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Washington State
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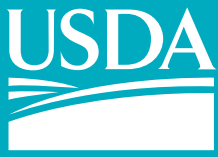


Grasslands of Special Significance (GSS)

Carlee Elliott, State Easement Program Manager

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Background information

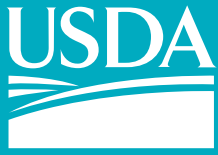
The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Grasslands of Special Environmental Significance (GSS) areas are eligible for an **increased Federal share** for enrollment of GSS land that **protects the long-term grazing uses and related conservation values** on eligible private range and pasture lands.

The program emphasizes support of grazing operations, maintaining and improving **plant and animal biodiversity, and protecting grasslands and shrublands under threat of conversion** to cropping, urban development, and other non-grazing uses.



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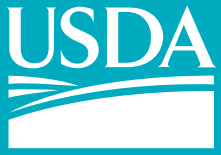
Policy information

Conservation Programs Manual (CPM) Title 440.528.33 B(3)(iii)

(iii) Grassland of special environmental significance, which is defined in 7 CFR Section 1468.3 as grasslands that contain little or no noxious or invasive species, as designated or defined by State or Federal law; are subject to the threat of conversion to nongrassland uses or fragmentation; and the land is—

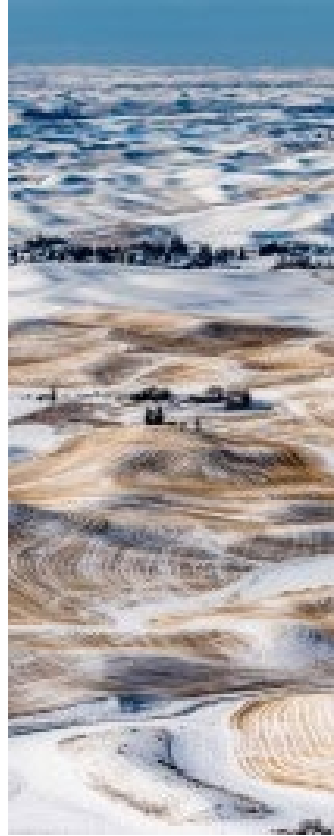
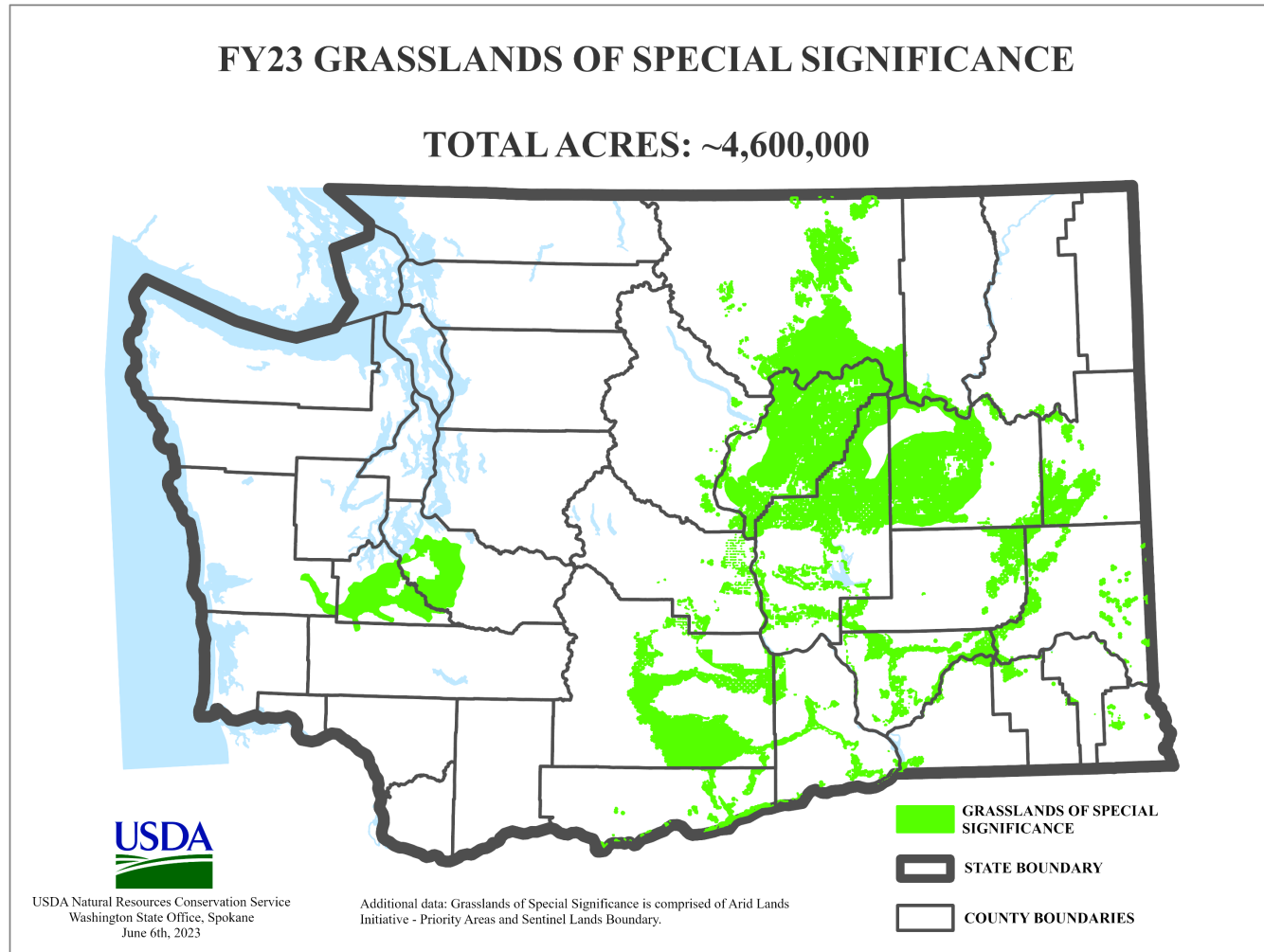
- **Rangeland, pastureland, shrubland, or wet meadows on which the vegetation is dominated by native grasses, grass-like plants, shrubs, or forbs, or is improved, naturalized pastureland, rangeland, or wet meadows.**
- And the land provides, or could provide, habitat for threatened or endangered species or at-risk species, protects sensitive or declining native prairie or grassland types or grasslands buffering wetlands, or provides protection of **highly sensitive natural resources as identified by the State conservationist, in consultation with the State technical committee.**





