

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a vast, green, rolling landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The clouds are dark and heavy in some areas, while others are lighter and more wispy. The foreground is a lush green field that stretches towards a low horizon line.

Rangeland Conservation Programs in Montana

*A voluntary, non-regulatory, and incentive-based
guide to choosing conservation programs.*

October 2016

*Brought to you by the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
Community Working Group*

Photo by Kelsey Molloy

Definitions

ACEP - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. Contains 2 options Agricultural Lands Easement or Wetland Reserve Easement

CCAA - Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (for ESA candidate or at-risk species)

CRP - Conservation Reserve Program

CRP grasslands - Conservation Reserve Program for native grasslands/rangeland

CRP SAFE - CRP State Acres for Wildlife; 3 options in MT - Pheasant winter cover, Prairie Pothole, Sagebrush

CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program

CTA - Conservation Technical Assistance

EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Habitat Montana - FWP's signature habitat program

HCP - Habitat Conservation Plan (for ESA listed species)

MBWP - Migratory Bird Wetland Program

MRP - Montana Rangelands Partnership

MSGOT - Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team, funding committee for Montana's Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

PFW - Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Safe Harbor - Safe Harbor agreement (for ESA listed species)

SGI - Sage Grouse Initiative

UGBEP - Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program

Montana is known as the “Last Best Place” because of its abundant natural resources that do more than provide beauty for the state, they provide the economic support for many families and rural communities in the state.

This Menu of Rangeland Conservation Programs in Montana was created to provide landowners with a list of conservation programs provided through federal, state, local, and private sources to help meet management and conservation needs on their land.

Although great effort was made to ensure the list is complete, it is not exhaustive and will continue to be updated as needed. The list is not an endorsement of the programs, nor is it meant to provide all the necessary information to enable landowners to make a decision between programs. What the Conservation Menu provides is a shopping list of the available programs for different conservation needs, and the contact information for those responsible for the programs.

We hope that simply knowing all the available options will empower you to select the program that best fits your need. Along with specific conservation actions, the menu provides information on estate planning and generational transitions for landowners, realizing this is a critical juncture for families and the future of their lands and livelihood.

It is the desire of the CMR Community Working Group that this resource be an advocate for voluntary, incentive-based conservation for the enhancement of the rangeland ecosystems of Montana.

LAND PROTECTION

Conservation Easements

USFWS Refuges/Realty: Bowdoin, Red Rock Lakes, Benton Lake NWR; Grassland/wetland easements

NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

FWP Habitat Montana, Migratory Bird Wetland Program (MBWP), Upland Game Bird Enhancement Program (UGBEP)

Ducks Unlimited Easement Holder

The Nature Conservancy Easement Holder

Pheasants Forever Donated Easements

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Montana Land Reliance Easement Holder

Fee-title Acquisition

USFWS Refuges/Realty (statewide)

Ducks Unlimited Revolving Lands

Conservation Leases

NRCS Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)

FWP MBWP, UGBEP periodically

MSGOT Montana's Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Grazing Management Plans

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW)

NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

BLM Grazing Authorization Renewal Process

FWP Habitat Montana, MBWP, UGBEP

The Nature Conservancy Matador Ranch Grass Bank (Philips County)

MT Rangelands Partnership Technical expertise/assistance

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Rangeland Monitoring

BLM Cooperative support and labor to establish monitoring

MT Rangelands Partnership Technical expertise/assistance

Ranch Infrastructure

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP, CTA

BLM Range Improvement Funds / special project funding

FWP Habitat Montana, MBWP, UGBEP

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Ranch Infrastructure (continued)

DNRC Range Improvement Loan Program

Local Conservation Districts Cost share

Native Species Plantings

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP, CSP & CTA

FSA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP),

BLM Range Improvement Funds / special project funding

FWP Habitat Montana, UGBEP

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Grassland Restoration

FSA Conservation Reserve Program for native grasslands/rangeland (CRP grasslands)

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Conifer and Invasive Species Control

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP, CSP & CTA

Conifer and Invasive Species Control (continued)

BLM Range Improvement Funds /special project funding

FWP Habitat Montana, UGBEP

Local Conservation Districts Cost Share

MSGOT Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Cover Crops

NRCS EQIP, CSP & CTA

FSA CRP

FWP UGBEP

Pheasants Forever Public Lands

SWCDM Cover Crop Education

Local Conservation Districts Cover Crop Education

Erosion Control

NRCS EQIP, CSP & CTA

FSA CRP; CRP grasslands; CRP SAFE

WETLAND CREATION / RESTORATION

Native Wetland Restoration

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP & CTA

FWP MBWP; Habitat Montana

Ducks Unlimited Technical Expertise

Invasive Species Control / Native Seedings

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP, CSP, & CTA

BLM Range Improvement Funds / special project funding

FWP MBWP; Habitat Montana

Riparian Fencing / Planting

USFWS Partners for Fish & Wildlife

NRCS EQIP, CSP & CTA

BLM Range Improvement Funds / special project funding

FWP MBWP; Habitat Montana

SWCDM Cost share for riparian fencing

Local Conservation Districts Cost share for riparian fencing

OTHER

Landowner Assurances

USFWS Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA); Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP); Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA)

NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW); Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI)

