GUIDANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010 KANSAS GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM APPLICATION RANKING AND WORKSHEET COMPLETION

The following guidance will assist with Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) application ranking and the ranking worksheet evaluation criteria. All FY 2010 GRP applications will be evaluated using the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI) ranking tool. A guidance document will be forthcoming on the use of CPGI. Field visits will not be made to complete initial application ranking.

Application Number: A Farm Service Agency (FSA) System 36 application identification number is to be used for all program applications.

Summary Section of Offered Land

Offered Acres

Enter requested information on offered acres.

- Native cover: Of those offered acres, enter number of acres that are native cover (i.e., native sod – never been tilled). Note that for the purposes of this worksheet, native sod is land possessing native grasses, forbs, and shrubs that have never been plowed or otherwise manipulated by tillage or other similar activity. Fields should not be considered native cover if the dominant grass species is nonnative or introduced. Note that up to 10 percent of the total acres offered may be in permanent vegetative cover other than native sod (e.g., woodland, introduced grasses, reseeded native grasses).
- Restoration acres: The applicant will identify if there is need for any of the total offered acres to be reseeded, treated for invasive species, or require other practice applications to restore a viable native grazing lands resource. (Note: this question addresses the "need for restoration", not who would implement of pay for the restoration.)

Easement Value

Easement value is the fair market value of the land less its grazing value.

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) determined value: CPGI will automatically populate this cell. The NRCS determined value is the lowest of a market analysis (or in some cases, appraisals) and geographical area rate cap (GARC). These values are determined at the state office level.
- Landowner Offer: Field Offices are to ask the landowner what would be the his/her financial offer for the easement (dollars/acre).
- Lowest Per Acre Easement Value: This cell is automatically calculated by taking the lowest of the NRCS determined value and the landowner offer. The 2008 Farm Bill stipulates that the easement value will be the lower of (1) market analysis or appraisal, (2) GARC, or (3) landowner offer. NRCS is to calculate (1) and (2) above.

Easement or Agreement
The applicant will select the appropriate choice. Only one enrollment option can be selected per application. Priority will be given to easements in native cover.

Other Notes

- Cooperative Entity – permanent easement. This 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.
- Expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Contract: Acreage in a CRP contract that will expire in the next 12 months is eligible for GRP. The only two enrollment options are permanent easement and 20-year rental contract.

Urban/Commercial Development Area: This item will automatically be populated by CPGI using the FY 2010 Kansas GRP Urban/Commercial Development map.

Percentage Native Sod: This percent will be automatically computed (acres of native cover/total acres offered). Fields should not be considered native sod if the dominant grass species is nonnative or introduced. Priority will be given to applications that comprise 90 percent or more native sod.

Need for Restoration: The applicant will identify if there is need for any of the total offered acres to be reseeded, treated for invasive species, or require other practice applications to restore a viable grazing lands resource. A few points to note:

- Incidental land: Up to 10 percent of the total acres offered may be in permanent vegetative cover other than native sod (e.g., woodland, introduced grasses, reseeded native grasses). This incidental land would not need to be restored.
- Woody invasive species: If woody invasive species is greater than five percent of the total offer 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 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 (e.g., EQIP), 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 for the program 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: The applicant will indicate whether the offered unit provides a direct forage resource for a grazing operation.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – Grassland Region of Concern: This item will automatically be populated by CPGI using the FY 2010 Kansas GRP Region of Concern map.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – Contiguous with Native Grassland: Using available aerial photography, determine the extent of contiguous grassland. Native grassland is defined as native sod. For the purpose of this worksheet, contiguity will not be considered interrupted by roads, highways, railroads, rivers, streams, or creeks. Contiguity will be considered interrupted by cropland, urban development, mineral development, industrial scale wind harvesting, aggregate extraction, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project-sized lakes. Select the most appropriate option, if one applies.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – Contiguous with Protected Agricultural Land: Determine if there are any agricultural areas protected by conservation easement, agreement, or ownership. Protected land would include refuge areas, state-owned land, land protected by a Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program or Wetlands Reserve Program agreements, enrolled GRP land, or other long-term protection instruments; i.e., greater than 25 years. Select the most appropriate option, if one applies.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – At-Risk Species: Determine if the offered unit provides habitat for at-risk plant or animal species directly associated with native grassland. Mead's Milkweed, Western Prairie-Fringed Orchid, American Burying Beetle, Henslow's Sparrow, and Greater and Lesser Prairie Chicken will be considered at-risk species. Please reference Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service or other websites for more information on as-risk species in your county.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – Lesser Prairie Chicken: The CPGI ranking tool will automatically populate this cell.

Plant and Animal Biodiversity – Woody Species Invasion: The extent of woody species invasion can be determined through personal knowledge of the offered acres, by applicant's knowledge of the area, or by use of the local FSA's most recent slides of the area.

Risk of Conversion: Most of the items in this section will automatically be populated by CPGI. The items that will not be populated are the items addressing infestation of invasive species and aggregate extraction. For invasive species, use available aerial photography to determine the percent of the offered unit's boundary that borders

properties with greater than a five percent infestation of invasive species. Musk Thistle, Sericea Lespedeza, Salt Cedar, Red Cedar, Juniper, Osage Orange, and Locust will be considered invasive species. For aggregate extraction, an applicant interview will be used to establish the potential for development with realistic consideration of geologic factors.

Group: This entry will be automatically populated based on the responses at the beginning of the worksheet. Only Group A applications are intended to be considered for FY 2010 GRP. Group B applications will only be considered if there are not enough viable Group A applications to use the Kansas GRP allowance. This item can be manually calculated by referring to the appropriate grouping designation for the initial entries. In order for an application to be in Group A, all responses to the appropriate questions must be identified as being in Group A. If any response corresponds to a “B,” then the application will automatically be placed in Group B.

Bonus: Bonus points (25) 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 January 29, 2010, when county access databases are pulled. The determination of continuous offers will be based on CPGI digitized application boundaries.

Ranking Points: Ranking points will be automatically computed.