

Committee: Grasslands

DRAFT-6

Author: Carol Davit

Intended Recipient: U.S. Congressional delegation from Missouri, with special attention to Rep. Vicky Hartzler, who serves on the House Commission on Agriculture.

Support of Robust Native Grassland and Grassland-wildlife Friendly Conservation Measures in the 2018 Farm Bill

WHEREAS, the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) is a private organization made up of thousands of Missourians who work together to better our natural resources; and

WHEREAS, CFM is an affiliate organization of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF); and

WHEREAS, the National Wildlife Federation advocates for strong native grassland and grassland-wildlife friendly conservation measures in the 2018 Farm Bill, which the U.S. Congress is slated to approve this year; and

WHEREAS, Missouri and elsewhere in the U.S. has experienced tremendous loss of original prairie and other native grassland habitat, along with its water quality, soil, and wildlife benefits; and

WHEREAS, native grassland and grassland-wildlife friendly conservation measures in past Farm Bills have resulted in benefits to native grassland protection, creation, and increases in pollinators and other grassland wildlife; and

WHEREAS, sustaining these same conservation measures from past years, and improving them, can result in greater protection of original grasslands, reconstructed ones, soil health, water quality, and grassland wildlife habitat, and **specifically, as supported by NWF**; and

WHEREAS, expanding the Sodsaver Provision to make it apply nationwide, closing the perennial crop loophole, and requiring improved grassland conversion tracking will safeguard more original grassland from becoming converted; and

WHEREAS, directing the USDA to establish a native vegetation management standard (“natives first”) will encourage greater use of natives in cost-share programs; and

WHEREAS, for CRP Grasslands, raising the CRP Grasslands program cap proportionally to the overall program cap, and prioritizing enrollment of:

- high-quality grasslands of ecological significance as well as
 - acres at risk of conversion to row crop agriculture, energy, or other types of development,
 - acres located in migratory corridors
 - acres located in close proximity to conservation lands
- will direct tax dollars to the best use of cost-share programs to do the most for grassland wildlife; and

WHEREAS, for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, we support

- reauthorizing at no less than \$500 million/year
- allowing landowners to donate the entire 25% matching fund requirement on ACEP contracts that qualify for grasslands of special significance
- allowing USDA to hold easements for grasslands of special significance to address the issue of critical grassland resources in areas without large land trusts to hold the easements; and

WHEREAS, for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, we support

- increasing the minimum amount of money spent on EQIP wildlife practices from at least 5% to at least 10%
- increasing the amount of dedicated livestock funding targeted at grazing practices
- increasing priority and funding for producers who implement practices beneficial to monarch and pollinator habitat; and

WHEREAS, for the Conservation Stewardship Program, we support authorizing supplemental payments for managed rotational grazing under CSP; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, MO, this 11th day of March 2018, supports the most robust conservation measures in the 2018 Farm Bill to protect original native grasslands, increase establishment of constructed native grasslands, and sustain and improve populations of grassland wildlife and the attendant improvements to soil health and water quality. The Grassland Committee requests that copies of this resolution be sent to members of the U.S. Congressional delegation from Missouri, with special attention to Representative Vicky Hartzler, who serves on the House Committee on Agriculture.

Summary: A 2018 Farm Bill with robust native grassland and grassland-wildlife friendly measures will benefit Missouri's natural resources and taxpayers.

Key words: 2018 Farm Bill, prairie, native grassland, soil conservation, water quality, grassland wildlife, pollinators, National Wildlife Federation, Sodsaver, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, ACEP, Conservation Stewardship Program, CSP.

Expires (March 11th, 2023)