Fact Sheet: Special EQIP Project for Grazing Lands in Central and Eastern North Dakota

Overview
The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources. Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) develops contracts that can be up to 10 years in duration with landowners to implement targeted, conservation practices. Under this special EQIP project, landowners can receive financial and technical assistance to establish or enhance grazing systems on their land. Funds will be targeted on existing grasslands, with a focus on expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands in central and eastern North Dakota to enhance livestock production and maximize environmental benefits. Producers participating in this program are further eligible, but not required, to participate and receive additional payments for a carbon credit program administered by Ducks Unlimited.

Eligibility
This opportunity is available for persons engaged in livestock or agricultural production on restored or existing grasslands in the North Dakota counties to the north and east of the Missouri River, with preference given to McLean, Sheridan, Burleigh, Kidder, Stutsman, Emmons, Logan and McIntosh counties. Preference is given to lands enrolled in CRP that will have expired by 2014 in the above mentioned counties. Other expired CRP lands and grasslands (including native, tame or improved pasture) in all counties east of the Missouri River are eligible as well. Producers must also meet general EQIP participation requirements, including:

- Be an agricultural producer;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions of the Farm Bill;
- Develop an EQIP plan of operations, including: The participant’s specific conservation and environmental objectives to be achieved;
- One or more conservation practices in the conservation management system to be implemented to achieve the conservation and environmental objectives; and
- The schedule for implementing the conservation practices.

Applications are due by March 15, 2013.

Practices Covered
Eligible EQIP practices include:
- Installation of fencing (border and cross);
- Forage and biomass plantings;
- Prescribed grazing;
- Forage harvest management; and
- Water infrastructure development, including well and spring development, stock tank construction, and wetland restoration and management opportunities.
How EQIP Works
NRCS works with the participant to develop the EQIP plan of operations. This plan becomes the basis of the EQIP contract between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides conservation practice payments to landowners under these contracts that can be up to 10 years in duration.

Additional Revenue Sources Available
These special EQIP funds have become available in support of an innovative partnership between the NRCS and Ducks Unlimited. Producers who participate in this EQIP offering are eligible for additional funds by enrolling in a carbon credit program. Participating producers could expect additional carbon credit payments of $30 or more per acre, in addition to payment for long-term grassland conservation.

Optional carbon credit payments are contingent upon the placement of a long-term grassland easement on participating lands, which are necessary to provide the long-term protection for carbon credit certification. Grassland easements place no restrictions on the management or use of protected lands, other than prohibiting the tillage and conversion of existing grassland cover. Carbon credits are units of carbon reduction that can be purchased by willing buyers interested in reducing their environmental footprint.

Producers are not required to enroll in the easement and/or carbon credit payment program in order to receive EQIP assistance. However, participants are strongly encouraged to explore and consider this additional revenue opportunity.

Contact Information:
Please visit your local NRCS service center for further details and enrollment opportunities.

For questions related to the carbon credit opportunity, please contact Randal Dell at 701-355-3593 or rdell@ducks.org

For questions specifically about grassland easements, please contact your local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office, or Randy Renner at 701-355-3526 or rrenner@ducks.org