

Ranchers, Landowners, and Producers
Roadmap Input Survey
Summer 2021

PRODUCED BY THE CENTRAL GRASSLANDS ROADMAP



Executive Summary

PURPOSE

Ranchers, producers, and landowners with access to a variety of financial and technical assistance programs are critical in supporting healthy grasslands. In order to receive input and feedback from these three groups, the *Ranchers, Landowners, and Producers Roadmap Input Survey* was launched to ensure that the priorities identified in the Central Grasslands Roadmap will be able to support them as much as possible from their point of view.

METHODOLOGY

Between May 10 and August 2, 2021, the survey garnered input from 153 individuals about their engagement with existing programs, their perspective on existing program efficacy, and types of programs, metrics, and messaging they would like to see in the future. In total, each respondent was asked 9 questions, which varied depending on the logic-model of their responses, and were a mix of quantitative, multiple choice with an option to add comments, and qualitative open-ended questions (Appendix B). It is important to note that survey respondents were not required to answer all questions to submit a valid response. Additionally, two survey questions contained embedded logic to pipe respondents to the appropriate follow up question, and both select-the-best-match and select-all-that-apply multiple choice questions were used.

EXISTING PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Sixty-four respondents indicated they were currently participating in at least one program, twenty-three of which indicated they were currently participating in at least two programs, and forty-seven respondents indicated they aren't participating in any program. A large majority of respondents (84.1%) indicated they are interested in learning more about programs, and prioritized in-person workshops (48.2%) and e-mails or e-newsletters (34.6%) as their preferred way to learn over virtual workshops (12.7%) or flyers (4.6%). For those respondents uninterested in learning more, existing knowledge or information streams that already meet their needs, and the ineligibility to enroll in programs, were the most common reasons given for why, followed by government distrust and general lack of interest.

With specific regard to the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), 29.1% of respondents indicated they are currently enrolled. Of those, a large majority (88.2%) expressed interest in re-enrolling, though they also identified a handful of barriers to their future participation. Of those that indicated they are not currently enrolled, slightly more than half of respondents (56.3%) indicated they do not intend to enroll in the future. Similar to the previous question about programs in general, common reasons for not wanting to enroll included the ineligibility to enroll and a desire for local control, as well as perceived program inflexibility to be tailored to local conditions.

EXISTING PROGRAM EFFICACY

Respondents were asked to rate existing programs in nine different categories about how effective they perceived them to be. Overall, Program Flexibility for Local Situations was rated worst, with just 46.7% of respondents rating it favorably, and one respondent described this sentiment as "some things are set up to be by-the-book rather than by-the-situation." Length of Term Agreement and Financial Payments were rated most favorably out of all program aspects, with 69.5% and 67.3% favorability, respectively.

IMPORTANT METRICS, FUTURE PROGRAMS, AND MESSAGING

Respondents were asked three questions at the end of the survey aimed at understanding their perceptions of important metrics for programs to track, what types of future programs (new or expanded) they want to be available, and how programs might effectively message and market themselves. The three most common categories of important metrics included economics-related (e.g., annual yield, net profit, cost of supply, or economic success of community), ecosystem-related (e.g., bird population rates, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, or soil health), and rangeland-management-and-operations-related (e.g., operation resiliency and sustainability, breeding and calving success, or livestock health).

When asked to consider what types of new or expanded programs participants hoped to see, ecosystem- and economic-related recommendations were frequent, including those related to topsoil improvement and conservation, creating incentives for proactive management and carbon sequestration, and implementing programs to better support small producers. Education- and literacy-related programs were also commonly recommended, including both those geared toward producers and those focused on educating the general public.

When asked what they wanted others to know about them, many respondents highlighted the fact that they are stewards, and are an integral part of supporting healthy grassland ecosystems through strategic care of their livestock and land. In addition, many respondents directly tied the importance of their stewardship to supporting their livelihoods. If programs are able to structure messaging around an acknowledgement that ranchers and farmers are stewards, they may become more effective at engaging producers for the long-term.



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Question 1. Current Program Enrollment

SUMMARY

Participants were asked to list any and all federal, state, local, tribal, or other conservation programs in which they are currently enrolled (Table 1). A majority of respondents were not participating in any programs (41.6%), followed by those participating in only one type of program (36.3%), with the lowest proportion participating in two or more program types (20.4%). Two respondents (1.8%) described themselves as outside of the US and without access to many of the programs discussed in the survey. Results for the remaining questions should be considered in light of the fact that a number of respondents are not currently enrolled in any programs, some of whom later explained that this is due to age, lack of land, or lack of time. How much additional capacity for enrollment can be created?

RESULTS

Program Type(s)	# of Respondents
Federal only	22
Non-Profit only	10
Easements only	4
State only	2
Local only	1
Joint Venture only	1
Organic Certification only	1
Easements & Federal	9
Easements & State	3
Federal & Non-Profit	3
Federal & Local	1
Federal & NGO	1
Federal & Organic Cert.	1
Federal & State	1
Federal, State, NP	1
Fed, Local, NP, State	1
Non-Profit & Private	1
Non-Profit & State	1
None	47
Not in US	2

Table 1: Summary of program participation, broken down by program type(s). N=115; two responses were omitted from this table because they did not answer the question. For a summary of specific programs, see Appendix A.

Question 2. Interest in Learning More About Programs

SUMMARY

Respondents were asked whether they were interested in learning more about any conservation programs (Figure 1). Overall, 127 respondents said they were, and 24 said they were not. Answering 'yes' to this question piped respondents to Q3: Preferred method for learning more. Answering 'no' piped respondents to Q4: Reason for disinterest in learning about programs.

RESULTS

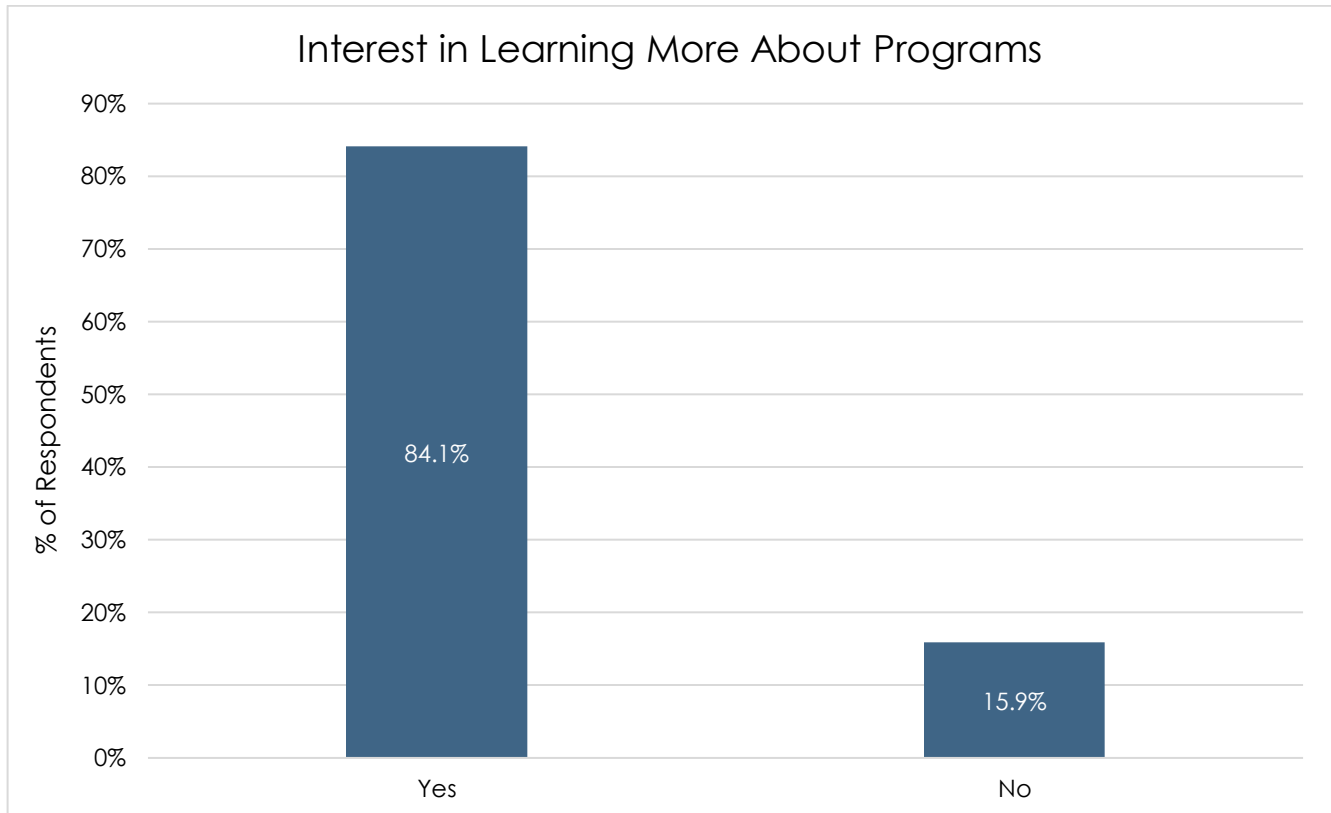


Figure 1: Summary of responses to Question 2. N=151.