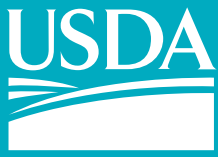
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Current area of GSS in WA



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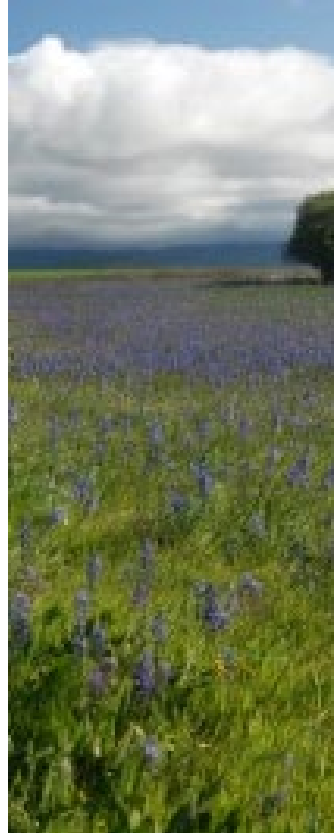
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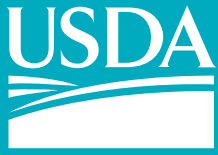
WA ALE-GSS History

- 2014 Farm Bill – replaced Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP).
- March 30, 2023 NRCS sent out email to STAC members asking for additional prairie habitat information. NRCS was looking for geospatial data to evaluate prairie habitat in Washington to potentially expand our easement program eligibility and availability for FY24.
- Minimal data received from conservation partners.
- NRCS-WA worked on utilizing technical soil data for GSS expansion.

