

2004 GRP Ranking Criteria for Utah

1) Support Grazing Operations

Is the land offered part of a viable existing grazing operation? If Yes, continue
If No, stop, not eligible for GRP

RMS Plan

An RMS plan is a requirement in the GRP contract. A prescribed grazing plan in a RMS or progressive plan is the O&M of grazing land. This section awards points for RMS plans or progressive plans that exist or could be written for the property prior to the ranking cut off.

There is an RMS plan existing on the land offered for GRP - **75 Points**

There is a progressive plan existing on the land offered for GRP – **50 Points**

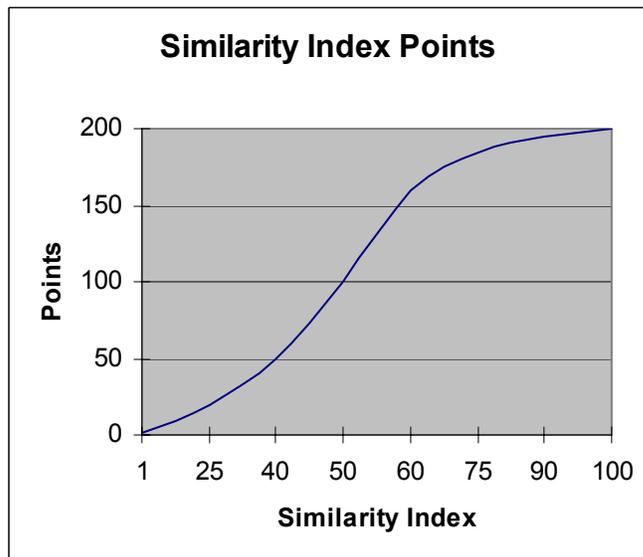
There is not a conservation plan existing on the land offered for GRP **0 Points**

75 points possible

2) Emphasize preservation of native grasslands and shrublands

Similarity Index

This is a weighted average of the similarity index of the ecological sites in the area offered for GRP. This is the similarity index to the historic plant community described in the ecological site. See NRPH 4-17.



200 points possible

3) Protect Grassland from the Threat of Conversion

Development Conversion Risk

Urban Land is defined as land occupied by buildings and related facilities used for residences, industrial sites, institutional sites, airports and similar uses associated with towns or cities. Not all developing land is associated with a town or city (i.e. cabin lots), this type of development receives a different treatment in the ranking.

Land offered is near an actively developing urban area (adjacent to) – **80 points**
Land offered is near an actively developing urban area (within) – **60 points**
Land offered is near an actively developing urban area (<5 miles) – **30 points**
Land offered is near an actively developing urban area (5-10 miles) – **20 points**
Land offered is near an actively developing urban area (10-20 miles) – **10 points**

Land offered is near a developing but not urban area (adjacent to) – **80 points**
Land offered is near a developing but not urban area (within) – **80 points**
Land offered is near a developing but not urban area (<5 miles) – **30 points**
Land offered is near a developing but not urban area (5-10 miles) – **20 points**
Land offered is near a developing but not urban area (10-20 miles) – **10 points**

Length of Agreement

Easements and rental agreement applications do not compete with each other.

Permanent easement – **60 points**
30 year easement – **0 points**
30 year rental agreement – **60 points**
20 year rental agreement – **40 points**
15 year rental agreement – **20 points**
10 year rental agreement – **0 points**

Agricultural Conversion Risk

If the offered land is at risk to being converted to cropland, points may be taken here if 1) the soils are suitable for cropland, 2) water rights exist if irrigation is necessary, and 3) other cropland exists within a specified distance

The offered land could potentially be converted to cropland, and:
Distance to other existing cropland is <1 mile – **60 points**
Distance to other existing cropland is 1 to 10 miles – **30 points**
Distance to other existing cropland is 15 to 20 miles – **15 points**

Invasive Species Conversion Risk

If the ecological sites in the area offered for GRP have invasive species, is the participant willing to implement conservation practices that will immediately address this? Invasive species can be noxious weeds, invaders (i.e. cheatgrass or juniper), or increasers that have dominated the site greater than their natural proportion (i.e. sagebrush). If accelerating practices are determined necessary by NRCS in order to accomplish this, the restored plant community can be either the historic climax or a desired plant community agreed upon by the cooperator and the NRCS.

Cooperator is willing to restore the site – **0 points**

No Restoration Necessary – **50 points**

Cooperator is not willing to restore the site – **minus 50 points penalty**

250 points possible

4) Maintain and improve plant and animal biodiversity

Riparian Areas

If there is a minimum of a ¼-mile riparian corridor within the land offered for GRP, points may be taken here. The requirement of an RMS plan for GRP contracts ensures that any necessary restoration will be done. – **50 points**

Sagebrush Steppe

If habitat for Greater or Gunnison Sage-Grouse, or any other species on the Utah Sensitive Species List (available from DWR) *associated with the sagebrush steppe vegetation type*, is present on land offered for GRP, points are awarded. The distribution of Sage-Grouse and other species at risk can be determined by the NRCS biologist or a DWR representative.

Active Sage-Grouse lek site is located on land offered for GRP, or located within 2 miles of land offered for GRP – **100 points**

OR

Habitat for Greater or Gunnison Sage-Grouse, or any other species on the Utah Sensitive Species List *associated with the sagebrush steppe vegetation type*, is present on the land offered for GRP – **75 points**

Mule Deer Winter Range

Mule deer winter range is available on the land offered for GRP. GIS maps of mule deer winter range are available through consultation with the DWR – **50 points**

200 points possible

5) Total Costs

Restoration Costs: Restoration costs need to be added to the total estimated cost for both easements and rentals.

Easements: The value is the Fair Market Value minus the Grassland Value. If the initial estimated value is significantly more than the final appraised value and the GRP budget cannot fund it, then the approval will be rescinded. It is important to be as accurate as possible in establishing an initial estimated value. According to private and government appraisers, they appraise property by using comparable sales.

Permanent Easements: The following method can be used in estimating the value of a permanent easement: 1. Obtain an estimated fair market value for the property by asking the landowner for sales or recent appraisals of neighboring property. 2. Estimate the Grassland Value, including a value for grazing, hunting rights or other recreation activities. Separate this value from any investment potential, development potential or any other outside influences on the Grassland Value. Through research and interviews of comparable sales for grazing in Utah, we have developed the following estimates as guidelines to determine Grassland Values. Values were assigned to the ecological climatic zones for simplicity. These are only guidelines, use your best judgment. The size of the property can influence price as well as proximity to agriculture facilities. Add any cost-share dollars for restoration to the requested dollars. To be eligible for easements, the landowner must have a clear deed to the land. A landowner may also have more than one contract but is limited to only one per year.

Thirty-Year Easements: Determine the easement value the same way as a permanent easement (Fair Market Value minus Grassland Value) then use 30 percent of the value for the easement value. Example $\$1300 - \$350 = \$950 \times 30\% = \$285/\text{acre}$.

Rental Agreements: A landowner or a land manager with control of the land can apply for a rental agreement. A rental agreement is determined by taking the acres times the county rental value per acre times the years (10, 15, 20 or 30) plus any restoration cost-share amounts.

The final score is points/cost/acre/year

99 years is used to calculate permanent easements