Question 3. Preferred Method for Learning More

SUMMARY

Respondents that said they were interested in learning more about any program were asked to choose their preferred method for learning (Figure 2). The majority of respondents preferred some type of workshop (n=67), with in-person (n=53) highly preferred over virtual (n=14). A large number of participants (n=38) expressed their preference for E-mails or E-newsletters, and very few (n=5) identified flyers as their preferred method to learn about programs.

RESULTS

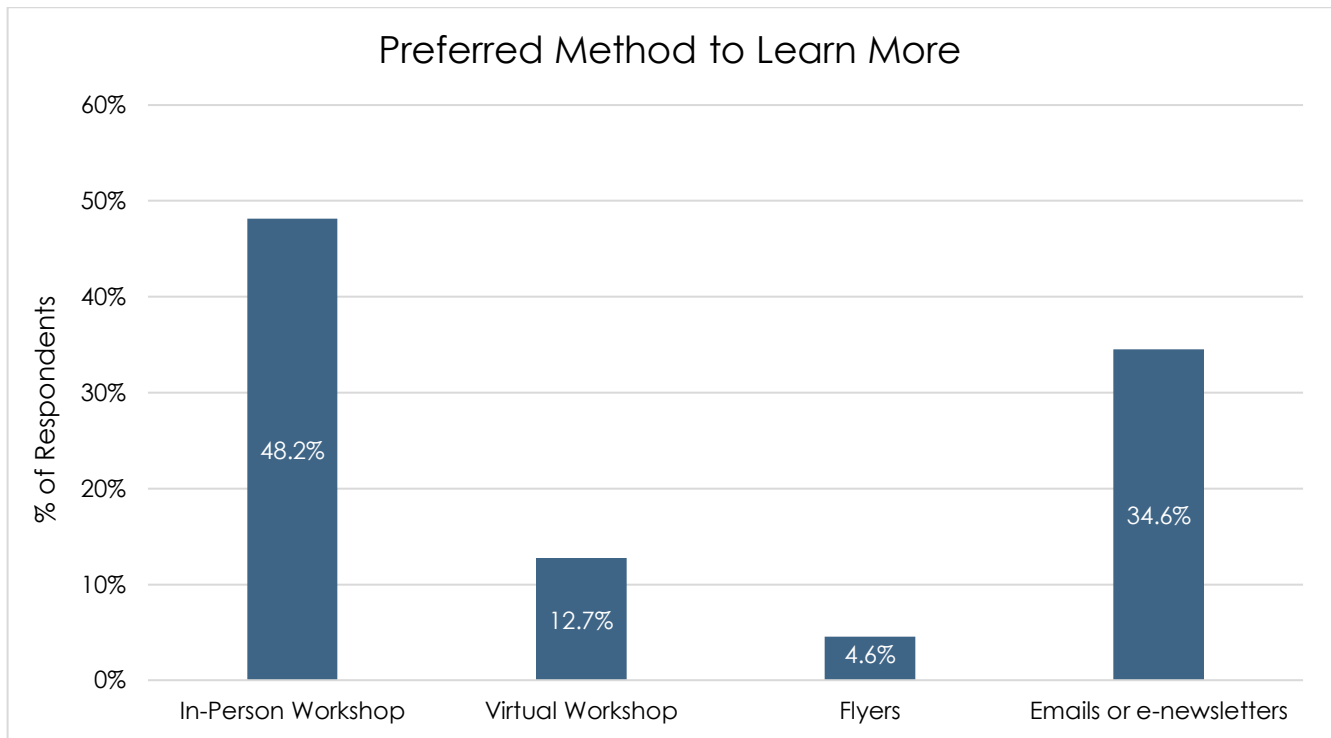


Figure 2: Summary of Responses to Question 3. N=110.

IMPLICATIONS

A large majority of respondents (84.1%) expressed a desire to learn more about available programs, and a large majority of those respondents (82.8%) prefer either in-person workshop or E-communication. This suggests that using one or both of these methods to conduct outreach and education will capture a significant proportion of producers and landowners, and may decrease the number of people participating in zero programs. The stark difference between in-person and virtual workshop preference is important to keep in mind when considering how to best connect producers to programs. Is this potentially an artifact of the COVID-19 pandemic in which in-person events were almost entirely replaced with virtual and there is greater cultural value in meeting face-to-face?

Question 4. Reason for Disinterest in Learning About Programs

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Respondents who said they were not interested in learning more about programs were asked why that was the case (n=21). The following themes emerged (see Appendix A for full list of responses):

- **Existing knowledge or information streams.** Seven respondents noted that they either already had knowledge, or knew where to go to gain knowledge, about programs. Most respondents in this category described themselves as interested or already participating in programs, and one expressed a desire to learn about programs they were not aware of.
- **Unable to participate.** Six respondents described their disinterest in learning about programs as stemming from barriers to their participation. The most common barrier was lack of time, followed

by lack of sufficient acreage to enroll and being too young to enroll. One respondent said they might reconsider learning more in the future if they have the time to do so.

- **Government distrust or loss of local control.** Five respondents identified government overreach and/or loss of control over their land as the primary reason for being disinterested in programs. One participant summarized this sentiment thus: "I like to have control of [my] land and rules seem to change after agreement is started."
- **No Interest.** Three respondents expressed general disinterest in programs, including not wanting to enter into easements, not wanting to be "involved with those entities," and not seeing how programs could help.

IMPLICATIONS

Although 21 respondents indicated they were not interested in learning more about available programs, not all were decidedly against the programs themselves. For instance, the majority of respondents that identified themselves as having knowledge or access to information are already interested or participating in programs. For those that said they were unable to participate due to limited time, programs might consider structuring their messaging or implementation to highlight the ways in which producers and landowners are already acting as stewards of the land, and how programs can support what they are already doing with less time commitment than what is perceived.

Question 5. Program Efficacy

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1, "programs do not work at all," to 4, "programs work incredibly well," how effective different aspects of local, regional, state and federal programs are at supporting range improvement, soil health, and/or water conservation activities (Figure 3). They were also offered an opportunity to provide written comments to supplement their ratings.

Overall, Program Flexibility for Local Situations was rated worst, with less than half of respondents (46.7%) rating it favorably (a score of 3 or 4), and 53.3% rating it unfavorably (a score of 1 or 2). One respondent described the Conservation Reserve Program as having many valuable elements, but that "some things are set up to be by-the-book rather than by-the-situation."

Respondents rated Length of Term Agreement and Financial Payments most favorably out of all program aspects, with 69.5% and 67.3% favorability, respectively.