Estate & Transition Planning Education

MSU Extension Estate Planning

Montana Community Foundation Estate Planning

Planned Giving

Montana Community Foundation Planned Giving

Special Initiatives

NRCS Sage Grouse Initiative

Agency / Organization Contact Information

AGENCY / ORG	PROGRAMS	CONTACTS	EMAIL	PHONE
Ducks Unlimited	Revolving Lands, Technical Expertise	Bob Sanders	rsanders@ducks.org	406-492-2002
		Abby Dresser	adresser@ducks.org	406-587-6947
Farm Service Agency	CRP	Contact your local FSA office	For office locations, visit: www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/montana/index	
MT Community Foundation	Planned Giving	Amy Sullivan	amy@mtcf.org	406-443-8313
MT DNRC	Range Improvement Loan Program	Bill Herbolich	bherbolich@mt.gov	406-444-6668
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks	General Habitat Programs	Rick Northrup - statewide	rnorthrup@mt.gov	406-444-5633
		Catherine Wightman	cwrightman@mt.gov	406-444-3377
		Kelvin Johnson	kjohnson@mt.gov	406-228-3727
	Upland Game Bird Enhancement	Debbie Hohler - statewide	dhohler@mt.gov	406-444-5674
		Ken Plourde - Plentywood	kplourde.fwp@gmail.com	406-474-2244
		Jake Doggett - Conrad	jdoggett.fwp@gmail.com	406-271-2670
		Jackie Tooke - Miles City	jtooke@mt.gov	406-234-0940
Migratory Bird Wetland	Catherine Wightman	cwrightman@mt.gov	406-444-3377	
MSGOT	Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation	Carolyn Sime	csime2@mt.gov	406-444-0554
		Therese Hartman	thartman@mt.gov	406-444-1467
		Graham Neale	gneale@mt.gov	406-444-2613
Montana State University Extension	Economics	Marsha Goetting	goetting@montana.edu	406-994-5695
	Range Management	Jeff Mosley	jmosley@montana.edu	406-994-5601
The Nature Conservancy	Matador Grass Bank	Brian Martin	bmartin@tnc.org	406-443-6733

AGENCY / ORG	PROGRAMS	CONTACTS	EMAIL	PHONE	
Montana Rangelands Partnership	Rangeland Monitoring	Stacey Barta	sbarta@mt.gov	406-444-6619	
	Montana Rangeland Partnership Technicians	Cheryl Schuldt - Miles City	cschuldt@macdnet.org	406-945-0404	
		Emily Standley - Lewistown	estandley@macdnet.org	406-396-5418	
Pheasants Forever	Donated Easements	Julie Unfried - Chinook	junfried@pheasantsforever.org	406-357-2320 x116	
		Michelle Downey - Scobey	mdowney@pheasantsforever.org	406-487-2872 x106	
		Aaron Clausen - Conrad	aclausen@pheasantsforever.org	605-280-9212	
Soil & Water Conservation Districts of MT	Cost share for riparian fencing	Jessica Makus	jessica@macdnet.org	406-443-5711	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Partners for Fish and Wildlife	Greg Neudecker -statewide	greg_neudecker@fws.gov	406-793-7400	
		Jim Magee - Dillon	james_magee@fws.gov	406-683-3893	
		Loren Ruport - Malta	loren_ruport@fws.gov	406-654-2863	
		Marisa Sather - Glasgow	marisa_sather@fws.gov	406-403-4678	
		Dean Vaughn - Bison Range	dean_vaughn@fws.gov	406-644-2211	
		Luke Lamar - Swan Valley	luke@svconnections.org	406-754-3137	
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	EQIP, CSP	Contact your local NRCS	For office locations visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/mt/home/		
	ACEP	Contact your local NRCS	For office locations visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/mt/home/		
		Lisa McCauley, Director	lisa.mccauley@mt.usda.gov	406-587-6970	
	Sage-grouse Initiative	Kelsey Molloy, Malta	Kelsey.molloy@mt.nacdnet.net	406 654-1334 x 119	
		Luke McCarty, Glasgow	luke@macdnet.org	406-228-4321 x 132	
		Heather Nenner, Forsyth	hnenninger@macdnet.org	406-346-7333 x109	
		Justin Hughes, Ekalaka	jhughes@macdnet.org	406-775-6355 x112	

CMR NWR Community Working Group
THREE-PART GOAL FOR THE LANDSCAPE

Describe the quality of life you would like to see be predominant in the region in 5 to 10 years.

We want this region to maintain a diversified economy within which a prosperous agriculture industry is sustained and local communities are prosperous with stable populations. We desire an atmosphere where agencies, local government, NGOs, and citizens work together to create positive outcomes for the community and citizens: focusing on common ground, mutual respect, and community-based decision making, where people are committed to the working group and access to public land is ensured for both the public and producers.”

What kind of production will be needed to sustain this quality of life?

A diversity of unique goods and services to support economic and social values will need to be produced from a working landscape that maintains its scenic value, healthy soils, and ecological integrity. We must also identify and implement best management practices that integrate local ecological knowledge, succession planning in all entities, local working groups to address challenges, incentives to practice conservation, steady tax base to support infrastructure and responsible, well-educated citizens.

What does the landscape need to look like to obtain your production?

We desire a landscape that provides habitat for diverse and healthy wildlife populations, where further conversion of native prairie is discouraged, and where the needs of natural resource dependent industries are balanced with conservation. In short, healthy agriculture lands cooperatively managed for the benefit of the resource, wildlife, industry, and community.