

# ON THE WILD SIDE

USDA FOREST SERVICE  
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## USDA Announces Sign-up for New Grassland Reserve Program

**Contact:** Alisa Harrison (202) 720-4623

**WASHINGTON, June 17, 2003**--Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced that the first sign-up for the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) will begin nationwide on June 30, 2003. The 2002 Farm Bill amended the Food Security Act of 1985 to include authorization for this program.

"Grasslands provide critical ecological benefits and play a key role in environmental quality, as well as contributing to the economies of many rural areas," said Veneman. "This voluntary program helps protect valuable grasslands from conversion to other land uses, thus helping to ensure this national resource is available to future generations."

Grasslands make up the largest land cover on America's private lands. Privately-owned grasslands and shrublands cover more than 525 million acres in the United States. For the first time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will direct financial resources and technical expertise to help landowners protect and restore these lands.

Applications for participation will be accepted on a continuous basis at local USDA service centers. Once funding has been exhausted, eligible applicants will remain on file until additional funding becomes available. Veneman previously announced that \$49.9 million in fiscal year 2003 funds are available to implement GRP.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Forest Service are coordinating implementation of GRP, which helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands. The program will conserve vulnerable grasslands from conversion to cropland or other uses and conserve valuable grasslands by helping maintain viable ranching operations.

When properly managed, grasslands and shrublands can result in cleaner water supplies, healthier riparian areas and reduced sediment loadings in streams and other water bodies. These lands are vital for the production of forage for domestic livestock and provide forage and habitat for maintaining healthy wildlife populations. These lands also improve the aesthetic character of the landscape, provide scenic vistas and open space, provide for recreational activities and protect the soil from water and wind erosion.

GRP offers producers several enrollment options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, rental agreements (10, 15, 20 or 30-year duration) and restoration agreements. For permanent easements, USDA makes a payment based on the fair market value of the property less the grazing value. For 30-year easements, USDA pays 30 percent of what would be paid for a

permanent easement. For rental agreements, USDA pays 75 percent of the grazing value in annual payments for the length of the agreement.

For restoration agreements, USDA pays up to 90 percent of the restoration costs on grassland and shrubland that has never been cultivated and not more than 75 percent on restored grassland and shrubland (land that once was cultivated).

To participate in GRP, offers must be private land that includes at least 40 contiguous acres. Additional eligibility criteria are described in the "Notice of Availability of Program Funds for the Grassland Reserve Program" that was published in the Federal Register on June 13, 2003, and is available on the NRCS Web site listed below. This notice applies only to fiscal year 2003 funds and will be used for the initial sign-up. For more information about GRP and other conservation programs, contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or online at <http://offices.usda.gov/>. Information, including Federal Register notices and rules, also is available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farbill/2002>.

## **Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Forms Task Force on Chronic Wasting Disease**

**For Immediate Release: June 4, 2003**

**Contact:** Jodi Stemler, 202-543-6850

Washington, DC: Representatives Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Ron Kind (D-WI) will co-chair a new Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Task Force on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation announced today. Representatives Lee Terry (R-NE) and Mark Udall (D-CO) will serve as vice chairs and additional members of the Caucus from CWD affected states are being invited to join the Task Force.

The goals of the CWD Task Force are to increase awareness, discussion and debate of CWD between members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, and the entire Congress as well as to work collaboratively to develop and implement actions to improve the management of CWD. Using the CWD Task Force as a framework, the Caucus will address the growing problem of CWD in cervids (deer and elk) by devising and managing legislative initiatives that help combat the spread of CWD, assist with the monitoring and eradication efforts, provide for research and development of databases, and provide funding for the state agencies to perform these functions.

"I'm pleased to co-chair this task force in order to foster a strong awareness of CWD issues in the 108th Congress," Ryan said. "Chronic Wasting Disease threatens the vitality of hunting and recreation in at least twelve states across the country, including my home state - Wisconsin. We have to stop it from spreading to new areas and eliminate CWD where it has already infected herds. This task force will encourage collaboration between federal and state agencies and help states get the resources they need to combat this disease."