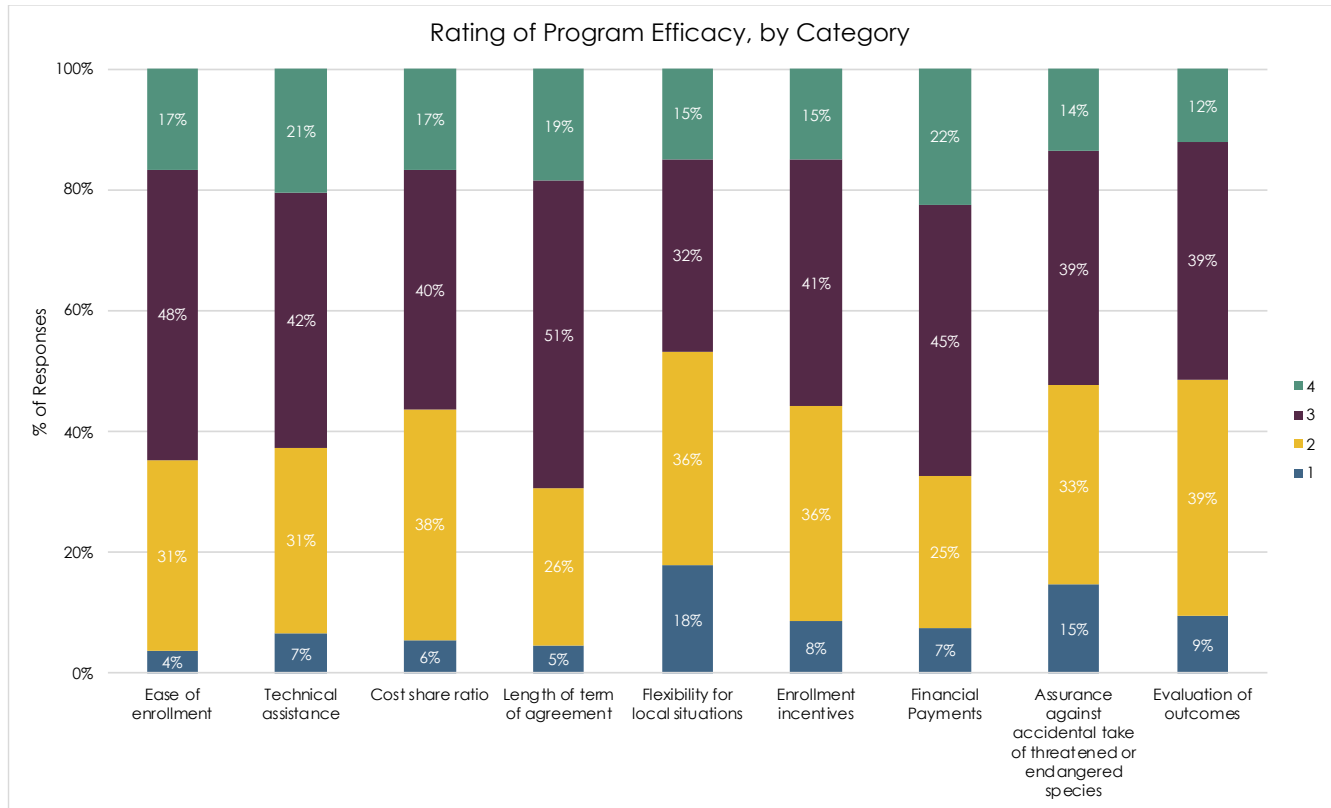


Figure 3: Summary of program efficacy rating, by category, presented to facilitate direct comparison between categories. Each category is represented by a single vertical bar, with the proportion of respondents rating it a 1 at the bottom in blue, followed in ascending order by 2 (yellow), 3 (purple), and 4 (green) at the top of each bar. N=109.

There were a handful of open response comments providing relevant insights and context (see Appendix A for full list of responses). Respondents said that:

- Rating conservation programs in this way was difficult due to their variance, and that rating specific programs on their own would be needed;
- Rating conservation programs in this way was difficult due to their limited individual participation in programs;
- Programs must support their bottom-line; and
- They had an overall negative experience with participating in a conservation program.

IMPLICATIONS

Less than half of respondents gave Flexibility for Local Situations a favorable rating, making it the lowest rated of all program categories. Taken in the context of why respondents were disinterested in learning more about programs, twelve gave reasons including government overreach, loss of local control, not enough time to learn more, and not wanting to be “involved with those entities.” All four of these reasons could be explained by respondents’ perception that programs are not able to adapt to their local nuance.

For instance, a lack of program flexibility could be perceived as the government attempting to exert its will upon producers without first understanding how their land is unique, thus leading to a loss of control. Alternatively, those that said they don’t have time to learn more, might see lack of flexibility as

a significant barrier because after enrolling, they might have to spend significant time tailoring the program to their land.

It is important to reiterate that multiple participants expressed that this question was challenging to respond to due to large variance between programs. In addition, a significant number of respondents stated they are not currently enrolled in any program, and may therefore have limited insights about these program aspects, depending on their prior experience.

Question 6. Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment

SUMMARY

Respondents were asked whether they are enrolled in the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Overall, 34 respondents said they were enrolled, and 83 said they were not enrolled (Figure 4). Answering 'yes' to this question piped respondents to Q7: Eligibility for CRP enrollment. Answering 'no' piped respondents to Q8: Interest in future CRP enrollment.

RESULTS

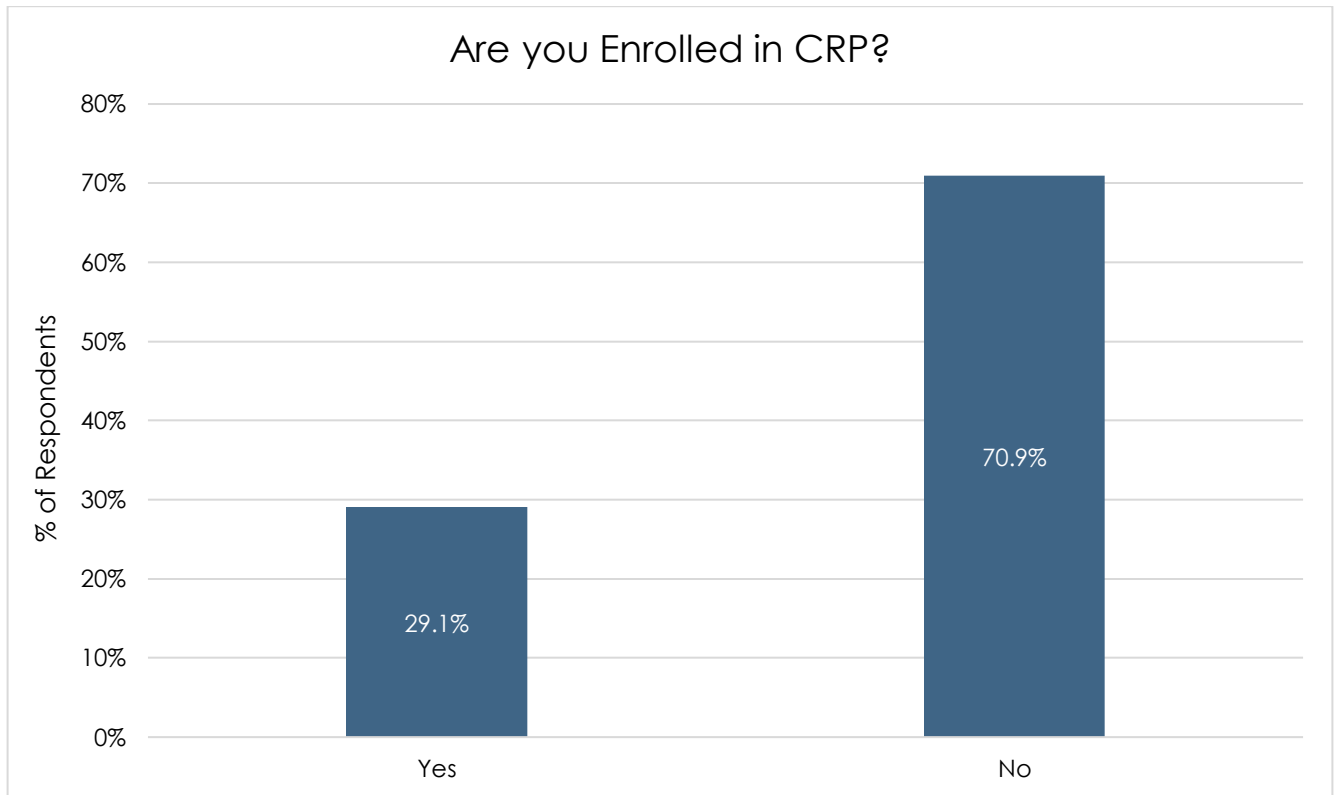


Figure 4: Summary of responses to Question 6. N=117.

