



## GRASSLAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

E300GCI

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

### Grassland Conservation Initiative Activity

**APPLICABLE LAND USE:** Range, Pasture, Crop

**RESOURCE CONCERN ADDRESSED:** One Priority Resource Concern

**CONSERVATION ACTIVITY LIFE SPAN:** 1 year

#### Conservation Activity Description

The Grassland Conservation Initiative Activity assists participants in protecting grazing uses; conserving and improving soil, water, and wildlife resources; and achieving related conservation values by conserving eligible land through grassland conservation contracts. GCI Participants must agree to meet or exceed the planning criteria for at least one of the priority resource concerns: Soil Erosion, Soil Quality Degradation, Water Quality Degradation, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Improvement, Air Quality Impacts, Degraded Plant Condition, and/or Livestock Production Limitation.

#### Criteria

- Develop a conservation stewardship plan that will ---
  - Include only eligible acres,
  - Address resource concerns and activities related to grassland, and
  - On cropland, implement activities needed to maintain the same ecological benefit as provided by grasslands such as stability, diversity and cover.
- Manage and control the establishment and/or spread of invasive species. Enrolled lands must not become a major seed source for noxious weeds.
- Manage the land to meet or exceed the NRCS planning criteria for the identified priority resource concern(s) as required through the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) and recorded in the conservation stewardship plan.

#### Additional Considerations:

- Criteria and considerations from the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) may be used to assist the participant in meeting the selected priority resource concern(s). The following list is not all inclusive, and additional practices may be needed for the enrolled land to meet the grassland conservation initiative activity criteria.
  - If enrolled land is grazed, Prescribed Grazing (CPS 528) may be used to maintain or improve grasslands by matching the forage quantity and quality produced with the

grazing and/or browsing demands of the livestock to maintain adequate vegetative cover, improve water quality and watershed function, reduce erosion, improve soil health and provide wildlife habitat.

- If enrolled land is annually cropped, Conservation Crop Rotation (CPS 328) may be used to grow crops in sequence to maintain or increase cover, improve soil health, increase organic matter, reduce erosion and pest pressure and provide forage for livestock and wildlife.
- If enrolled land is annually cropped, Cover Crop (CPS 340) may be used to plant seasonal vegetative cover to maintain cover in between cash crops and increase soil health, reduce erosion, improve water quality, suppress weeds and break pest cycles.
- If enrolled land is cut or mowed, Forage Harvest Management (CPS 511) may be used to ensure forage will be harvested at a frequency and height that optimizes the desired forage stand, plant community and stand life while maintaining cover, and to reduce pest pressure, improve wildlife habitat and improve soil health. Mowing and harvest operations should be completed outside of the reproductive period where wildlife species are a concern.
- Prescribed Burning (CPS 338), Brush Management (CPS 314) or Herbaceous Weed Treatment (CPS 315) may be used when needed to improve the amount of plant biomass while maintaining cover and to manage and control the establishment and spread of invasive species.
- If enrolled land needs vegetative cover or productivity improvements, Range Planting (CPS 550), Forage and Biomass Planting (CPS 512) or Conservation Cover (CPS 327) may be used to assist the participant in establishing or improving permanent vegetative cover, improving forage for livestock and wildlife, reducing soil erosion, improving air and water quality, wildlife habitat and soil health.

### **Documentation and Implementation Requirements**

#### **Participant will:**

- Determine the priority resource concern(s) to be met or exceeded by the end of the GCI contract.
- Identify any management actions needed to address the priority resource concern(s), including control of invasive species.
- Develop a conservation stewardship plan that will ---
  - Include only eligible acres,
  - Address resource concerns and activities related to grassland, and
  - On cropland, implement activities needed to maintain the same ecological benefit as provided by grasslands such as stability, diversity and cover.
- Provide documentation of management actions taken as requested by NRCS.
- Take photos annually of enrolled land showing that the conservation stewardship plan has been implemented.
- Notify NRCS of any planned changes to the management of the enrolled land.

#### **NRCS will:**

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- Prior to implementation, assist the participant in identifying the priority resource concern(s) they will meet or exceed through the GCI.
- Prior to implementation, assist the participant with determining whether any management or control of invasive species is needed.
- As needed and requested provide technical assistance to the participant.
- As needed, assist the participant with developing a conservation stewardship plan that will ---
  - Include only eligible acres,
  - Address resource concerns and activities related to grassland, and
  - On cropland, require activities needed to maintain the same ecological benefit as provided by grasslands such as stability, diversity and cover.
- Review annual photos and any additional documentation provided to ensure that the participant has implemented the conservation stewardship plan in accordance with the criteria identified above.

**NRCS Documentation Review**

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the enrolled acres meet the requirements of the Grassland Conservation Initiative.

Participant Name \_\_\_\_\_ Contract Number \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Applied \_\_\_\_\_ Fiscal Year Completed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date