

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Glenn Sandifer, Programs Specialist

glenn.sandifer@sc.usda.gov

(803) 253-3894

State Conservationist Announces Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Signup

Eligible entities should apply by February 1, 2010

December 5, 2009, Columbia, SC--The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is a voluntary Farm Bill program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. **Administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), eligible entities are encouraged to submit applications for prioritized funding by February 1, 2010.**

SC NRCS State Conservationist Niles Glasgow said the 2008 Farm Bill provided for a continuous signup to allow entities more opportunities to submit eligible parcels. Only eligible entities may submit applications.

Eligible entities are State, Tribal, and local governments and non-government organizations that acquire conservation easements from landowners who agree not to convert their land to non-agricultural uses and to develop and implement a conservation plan for any highly erodible land. All highly erodible lands enrolled must have a conservation plan developed based on the standards in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and approved by the local conservation district. Landowners retain rights to use the property for agriculture.

The entities submitting the FRPP application must have the authority to hold and manage easements, have the capacity to acquire, manage, and enforce the easements, and the funds to match the Federal contribution.

NRCS provides up to fifty percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement in this voluntary program. State, tribal and local entities can match that amount and they can include landowner donations in their match. Landowners may accept less than the appraised fair market value of the easement. The difference between the appraised value and the purchase price the landowners are willing to accept is considered a landowner donation. The eligible entity must provide at least fifty-percent of the easement purchase price, including a maximum twenty five percent landowner donation. Parcels selected for funding must also include an appraisal, survey, title search, preparation of conservation easement deed, and payment for the closing.

Land proposed for FRPP must meet one of two eligibility categories. This includes land that has at least fifty percent prime and unique farmland soils, and soils of Statewide and local importance, or contains historic or archeological resources.

Helping People Help the Land

Page 2

State Conservationist Announces Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Signup continued...

Private landowners should work with sponsoring entities to submit their applications. Eligible entities should submit completed applications to the NRCS field office in their county by February 1 2010.

For more information visit www.sc.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp2010.html or contact your local USDA Service Center.