Question 7. Eligibility for CRP Re-enrollment

SUMMARY

Participants who said they were currently enrolled in the CRP were asked whether their land is eligible for re-enrollment in the program (Figure 5). Overall, 17 respondents said their land is eligible and they intend to re-enroll, 4 said their land is not eligible but they want to re-enroll, and 13 said their land is eligible but there are barriers to re-enrollment. Those that said there were barriers to re-enrollment were offered the opportunity to describe those barriers, and they included (see Appendix A for full list of responses):

- Being early in a new CRP contract and the inability to predict whether they could enroll years down the line; and
- Local staff not being aware of their problems.

RESULTS

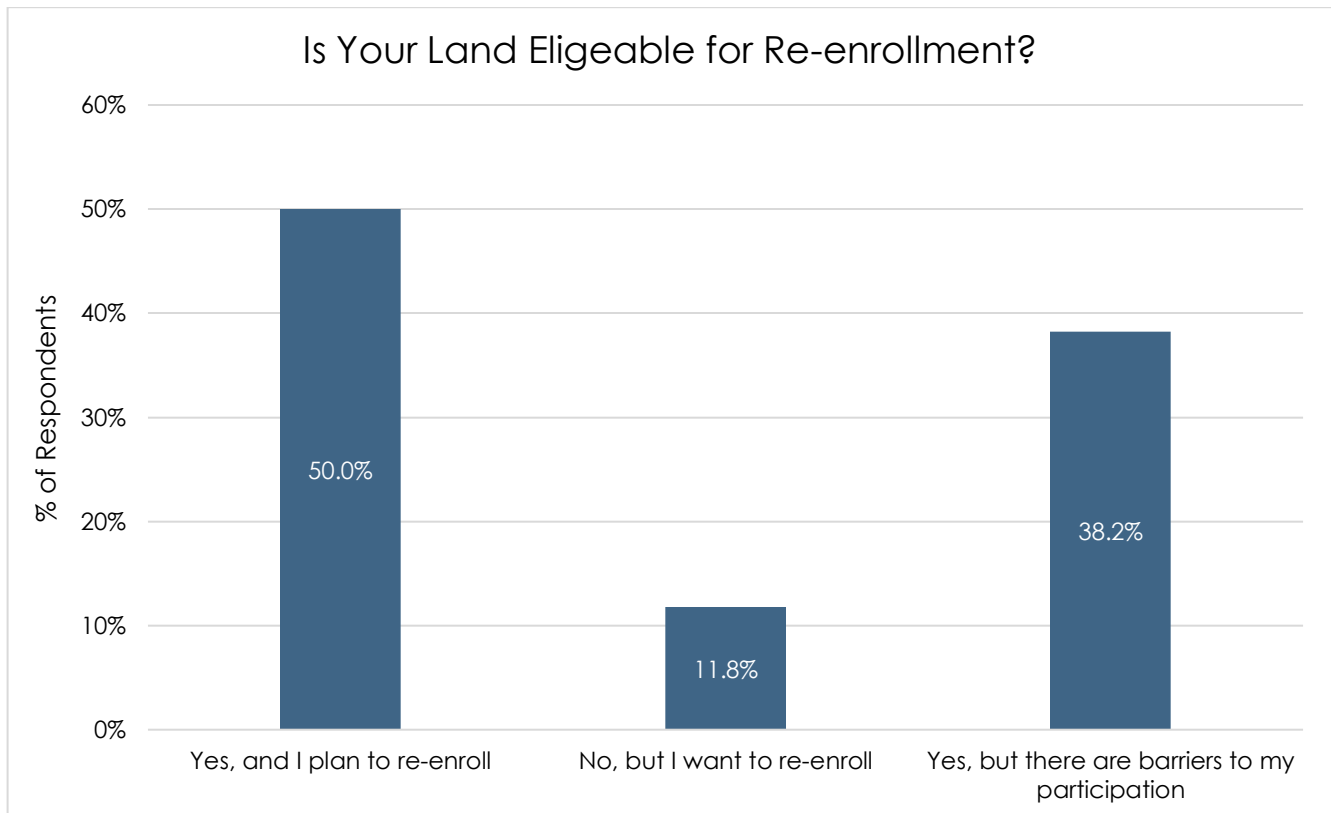


Figure 5: Summary of responses to Question 7. N=34.

Question 8. Interest in Future CRP Enrollment

SUMMARY

Respondents who said they were not currently enrolled in CRP were asked whether they were interested in enrolling in the future (Figure 6). Overall, 35 respondents said they would be interested in enrolling in the future, and 55 said they would not be interested. Those who answered 'no' were

offered the opportunity to describe why, and their responses are listed below in order from most to least common (see Appendix A for full list of responses):

- **Inability to enroll**, including lack of farm or cropland, land already populated by native grass, and perceived ineffectiveness of enrolling;
- **Undesirable limits imposed when enrolled**, including program inflexibility, lack of adequate financial incentives to make enrollment cost effective, and the perception that CRP doesn't reward good management;
- **Undecided about future enrollment**, including wanting to defer their decision to a later date, and the need for more information about CRP in order to make an informed decision; and
- **Government and bureaucracy as barriers**, including the sentiment that CRP is a handout program, potential loss of local control, and "too much red-tape."

RESULTS

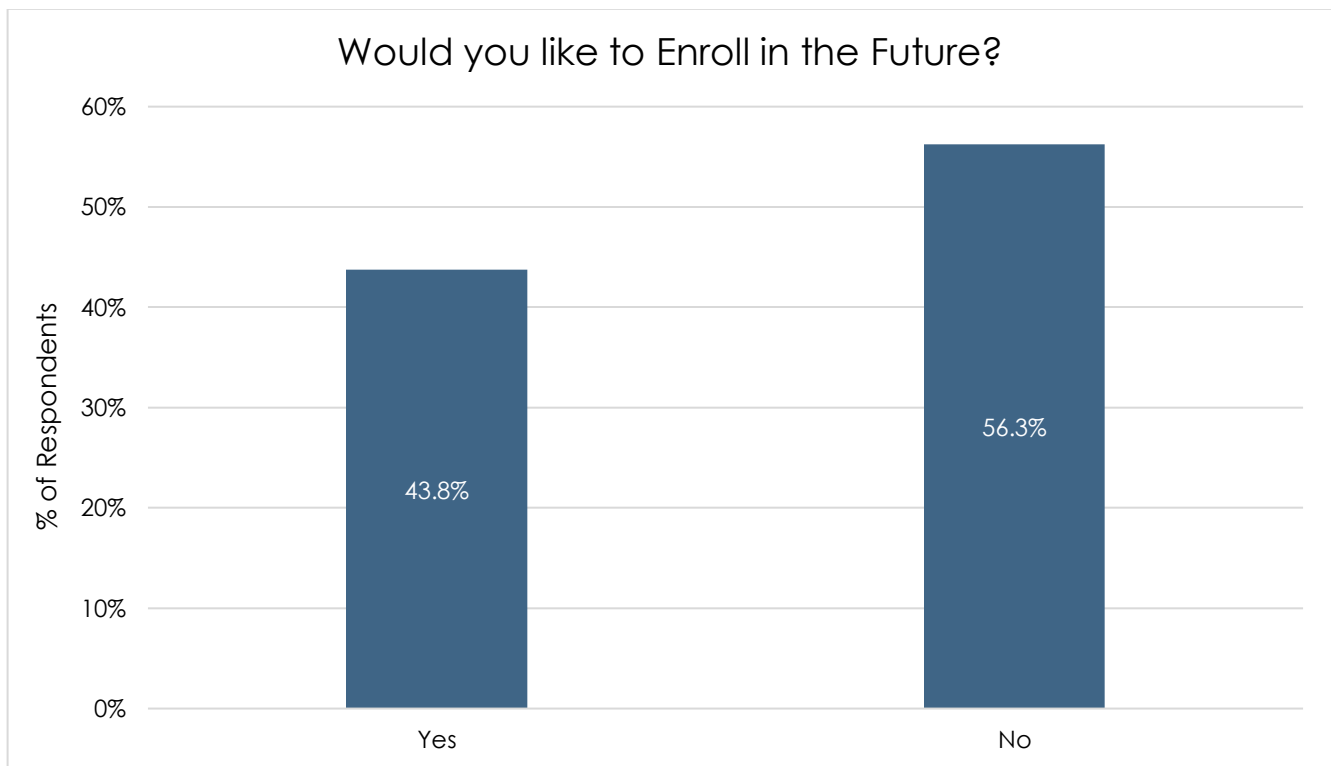


Figure 6: Summary of responses to Question 8. N=80.

