

Grassland Reserve Program cutoff date is announced

Eric B. Banks, state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service for Kansas, announced a cutoff date for submitting applications for the Grassland Reserve Program. Although applications may be taken at any time, only those applications submitted by Jan. 22 will be evaluated and ranked for funding for the Fiscal Year 2010 program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance for Grassland Reserve Program.

Grassland Reserve Program was reauthorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill).

In FY 2010, Grassland Reserve Program is funded at about \$46 million nationwide. Kansas received an allocation of \$1.2 million.

"Kansas has the finest, most productive native grassland in the world," said Banks, "and Grassland Reserve Program offers a way for ranchers and farmers--the backbone of our economy--to ensure this unique natural resource remains a healthy and viable part of Kansas for years to come."

Grassland Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance grasslands on their property through permanent easements and rental contracts (10-year, 15-year, or 20-year). For the FY 2010 program, priority will be given to enrolling land in easements.

The program emphasizes the preservation of native and natural grasslands and shrublands, support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and the protection of grassland that is under multiple threats of conversion to other land uses.

Enrollment options for this land are limited to permanent easements and 20-year rental contracts.

"I would encourage producers interested in preserving their grasslands to stop by a United States Department of Agriculture Service Center and visit with the Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency (FSA) staffs to learn more about the program," Banks said.

Banks offered the following questions and answers to help farmers and ranchers understand how Grassland Reserve Program works.

What land is eligible for the Grassland Reserve Program?

The overall emphasis for FY 2010 enrollment is on preserving native and natural species. Eligible land includes grasslands; land that contains forbs; shrubland (including improved rangeland and pastureland); or land that is located in an area that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrubland 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 the Grassland Reserve Program.

Is there a limit on the number of acres a landowner may enroll in the program?

There is no maximum or minimum limit.

Who may participate in the program?

Only landowners may submit applications for easements. As proof of ownership, landowners must provide United States Department of Agriculture with a copy of the documents with which they took ownership (record of title, LLC Agreement, etc.).

Both landowners and operators may participate on rental contracts. Operators must provide United States Department of Agriculture 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 Grassland Reserve Program?

The Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provision of the 2008 Farm Bill impacts eligibility for Grassland Reserve Program 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 Natural Resources Conservation Service or Farm Service Agency office in the local United States Department of Agriculture 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 the Grassland Reserve Program?

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 Natural Resources Conservation Service; and 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 the Grassland Reserve Program will be required to implement a grazing management plan, conservation plan, or both, approved by United States Department of Agriculture to preserve the viability of the grassland enrolled in the program.

What do Grassland Reserve Program contracts or easements prohibit?

Grassland Reserve Program 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 Grassland Reserve Program 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 FY or the next FY) funding becomes available if they have informed their Natural Resources Conservation Service office that they are still interested.

Who will administer the Grassland Reserve Program?

Both the Natural Resources Conservation Service 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 the Grassland Reserve Program, please contact your local United States Department of Agriculture Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available at <http://www.ks.naturalresourcesconservation.gov/programs/GrasslandReserveProgram/>. United States Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Mission

(Continued from Page 1) Kylie Witt, Manhattan. It took two days to drive to El Paso, where the team met a representative of Casas por Cristo (Houses for Christ), a ministry that pairs volunteer work teams with families and guides them through the building process.

The family of a single father, Juan Carlos, including two young sons, a married daughter and her husband and baby boy, had been chosen to receive a new home. They had all been living in a two-room house about 10 feet wide by 20 feet long, under a leaky roof.

A group of Mexican ministers meets once a month to present and consider applications from families.

Since the unrest in Juarez has received so much attention, the number of teams willing to come to the city has dropped, they said. In previous years, over 400 houses could be built in a year. However, this year, only about 150 went up.

"Sure, we heard about the drug wars," Mr. Plotts said, "but, the staff at Casas por Cristo assured us Juarez is still safe, and I know they would not ask us to come if it weren't.

