

NEWS RELEASE

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

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For Immediate Release

GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM SIGNUP UNDERWAY

Bismarck, ND, June 8, 2004— On May 11, 2004, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the release of an interim final rule to implement the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. The GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.

By issuing an interim final rule with request for public comments, USDA can conduct a program sign-up and implementation this fiscal year, according to the rule. USDA will consider all comments received during a 60-day public comment period, ending July 20, 2004, in developing a final GRP rule. The rule can be accessed at:
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/GRP/pdf_files/7cfr1415_IFR.pdf.

North Dakota has received \$1,119,200 in financial assistance for the Grassland Reserve Program in 2004. “We are undergoing a continuous sign-up for the program,” says J.R. Flores, State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). “We are pleased to provide this opportunity for private landowners to conserve grasslands across North Dakota. To compete for 2004 program funding, potential applicants must apply by July 16, 2004. At that time, NRCS will evaluate the applications on hand for funding.”

The interim final rule published in the Federal Register on May 21, 2004 states that GRP rental agreements and easements are designed for working agricultural lands and describes multiple enrollment duration options. Applications will be rated for funding based on ranking and selection criteria developed around North Dakota’s natural resource concerns. Highest priority will be provided to those applications that conserve the State’s most critical grassland resources, the native and natural grasslands and shrublands.

GRP signup is conducted at your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture. Additional GRP information is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp>.

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