

# Central Grasslands Conservation 2025 Farm Bill Policy Priorities



Farm Bill policy priorities for the Central Grasslands focus on securing critical funding to support rural communities and economies, expand grassland conservation efforts, and ensuring long-term sustainability for working lands, grassland habitats, communities, and wildlife.

According to the National Wildlife Federation, 74% of producers believe there should be more conservation funding, not less. Based on 2023 reporting, only 7% of Farm Bill program funds are designated for conservation, while demand for conservation on 13.8 million acres goes unmet annually. Less than 1 in 3 applications for Farm Bill assistance programs were funded due to demand exceeding revenue.

Cattle production is a leading agricultural industry in the US. More than 50 million head of cattle, which is greater than 60% of total produced in the U.S., are raised annually in the Central Grasslands region feeding roughly 86 million Americans.

- Secure reauthorization of a new five (5) year Farm Bill.
- Increase conservation title funding baseline by including other congressional authorized spending for farm bill conservation programs in a new farm bill. The demand for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) exceeds existing funding and enrollment authorities.
- Continue funding to support grassland conservation programs, working lands incentives, and technical assistance. Prioritize investments in areas that build larger cores or blocks of grassland habitats. These landscapes support rural communities, agricultural economies, ecosystem health, and provide resilience against leading threats including woody encroachment and conversion to row-crop agriculture.
- Strengthen the Grassland Conservation Reserve Program (GCRP) by including resources for grazing management and grassland health improvements, and making the program more accessible to farmers and ranchers.

- Expand access to risk management and disaster relief programs to support financial stability for all agricultural producers.
- Scale regenerative and resilient practices and systems by expanding funding under the EQIP and the CSP and prioritize sustainable grazing under the set aside for livestock practices.
- Expand funding for Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), including providing options for long-term leases.
- Improve technical assistance and program access to all land stewards, including farmers, ranchers, and Tribal communities by increasing staff and use of local knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge. Coordinate with non-governmental organizations and the private sector to support field and office capacity necessary to meet producer interest and provide job opportunities in rural communities.
- Ensure USDA consults with, empowers, and improves program access for all communities, including rural and Tribal Nations, who play a critical role in grassland conservation and management.
- Support retention of native grasslands by creating landowner led determinations of ecosystem payments that reflect the benefits of retaining land in grasslands including improved water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, soil health and air quality. Model after existing reverse auction programs like the migratory birds, butterflies and pollinators conservation reserve program, state acres for wildlife program.
- Strengthen Sodsaver and expand it nationwide.



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