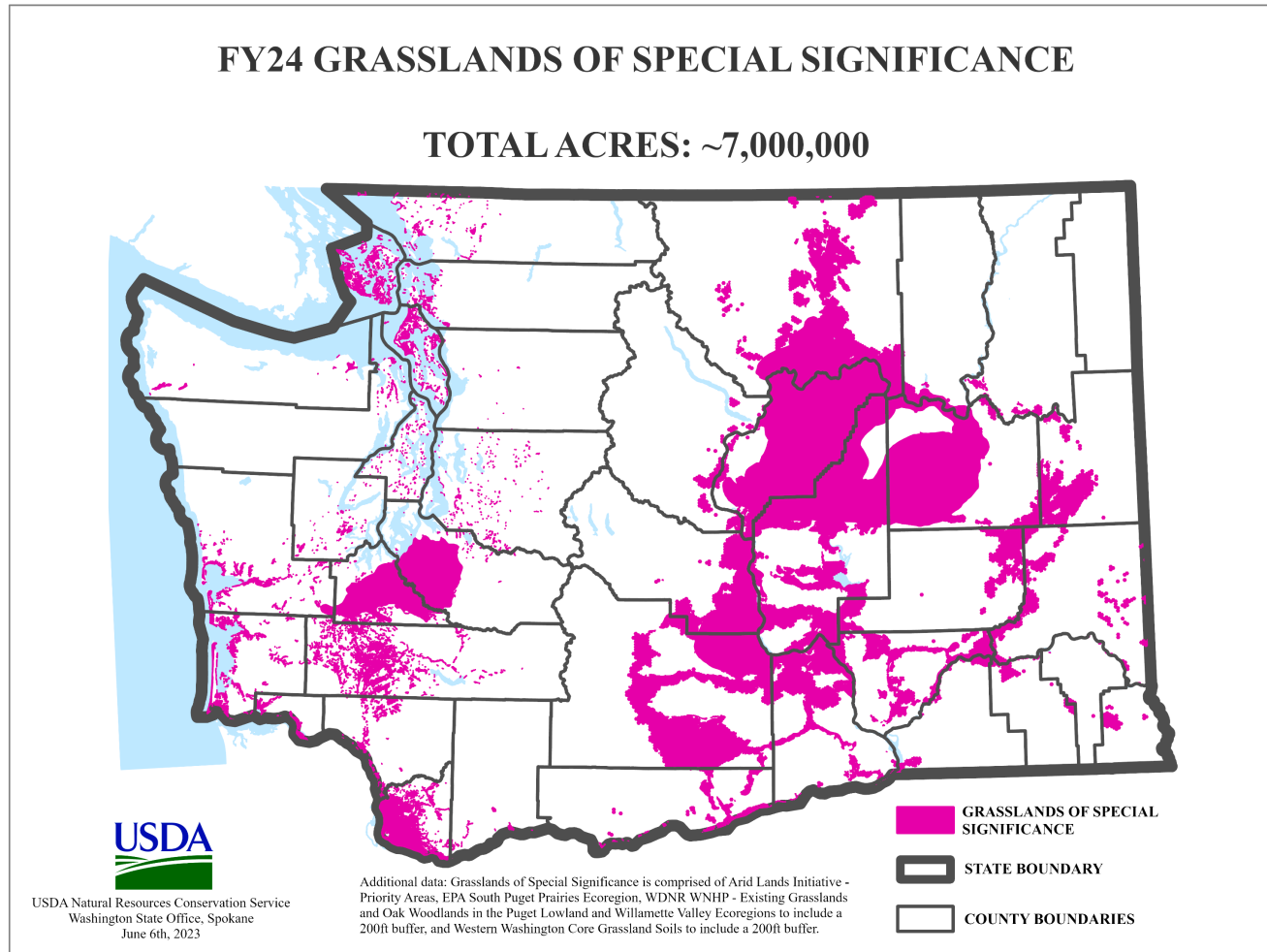


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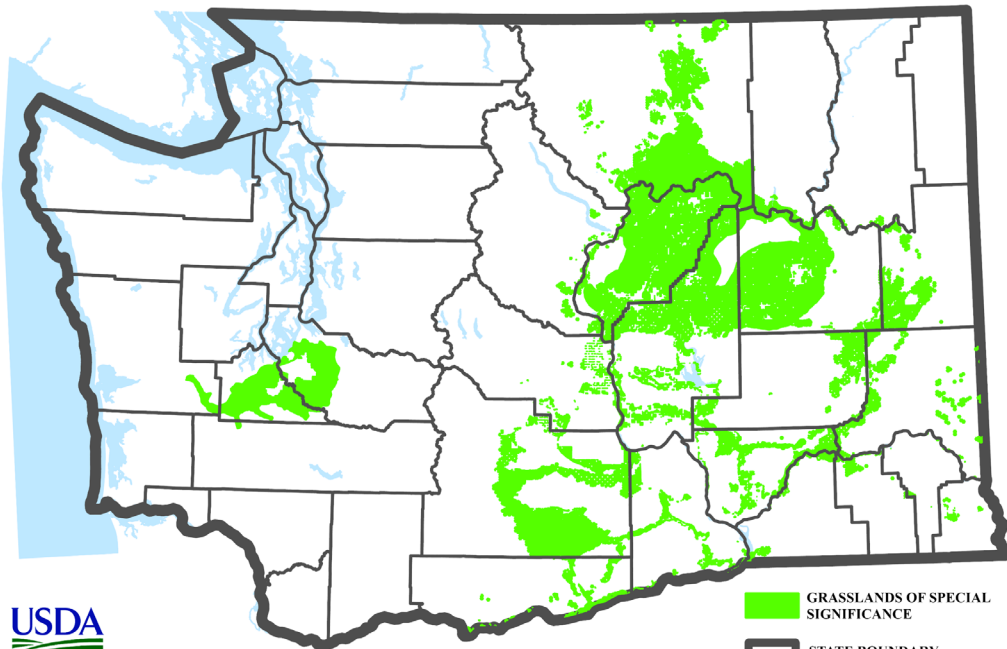
Proposed area of GSS in WA



