



Rancher Participation in the Grassland Resilience and Conservation Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

What is this new program?

In partnership with McDonald's USA, some of its key beef and beverage suppliers, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has launched a landmark conservation initiative to support large-scale, voluntary conservation and grazing management practices on 4 million acres of grasslands across most of the United States.

Launched in 2025, the *Grassland Resilience and Conservation Initiative* aims to enhance wildlife habitat, conserve water resources and improve soil health. McDonald's USA supports the Initiative because it is expected to also help strengthen the resilience of the U.S. beef supply chain, including due to the economic benefits participating ranchers are expected to receive via incentive payments.

This initiative seeks to improve the health and resilience of 4 million acres of grasslands and ranch lands in as many as 38 states, with investments expected in the Great Plains, Rocky Mountain West, West Coast, Midwest and Southeast.

Collectively, NFWF, McDonald's USA, and some of McDonald's USA's key suppliers will invest more than \$200 million over the next seven years (2025–2031) to help promote and accelerate regenerative grazing practices, habitat restoration and wildlife conservation across 4 million acres.

How does it work?

NFWF will award competitive grants to a variety of implementers and conservation partners who work with ranchers to support conservation and ranch resilience throughout much of the nation.

These grantees, in turn, will work directly with ranchers to:

- Provide technical and financial assistance for implementing grassland conservation and grazing management practices and enrollment in applicable Farm Bill, state and local government financial assistance programs
- Facilitate enrollment in a program that will incentivize ranchers for their participation
- Assist ranchers with the data collection/entry required to document and verify any positive ecological impacts

NFWF is currently soliciting proposals from a small group of partner organizations to pilot the implementation of this initiative. Opportunities to participate may expand to additional partners after the first round of awards are announced.

This first round of competitive grant-making will culminate in the announcement of awards, expected in January 2026.

Grant awards and grantee organizations will be publicly posted on the [Grassland Resilience and Conservation Initiative webpage](#) at [nfwf.org](#).

Interested ranchers will then be able to contact a geographically appropriate grantee to learn more about financial support and technical support for conservation opportunities, incentive payments, obligations and other details about becoming involved in the initiative.

What kind of conservation projects will the initiative support?

The Grassland Resilience and Conservation Initiative will fund projects that provide technical and financial assistance to ranchers seeking to adopt voluntary conservation and grazing management practices. Grantees will hire or support field conservation professionals to help ranchers develop and implement economically sound management plans and practices that are designed to yield positive conservation outcomes. Key strategies expected to be supported through this funding opportunity include:

- *Grazing Management:* Develop and implement grazing management plans that optimize stocking rates and livestock movements and incorporate virtual fencing and other grazing infrastructure, as appropriate, to promote plant growth above and below ground, improve wildlife habitat, and maximize soil function.
- *Grassland Restoration:* Restore grassland function and connectivity through reseeding native plants and controlling invasive vegetation in areas with new and low-density infestations of woody invasive species, and through removing and modifying fencing to support wildlife migrations.
- *Protect and Restore Water Resources and Wildlife Habitat:* Restore riparian buffers and wet meadows (e.g., via streambank re-vegetation, water control structures, beaver mimicry) to improve hydrology, in-stream flows, aquifer recharge, water conservation, and flood and drought resilience. Additionally, implement voluntary, permanent conservation efforts that maintain working ranches and restrict sub-division and sod-busting activities (e.g., conservation easements, grass banking). Projects in areas at high risk of tillage, development or degradation will be more competitive.

How could participating in this initiative improve my ranching operation?

Participating in this initiative may benefit ranchers in multiple ways. First, with the support of technical experts from grantee organizations, ranchers can develop grazing management plans that support operational efficiency. Second, improving soil health can improve rangeland productivity and resilience, which may translate to higher revenues. Third, this initiative will offer ranchers payments to incentivize their participation, which is a direct financial benefit. Beyond those monetary considerations, ranchers may find value in increasing the long-term resilience of their operations, enhancing habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife, and protecting and conserving vital water resources.

What kind of ranching, and which locations, will be eligible for the initiative?

This funding opportunity can support grasslands work on beef-cattle-producing lands in as many as 38 U.S. states indicated on the following map. NFWF expects to award grants across the Great Plains, Rocky Mountain West, West Coast, Midwest and Southeast. Funded projects will have a heavy focus on private lands.

