser prairie chickens has been documented within two miles of
one proposed acquisition tract and both tracts contain suitable habitat in good condition for this species. The habitat on both proposed acquisition tracts is unsuitable or poorly suited for Bell’s vireos and long-billed curlews; therefore, neither species is likely to be affected by these acquisitions.

Table 3. Anticipated Effects of the Proposed Action Alternative on Eight Species of Greatest Conservation Need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Anticipated Effect and Status on Proposed Disposal Tract (623.58 acres)</th>
<th>Anticipated Effect and Status on Related Acquisition Tracts (totaling 641 acres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lesser prairie chicken</td>
<td>neutral effect; not present on property; existing habitat unsuitable or in poor condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potential positive effect; likely to be present on both properties; existing habitat suitable and in good condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell’s vireo</td>
<td>neutral effect; not present on property; existing habitat unsuitable or in poor condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>neutral effect; not present on property; existing habitat unsuitable or in poor condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loggerhead shrike</td>
<td>neutral effect; potentially present on property year-round; existing habitat is suitable and in good condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potential positive effect; present on at least one tract year-round; existing habitat is suitable and in good condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swainson’s hawk</td>
<td>neutral effect; potentially present on property during nesting season; existing habitat is suitable and in fair condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potential positive effect; present on both properties during nesting season; existing habitat is suitable and in good condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long-billed curlew</td>
<td>neutral effect; potentially present on property during spring and fall migration; existing habitat is marginally suitable and in fair condition</td>
<td>neutral effect; unlikely to occur on either property because of dense/tall herbaceous vegetation and shrubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burrowing owl</td>
<td>neutral effect; not present on property; existing habitat is unsuitable or in poor condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potentially positive effect; occurs on one and probably both tracts; existing habitat is suitable and in good condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black-tailed prairie dog</td>
<td>neutral effect; not present on property; existing habitat is unsuitable or in poor condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potentially positive effect; occurs on both tracts; existing habitat is suitable and in fair to good condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas horned lizard</td>
<td>neutral effect; potentially present on property; existing habitat is suitable and in fair condition; habitat conditions are unlikely to change</td>
<td>potentially positive effect; occurs on one and probably both tracts; existing habitat is suitable and in good condition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 15 Tier II species of greatest conservation need that were identified at the time of the McFarland Ranch acquisition, two have been confirmed to occur on the 623.58-acre proposed
disposal tract in small numbers (painted bunting and Bullock’s oriole), while another six potentially occur there because suitable habitat is present for them (Harris’s sparrow, chestnut-collared longspur and ferruginous hawk during the winter months, upland sandpiper and Sprague’s pipit during spring and fall migration, and long-nosed snake year-round). Each of these species is adapted to a range of grassland habitats, and each is found in areas where grazing is practiced; therefore, none of these species should be affected substantially by a continuation of or an increase in grazing. The acquisition of 641 acres of sand sagebrush and mixed-grass prairie habitat as a related action should provide some benefit to six species of greatest conservation need through the conservation of their habitat. The Cassin’s sparrow, chestnut-collared longspur, ferruginous hawk, upland sandpiper, long-nosed snake and western massasauga are known to occur or likely to occur on one or both of these acquisition tracts.

4.4 Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

4.4.1 No Action Alternative

Through the No Action Alternative, no changes would take place and the proposed tract would be retained under ODWC ownership and management. Currently, the proposed disposal tract is within a Wildlife Management Area and has certain hunting restrictions due to its close proximity to the town of Beaver. These restrictions include only allowing archery and shotgun with pellets as methods of take for huntable game species. The property is moderately grazed by cattle, every other year, as a management tool to help maintain habitat in desired condition. The No Action Alternative would maintain the available habitat for threatened, endangered, and candidate species as it currently stands.

Due to intermittent flow and lack of recent records, the proposed disposal property currently provides no suitable habitat for the Arkansas River shiner. Extensive invasion of saltcedar in the river bottom has created conditions which are marginal-to-unsuitable migratory stopover and foraging habitat for the whooping crane, piping plover, rufa red knot, and interior least tern. However, the potential exists for any of the four federally-listed bird species to use portions of the Beaver River on the proposed disposal property when standing or flowing water is present.

Suitable habitat is lacking on the disposal property for the black rail and lesser prairie-chicken, and these conditions would not change under this alternative. Beaver County is west of the “South Core” Monarch Butterfly Conservation Unit, but is still within the “South Exterior” Area (DOI 2018), which indicates fewer numbers of monarchs move through the Oklahoma panhandle counties during migration. Both milkweed and suitable nectar-producing plant densities would likely remain unchanged under the No Action Alternative.

