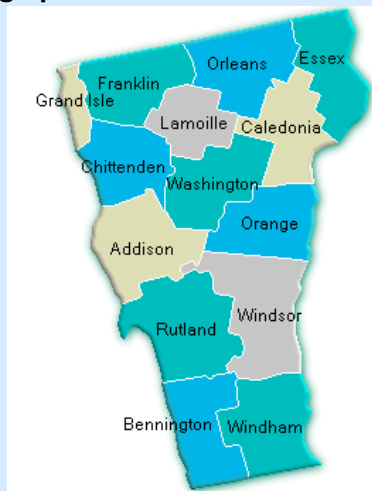


Helping People Help the Land...

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** was reauthorized in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

Reference: Vermont's Wildlife Action Plan, VT Grassland Bird Recovery and Management Plan.

Geographic Area: Statewide



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Contact an NRCS field office

Addison County

68 Catamount Park, Middlebury
802 388-6748

Bennington County

310 Main St. P.O. Box 505, Bennington
802 442-2275

Caledonia & Essex Counties

481 Summer St., St. Johnsbury
802 748-2641

Chittenden County

1193 South Brownell Rd. Williston
802 865-7895

Orange & Washington Counties

617 Comstock Rd., Berlin
802 828-4493

Franklin & Grand Isle Counties

27 Fisher Pond Rd., St. Albans
802 527-1296

Lamoille County

109 Professional Drive, Morrisville
802 888-4935

Orleans County

59 Waterfront Plaza, Newport
802 334-6090

Rutland County

170 South Main St., Rutland
802 775-8034

Windham County

28 Vernon St., Brattleboro
802 254-9766

Windsor County

28 Farmvu Drive, White River Jct.
802 295-7942

Natural Resources
Conservation Service

EQIP New Incentives for Grassland Bird Conservation



**New Tools! Specific
Incentive payments! No
Lost Income!**

January 2009

Environmental Quality Incentives Program Grassland Bird Conservation

On the Decline: Grassland bird populations such as savannah sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, bobolinks and Eastern meadowlarks, have significantly decreased over the last thirty years due to development, forest succession and intensification of certain agricultural practices.

Farming practices, such as haying, mowing and



spreading manure, may cause nest failures. Nests or nestlings may be crushed by machinery or covered when manure is spread. As hay is harvested the nesting cover is lost which leads to predation by crows and gulls. At the

same time, grassland birds are concentrated in and attracted to large acres of pasture and hayland. Frequent mowing of hayfields (three times per year) provides little chance for successful nesting and fledging of young.

Grassland birds depend on agricultural lands for breeding and farmers depend on the land for their livelihood. Researchers at the University of Vermont propose a management plan that helps balance the needs of farmers and grassland birds. An early season cut, on or before May 31st, followed by 65 days of rest would provide significant breeding potential for grassland nesting birds.

Configuration Requirements: Field should be large and somewhat square. Grassland birds limit nesting near edges so long, narrow fields will not be considered.



THIS

NOT THIS



Minimum Size Requirements: Minimum size requirements: 20 acres total, which must be uninterrupted grassland. Interruptions to habitat would include roads, hedgerows, perennial streams, forest blocks, etc. Larger acreages of contiguous grassland and project sites situated near other grasslands are encouraged and will be prioritized. The benefits to grassland birds will be maximized with large, abundant grasslands in the surrounding landscape.

Vegetation Requirements: Fields must be at least 50% to 75% grass to provide optimum conditions for a variety of grassland birds. Only 10% or less of the entire area may be reed canary grass. Reed canary grass is little used by grassland birds for nesting in early June.

History of Use: Enrolled areas must have been used as hayland for 3 out of the last 5 years.

Cutting/Spreading Requirements: First cut, and all associated management including raking, baling and spreading of manure, must be completed by June 2nd. Early completion, prior to May 31st is encouraged. The next cutting is allowed after 65 days. If manure is to be spread on the field, it must be within 3 days of the harvest. Some grassland birds will begin to re-nest immediately and spreading of manure will lead to nest failure

Act of Nature: Once during the 3 year incentive, if weather conditions do not allow that the entire cutting, chopping/baling, and fertilizer applications process be complete by June 2nd, a harvest may occur as early as July 15th.

Incentive Payment: \$100/acre per year for 3 years.

Review: All potential sites will be reviewed by trained staff.