

Prairie and Grassland Easements

Commonly Asked Questions & Answers

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

People with hearing disabilities may reach
the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the
Federal Information Relay System at 1 800/877 8339.





Native prairie
B. Angus, USFWS



Why protect and restore grasslands?

Grasslands provide a variety of benefits for all living beings. They control erosion and supply forage for livestock; trap rain and snow to recharge water tables; prevent excessive agricultural chemicals from degrading surface and ground water; and provide essential habitat for a variety of wildlife species... habitat that is rapidly disappearing. Protecting uplands helps ensure a safe water supply for all forms of life.

Tallgrass prairie once covered more than 25 million acres of Minnesota and Iowa. The original Tallgrass prairie is mostly gone now, with only one-tenth of 1 percent remaining. These are places where species of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world hold on to existence, and places where men, women, and families understand the hardship, challenges, and triumphs of the native and immigrant people that came before them.

“I’m the third generation to farm this land. My father raised 13 kids on 300 acres. Today, I’m trying to raise three kids on 1,300 acres...and it is tough. I’m paying taxes on this old pasture. A prairie easement gives me some income on this land, and I can still enjoy all the things I love about this prairie...the wildlife, hunting, and knowing that it will be protected forever”.

Swift County, MN resident



Pasque flowers
B. Angus, USFWS

What are grassland and prairie easements?

Prairie and grassland easements were designed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as complimentary programs to help protect native prairie and grassland resources. Through prairie and grassland easements, the Service purchases certain property rights, including the right to plow or destroy the grassland. Grazing, haying, mowing and grass-seed harvest are restricted. Some of these agricultural practices, depending upon the condition of the land and the desire of the landowners, are still allowed with certain easements.

What are the differences between prairie easements and grassland easements?

If your land is covered by native prairie that has never been plowed, you are eligible for a *prairie easement*.

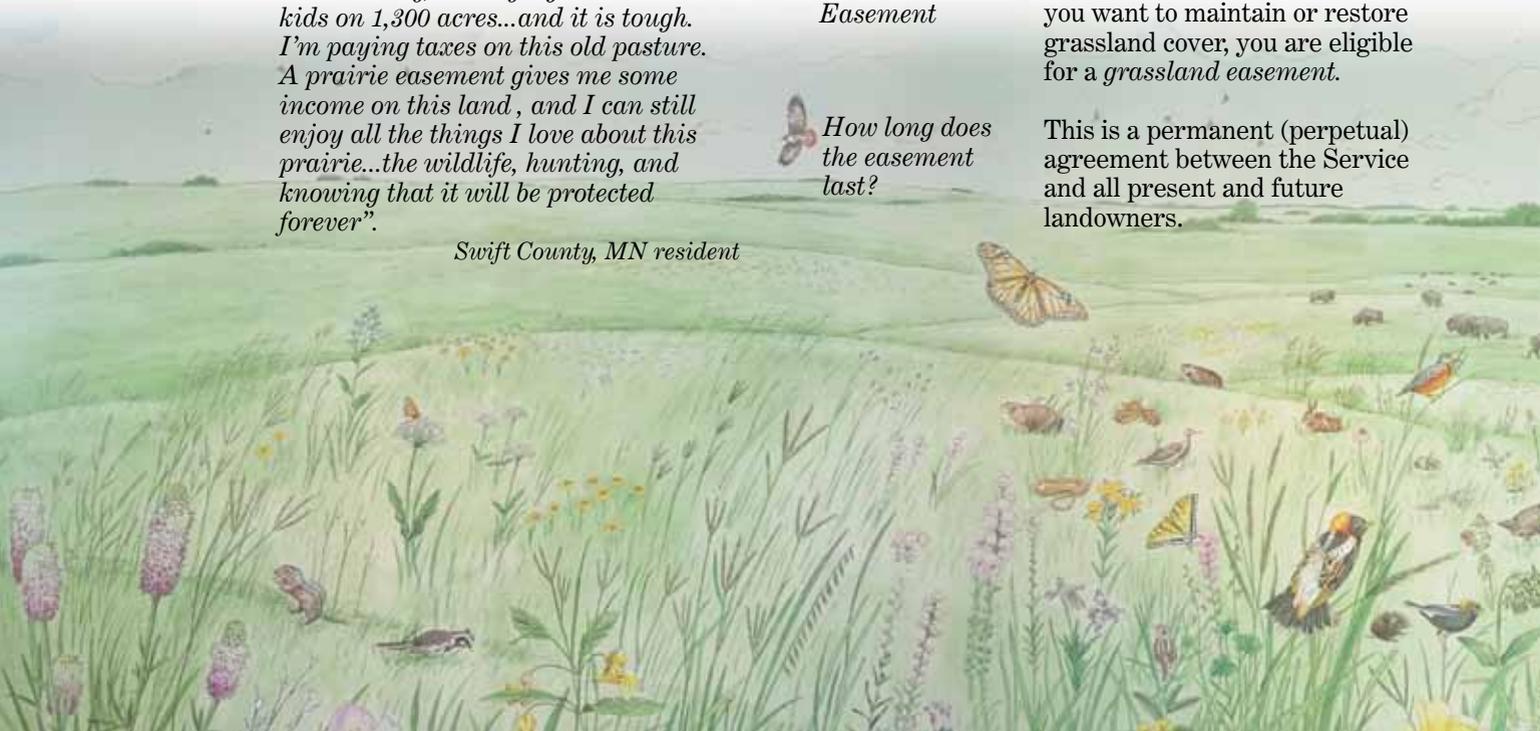
If your land contains wetlands and you want to maintain or restore grassland cover, you are eligible for a *grassland easement*.

