



## Working Landscapes in the Rainwater Basin

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Converting marginal cropland in the Rainwater Basin to wetland/grassland pasture can increase the land's value to an agriculture operation and help maintain the region's cattle production. It also provides springtime habitat for migrating waterfowl.

The transition from cropland to pasture is costly – but Rainwater Basin Joint Venture partners can help. The RWBJV Working Landscapes Initiative offers cost share assistance for seeding, fencing, and livestock watering infrastructure. Producers may apply for annual transition payments through NRCS's EQIP program. In addition, for interested producers, RWBJV partners have a variety of easement programs that can also be part of the grassland transition.

**Grassland Easement:** The landowner works with RWBJV partners to develop a grassland/wetland easement that is compatible with the needs of the agriculture operation. Depending on the easement, unrestricted grazing, haying, and recreational activity may be permitted. Typically, such easements prevent development, cropping, or alteration of the wetland through excavation, filling, or drainage. The value of the easement is determined through a licensed private appraiser and reflects the difference between cropland and grassland appraisals in the vicinity. The easement may be held by a Natural Resources District, a conservation organization, or a state or federal wildlife agency.

### The Transition in Three Steps:

1. Sell a grassland easement to a conservation organization.
2. Apply to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's EQIP program for grass seeding cost-share and annual transition payment.
3. Coordinate with RWBJV for cost-share assistance with seeding, fencing, and livestock watering infrastructure.

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