



## Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823  
Phone: (517) 324-4421, Fax: (517) 324-4435  
[www.macd.org](http://www.macd.org)

“Your Land, Your Water, Your Michigan”

### News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 1, 2009

For more information contact:

Ann Cool

Communications Associate

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

[ann.cool@macd.org](mailto:ann.cool@macd.org)

### USDA Makes Funds Available for Easement Programs for Working Lands

Lansing, MI. Many landowners are interested in preserving agricultural land, but are not aware of the opportunities available within Michigan. Two important programs available through the new Farm Bill will assist landowners in preventing the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Michigan Conservation Districts, as the local providers of natural resource services to private landowners, are encouraging individuals to learn about the opportunities available within Michigan through these two programs.

The two programs, the Farm and Ranch Lands Preservation Program (FRPP) and the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), promote the preservation of agricultural land through the purchase of development rights.

Both FRPP and GRP give producers an incentive to keep their land in agricultural use. The goal of both programs is to conserve natural resources on land enrolled in the program and preserve the land for agricultural production.

Although each provides funding for the purchase of development rights through permanent easements the mechanism for purchasing development rights is different for each program.

#### Farm and Ranch Lands Preservation Program (FRPP)

Funds are made available to existing farmland preservation organizations through FRPP. These organizations can be state or local governments, federally-recognized American Indian Tribes, or non-governmental organizations with farmland preservation programs. NRCS provides matching funds, of up to 50 percent, for these organizations to purchase development rights of land currently in agricultural use. Landowners apply to the farmland preservation entity and a purchase agreement for the development rights is agreed upon prior to the entity applying for FRPP funding.

A number of farmland preservation organizations exist in Michigan, including Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program administered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Orchards and other land used for the production of specialty crops are eligible for FRPP. Land eligible for enrollment in FRPP must contain either:

- Prime, unique or statewide important soil; historical or archeological resources; or
- Further the policy of a state or local farmland protection program.

Applications are ranked on a number of factors including the risk of the land being converted to non-agricultural use, its continued viability for agricultural use, its conservation benefits and other factors.

-more-



## Michigan Association of Conservation Districts

3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250  
East Lansing, Michigan 48823  
Phone: (517) 324-4421, Fax: (517) 324-4435  
[www.macd.org](http://www.macd.org)

### **Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)**

GRP allows individual landowners or existing farmland preservation organizations to apply directly to NRCS to enroll land in the program. Unlike FRPP, the program offers the choice of a permanent easement or a rental agreement option of 10, 15 or 20 years. Under a rental agreement or an easement, the landowner agrees not to use the land for any purpose other than grazing or hay production. Agricultural crop production or non-agricultural uses that require disturbing the land is not permitted. Under a rental agreement or easement the landowner must adhere to a grazing plan and/or a conservation plan.

The value of easements under GRP and FRPP are determined differently. Geographic Area Rate Caps for easement under GRP are established by NRCS at the state level, rental rates are set at the national level. Under FRPP, the farmland preservation entity conducts an appraisal to determine the value of the easement.

For more information about FRPP and GRP, contact your local Conservation District, USDA Service Center or your local farmland preservation organization. More information is also available on the Web at [www.macd.org](http://www.macd.org) and/or [www.mi.nrcs.gov/programs](http://www.mi.nrcs.gov/programs).

*The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of Michigan Conservation Districts and works to strengthen Districts through leadership, information and representation.*

###