IMPLICATIONS

Similar to sentiments expressed in earlier questions, a number of respondents listed loss of control, inflexibility, and undesirable government or bureaucratic presence as primary reasons for not being interested in CRP enrollment. One respondent commented that "it's not rewarding good management," which could be a nod to a perceived lack of flexibility to adapt to local nuance. For respondents that share this sentiment, as well as those that are as of yet undecided about their future enrollment, the ability of CRP to be adaptable as much as possible will be critical for its success.

Question 9. Important Measures to Track

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Respondents were asked what measurements were important for programs to track in order to understand production success or grassland health, and could choose as many options as they found appropriate (Figure 7). Pre-identified metrics related to personal economics (Annual Yield and Cost per Pound of Product) were most frequently identified as important to track, followed by the two environmental metrics (Bird and Other Species Population Rates and Carbon Sequestration Rates), with Economic Success of your Local Town or Community identified as the least important.

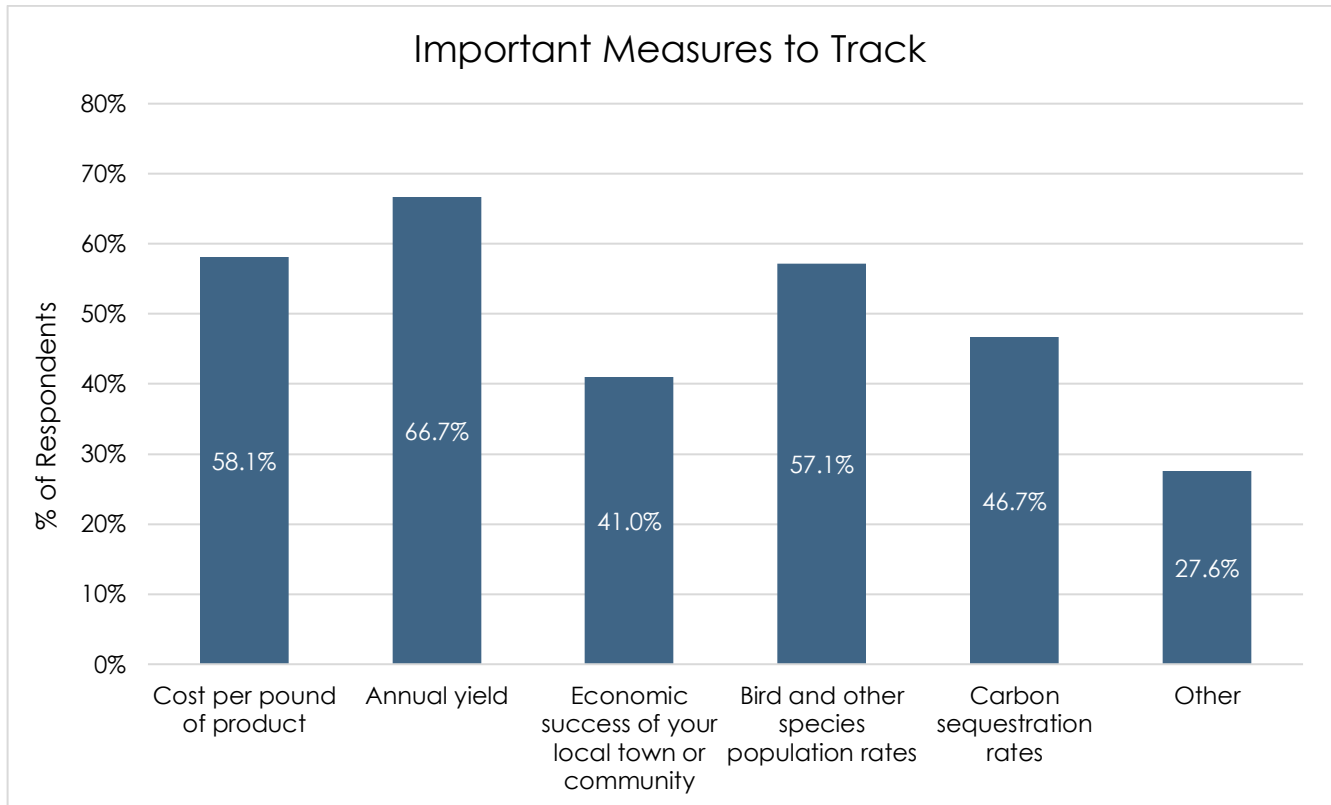


Figure 7: Summary of responses to Question 9. N=105.

A little more than a quarter of respondents suggested at least one important metric not included in the pre-identified list of options, and their suggestions are listed below in order from most to least frequent (see Appendix A for full list of responses):

- **Ecosystem health metrics**, including plant, animal, and insect biodiversity, soil health, and amount of native grass. Other more challenging metrics to track and/or quantify, or that are hard to influence as an individual producer, included sustainability and changes in rainfall;
- **Rangeland management and operations related metrics**, including monitoring rangeland health and capacity, resilient and sustainable operations, breeding and calving success, and livestock health;
- **Monetary related metrics**, including net profit per year and over time;
- **Producer wellbeing**, including work-life balance satisfaction and mental/emotional health;

- **The ability to experiment**, presumably with different management strategies; and
- **Program adaptability** to changing conditions.

IMPLICATIONS

Economic- and environmental-related metrics were identified at similarly high-levels of importance, and the connection between these two categories was reinforced in respondents' open-response answers to the final two questions. Each program should evaluate whether these responses reinforce the structure of their existing program metrics, or if they open up expanded opportunities for additional or different approaches to reporting and tracking. As existing programs expand or new programs are developed, it will be important to remain mindful of how producers and other respondents have prioritized metrics, as this will likely impact program engagement and success.

For the Grasslands Roadmap, a metric or suite of metrics is needed to understand and track economic/livelihood sustainability, while at least one other metric or suite of metrics should track the health of ecosystem services and/or impact on species decline. One respondent mentioned producer wellbeing as important to track, and while this is not necessarily immediately related to supporting healthy grasslands, ensuring their wellbeing could be critical for long-term grassland health, and such a metric might be an innovative and unique way for the Roadmap to track success and impact over the long-term.

Question 10. Ideas for New or Expanded Programs

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Respondents were asked what other ideas they would recommend for programs that support range improvement, cattle production, soil health, and/or water conservation. Sixty-nine respondents provided suggestions for program elements that should be added, adjusted, or made adaptable in existing programs, and/or included in new programs, in order to maximize engagement and efficacy. These are listed below in order from most to least frequent (see Appendix A for full list of responses).

Program elements that should be added, adjusted, considered, or made more adaptable include:

- **Environment or ecosystem related**, including monitoring, improving, and conserving top soil to support native grasses; creating financial incentives for carbon capture and sequestration, and ecosystem services; creating payments to defer a portion or all land in production to rest and recover; support for using prescribed burning as a management tool; cost sharing for invasive species control; drought protection and management strategies; and ensuring rangeland connectivity to facilitate game migration.
- **Education and literacy related**, for both producers and the general public. Producer literacy program suggestions included management practices for cover crops, top soil conservation, grazing, drought, ranching without chemicals, and water use and conservation; Ranching for Profit course expansion and cost of production; and the importance of conservation to support diversity across all species. Participants also emphasized the importance of programs educating the general public about the value/need of grazing in many grassland ecosystems, and that cattle ranching done well can support a healthy grassland ecosystem.
- **Monetary related**, including implementing incentive structures that reward proactive management, better support small producers, prioritize conservation of existing native soil, and pay for results; and creating cost share programs for invasive control, native grass planting, and annual payment assistance.