"We felt perfectly safe the entire time and never worried, even once, about our safety. Besides, it's even more important now that Christians step up to help."

The team of seven built a simple frame home in about 3 1/2 days. It would have been three, but work was shut down on the third day by a cold spell, complete with wind, rain and hail.

The stuccoed house has a concrete floor, insulated walls and ceiling, electrical wiring, two windows and a door. The house measures 22 feet long by 11 feet wide and has a single-slope roof.

"This year I was able to help with every phase of the building except the roof," said Mrs. Castle, on her second trip. "This trip was different from my first because the family spoke pretty good English. We were really able to communicate with them. They were a really neat family.

"Juan Carlos, his sons, Irvin and Diego, and his son-in-law Jesus really pitched in and helped. They wanted to learn all they could about the building process. Juan Carlos' daughter Brenda loved to paint and she helped when she wasn't at work or taking care of baby Andres. It was a great experience and I can't wait to go back."

Cost of materials to build the house was \$4,100. This money is raised by the team and sent to Casas por Cristo a month before arrival in El Paso. The agency buys all the material and has it waiting at the site when the team

arrives. The agency also provides all the power and hand tools, so team members don't need to bring a thing.

One thing this team did bring, however, was a box of 15 Spanish Bibles and 15 children's evangelism packets.

Christians in Oberlin provided money to buy the materials to be distributed to people in the neighborhood.

On completion of the house, a dedication ceremony is held. The keys to the home are presented to the family along with a Spanish Bible.

"This was the second house I've helped build," Mrs. Witt said, "and it's very emotional for me. When Juan Carlos was thanking us for his new home, he started crying, and I did, too.

"Actually, we were all crying. I know he was very appreciative of what we had done. My husband and I are already planning our next trip."

Casas por Cristo builds houses year-around with teams from churches, colleges and clubs from all over the United States, Canada and some places overseas. Besides Juarez, the ministry group operates in Acuna, a border town across the river from Del Rio, Texas. To learn more about a short mission trip to Mexico, go to the organization's website at www.casasporcristo.org.

Co-op

(Continued from Page 1) expanding to build new grain storage sites, which he said is a

priority for the company. He said nothing has been decided and the issue is still under discussion.

"That's something to look forward to," he said.

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Treasurer challenges Kansans to make financial resolutions

Kansas State Treasurer Dennis McKinney is encouraging all Kansans to consider at least one financial goal this year when they are setting their 2010 resolutions.

"Every Kansan can find something that they can improve upon which is what resolutions are all about," McKinney said. "As a new year approaches, this is the perfect time to think about a financial resolution."

When setting financial goals it is important to make them measurable (how much, how long, how often), be sure that they are achievable - you want to challenge yourself financially but be reasonable and don't stretch yourself too thin, build in ways

to reward yourself along the way for reaching financial milestones, and share your financial goals with others.

"Financial knowledge and improvement is the key to empowering an individual or family to become more financially secure and independent," McKinney said. "Financially empowered families mean stronger communities throughout Kansas."

The Treasurer's office released a few ideas for Kansans to consider as New Year's resolutions:

- Boost emergency funds
- Review/Update will/estate plan
- Set retirement income goals
- Talk to a financial planner
- Reduce energy costs in the

home

-Begin discussing financial education at home with children

-Take a financial education class

-Eliminate/reduce debt

For free resources and tools to help you with your financially fit resolutions, please log onto the State Treasurer's Web site at http://www.kansasstatetreasurer.com/financial%1f_resources>www.kansasstatetreasurer.com/financial%1f_resources.

For help with your advertising needs please give Dana a call 877-3361

airport and sewer funds. Vote taken, motion passed.

The next city council meeting will be held Wednesday at the city office.

Council

(Continued from Page 1)
• Mayor David Corns thanked the city staff and council for the work they did in 2009.

• A motion was made to approve the budget amendments for the