"As an avid hunter, and father of two little boys whom I hope to pass on the wonders of outdoor recreation, I am concerned not only about the potentially devastating impact CWD may have on wild deer and elk herds but also on a cherished tradition in our country," commented Kind. "I have long believed that a vigorous, coordinated effort by federal, state, and local agencies is necessary to develop solutions to this crisis. I am pleased to have the opportunity to lead the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus' Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force, and ensure Congress and the federal government become a meaningful partner as we seek to contain and eradicate this disease."

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About CSF: Established in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation works on behalf of current and future generations of Americans to protect the right and increase the opportunity to hunt, fish and trap by serving as the sportsmen's link to Congress. CSF provides this link by acting as the conduit between sportsmen, wildlife conservation organizations and the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), a bi-partisan caucus that supports wildlife conservation, professional wildlife management, hunting and fishing. For additional information, visit the CSF website at [www.sportsmenslink.org](http://www.sportsmenslink.org).

## **Diseases at the Interface between Domestic Livestock and Wildlife Species - July 17-18, 2003, Ames, Iowa**

This conference is intended to promote the exchange of information about and foster discussion of important and timely topics relevant to the transmission of diseases between domestic animals and wildlife species. Topics will include: disease surveillance models, logistics of managing disease outbreaks, the role of wildlife management in control and eradication programs, chronic wasting disease, etc. The registration deadline is June 20, 2003. For more information contact Dawne Buhrow at the Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics (515-294-7632 or [iicab@iastate.edu](mailto:iicab@iastate.edu))

## **Regional Ecosystem and Species Conservation Project Advances in the Rocky Mountain Region**

In response to ever-increasing appeals and litigation charging Forest Service failure to promote and maintain biodiversity as required by NFMA, Region 2 several years ago decided there had to be a better way to manage for ecosystem integrity and species viability. In contrast to the uncoordinated, piece-meal, and reactive approaches normally employed, Region 2 envisioned development of a comprehensive and proactive approach, founded on the best available science, to guide future management of Regional ecosystems to achieve and maintain sustainability and inherent biodiversity. The output of this multi-year science project would be the synthesis of scattered knowledge into a new understanding of the natural functioning of our ecosystems, the degree to which they have been forced from their natural patterns and historic range of variation, and the needs of key species of interest essential to maintaining naturally distributed and self-sustaining populations across the lands that we manage.

The Species Conservation Project is comprised of multiple components, each being developed by teams of scientists from both within and beyond the Forest Service. *Species assessments* are being written for each regional sensitive species and multi-forest management indicator species. These assessments compile and synthesize knowledge of the biology, ecology, risks, conservation needs and management of these species. *Terrestrial ecosystem assessments* are under development for primary regional ecosystems and key ecotypes. These assessments illuminate historic and current patterns, processes, conditions, and management relationships for vegetation communities and landscapes. Similarly, *aquatic-riparian-wetland ecosystem assessments* are also in development for groups of small watersheds nested in 5 river basins. Ecological drivers and anthropogenic influences are identified to show natural and existing patterns and conditions, natural and human disturbance processes and effects, and ecological risks and restoration opportunities for these systems. Finally, with the completion of species and ecosystem assessments, *synthesis tools* (reference models) will be developed to synthesize the results of species and ecosystem assessments to show species-ecosystem relationships and help define desired conditions and management options for successful ecological conservation.

Project work began in earnest in 2001 and is now mid-stream. Nearly 200 species assessments are in various stages of production. Historic range of variation analyses have been completed for 5 terrestrial ecosystems/ecotypes, 5 more will soon be completed, and another 5 are in the early stages. Extensive and detailed protocols have been developed for assessing natural function, current condition and risks to aquatic-riparian-and wetland systems. Pilot terrestrial and aquatic-riparian-wetland assessments for the Bighorn National Forest are near completion, and current condition assessments will soon begin on a Forest by Forest basis.