- **Existing program enhancement related**, including creating structures to better connect producers; effectively enforcing program agreements or local/state/federal laws; allowing for increased program flexibility and local control to adapt to changing local conditions; and expanding engagement efforts and removing bureaucratic barriers to participation.
- **Technical assistance related**, including water infrastructure investment and secondary financial and technical assistance.
- **Monitoring related**, including more robust short- and long-term monitoring of rangeland health.
- **Structural change related**, including altering or disposing of existing subsidies and tax structures, deregulation, and creating better pricing for livestock at sale barns.

IMPLICATIONS

Similar to Question 9, the responses here largely confirm the existing knowledge about where programs need to develop in the future. **A common theme throughout these and previous question responses is the need to capitalize on what people already know works** (e.g., connecting producers to facilitate idea sharing, allowing for flexibility, and management education for producers), **as well as reducing or eliminating barriers to program engagement and implementation** (e.g., structural change to alter subsidies or remove bureaucratic red tape, consumer education to garner more producer support from the general public, and minimizing the time it takes an individual producer to engage with or implement a program). For those developing or updating programs or policy, it will be important to consider how some or all of these seven criteria can be integrated to ensure producer and landowner buy-in, and how they can be designed to capitalize on previous success and minimize barriers.

Question 11. What People Should Know About You

SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Respondents were asked to identify the most important pieces of information they want more people and leaders to know about their livelihoods and communities. Seventy-five people provided responses, which are listed below in order from most to least frequent (see Appendix A for full list of responses):

- **Producers are stewards.** Nearly half of respondents described how they as producers or landowners act as stewards for the environment, supporting the grassland ecosystem by engaging in regenerative agriculture practices, supporting global climate change initiatives by sequestering carbon, and striving to create as healthy a product possible for end consumers. Many also mentioned that their livelihoods depend on their conservation efforts.
- **Producers work hard and against tall odds to support themselves, their families, and their communities.** Respondents noted that they work in an incredibly tight-margin industry that often does not support small producers in the same way it supports larger corporate producers. Despite, or perhaps because of this, they described how their operations support their local communities directly through providing food and a healthy ecosystem, and indirectly through supporting the myriad ag-related businesses they rely on to continue ranching or farming.
- **Producers commit a significant portion of their time and effort to strategically care for their land and livestock.** Respondents described how effort-intensive ranching and farming can be, especially when stewarding sustainable grasslands.
- **Producers want control over their land, and want programs that support this ideal.** Respondents described their desire for local control without extensive or any government involvement. Some also described opposing interests between producers and programs.

- **Producers exist, and are essential for program viability.** Respondents emphasized the fact that they exist, and should not be sidelined or forgotten. They also emphasized the importance of getting younger people involved in ranching and farming, and the fact that without them many programs would not be successful.

IMPLICATIONS

At its core, this question gets at how programs can most effectively message and market themselves to producers and landowners in order to maximize engagement and minimize disenfranchisement. **For instance, a program built and messaged around the idea that ranchers and farmers already act as stewards, and how the program can support what they are already doing, would likely be more effective than one built and messaged around the idea of recruiting farmers and ranchers to become stewards.** In this way, programs could capitalize on the work already being done by producers across the Central Grasslands rather than attempting to overwrite those important efforts.

Responses to this question also reinforce the sense of ownership expressed throughout the survey, and how important it is to work alongside ownership rather than against it. By developing flexible programs that can readily adapt to local situations, and by marketing them in a way that emphasizes the importance of producer ownership, stewardship, and knowledge, they are much more likely to result in rapid and positive outcomes for the health of the Central Grasslands.

Conclusion

The *Ranchers, Landowners, and Producers Roadmap Input Survey* was created and distributed with the intent to gather feedback from these groups to ensure that the priorities identified in the Central Grasslands Roadmap will be able to support them as much as possible from their point of view. Making a suite of financial and technical assistance programs available to producers and landowners, and aligning those programs with the priorities they have identified, will be critical to support the long-term health of the Central Grasslands ecosystem. The results of this survey offer important insight into how producers and landowners are currently engaged in programs, how they would like to engage in the future, common barriers to engagement or program implementation, and most importantly the highest-priority aspects that all programs should have.

Nearly half of respondents said they are not currently participating in any program, however the vast majority said they were interested in learning more about them. The desire to engage in programs emerged throughout the survey, along with a handful of common barriers that either made it challenging for people to get started or actively disincentivized their participation. The most common barriers included:

- **Perceived lack of program flexibility for local situations and nuance.** This was mentioned as a reason for lack of desire to learn about programs, a reason for disinterest in CRP, and was the worst rated out of nine program metrics. Two respondents requested that program adaptability and the ability for producers to experiment should be added as metrics to track, reinforcing the high importance of program adaptability.
- **Government overreach and bureaucratic red tape.** Related to program flexibility, local control (as opposed to government control) was emphasized throughout as something programs should facilitate and encourage. In addition, red tape and other time-consuming logistical aspects of programs were regarded as reasons to not engage, especially considering how time-intensive ranching and farming are in the first place.

In addition to common barriers to avoid, respondents offered insight into important criteria for what programs should focus on and how they can message themselves most effectively. Economic- and environment-related program aspects were most frequently identified as critical to deliver on, and some respondents highlighted the deep connection between their bottom-line and their stewardship efforts. Nearly half of respondents emphasized how they are already stewards of the land, and this speaks to one of the most important messages to come out of this survey – **programs must build upon what people are already doing, and what we/they already know works.**

Ranchers and farmers are stewards, and programs should build upon those efforts:

- They understand what works in their local area, and programs should allow them to capitalize on that knowledge;
- They are experts in their field, and programs should facilitate knowledge sharing to fill the gaps; and
- They recognize the interconnection of grassland health, and family and community health, and programs should strive to support both.

It is noteworthy that, on the whole, respondents reinforced the general criteria programs have already identified as important. However, they have also provided much-needed perspective on how programs can better engage with producers and landowners to most effectively implement these criteria. Through reducing widespread barriers and capitalizing on what is already working, programs can work in tandem with producers and landowners to ensure the long-term health and vitality of the Central Grasslands.

Appendix A. Raw Survey Data, by Question

Data for all questions except Q1 are presented in the order in which they were received, and have been lightly edited for spelling and formatting consistency.

QUESTION 1. CURRENT PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

Summary of programs sorted into each category

Federal: National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Cost Share, Wetland Mitigation Banking Program (WMBP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP); US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Permanent Easement, Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), and Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW); US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs, CRP Grasslands, and CRP Trees

Non-Profit: Audubon Conservation Ranching, Restore Grant, and Bird Friendly Beef; The Nature Conservancy Sustainable Grazing Land Program; Pheasant Forever; Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition; Ducks Unlimited Cover Cropping, Carbon Credit Offset Program; working lands owned by watershed health organization; Bird Conservancy of the Rockies; Thunder Basin Grasslands Prairie Ecosystem Association

Easements: USFWS Grassland and Wetland Easements; CSP Grassland Easement Program; South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) Grassland Easement; Colorado Cattleman's Easement; Texas Agricultural Land Trust Easement

State: SDGFP; SDSHA; state walk-in hunting area; Colorado Cattleman's Easement, and Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT); and Texas Agricultural Land Trust Easement

Local: Winnett Agricultural and Community Enhancement and Sustainability (ACES); and James River Water Development District (JRWDD), Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Private: BeefCARE

Joint Venture: Rio Grande Joint Venture (RGJV)

Organic Certification: Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) Certified Organic

QUESTION 4. REASON FOR DISINTEREST IN LEARNING ABOUT PROGRAMS

Open Response

1. Not yet. Age.
2. I am interested but feel like I currently have knowledge of all these program.
3. Able to find information as needed
4. We get that information that is appropriate to our area from local sources
5. I am already participating and know about the programs. If there are more programs I would be interested.
6. They are government bureaucrats.
7. Government overstepping. Socialist nanny state
8. Don't have time
9. Don't have time for it

10. I like to have control of land and rules seem to change after agreement is started.
11. Haven't heard of them before and not time to look at right now. Maybe at a later date.
12. I work for NRCS and already know about these programs
13. Do not want to enter an easement
14. Don't want to get involved with those entities.
15. I only own 40 acres
16. We are interested, but do already tune into a lot of information that is provided.
17. Don't see how they can help
18. I don't have time for more causes
19. Not interested in outside control of my property
20. It's not that we are not interested, we're already utilizing or enrolled in some of these programs so we don't require further education in them
21. Not interested in any government involvement on my land.