This is a permanent (perpetual) agreement between the Service and all present and future landowners.

Prairie Easement

Grassland Easement

How long does the easement last?





Dickcissel
S. Maslowski

*“I’ve cut hay on this prairie for 58 years. Everything around has been plowed up. But this field is full of wildflowers and songbirds. A permanent easement that lets me keep haying it and protect prairie at the same time just makes sense.”
Lac Qui Parle County, MN resident*

Are there different types of easement options?

Yes. But with each use that is retained, payment is decreased.

Four options for both the prairie and grassland easements:

No Use

With this easement option the rights to graze, hay, crop, ditch, and harvest seed are purchased by the Government.

Haying Only

With this easement option the rights to graze, crop, and ditch are purchased by the federal Government. The right to hay and harvest seed is retained by the landowner but only after July 15 of each year (to protect ground-nesting wildlife). The Service’s easement manager reserves the right to say when and where this easement option is used.

Grazing Only

With this easement option the rights to hay, crop, ditch and harvest seed are purchased by the federal Government. The right to graze is retained by the landowner and no grazing restrictions are placed on the land. The Service’s easement manager reserves the right to say where and how this easement option is used.

Both Grazing and Haying

With this easement option the rights to crop and ditch are purchased by the federal Government. The rights to hay, graze and harvest seed are retained by the landowner. There are no restrictions on grazing, but haying and grass seed harvest may not take place until after July 15 of each year (to protect ground nesting wildlife). The Service’s easement manager reserve the right to say where and how this easement option is used.



Red Fox
J&K Hollingsworth

Will hunting and trapping rights on my land be affected?

No. You maintain the right to open or close your land to hunting and trapping.

Will my mineral rights be affected?

Under certain situations mineral rights may be affected. Please consult your local easement manager to avoid easement violation situations.

Who controls noxious weeds and pests?

As landowner, you are responsible for noxious weed and pest control. Mowing before July 15 to control weeds is prohibited without prior written approval by the Service.

What happens after the easement is accepted?

A letter, sent by certified mail, will inform you that the easement has been accepted and is being recorded at the county courthouse. A copy of the easement will be included in the letter sent to you



Discussing
landowner
concerns
B. Angus, USFWS

When will I be paid?

Payment is usually made within 9 to 12 months after the easement has been signed.

What is the method of payment?

A single lump-sum payment, in the form of a check from the U.S. Treasury for the amount specified in the easement, will be sent to the landowner.

If I am buying my land under a contract for deed, should the seller also sign the easement?

Yes. Both you and the contract seller, who legally holds the title, must sign.

Do I have to report the easement payment to the Internal Revenue Service?

Yes. The payment should be reported on your Federal income tax return, but may not be taxable. Consult your tax attorney or accountant for further guidance.

**Prairie and grassland easements
DO NOT:**

- remove the land from the local tax base, or
- open the land to public use (hunting, fishing, birdwatching, etc.).

“My grandfather told my dad to never plow up that piece of prairie across the river from the home place. Well, dad passed that on to me. My husband asked about plowing it up the other day, but I said no. Grandpa said to leave it alone, He said we always need a reminder of what this country looked like when it was first settled. Protecting this prairie with a permanent easement will give me the peace of mind I need, knowing that we kept our promise to grandpa.”

Clay County, IA resident

For more information on how you can protect and restore native prairie and grasslands, call your local U.S. Fish and Wildlife representative at the addresses or phone numbers listed on the back of this brochure.

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*Eastern
meadowlark
J.Jave, USFWS*

