



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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October 14, 2010

PROGRAM MANUAL
Title 440 – Programs
Part 524, PA Supplement No. 1

SUBJECT: Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) Wildlife Requirement for Rental and Easement Enrollments

Purpose: To supplement the General Manual's Title 440, Part 524, GRP program policy.

Effective Date: This Supplement is effective when received.

Background: This supplement will establish Pennsylvania GRP policy regarding the required management of wildlife habitat in GRP enrolled acres for Rental Contracts and Easement Enrollments.

Filing Instructions: This Supplement should be filed immediately following Title 440, Part 524, after the official release of Part 524, Grassland Reserve Program manual, which is currently in draft format.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Coleman".

DENISE COLEMAN
State Conservationist

DIST: GM Holders



Title 440 – Programs

PART 524 – Grassland Reserve Program

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PART 524 – Wildlife Requirement for Rental and Easement Enrollments

The following provides policy for GRP rental and easement enrollments to meet the wildlife habitat requirement of the GRP program. Grassland Reserve Program easements and rental contracts are subject to restrictions on grazing, haying, mowing and harvesting for seed production. In Pennsylvania this includes the nesting and brood rearing season for ground nesting birds, which lasts from April 15th through August 1st.

1. Compliance with USDA Policy, Federal Register 7 CFR 1415

- a. 1415.4(h) under Program Requirements, states : “Easements and rental contracts allow, consistent with their terms and the program purposes, the following activities as outlined in the grazing management plan:”
- b. 1415.14 (h)(2) under Program Requirements, states: “Haying, Mowing, or harvesting for seed production subject to appropriate restrictions, as determined by the State Conservationist, during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are in significant decline, or are conserved in accordance with Federal or State Law;”

2. GRP Rental Agreement Wildlife Habitat Requirement

- a. In order to meet the wildlife habitat requirement of GRP, rental contract participants will meet the wildlife requirement as determined by the “Pennsylvania Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Pasture and Permanent Hayland – Grassland Birds” worksheet.
 - i. The worksheet assists landowners enrolled in rental contracts in meeting the GRP wildlife habitat requirement. Criteria in worksheet provide rental enrollees options to meet wildlife habitat criteria.
 - ii. Rental contract holders must score an overall score (Index) of 50% (0.5 Index) to ensure adequate nesting and brood rearing habitat for grassland birds. Scores of ‘0’ in EITHER

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Criteria 1 OR Criteria 2 will result in an overall score of '0', which is not acceptable for meeting the wildlife requirement.

1. The worksheet evaluates both existing and planned activities. Potential participants who do not meet the minimum score for existing management can improve their score (Planned Condition) through planned practices and still meet the wildlife habitat requirement for GRP.
- b. All GRP rental acres will be included in a Grazing Management Plan:
 - i. The participant must agree to implement practices in the Grazing Management Plan to meet the planned criteria in the wildlife worksheet. Grazing Management Plans addressing the wildlife habitat area will incorporate information on managing ground nesting bird habitat, following this policy, utilizing the Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard (for grazing land) and/or the Forage Harvest Management Practice Standard (for hayland) along with the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Practice Standard.
 - ii. Remaining enrolled rental acres not managed for wildlife habitat must be managed according to a Grazing Management Plan developed in accordance with the participant's objectives for restoring and maintaining the viability of the land's uses and related conservation values.
 - c. Land enrolled in Rental Contracts prior to the development and approval of this policy is not subject to the above listed requirements.
 - d. PA NRCS employees will inform all GRP rental applicants of the grazing, haying, mowing, and harvesting for seed production restrictions.

3. GRP Easement Agreement Wildlife Habitat Requirement

- a. In order to meet the wildlife habitat requirement of GRP, applicants wishing to enroll land in a GRP easement will need to agree to the wildlife habitat requirements listed below.
 - i. All GRP easements will be subject to grazing, haying, mowing, and harvesting for seed production as follows:
 1. All land enrolled under GRP easements must set aside a minimum of 10 contiguous acres or 20%, whichever is larger, to be managed as wildlife habitat for ground nesting birds.

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- a. Land set aside for ground nesting bird habitat can be rotated throughout the entire enrolled easement acreage on a yearly basis.
 - b. GRP applicants who wish to enroll 10 acres or less into an easement will need to manage the entire enrollment area for ground nesting birds as required in this policy.
2. No haying, mowing or harvesting for seed production is allowed on acres managed for ground nesting bird habitat between the dates of April 15th and August 1st.
 3. Grazing is allowed on acres managed for ground nesting bird habitat, but vegetation cannot be grazed lower than six inches in height between the dates of April 15th and August 1st.
 4. All GRP easement acres will be included in a Grazing Management Plan:
 - a. Grazing Management Plans addressing the wildlife habitat area will incorporate information on managing ground nesting bird habitat, following this policy, utilizing the Prescribed Grazing Practice Standard (for grazing land) and/or the Forage Harvest Management Practice Standard (for hayland) along with the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Practice Standard.
 - b. Remaining easement acres not managed for wildlife habitat must be managed according to a Grazing Management Plan developed in accordance with the participant's objectives for restoring and maintaining the viability of the land's uses and related conservation values.
- b. PA NRCS employees will inform all GRP easement applicants of the grazing, haying, mowing, and harvesting for seed production restrictions.