4.4.2 Proposed Action Alternative

Through the Proposed Action Alternative, the proposed disposal property would be transferred to private ownership and the landowners desiring to purchase the tract have expressed their interest in maintaining the property for cattle grazing and using the property as a holding area for livestock to be auctioned. Grazing frequency and intensity would be heavier if the proposed action alternative were implemented; however, this would not affect habitat quality for the
threatened and endangered species that occur in the vicinity (Beaver County). Table 4 provides a summary of the anticipated effects of the Proposed Action Alternative on federally-listed threatened and endangered species.

Habitat availability will likely remain unchanged for federally-listed bird species such as the whooping crane, piping plover, *rufa* red knot, and interior least tern. Suitable stopover or foraging areas for the four aforementioned species will depend on precipitation or flow patterns. It is not anticipated the current habitat on the river bottom will be significantly altered after ownership of the disposal tract is transferred. Habitat for the Arkansas River shiner on the disposal tract will remain entirely unsuitable, as flows are likely to continue to be intermittent on the Beaver River under the Proposed Action Alternative.

**Table 4. Threatened and Endangered Species Effects Determinations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species / Critical Habitat</th>
<th>Habitat Determination</th>
<th>Notes / Documentation</th>
<th>Effects Determination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Knot</td>
<td>Limited Habitat Present</td>
<td>Rare migrant that uses wetlands, reservoirs, etc. as brief stopover habitat during spring and fall migration; very low and intermittent surface flow in floodplain, thus extremely limited available habitat.</td>
<td>No effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piping Plover</td>
<td>Limited Habitat Present</td>
<td>Rare migrant that uses wetlands, reservoirs, etc. as brief stopover habitat during spring and fall migration; very low and intermittent surface flow in floodplain, thus extremely limited available habitat.</td>
<td>No effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whooping Crane</td>
<td>Limited Habitat Present</td>
<td>Rare migrant during spring and fall migration periods. Area is within 95% migration flyway for Aransas-Wood Buffalo flock; very low and intermittent surface flow in floodplain, thus extremely limited available habitat.</td>
<td>No effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Least Tern</td>
<td>Limited Habitat Present</td>
<td>No suitable least tern nesting habitat (e.g. exposed beaches or sandbars) within or adjacent to area; very low and intermittent surface flow in floodplain, thus extremely limited available habitat.</td>
<td>No effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suitable habitat is lacking on the proposed disposal property for lesser prairie-chickens and black rails; they would not be negatively affected by the Proposed Action Alternative. Because the funds generated from the disposal would be used by ODWC to purchase two tracts adjacent to the Beaver River Wildlife Management Area that contain habitat suitable for the lesser prairie-chicken, this species should receive a small net benefit from the Proposed Action Alternative.

Habitat is present on the proposed disposal tract for the monarch butterfly; however, milkweeds used by monarchs as host plants could increase in abundance with higher grazing pressure. Like the lesser prairie chicken, the monarch should benefit from the related acquisition of 641 acres of mixed-grass prairie and sand sagebrush shrubland habitats that would follow the land disposal action. These acres would provide higher quality habitat (greater abundance and diversity of milkweeds and nectaring plants) and at least four species of milkweed have been documented on these acquisition tracts - broadleaf milkweed (Asclepias latifolia), sand milkweed (A. arenaria), Engelmann’s milkweed (A. engelmanniana) and plains milkweed (A. pumila).

4.5 Cultural and Historic Resources

4.5.1 No Action Alternative
Cultural and historic resources would not be affected under the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative, there are no anticipated direct or indirect impacts to the cultural environment, as current conditions would be maintained, and no new soil disturbance would occur. Similarly, there would be no potential to affect historic sites in the vicinity of the property.

4.5.2 Proposed Action Alternative
The proposed action is subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). A cultural resources background study and a field survey were undertaken at the request of Oklahoma Archeological Survey (OAS). Cojeen Archaeological Services conducted a cultural resources survey investigation on 240 acres on June 13-17, 2018. No sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places occur on the proposed disposal property and the survey for cultural resources found limited evidence of culturally significant artifacts. A concurrence letter from OAS was received on August 29, 2018 and concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was received on November 7, 2018. (Appendix B).

4.6 Land Use

4.6.1. No Action Alternative
The No Action alternative would not change the current management activities on BRWMR and present conditions would continue. The property would continue to be owned by the ODWC and
managed as wildlife habitat with seasonal recreational use (primarily fall hunting) and limited grazing (cattle grazing from April through September, every other year).

4.6.2. Proposed Action Alternative
Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the land would be sold to a private entity, and cattle grazing would become the primary purpose of the property. It is difficult to predict how grazing would change from the current condition, but it is likely that cattle would be held at a higher stocking rate and that grazing would occur year-round annually rather than during the growing season every other year. This is consistent with past use of the property before it was acquired by ODWC, and it is also consistent with the majority of land use within the county. It is likely that additional fencing will be installed by the new owners to help contain cattle and manage grazing on the property, but other forms of construction are unlikely.

