GUIDANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012 KANSAS GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM RANKING WORKSHEET COMPLETION

The following guidance will assist with Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) application ranking. Field visits are not required to complete the initial application ranking.

RENTALS

Rental applications are not required to be ranked with the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI) tool at this time. Instead, Field offices will track rental applications using the CPGI tool.

EASEMENTS

All easement applications are to be ranked using the CPGI tool.

Easement applications from FY 2011 that were deferred to FY 2012 will be re-ranked using the FY 2012 version of the CPGI tool. Of the ranking categories populated by the user, only those concerning threatened and endangered species and species in need of conservation have changed. For all other user populated categories, the user may refer to the FY 2011 application for answers. Additional meetings with the landowner will not be necessary to re-rank the FY 2011 deferred applications.

CPGI TOOL

Since rental applications are not required to be ranked at this time, changes have been made to the CPGI tool to allow minimum user input for rentals so that they may still be tracked.

To track a rental application, follow these steps:

- Upon accessing the tool, the user will receive the following prompt: “Click YES to rank an Easement or Rental Agreement. Click NO to track a Rental Agreement”.
- To track a rental application, click “NO”.
- The user will be taken to a data entry form for the rental agreement. Enter the following information:
  - Landowner name
  - Application number (from Farm Service Agency (FSA) System 36)
  - County
  - Application type: 10, 15, or 20 year rental
  - Acres
- Once the required information has been entered, click “Save”. This will store the application information in the CPGI database to provide information on rental application volume.
- If at a later date it is deemed necessary to rank the rental applications because of available funding, it will be necessary to go back into the CPGI tool to do so. In this situation, when the message “Click YES to rank an Easement or Rental Agreement. Click NO to track a Rental Agreement “ appears, the click “YES”. This will take the user to the actual GRP ranking worksheet.

To rank an easement application, follow these steps:

- Upon accessing the tool, the user will receive the following prompt: "Click YES to rank an Easement or Rental Agreement. Click NO to track a Rental Agreement".
- To rank an easement application, click "YES".
- The user will be taken to the GRP ranking worksheet.
- Proceed to fill out the worksheet and rank the application

Use the following guidance for completing the GRP ranking worksheet

RANKING WORKSHEET

Application Number: FSA System 36 generated application identification number.

Summary Section

- Total Acres: The total number of acres offered by the applicant for enrollment into GRP.
- Acres of native cover: Number of acres from the offered amount that has never been tilled. Fields should not be considered native cover if the dominant grass species is nonnative or introduced. Up to 10 percent of the total acres offered may be permanent vegetative cover other than native sod.
- Acres needing restoration: Number of acres from the offered amount that would need to be reseeded, treated for invasive species, or requires other practice applications to restore a viable native grazing lands resource.
- NRCS determined easement value: The CPGI tool will automatically populate this cell. This value will be the Geographical Area Rate Cap (GARC) for the county in which the land is located.
- Landowner offer: Field Offices are to ask the landowner what would be his/her financial offer for the easement (dollars/acre).
- Lowest Per Acre Easement Value: This cell is automatically populated with the lower of the NRCS determined value and the landowner offer value.
- Estimated restoration costs: The estimated cost of restoring lands to a viable grazing land.
- Estimated total cost of rental agreement: Equal to the annual rental rate as determined by the FSA national office times total acres times the length of the contract. This is automatically calculated by the CPGI tool.
- Estimated total cost of easement: Equal to the lowest per acre easement value times the total acres. This is automatically calculated by the CPGI tool.

Ranking Section

Only one enrollment option can be selected per application. The "Cooperative Entity – Permanent" option is not to be selected at the field office level. Cooperative entities (such as a land trust or other entity capable of acquiring, closing and managing a conservation easement) are to submit an application to the state office. Acreage in a CRP contract that will expire within 12 months is eligible for a permanent easement or 20 year rental contract application.

Urban/Commercial Development Area: This item will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.

Percentage Native Sod: This is automatically calculated based on the acres provided in the summary section.

Restoration Assistance: Determine if there is a need for any of the offered acres to be reseeded, treated for invasive species, or require other practice applications to restore a viable

grazing lands resource. If woody or invasive species is greater than five percent of the total offered land, restoration would be required.

Mineral Rights: Control of mineral rights means the applicant(s) owns the mineral rights and has not leased out those mineral rights.

Houses and Significant Existing Encumbrances: Houses are not permitted on the easement area. In addition, the applicant, to the best of his/her knowledge, will identify whether or not there are significant existing limitations attached to the deed, such as an active oil and gas lease, wind power development agreements, or a watershed dam easement that could or do fragment the offered unit. Note that easements for utilities and pipelines will be permitted on GRP acreage and should not be considered as a significant existing encumbrance.

Existing Contract, Easement, or Deed Restrictions: Land is ineligible for GRP if the functions and values of the grassland are already protected under an existing contract, easement or deed restriction, or if land is in ownership by an entity whose purpose is to protect and conserve grassland and related conservation values. Land would become eligible once the existing contract, easement or deed restriction expires or is terminated and the grassland values and functions are no longer protected.

Support for Grazing Operations: Applicant will indicate whether the offered unit provides a direct forage resource for a grazing operation.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity

- Unit is in a Kansas grassland region of concern: This item will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Percent of land in five mile radius of the offered unit that is native grassland: This item will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Proximity to land protected by a conservation easement or agreement: Determine if there are any agricultural areas protected by a conservation easement, agreement or ownership. Protected land would include refuge areas, state-owned land, land protected by another NRCS conservation easement. Select the most appropriate option (within five miles, within one mile or contiguous with) if one applies.
- KDWPT "Species in Need of Conservation" (SINC): Refer to the KDWPT Threatened and Endangered Species webpage to determine if SINC species are present in the county in which the land is located. The county should be shown to be in the "Known Current Range" for the species habitat. Based on the species description, the DC should then determine if the offered GRP ground would provide the needed habitat.
- USFWS "Endangered, Threatened, proposed and candidate species": Refer to the KDWPT Threatened and Endangered Species webpage to determine if endangered, threatened, proposed or candidate species are present in the county in which the land is located. To qualify for this category, the county must be listed as providing Critical Habitat for a federally listed threatened or endangered species. Based on the species/critical habitat descriptions, the DC should then determine if the offered GRP ground would provide the needed habitat.
- Lesser Prairie Chicken habitat region: This item will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Invasive species invasion: Musk Thistle, Siricea Lespedeza, Salt Cedar, Red Cedar, Juniper, Osage Orange, Locust, Black Locust, Siberian Elm, Mesquite, Russian Olive and Roughleaf Dogwood will be considered invasive species.

Risk of Conversion

- Subsurface mineral exploration/development area: This will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Industrial scale wind harvesting area: This will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Soil Composition: This will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Bordering properties infestation: Determine the extent to which bordering properties are infested by invasive species and choose the appropriate option.
- Exurban development: This will be automatically populated by the CPGI tool.
- Potential Development for aggregate extraction: An applicant interview will be used to establish the potential for development with realistic consideration of geologic factors.

Bonus: Bonus points will be awarded to offers that are contiguous with one or more GRP offers from other applicants. This will be done at the state office level after initial rankings are pulled. The determination of contiguous offers will be based on CPGI digitized application boundaries.

Group: This entry will be automatically populated based on the responses at the beginning of the worksheet. Only Group A easements are intended to be considered for funding in FY 2012. If all Group A easements have been funded, funding priority will be as follows: Group B easements, Group A Rentals, Group B Rentals.