QUESTION 5. PROGRAM EFFICACY

Additional Comments

1. CRP has many valuable components, but some things are set up to be 'by the book' rather than 'by the situation' in regards to grazing planning.
2. As a producer, I have to see a benefit to my bottom line before I'm interested in the program. All the other benefits are secondary to profitability.
3. My experience with previous programs has been poor
4. No idea
5. None
6. I assume 4 is the worst
7. Varies widely by program
8. Hard to evaluate as we are not participating in any programs
9. Would really appreciate update regularly on all programs.
10. Need to pay for results not methods
11. Not much experience with these programs
12. In Canada we have no programs
13. These are relevant survey questions

QUESTION 7. ELIGIBILITY FOR CRP RE-ENROLLMENT

Additional Comments

1. Not up for re enrollment this year
2. Currently early in the 15-year contract, so no opportunity at this point.
3. Does not apply, new contract
4. NRCS local personnel are not aware of our problems.

QUESTION 8. INTEREST IN FUTURE CRP ENROLLMENT

Additional Comments

1. Inflexible

2. Possibly, depends on situations with grazing and rentals.
3. We don't have any farm ground
4. It's not a no. It's not a yes. It's a "tell me more"
5. No spot for unknown
6. Small producer, not cost productive versus commodity necessity
7. Payments too low. Grass needs to be grazed. Needs cloven foot action to prosper
8. It's a handout program
9. Don't have cropland and limited opportunity for CRP on grassland
10. I need the land to make things work
11. Not eligible.
12. Don't want to lose grazing
13. We do not have ground that fits the program anymore and we need all of you grazing/haying ground.
14. I am not eligible for CRP because the range is native sod as I understand it
15. Don't have crop land
16. Don't have acres that are worth putting into the program
17. We lease most of our land so we need to use it.
18. Ties up ground to long. Inflexible
19. Not at this time. The majority of our land is native grass.
20. We do not farm our property.
21. They changed it so it's not rewarding good management
22. Possibly I need more information
23. We graze cattle but have no farm land
24. We have no information on the Conservation Reserve Program
25. I want to run my ranch my own way
26. No eligible land
27. I don't know what the program is, have never heard of it before.
28. I've not been approached. Also would it lead to part of the 30 by 30 goal of this administration?
29. Govt programs have too much red-tape
30. It's a possibility in the future.
31. Not eligible as we are in Canada
32. No acres
33. No acres to enroll

QUESTION 9. IMPORTANT MEASURES TO TRACK

Open Response

1. Increase of native grasses as my pastures were continuous grazing
2. Improving biodiversity and creating a resilient grazing operation.
3. Rangeland monitoring to check for rangeland trends
4. Profitability
5. Water infiltration and grass cover or armor for the soil

6. Similar to carbon sequestration, but organic matter content and water infiltration rates as well as overall rangeland health.
7. Profit from the product(s) year after year
8. Soil health and ground cover
9. Management of a bio-divers system
10. Am I happy and satisfied with work/life balance
11. Manage for long term grass success and erosion
12. More flexibility
13. Cost of inputs such as feed. Sustainability. Grazing capacity. Rainfall. Breeding success. Calving success. Marketing costs. Changes in carrying capacity.
14. Native grasses emergence in native pastures with specific grazing methods
15. Profit (enough to afford conservation practices and stay in business, lowered cost of inputs), plant diversity/invasive species, health of livestock, time/resources to experiment.
16. Long term soil health
17. OM content, soil microbial activity
18. Grass species diversity
19. Insect biodiversity—specifically beetles, pollinators
20. Sustainability and presences on the land
21. Measure annual forage production and carry over, % cows weaning a calf X total exposed to breed: 96% minimum, % of cows bred X total cows exposed to breeding: 98%, annual wildlife inventory
22. How much is your land health improving
23. Diversity of the entire system supports
24. Plant and animal biodiversity, pounds of calf weaned per pound of cow weight
25. Plant Diversity
26. Decreased bare ground, increased diversity of plant species, etc... Rangeland Monitoring is very important
27. Net profit, bare ground, bio-diversity, soil health
28. Sustainable and profitable
29. Production of pounds of beef per acre

QUESTION 10. IDEAS FOR NEW OR EXPANDED PROGRAMS

Open Response

1. Any soil health practices positively affect all other things positively
2. Reward desirable behaviors with monetary recognition. It seems that the programs offered are reactive, and so encourage producers to wait for a handout before they will act. The producers who act independently without assistance are the ones who should be rewarded.
3. More follow up both technical and possibly financial.
4. I did a program that put fencing n water line in my pastures. But I wish we would have put more water line in or even just more hydrants on the line we did put in and there should be a fence on that water line so we could always use portable fencing in places to move cows more. As long as the water line was on the fence line I think that would make it easier for day moves with the cows
5. Intensive grazing cover crops
6. I think we need to get from annual rainfall to measured and predicted forage growth/yield

7. An emphasis in the NEED (and opportunity) for ranchers (and farmers) to fully understand their finances and cost of production. Ranching for Profit is an example of a course that teaches folks to do this.
8. Understanding water development
9. More technical assistance
10. Continuing flexibility with CRP contracts and grazing
11. Soil biology
12. More financial incentives for smaller producers, less so for larger
13. Getting us paid for carbon sequestration would be nice.
14. Long term improvement of land and livestock.
15. Info on raising cover crops in our region.
16. Drought protection
17. There should be no easements over 8 years
18. Information on rest period of pasture
19. Better training of program specialists
20. More informative meeting
21. Something that pays producers to defer a portion of their ranch completely for a year. I.e. Rest 20% of the ranch each year for 5 years.
22. I would happily trade all the programs to get rid of subsidized crop insurance. Make grain farmers compete on an even playing field for land, and there would be a lot more grass around...
23. Do some pasture soil testing. What plant species grows better with soil types. Fresh/Clean water sources
24. More local control in how program is carried out. Ability to flex when local conditions become barriers
25. Taxing should be based on land productivity.
26. Education is key - Economic value needs stressing!
27. To my knowledge there is not a lot of information on improving or monitoring soil health on native rangelands.
28. Promote the value of grazing (in grasslands that evolved with grazing) in sustaining ecosystem functions, help articulate that not all beef is produced the same nor has the same environmental impact and consumers can support healthy options by choosing sustainably produced food, consumers also need to know where to find the product and have ready access to it
29. More flexibility. Listen to landowners
30. Education of non-ranchers that cows and grass work in symmetry
31. Improved conservation programming training in universities
32. Cattle producers need better prices at the sale barns
33. Game migration
34. Use of fire to control invasion species
35. Keep doing Young People's Ranching for Profit. . .
36. Have producers more involved in programs like Working Lands for Wildlife
37. It should be easier for the people that want to enroll to get in to programs
38. Federal programs need to be more flexible. There is no such thing as one size fits all.
39. Ranching for profit schools
40. Plus and minus using fire to manage grasslands or pasture