4.7 Local Socioeconomic Factors

4.7.1. No Action Alternative
Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed disposal tract would remain the property of the ODWC and would continue to be managed as a part of the Beaver River WMA. The land use would not change and the property would continue to have the same local socioeconomic impact which it currently has. It would continue to be used as a portion of a larger property which provides wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities for local residents and out-of-county visitors.

4.7.2. Proposed Action Alternative
The Proposed Action Alternative would likely have a positive socioeconomic impact on the local community of Beaver because it would allow for an increase in the livestock holding capacity of the adjacent stockyard and cattle auction facility in Beaver. By allowing greater holding capacity, the stockyard and auction facility would be able to handle larger numbers of animals and larger auctions, which could increase their business, allow them to hire additional employees and increase the economic impact on the town (e.g. increase visitation to restaurants and retail businesses).

5.0 Public Comments

A notice of availability of the draft EA for public comment was issued to the Herald Democrat for the residents of the local affected area (Beaver County) on December 17, 2018. The draft EA was available for public review on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation website: www.wildlifedepartment.com as of December 17, 2018.

Comments may be submitted using the website comment form through 4:30 p.m. on January 17, 2019 or mailed to ODWC-BRWMA EA, PO Box 53465, OKC, OK 73152 (postmarked by January 17, 2019).
6.0 List of Preparers
Kristen Gillman
Wildlife Lands and Minerals Coordinator
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
2100 NE 37th
Oklahoma City, OK 73111
kristen.gillman@odwc.ok.gov
(405) 522-6281

Mark Howery
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Matt Fullerton
Wildlife Diversity Biologist
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
P.O. Box 53465
Oklahoma City, OK 73152
matthew.fullerton@odwc.ok.gov
(580) 571-5820
7.0 References Cited


Appendix A: Quit Claim Deed and Federal Property Proposed for Transfer

QUIT CLAIM DEED

Know all men by these Presents:

That the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, an agency of the State of Oklahoma ("Grantor"), in consideration of the sum of ten dollars ($10.00) and other valuable consideration, in hand paid, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, does hereby quitclaim, grant, bargain, sell, and convey unto Jeff Slatten and Jeri Slatten (collectively "Grantee"), the following described real property and premises of surface estate only, situated in Beaver County, Oklahoma, as more particularly described on Exhibit “A” attached hereto and made a part hereof, together with all appurtenances and other improvements thereon and the appurtenances thereunto belonging, less and except for any oil and gas interests, all other hydrocarbons, including coal, metallic ores and other mineral interests in, on or under the premises. Said property is being conveyed herein without any warranties or representations from Grantor; and the ownership interest conveyed to Grantee herein shall be subject to all easements, right of ways, encroachments, restrictions, oil, gas, all hydrocarbons, coal, metallic ores and other mineral interests, and along with any other encumbrances, if any, whether of record or otherwise.

The Grantee acknowledges and agrees to that no anthropogenic (man-made) structures higher than 5 feet tall will be constructed with 10 feet of the property boundary that adjoins the Beaver River Wildlife Management Area except for a fence to keep in livestock that will be no taller than 5 ft. This deed restriction shall run with the land and shall be binding upon Grantee, tenants and any subsequent owner and tenants, their successors, heirs or assigns.

Signed and delivered this ___ day of ______, 2019.

Grantor: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

By:________________________
   J.D. Strong, Director

State of Oklahoma ) ss:
County of Oklahoma )

This instrument was acknowledged before me on the ___ day of ________, 2019 by J.D. Strong, as Director of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the above named Grantor.

___________________________
Notary Public

My Commission Expires____________________

(SEAL)
Exhibit “A”

Property Legal Description

(Attached to the Quit Claim Deed from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, an agency of the State Of Oklahoma, Grantor, to Jeff Slatten and Jeri Slatten, husband and wife as Buyer)


