

Improving Grazing Lands Through Farm Bill Programs

Farm Bill Programs offer technical and financial assistance to help livestock producers increase forage quantity and quality, manage brush, control invasive species, provide alternate livestock watering sources and exclude livestock from sensitive areas. Options include:



- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Grassland Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program

What is EQIP?

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. This funding is the largest source of federal assistance for Virginia producers who want to improve and conserve natural resources. EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of eligible practices.

Eligible agricultural producers **can sign up for EQIP at any time – check with your local NRCS office for Fiscal Year deadlines.** Applications are ranked based on the environmental benefits that would be achieved by implementing the EQIP contract. An NRCS conservationist will schedule a field visit to assess resource concerns on the farm and to develop a conservation plan and contract.

EQIP PRACTICES FOR PASTURELAND	
Priority Practices	Companion Practices
Access Control – Livestock Exclusion	Animal Trails and Walkways
Conservation Cover - Land Conversion (Agricultural Land to Grass)	Brush Management
Nutrient Management	Fence
Pasture and Hayland Planting	Heavy Use Area Protection
Prescribed Grazing – Grazing System Plan and Implementation	Pest Management
Riparian Forest Buffers	Pipeline
Riparian Herbaceous Buffers	Pumping Plant
Tree/Shrub Establishment - Land Conversion (Agricultural Land to Trees)	Spring Development
Streambank Protection	Stream Crossing
Critical Area Planting	Watering Facility
	Water Well

What is GRP?

The Grassland Reserve Program provides a one-time payment for a permanent easement (maintains grazing rights) or annual payments for 10-, 15- or 20-year rental contracts. Certain easements or rental contracts may be eligible for cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of the cost to install conservation practices.

What is WHIP?

Landowners can receive payments to cover most of the costs for installing conservation practices to improve wildlife habitat.

What is CSP?

CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities on agricultural land and non-industrial private forest land. Landowners may receive an annual payment for installing additional practices and maintaining existing ones and a supplemental payment for adopting resource-conserving crop rotations.

What is WRP?

The Wetlands Reserve Program provides a permanent easement, 30-year easement or 10-year restoration agreement. Landowners receive a one-time payment for a permanent easement and 100 percent of the cost to restore the wetland. For 30-year easements and restoration agreements, landowners can receive up to 75 percent of the restoration costs.

For More Information

Contact your local NRCS office or check the NRCS website for more information about programs and sign-ups at www.va.nrcs.usda.gov.

By implementing a few key conservation practices to enhance soil quality and water utilization on your farm, you can greatly increase the quantity and quality of forage available to your livestock throughout the year.

--J.B. Daniel



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