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The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is one of the new conservation programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill. The GRP was first implemented earlier this summer when USDA announced a continuous sign-up period that began on June 30. Based on recent USDA information, the GRP appears to be attracting strong interest and enrollment in its first year.

### Program Funding and Implementation

At the time, USDA released \$37.2 million of an announced \$49.5 million in funding for fiscal year (FY) 2003. In a news release on September 25, USDA announced an additional release of \$12.5 million for GRP enrollments in FY 2003, bringing the total funding for the current fiscal year to \$49.7 million.

USDA originally allocated funding of \$1,641,000 to Kansas for the GRP for FY 2003. In this week's announcement, USDA added \$420,000, bringing the total funding for the GRP in Kansas to \$2,061,000 for FY 2003. This places Kansas fourth in state funding for the GRP behind only Texas, North Dakota, and Oklahoma.

Of note, the announced funding is only for FY 2003, which ends on September 30, 2003. Thus, the additional release of funds should primarily allow for enrollment of applications already pending at USDA Service Centers around the country. While funding for FY 2004 is uncertain at the moment, the continuous sign-up procedure used for the GRP suggests sign-ups will continue at local USDA Service Centers beyond September 30. As funding comes available, applications will likely be periodically ranked and judged for enrollment.

While the announced funding for FY 2003 ends up at \$49.7 million, the 2002 Farm Bill authorized the GRP for enrollment of up to 2 million acres,

using up to \$254 million in CCC funds for fiscal years 2003 through 2007. It appears there will still be ample opportunity in the next fiscal year and beyond for additional applications and enrollments. A review of the basic details of the GRP can help landowners and operators make decisions regarding potential application and enrollment. Specific questions on eligibility and potential payments can be answered at any local USDA Service Center.

### Program Details

The GRP is a unique conservation program in that it pays for conservation efforts on working lands instead of paying for the retirement or removal of land from production. The program aims to restore and protect rangeland and pastureland while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land contains forbs and shrubs under the greatest threat of conversion to cropland or non-agricultural uses.

In Kansas, several priority factors for FY 2003 enrollments provide a guide to the types of grasslands most suited for the GRP. The specific priority factors include:

- Grassland that is enrolled in easements versus rental agreements
- Grassland that is in a region of concern, including the Red Hills, the Sand Sage Prairie, the Smoky Hill River Valley, and the Flint Hills
- Grassland that is used in grazing operations
- Grassland that supports plant and animal biodiversity as determined by proximity to other native grassland
- Grassland that provides habitat for at-risk plant and animal species associated with native grassland

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Extension Agricultural Economist, K-State Research and Extension, 3311 Waters Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506. Phone: 785.532.2276; fax: 785.532.6925; e-mail: blubben@ksu.edu. This publication is designed to provide information about developing agricultural policy issues and farm programs. The document does not necessarily represent the views of Kansas State University. This publication and other agricultural policy resources are available from Kansas State University at [agmanager.info](http://agmanager.info) in the policy section while program information is available from USDA at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

- Grassland that is at risk of conversion for mineral, sand, or gravel exploration and development
- Grassland that is at risk of conversion for industrial-scale wind harvesting
- Grassland that is at risk of conversion for urban and commercial development or exurban residential development
- Grassland that is at risk of conversion for cropland

There are several USDA fact sheets on the GRP as well as information on specific ranking factors and maps relevant to Kansas enrollments. These resources and information on other conservation programs are available through

several links from the Conservation section of the Policy section of AgManager at:

[agmanager.info](http://agmanager.info)

The link to the GRP page developed by the Kansas office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is available at the above link or is available directly at:

[www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/grp2003.html](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/grp2003.html)

Links on this page include the ranking worksheet and explanation as well as several maps of areas delineated for the various specified priority factors.