BEGINNING AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 12, THENCE EAST (S 88°33'43"E) ALONG THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF SAID SECTION 12, A DISTANCE OF 1979.90 FEET; THENCE NORTH (N 01"28'45"E), A DISTANCE OF 660.00 FEET; THENCE EAST (S88'33'43"E) A DISTANCE OF 660 FEET TO A POINT ON THE EAST BOUNDARY OF THE SW/4 OF SAID SECTION 12; THENCE NORTH (N01'28'45"E) ALONG SAID EAST BOUNDARY, A DISTANCE OF 661.66 FEET TO THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF THE S/2 SW/4 OF SAID SECTION 12; THENCE EAST (S88°31'36"E) ALONG THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE N/2 SE/4 OF SAID SECTION 12, A DISTANCE OF 2639.53 FEET TO THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID N/2 SE/4; THENCE EAST(S88°38'19") ALONG THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE N/2 SW/4 OF SAID SECTION 7, A DISTANCE OF 1034.88 FEET TO POINT ON THE WEST BOUNDARY OF STATE HIGHWAY NO. 23; THENCE NORTH (N01°05'48"E) ALONG SAID WEST BOUNDARY, A DISTANCE OF 2181.40 FEET; THENCE WEST (N87°47'36"W), A DISTANCE OF 1020.85 FEET TO A POINT ON THE EAST BOUNDARY OF SAID SECTION 12;THENCE WEST (N87°47'36"W), A DISTANCE OF 4941.70 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S42°42'21"W) A DISTANCE OF 207.92 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S81°38'01"W) A DISTANCE OF 216.86 FEET TO A POINT ON THE EAST BOUNDARY OF SAID SECTION 11;THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S81°38'01"W) A DISTANCE OF 786.09 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S88°07'16"W) A DISTANCE OF 1297.16 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S08°07'54"W) A DISTANCE OF 356.45 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S08°08'07"W) A DISTANCE OF 1050.66 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S06°05'23"W) A DISTANCE OF 830.39 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S08°00'21"W) A DISTANCE OF 483.84 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S04°10'00"W) A DISTANCE OF 493.27 FEET TO A POINT ON THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF SAID SECTION 11;THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S05°07'16"W) A DISTANCE OF 804.85 FEET; THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY (S08°37'28"E) A DISTANCE OF 557.84 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY (S04°43'20"W) A DISTANCE OF 1183.91 FEET; THENCE S/SOUTHWESTERLY (S04°44'01"W) A DISTANCE OF 300.28 FEET TO A POINT ON THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE W/2 NE/4 OF SAID SECTION 14; THENCE EAST(S88°27'10"E) ALONG SAID W/2 NE/4, A DISTANCE OF 1099.35 FEET TO THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID W/2NE/4; THENCE NORTH (N01°38'44"E)ALONG THE EAST BOUNDARY OF SAID W/2NE/4, A DISTANCE OF 2838.65 FEET TO THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SAID W/2NE/4; THENCE EAST (S88°30'33"E) ALONG THE SOUTH BOUNDARY OF THE SE/4 OF SAID SECTION 11, A DISTANCE OF 1324.74 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, SAID TRACT CONTAINING 623.5755 ACRES.
Appendix B: Agreement Documents for Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

November 7, 2018

Ms. Kristen Gillman
Wildlife Land/Minerals Coordinator
Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation
2100 Northeast 37th Street – Inter-Agency
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

RE: File #0173-19; (Previously #1243-18); ODWC Proposed Disposal of 623.5755 Acres, Including Sites 34BV210 and 34BV211, Beaver County, Oklahoma

Dear Ms. Gillman:

We have received and reviewed the documentation concerning the referenced project in Beaver County. Additionally, we have examined the information contained in the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory (OLI) files and other materials on historic resources available in our office. We find that there are no historic properties affected by the referenced project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. We look forward to working with you in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact Catharine M. Wood, Historical Archaeologist, at 405/521-6381.

Should further correspondence pertaining to this project be necessary, please reference the above underlined file number. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lynda Ozan
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LO:pm
August 29, 2018

Kristin Gillman
Wildlife Lands/Minerals Coordinator
ODWC Wildlife Biologist
P.O. Box 53465
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152

Re: Report on the Archeological Survey of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Proposed Disposal of 623.5755 Acres (240 Acres Surveyed), Beaver River WMA, Beaver County, Oklahoma

By Christopher Cojeen and Roger Burkhalter (Cojeen Archaeological Services, LLC)
Legal Location: Portions of Sections 12 and 14, T4N, R23E
Beaver County

Dear Ms. Gillman,

This agency received for review and comment the above-listed cultural resources survey report of investigations regarding the proposed disposal of some 623.5755 acres from the Beaver River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). From the information provided, I understand that Cojeen Archaeological Services staff surveyed 240 acres of the proposed area of potential effects (APE) on June 13-17, 2018. This portion of the APE had been identified by our office in an earlier review (April 9, 2018) as having potential for significant archaeological resources. Five new archaeological sites were identified within the APE during this survey, including three prehistoric sites (34BV207-209) and two historic sites (34BV210-211). I understand that ODWC recommends that all five sites are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

I concur with the findings and recommendations as they pertain to 34BV207, 34BV208, and 34BV209 and defer opinion on the eligibility of 34BV210 and 34BV211 and the overall project effects to the Historical Archaeologist with the State Historic Preservation Office. However, I request a hard copy of the site form for 34BV211, which was not included with the submission.

This review has been conducted in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society. You must also have a letter from that office to document your consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Kary L. Stackelbeck, Ph.D.
State Archaeologist
CC: SHPO