1. EPA – Southern Puget Prairies Ecoregion
2. DNR – WNHP Grasslands and Oak Woodlands in Puget Lowland and Willamette Valley Ecoregions w/200' buffer
3. Arid Lands Initiative – Priority Areas
4. NRCS – Western Washington Core Grassland Soils w/ 200' buffer

FY23 GRASSLANDS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

TOTAL ACRES: ~4,600,000



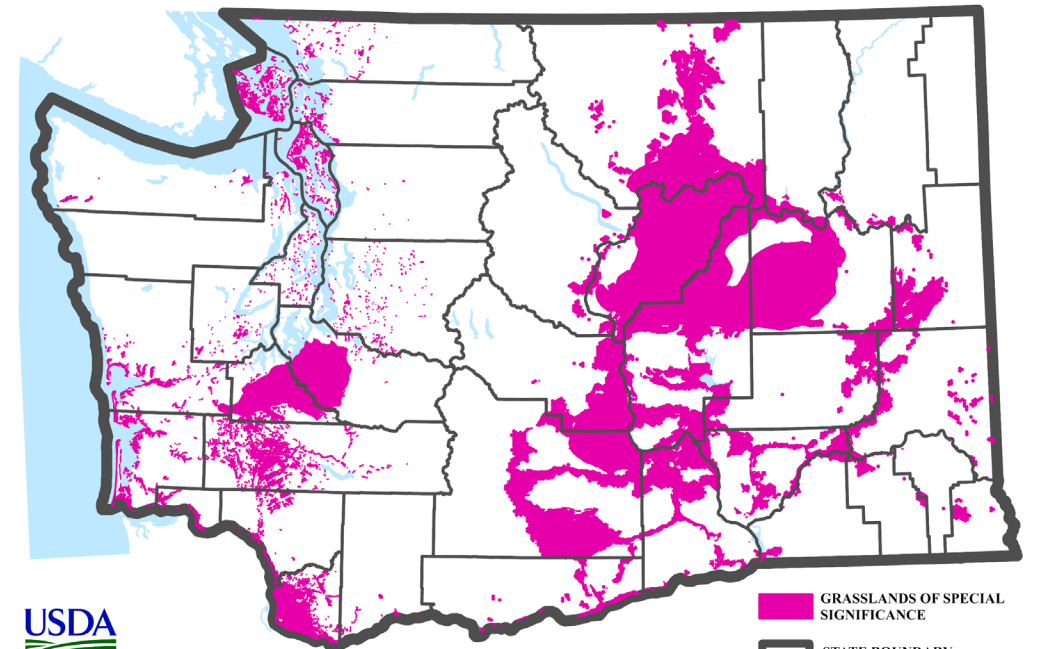
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington State Office, Spokane
June 6th, 2023

Additional data: Grasslands of Special Significance is comprised of Arid Lands Initiative - Priority Areas and Sentinel Lands Boundary.

- GRASSLANDS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE
- STATE BOUNDARY
- COUNTY BOUNDARIES

FY24 GRASSLANDS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

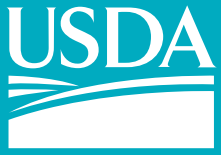
TOTAL ACRES: ~7,000,000



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Washington State Office, Spokane
June 6th, 2023

Additional data: Grasslands of Special Significance is comprised of Arid Lands Initiative - Priority Areas, EPA South Puget Prairies Ecoregion, WDNR WNHP - Existing Grasslands and Oak Woodlands in the Puget Lowland and Willamette Valley Ecoregions to include a 200ft buffer, and Western Washington Core Grassland Soils to include a 200ft buffer.

- GRASSLANDS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE
- STATE BOUNDARY
- COUNTY BOUNDARIES



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Questions?



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