

News Release

Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources
Conservation Service, Minnesota State Offices
State Executive Director John Monson and
State Conservationist William Hunt

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For Immediate Release

2004 SIGN-UP FOR GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM BEGINS

ST. PAUL, Minn., July 13, 2004—Farm Service Agency State Executive Director John Monson and Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist William Hunt remind landowners that applications for the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) will be accepted on a continuous basis at local USDA Service Centers, however August 2, 2004, is the cut off date for the first scoring and ranking of applications. Once funding has been exhausted, eligible offers will remain on file. The Minnesota 2004 state allocation for GRP is \$905,000.

Landowners whose offers were not approved in 2003, due to lack of funding, are eligible to resubmit a new application based on the revised scoring process published in the interim final rule which can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp>.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency are coordinating implementation of GRP. GRP focuses on: preserving native and natural grassland and shrubland; protecting grassland and shrubland land from the threat of conversion; conversion refers to all threats, including conversion to non-agriculture uses, conversion to cropland, and vegetation changes to non-grass covers; supporting grazing operations; and maintaining and improving plant and animal biodiversity.

GRP, which is a voluntary conservation program, offers producers several enrollment options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, rental agreements (10, 15, 20 or 30-year duration). For 30-year easements, USDA will provide payment equal to 30 percent of the fair market value of the land, less grazing value of the land for the period during which the land is encumbered by the easement. For permanent easements USDA will pay fair market value of the land, minus grazing value. For rental agreements, USDA has set a county per acre rate. These rates represent the land grazing value and are paid annually.

To participate in GRP, the land offers must be privately and/or tribally owned that include at least 40 contiguous grassland acres, unless the NRCS State Conservationist and the FSA State Executive Director determine a small partial is appropriate to achieve the purposes of the program.

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Interested landowners can signup at USDA Service Centers.

For more information about GRP and other conservation programs, contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or online at <http://offices.usda.gov/>. Information, including Federal Register notices and rules, also is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farbill/2002> and <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/GRP/default1.htm>.

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