



Natural Resources Conservation Service
6200 Jefferson NE, Room 305
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Phone: (505) 761-4402 Fax: (505) 761-4463
Web site: www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov

News Release

May 7, 2009

Contact: Barbara Garrett, public affairs specialist
(505)761-4406

Grassland Preservation Opportunities Announced

ALBUQUERQUE, NM-The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service announced today that the final date for acceptance of applications for 2009 funding under the Grassland Reserve Program is May 27, 2009. The Grassland Reserve Program provides conservation opportunities for the highest ranking applicants to protect their grasslands from development through permanent easements or term-specific rental contracts.

“Ranking is very competitive and this year priority has been given by the State Technical Committee to ranches with exceptional management in Union, Harding, Quay, Curry, Roosevelt, Lea, DeBaca, Chaves, and Eddy counties,” said Seth Fiedler, NRCS resource conservationist.

According to Fiedler, range condition is the most heavily weighted ranking factor with priority give to grasslands that are in the best condition. Other ranking factors include the diversity of ecological sites within the area considered, threat of conversion to non-grassland uses, and viability of easement management.

The Grassland Reserve Program, in 2009, is offering opportunities for permanent easements and term-specific rental contracts. The term-specific contracts may run 10, 15, or 20 years. The payments a rancher can receive are tied to the type of agreement that is established. For example, a permanent easement holder will be eligible for a one-time payment not to exceed the lowest of three values. These values are the value of the land less the grazing value, a set cap of \$224 per acre, or an offer made by the land owner. Rental contracts holders will be eligible for annual payments of not more that 75 percent of the grazing value of the land over the life of the agreement.

“These conservation opportunities interest many of our ranchers who are outstanding land stewards, and benefit New Mexico as a whole by protecting our watersheds, sequestering carbon, and enhancing wildlife habitat,” said Fiedler.

The agency advises that while a cut-off date for 2009 funding is necessary, applications for the program are accepted on a continuous basis for future opportunities.

For more information about the program and how you can apply, contact your local NRCS field office.

###