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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma Cross Timbers Selected for Grassland Restoration Project

STILLWATER, Okla., Dec. 27, 2016—The USDA [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) has selected the [Grassland Restoration Incentive Program](#) (GRIP) to receive \$2.9 million to assist landowners with implementing conservation practices that improve habitat for declining grassland bird and monarch butterfly populations. In Oklahoma, GRIP covers around 30 percent of the state in the cross timbers region, from Osage County to Lake Texoma and from Oklahoma County to Eufaula Lake.

“Iconic Oklahoma bird species such as the scissor-tailed flycatcher, bobwhite quail and eastern meadowlark have long been on decline due to habitat loss and invasive species encroachment,” said Mike Sams, NRCS State Biologist for Oklahoma. “Projects just as GRIP are often the best hope for many species because they leverage the resources of local and diverse groups combined with voluntary, incentive based conservation practices—this is a similar approach that has been used to improve lesser prairie-chicken habitat in Western Oklahoma.”

GRIP provides financial assistance to landowners for grassland restoration practices such as range planting, prescribed burning and invasive plant control. Landowners interested in enrolling in GRIP should visit www.restoreourgrasslands.org.

Funding for GRIP will be provided by NRCS’s [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP). GRIP is administered by the [Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture](#), a regional partnership of government and non-government organizations in Oklahoma and Texas including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

“RCPP makes it possible for diverse partners to combine resources and expertise with NRCS to address conservation issues that span disciplines, focus areas and even state lines,” said Gary O’Neill, NRCS State Conservationist for Oklahoma. “Past RCPP projects in Oklahoma such as the [Oklahoma Healthy Soils Project](#) and [Grand Lake Watershed Project](#) prove when we work with partners and keep the emphasis local, we can have large conservation impacts across a region.

Since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$29 billion to help producers make conservation improvements, working with as many as 500,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners to protect over 400 million acres nationwide, boosting soil and air quality, cleaning and conserving water

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and enhancing wildlife habitat. For an interactive look at USDA's work in conservation and forestry over the course of this Administration, visit <http://medium.com/usda-results>

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