

Fact Sheet - May 2009

Overview

The Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) assists landowners and operators in protecting grazing uses and other related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible grassland and certain other lands through rental contracts and easements. GRP emphasizes: 1) Supporting grazing operations; 2) Maintaining and improving plant and animal biodiversity; and 3) Protecting grasslands and shrublands from the threat of conversion to uses other than grazing.

Program Requirements

For enrollment purposes, only landowners may submit applications for easements. For rental contracts, applicants must own or provide written evidence of control of the property for the duration of the rental contract. All participants in GRP are required to implement a grazing management plan approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The easement or rental contract must grant USDA or its representatives a right of ingress and egress to the easement or rental contract area. Easement participants are required to convey unencumbered title that is acceptable to the United States and provide consent or subordination agreements from each holder of a security or other interest in the land. The landowner must warrant that the easement granted the United States or eligible entity is superior to the rights of all others. The easement grants development rights, title, and interest in the easement area in order to protect grassland and other conservation values. The program participant must comply with the terms of the easement or rental contract and comply with all terms and conditions of the grazing management plan and any associated conservation plan or restoration agreement. Easement and rental contract allow, consistent with their terms and the program purposes, the following activities as outlined in the grazing management plan: 1) Common grazing practices, including maintenance and necessary conservation practices and activities; 2) Haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production subject to appropriate restricts, as determined by the State Conservationist, during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are in

significant decline, or are conserved in accordance with Federal or State law; 3) Fire suppression, rehabilitation, and construction of firebreaks; 4) Grazing related activities, such as fencing and livestock watering facilities; and 5) Wind power facilities for on-farm use power generation.

Program Restrictions

GRP easement and rental contracts prohibit the following activities: 1) The production of crops, fruit trees, vineyards, or other agricultural commodity that is inconsistent with maintaining grazing land; and 2) Wind power facilities for off-farm power generation. **Rental contract** participants are required to suspend any existing cropland base and allotment history for the land under another program administered by the Secretary. **Easement** participants are required to eliminate any existing cropland base and allotment history for the land under another program administered by the Secretary.

Land Eligibility

GRP is available on privately owned lands, which include private and Tribal land. Publicly owned land is not eligible. Land is eligible for funding consideration if the NRCS State Conservationist determines that the land is: 1) Grassland, land that contains forbs, or shrubland (including improved rangeland and pastureland) for which grazing is the predominant use; or 2) Located in an area that has been historically dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrubland and the State Conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), determines that it is compatible with grazing uses and related conservation values. Land that could provide habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value if the land is retained in its current use or is restored to a natural condition would also be eligible.

Participant Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in GRP, an applicant: a) must be a landowner for easement participation or be a landowner or have control of the eligible acreage being offered for rental contract participation;



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b) Agree to provide such information to USDA that is necessary or desirable to assist in its determination of eligibility for program benefits and for other program implementation purposes; c) Meet the Adjusted Gross Income requirements for conservation programs; and d) Meet the highly erodible and wetland conservation compliance requirements of the Food Security Act of 1985.

Application Procedures

Interested parties may submit an application through a local USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service office located in county seats across Texas. Applications are accepted throughout the year and should identify the duration of the **easement** or **rental contract** for which they seek to enroll their land. **Rental contracts** may be for a duration of 10-years, 15-years, or 20-years; **easements** may be permanent in duration or for the maximum duration authorized by State law.

More Information

For more information regarding the Grassland Reserve Program contact your local NRCS office, the Texas State GRP Manager, Claude Ross at 254 742-9822 or Mark Habiger, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs at 254 742-9881.

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