The robust application of science and a coordinated approach will enhance scientific credibility of and legal defensibility and public support for Regional management strategies. Most importantly, project tools will better position the Forest Service in the future to manage its resources across the Region in a manner that ensures that its responsibilities for the maintenance of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity are redeemed. ~Submitted by Gary Patton

## All Bird Conservation Workshop

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Wyoming Game and Fish, along with the American Bird Conservancy, will be hosting an "All Bird Conservation Workshop" in Billings, MT on August 20-21. This workshop is made possible by a grant from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). The Tentative Agenda and Registration Form are now available on our MT FWP Website <http://fwp.state.mt.us/default.aspx>. Look under "Hot Topics" on the upper right side of the home page. This will be a great opportunity to find out what is going on in the conservation of the broad spectrum of avian species for which we have management responsibility. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet many of the "players" involved with these efforts from MT, WY, and the entire country. Please direct any questions you might have to: Bob Martinka, MT FWP Migratory Bird Coordinator, Helena, MT, 406-444-3248 [bmartinka@state.mt.us](mailto:bmartinka@state.mt.us)

## Vacancies

The following job announcements are just a sample of the job opportunities that can be found at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>

Title	Grade/Series	Deadline	Vacancy #	Location
<a href="#"><u>FISH AND WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-05/07	July 10, 2003	DEU4-03-103	Daphne, AL
<a href="#"><u>FISH AND WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-07/09	July 8, 2003	DEU6-03-066	Pierre, SD
<a href="#"><u>BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-09/11	July 18, 2003	CH174347	Jefferson, WI
<a href="#"><u>WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0486-09/11	July 10, 2003	FWS4-03-144LBJ	Big Pine Key, FL
<a href="#"><u>BIOLOGICAL SCIENTIST (INTERDISCIPLINARY)</u></a>	GS-0401-11/11	July 9, 2003	R802-569-03G	Morehead, KY
<a href="#"><u>BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-11/12	Jul 14, 2003	CK174779 JM	Ashland, WI
<a href="#"><u>FISH AND WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-12/	July 10, 2003	FWS1-03-108	Lacey, WA
<a href="#"><u>FISH &amp; WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></a>	GS-0401-12/13	July 14, 2003	FWS9-03-56	Arlington, VA
<a href="#"><u>FISH AND WILDLIFE</u></a>	GS-0401-13/	July 8,	FWS1-03-	Honolulu, HI

<b><u>BIOLOGIST (SUPERVISORY)</u></b>		2003	104	
<b><u>SUPERVISORY WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST</u></b>	GS-0486-14/	July 7, 2003	FWS7-03- 30-0929651	Anchorage, AK

## Hotlinks!

- Wildlife, Fish and Rare Plants: <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/wildlife/>
- 2003 News Releases: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2003/releases.shtml>
- FS Today Newsletter: [http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/pao/fs\\_today/](http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/pao/fs_today/)
- National Fire Plan: <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/nfp/>
- Roadless Area Conservation: <http://roadless.fs.fed.us/>
- Large-Scale Watershed Restoration Projects: <http://www.fs.fed.us/largewatershedprojects/>
- Land and Resource Management Plans: <http://www.fs.fed.us/forum/nepa/nfmalrmp.html>
- Watershed and Air Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/clean/>
- Lands and Realty Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/staff/>
- Road Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/news/roads/>
- Recreation, Wilderness and Heritage Resources: <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/>
- Forest Management: <http://www.fs.fed.us/land/fm/>
- International Programs: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/>
- Research: <http://www.fe.fed.us/research/scientific.html>
- Healthy Forests Initiative: <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/HFI.shtml>
- Partners in Planning (**NEW**): <http://www.fs.fed.us/biology/planning/guide/index.html>

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Once you select a link, please be sure to hit the “Refresh” button to ensure that you are loading the most current version of the web page!**

**On The Wild Side** is a monthly update of activities of the National Forest System Terrestrial Wildlife and Ecology Program of the USDA Forest Service. All information presented is subject to change as projects evolve, opportunities arise and issues unfold. Contributions are welcome and should be submitted to Debbie Pressman at [dpressman@fs.fed.us](mailto:dpressman@fs.fed.us) no later than the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. We reserve the right to edit contributions for clarity and brevity.

Positions listed are for outreach purposes only and are not full announcements. Interested individuals should contact the forests referenced or consult the USAJOBS website.

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