



Conservation Reserve Program - Grasslands

OVERVIEW

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands is part of the CRP program, a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits.

Participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion and improve water quality. In return, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

CRP Grasslands helps landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion.

CRP Grasslands is authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the program on behalf of the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

BENEFITS

Protecting grasslands contributes positively to the economy of many regions, provides biodiversity of plant and animal populations and improves environmental quality.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices, produce hay, mow, or harvest for seed production (subject to certain restrictions during the nesting season of bird species that are in significant

decline or those that are protected under federal or state law), conduct fire rehabilitation, and construct firebreaks and fences.

RANKING LAND OFFERED FOR CRP GRASSLANDS

Interested participants may file applications with FSA at any time. These applications will be batched and reviewed several times a year to determine which applications can be approved.

Applications for CRP Grassland will be ranked after each batching period using Grassland Ranking Factors. FSA collects data for each of the ranking factors based on the relative benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking.

FSA uses the following ranking factors, including:

- Existence of expiring CRP or Grassland Reserve Program land;
- Existing grassland;
- Multi-species cover existence and predominance of native species;
- Livestock grazing operation;
- State priority enrollment criteria (non-land based) and State Focus Area (land-based) determined in consultation with State Technical Committee;
- Whether the applicant is an eligible beginning, veteran, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher and;
- Other factors as determined by the Deputy Administrator.

ELIGIBLE PRODUCERS

A producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP enrollment period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law or;
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

ELIGIBLE LAND

Land currently must be planted to a grass cover.

RENTAL PAYMENTS

In return for following an approved CRP conservation plan, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants in an amount that is not more than 75 percent of the grazing value of the land covered by the agreement as determined by FSA for the life of the agreement.

COST-SHARE ASSISTANCE

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved practices on eligible land in an amount that is not more than 50 percent of the participants' costs in establishing approved practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is for informational purposes only; other restrictions may apply. To find more information about CRP-Grasslands, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp. For more details on FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation or contact your local FSA office. To locate the nearest FSA office or USDA Service Center visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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