USDA NRCS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service

News Release

NEW MEXICO

NRCS New Mexico http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov
6200 Jefferson NE, Albuquerque NM 87109 (505) 761-4400

Nov. 18, 2010

Contact:
Rey Adame
(505) 761-4406

2011 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) Batching Date Announced

USDA will rank all GRP applications received by January 21, 2010

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) will rank all Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) applications received by January 21, 2010 in the only anticipated 2011 batching period. The GRP uses a continuous sign-up, like other USDA programs, so applications received after that date will be considered in the next batching period.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can address the issues of most concern to New Mexico private land agricultural producers:

What land is eligible for GRP?

The overall emphasis for FY 2011 enrollment is on preserving native and natural species. Eligible land includes grasslands; land that contains forbs; shrub land (including improved rangeland and pastureland); or land that is located in an area that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrub land when these lands have the potential to serve as wildlife habitat of significant ecological value. Land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with an expiring contract in the next 12 months is also eligible for enrollment in GRP.

Who may participate in the program?

Only landowners may submit applications for easements. As proof of ownership, landowners must provide USDA with a copy of the deed. Both landowners and operators may participate on rental contracts. Operators must provide USDA proof (e.g., written lease) of control of the land for the duration of the rental contract.

How will my adjusted gross income affect my eligibility for GRP?

The adjusted gross income (AGI) provision of the 2008 Farm Bill impacts eligibility for GRP and several other programs. Individuals or entities that have an AGI exceeding $1 million for the three tax years immediately preceding are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments. However, an exemption is provided in cases where two-thirds of the AGI is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operations.

What is the application process?

To participate, interested persons should submit an application to their local (NRCS) or Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in their servicing USDA Service Center. Applications for the program are accepted at anytime.

What are my enrollment options?

Enrollment options are permanent easements and 10-year, 15-year, and 20-year rental contracts.

Can I graze my grassland while enrolled in GRP?

All enrollment options permit:

- Common grazing practices that maintain the viability of the grassland.
- Haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production, subject to certain restrictions during the nesting season, as determined by NRCS.

- Fire rehabilitation and the construction of firebreaks, fences, and watering facilities and practices that protect and restore the grasslands functions and values.

Do I need a grazing management plan and conservation plan?

All participants in GRP will be required to implement a grazing management plan, conservation plan, or both, approved by USDA to preserve the viability of the grassland enrolled in the program.

What do GRP contracts or easements prohibit?

GRP contracts and easements prohibit the production of crops (other than hay), fruit trees, and vineyards that require breaking the soil surface and any other activity that would disturb the surface of the land, except for appropriate land management activities included in a conservation plan.

How is the contract or easement value determined?

The value of an easement will be the fair market values of the land less the grazing value as determined by the lowest of (1) an appraisal or market survey, (2) geographical area rate cap, or (3) the landowner offer.

For rental contracts, the participant receives not more than 75 percent of the grazing value in an annual payment for the length of the agreement. Grazing values will be determined based on local prevailing rental rates.

Is there a payment limitation?

Rental contracts have a $50,000 annual payment limitation per person per year. Easements do not have a payment limitation.

What should eligible applicants do if their GRP application is not funded?

Once funding has been exhausted, eligible applicants whose applications were not funded will be considered when additional (whether in the current or next fiscal year) funding becomes available if they have informed their local NRCS office that they are still interested.

Who will administer the GRP?

Both the NRCS and FSA handle program implementation. Applications will be accepted by either agency on a continuous sign-up basis.

For More Information

If you need more information about GRP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or stop by your local conservation district. You can also visit the NRCS New Mexico website at: http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp.html.

NRCS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.