41. Open, less red tape, flexible
42. I like hearing from other producers how they do things, like fencing, water, how they rotate through their pastures and why. It would also be valuable to us to find out more about different programs that are available to help with cost of planting grass and other incentive programs.
43. Incentives to keep landowners from plowing native grass lands or any grass lands. Trace back programs to identify all cattle in the
44. Teaching better grazing practices including enhanced watering option, mobile tanks, fencing for mob grazing, etc.
45. None
46. payment for ecosystem services, not just carbon capture and sequestration
47. Teaching managers how to take care of the land without so much chemical also cattle
48. More programs for Cattle producers, to combat drought and offer assistance to make annual payments while cattle are transferred to another location or sold to give land a rest during a drought period.
49. Cash incentives and actually abide by Colorado water laws
50. Education to emphasize the importance of balance and diversity of all species from soil to plants to insects to all species
51. More information on top soil conservation
52. Support of prescribed fire activities
53. More in person field day type events. There is a lot of information out there on proven grazing systems that benefit range health, wildlife, and cattle mutually. Unfortunately most of these systems are hard to implement in a desert environment on a large scale. I'd like to know if there is anyone out there who's figured out a way to make it work in an arid, mountainous environment.
54. More education
55. Cheat grass spray
56. Increased cost share for controlling invasive species.
57. Upfront education component
58. More annual payments to ranches that improve ecosystem health
59. Pay for results
60. Alternative marketing options for those who are improving the land would be great
61. Having options for adaptability to unique local conditions instead of "one size fits all"
62. Water retention projects i.e.: dikes, reservoirs, key lines, spring development, erosion mitigation, building soil from dirt,
63. Drought management strategies
64. More money incentives
65. Carbon sequestration
66. De regulate, Trust in delivery agency, adequate incentives
67. Grazing school
68. Get rid of invasive weeds such as Downy brome (cheat grass) and sage brush.
69. All are relevant, add prescribed burning

QUESTION 11. WHAT PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU

Open Response

1. How valuable small producers are
2. One, Capitalism protects personal rights. Two, if there is no money, there is no mission. Good intentions are misguided without economic guidelines.
3. Raising livestock is an important role in our grassland's ecosystem and overall world climate health.
4. We are here! We may not be many per square mile but that does not make us less important or indicate that this is a vacant country side. We are doing a lot of things right while we are producing products from a renewable source.
5. We practice conservation because it benefits us as producers, our communities, and the planet.
6. We hear people talk about how cattle are hurting the environment so them people because vegetarian. I think are leader need to know taking cows, goat, horses, and other livestock off the land is bad. We need them on the grass lands and manage it by regenerative agriculture. That is better for the environment then people being vegetarian. Actually look to see where your food comes from. Is it regenerative or conventional?
7. We work hard to protect our land and care for our livestock
8. We try hard to maintain, manage, preserve and enhance rangeland resources
9. How we care for the land
10. How unfair it can feel as a cattle producer trying make a living. Lots of different factors working against a grass farmer
11. Get government out of my life.
12. We're trying to make a living feeding people and preserving our environment.
13. Larger producers are going nowhere, but their level of support to smaller communities is only marginally better; if we want smaller producers / communities, federal programs need to focus on such (sliding scale versus \$/acre)
14. How much thought and time we strategize
15. Ranching IS NOT a high-margin industry.
16. We are trying to make a living on land that cannot effectively support anything else.
17. Our lives depend on conservation.
18. The non-profits that have farm or grass land are destroying the rural communities by not paying taxes but using the resources that tax payers pay for. Short for leaches
19. How livestock grazing puts carbon in soil
20. We are key players in allowing these programs to be successful.
21. Hard to make a profit selling to a monopoly
22. We are all just getting by
23. People are the key. We need young producers to be successful and enjoy ranching, and have the skills to be successful.
24. Understand the difference between cow-calf and feedlots. Realize that while grassland can obviously be over-grazed, it is equally unhealthy to under-graze it.
25. When ranching and farming are slow, such as no grass to hay, that directly impacts many businesses in our community as well. Repairs, fuel, etc.
26. Conservation
27. Farming/Ranching does change for consumer demand with a safe nutritious product in mind and environmental care for our long-term success.

28. Local input and control
29. Sustainable production is necessary for long term profitable use of the land without government support.
30. We try to be stewards of the land but economics tend to drive other options
31. Don't penalize people who want to keep grass on the landscape simply because of soil capability and being taxed for the type of soil rather than what's on top of the soil (grass)
32. That we are feeding them for the long term.
33. Good grazing management with livestock is important for soil health and rangelands.
34. Above
35. Ranchers strive to do their best for their land and critters
36. The importance of wildlife in SD
37. Range, cattle, crop, and land health is as important as our family health.
38. We are taking the free energy from the sun and using it to grow food and fiber to serve our neighbors
39. That the results of restoring grasslands is work and costs money. It's not a project that makes money initially but is critical for future grassland vitality.
40. We are HELPING the environment!
41. If ranchers are gone so are the small communities
42. If we as landowners don't take care of the land it will not happen.
43. That most ag operations are subsidized by off farm income and are not economically sustainable
44. How much goes into production
45. Positive environmental benefits
46. Grasslands are crucial to our business sustainability.
47. The difficulty it has been to start from scratch without having family land. The struggle with improving soil health.
48. How important family ranches and farms are to the local communities.
49. Investing in better range management results in a better ecosystem, a healthier product, and a profit for the producer.
50. Land stewardship
51. How hard we work to help nature
52. The overall care and management of the resources and wildlife. There is already so much good management that is taking place and not being noticed and rewarded.
53. If we don't stop degrading our land our livestock will continue to be unhealthy which in turn will make the people in healthy.
54. There are plenty of programs for farmers but small/medium ranchers have very few programs to help during drought times which seem to be the norm for western states.
55. Getting a fair price for what we produce
56. Country of origin labeling, rural life and protection of our ways.
57. The importance of private land and working land stewardship upon everybody's lives
58. Economic impact of ranches
59. Despite some shortcomings of traditional ranching, keeping land open and undeveloped is the single biggest thing we can do to protect the environment. This is one thing ranchers do well. We need to spread this message.
60. Sustainable grazing requires preserving habitat
61. Protect preserve permits

62. The importance of healthy grasslands for the entire community.
63. How we support their lives and communities
64. I would like people to recognize the difference in operations that manage regeneratively and which operations degrade their resources
65. Cattle production sustains grasslands. The methane case against cattle is false.
66. Grasslands are a precious ecosystem.
67. Our community is targeted by special interest groups that like the bare ground and loss of soul created by prairie dog infestation. Our small community is affected adversely by that desire. So perhaps some type of resource for us to recap the huge expense of controlling the prairie dog populations that constantly migrate into our private land from surrounding lands administered by the USFS.
68. We are stewards over a lot of land and animals. We take it seriously
69. Cattle prices too low
70. The process of getting a calf to market, and then from market to the table. Knowing who the middle men are and how we as producers are being treated by the packers.
71. Family operations, close communities dependent on one another
72. Most ranchers are already doing proper management and may only need to tweak management to achieve further environmental objectives. Motivating factors to continue to ranch are not only economic but annual cropping and developmental pressures are a force against the ranching community
73. Tillage drive habitat loss and carbon dispersal.
74. NRCS needs to be more assessable to local farmers in Yuma County. To much a bureaucracy!
75. Landowners provide habitat, forage, water, clean air for wildlife and birds. They should be acknowledged for doing that. Rural communities need healthy economies - seek a balance. Landowners should be rewarded for having threatened or endangered species on their landscape. Bird species are indicators of healthy grasslands.

Appendix B. Survey Questions and Logic

1. **Open response.** In what local, regional, tribal, or state programs are you enrolled? (examples include Audubon's Conservation Ranching, The Nature Conservancy's Sustainable Grazing Land Program, an easement of some form, a local landowner collaborative grant, or many others).
2. **Yes/No with logic.** Are you interested in learning more about any of these programs?
 - **Yes** – piped to Q3
 - **No** – piped to Q4
3. **Select the best option.** What's your preferred method for learning more?
4. **Open response.** Why are you not interested in these programs?
5. **Matrix rating scale with option to comment.** Overall, on a scale of 1, "programs do not work at all," to 4, "programs work incredibly well," how effective overall do you think the following parts of local, regional, state and federal programs are at supporting range improvement, soil health, and/or water conservation activities?
6. **Yes/No with logic.** Are you enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program?
 - **Yes** – piped to Q7
 - **No** – piped to Q8
7. **Select the best option with option to comment.** Is your land eligible for re-enrollment?
8. **Yes/No with option to comment.** Would you like to enroll in the future?
9. **Select all that apply with option to comment.** In terms of understanding the success of cattle production and the health of the grasslands, what measurements are important to you to track?
10. **Open response.** What other ideas would you recommend for programs that support range improvement, cattle production, soil health, and/or water conservation?
11. **Open response.** What are the most important pieces of information you want more people and leaders to know about your livelihoods and about your communities?