

NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service
375 Jackson Street • Suite 600 St. Paul, MN 55101-1854 • (651) 602-7900
Web: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov>

Contact:

[Julie MacSwain](#) State Public Affairs Specialist, (651) 602-7859

Minnesota Grassland Reserve Program Scoring Period announcement

ST PAUL, MN, March 30, 2012 – The revised Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program that assists grazing operators to maintain and protect grazing lands, including rangeland and pastureland, while conserving related environmental values on grasslands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grasslands under the threat of conversion.

GRP is authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, as amended by the 2008 Farm Bill legislation. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer the program. Funding for the GRP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Sign-up Dates

Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, on April 27, 2012, the first scoring and ranking will occur for this year's applications. The amount of funding available in Minnesota is approximately \$409,882. Once this year's funds have been exhausted, all eligible applicants will remain on file until additional funding becomes available.

Benefits

Conserving and protecting grasslands while promoting properly managed grazing contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations, and improves environmental quality.

How GRP Works

Applications may be filed for an easement or rental agreement with either NRCS or FSA county office personnel at any time. All enrolled acres are actively managed through a conservation plan which ensures that proper grazing management, wildlife, and biodiversity values are protected. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land while retaining the right to conduct all common grazing practices. Other activities such as hay production, or harvesting grasslands for seed production can be conducted subject to

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certain restrictions during the nesting season of bird species that are in significant decline or those that are protected under Federal or State law. Where recommended participants can maintain and construct firebreaks.

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