

NEWS RELEASE

SIGN-UP FOR GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

St. Paul, MN, January 28, 2010- Minnesota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Acting State Conservationist Jennifer Heglund and Minnesota Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Linda Hennen announced today that NRCS and FSA are accepting applications for the 2010 Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP). NRCS and FSA jointly administer the GRP.

GRP applications received by Friday, March 12, 2010 will be evaluated for 2010 GRP funding; applications received after this date will be evaluated for future GRP funding.

GRP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to support grazing operators for conservation of the nation's grasslands. "Enrollment of land in GRP will have a positive economic impact on Minnesota and will improve environmental quality by preventing the conversion of grassland to other uses, including crop production and urban development," said Heglund.

According to Hennen the program has several enrollment options: 10, 15, or 20-year rental agreements. Application evaluation for acceptance in the 2010 GRP will be based on ranking criteria that will emphasize grazing operations; protection of grassland, land that contains forbs, and shrub land at the greatest risk from the threat of conversion to uses other than grazing; plant and animal biodiversity.

Participants with approved rental agreements will receive annual payments for the rental contract period. GRP enrollment permits common grazing practices, haying, mowing or harvesting for seed production, subject to certain restrictions. All participants in GRP are required to implement a grazing management plan approved by NRCS.

For additional eligibility and information about GRP, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit the USDA Websites at: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/index.html> or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=grp>

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