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USDA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

Financial assistance for the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is now available to eligible landowners. GRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer the program, in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service. Funding for the GRP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

According to Dr. Larry D. Butler, NRCS State Conservationist, "This voluntary program helps landowners and operators restore and 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 to other land uses."

To participate in GRP, offers must be private land that includes at least 40 contiguous acres. 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.

(more)

Applications for participation will be accepted on a continuous basis with the local office of NRCS or FSA. For the current funding cycle, an application must be received by August 1, 2003. All applications received by that date will be ranked on specific selection criteria to ensure only the highest priority areas (lands) are protected. Once funding has been exhausted, eligible applications will remain on file until additional funding becomes available. Applications accepted after August 1, 2003, will be held for ranking during the next funding cycle.

For more information about the GRP, contact your local NRCS field office.

Additional information is available on the agency Website at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farbill>.

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