

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lori Valadez, 254-742-9811  
[lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov](mailto:lori.valadez@tx.usda.gov)

July 27, 2009

Mark Habiger, 254-742-9881  
[mark.habiger@tx.usda.gov](mailto:mark.habiger@tx.usda.gov)

## **Funding Available for Texas Grassland Owners**

TEMPLE, TEXAS, July 27, 2009 –Grassland owners in south Texas, the area hardest hit by the state’s drought, will be given priority consideration to participate in USDA’s Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), a \$4.2 million conservation program in Texas.

“While GRP is open to anyone who owns grassland, we are giving priority consideration to drought areas so ranchers can protect their land resources through rental agreements or perpetual easements,” said Don Gohmert, state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas.

Extreme or exceptional drought has been designated in 78 counties in south Texas by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Landowners in these counties can sign-up for GRP to be compensated to defer cattle grazing until grassland conditions improve.

“Areas in South Texas are the driest in the entire country based on USDA’s Drought Monitor,” said Juan Garcia, Farm Service Agency (FSA) state executive director for Texas. “By enrolling in GRP, landowners can defer grazing, protect their land, and receive compensation.”

GRP is a continuous sign-up program, but landowners are encouraged to apply as soon as possible to be eligible for the 2009 funding cycle, which ends in September.

(over)

Helping People Help the Land

The NRCS and FSA administer GRP, a voluntary program reauthorized in the 2008 Farm Bill to protect grazing uses and other related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible grasslands and certain other lands through rental agreements and easements.

The enrollment options for GRP include:

- Rental agreements – 10, 15, or 20-year duration, USDA pays 75 percent of the grazing value in annual payments for the length of the agreement.
- Permanent easements – USDA makes payment based on the fair market value of the property less the grazing value.

Land that is privately owned is eligible for GRP. The land must be grassland for which the predominant use is grazing. Land that has been historically dominated by grassland and provides habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value, or land that contains historical or archeological resources is eligible. Land previously enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program is eligible for GRP. Publicly owned land is not eligible or land already under protection from conversion to non-grazing uses is also not eligible.

For more information about GRP and conservation programs that may be available for conservation technical and financial assistance, visit the nearest USDA Service Center or visit the NRCS Texas Web site at [www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov).