



# Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust

## Grassland Set-Asides: Program Overview & Guidelines

DFWT Grassland Set-asides are farm fields temporarily taken out of crop production and planted with grasses and broad-leaved plants. These fields are rested for up to four years before returning to crop production. For nearly three decades, set-asides have helped improve soil health while providing valuable wildlife habitat across the Fraser River Delta.

### Purpose of the Program

Grassland Set-asides improve soil structure and organic matter while creating dense grass cover that supports wildlife. These fields provide habitat for small mammals such as shrews, deer mice, and voles, which serve as prey for raptors, and offer foraging, roosting, and nesting areas for many species. Waterfowl commonly graze on young shoots in first-year set-asides during winter months.

A diverse mix of coarse and fine grasses, combined with management practices such as mowing or organic inputs, provide habitat diversity for a wide range of species, including beneficial insects.

Ideally, grass seed mixtures should:


- have low maintenance requirements;
- enhance soil organic matter and structure;
- establish good vegetative cover for foraging, roosting and nesting wildlife; and
- be relatively inexpensive.

The DFWT seed mix also supports soil restoration. Tall Fescue, Orchardgrass, and Timothy improve soil organic matter, while Tall Fescue and clover are particularly beneficial for soil structure. Tall Fescue is well suited to wet or saline soils, making it useful for degraded sites. Creeping Red and Chewing’s Fescues provide strong turf-building qualities, and the overall mix can also produce good-quality forage for livestock.



**Seed Mixes** *Growers should select a Grassland Set-aside mix suited to their site. Two example mixes are provided, but other mixes may also be used.*

#### DFWT Grassland Set-aside Mix:

Tall Fescue	25%
Orchardgrass	28%
Timothy	15%
Chewing’s Fescue	15%
Creeping Red Fescue	15%
 Double Cut Red Clover	2%

#### Pollinator Mix:

Tall Fescue	30%
Saltlander Wheatgrass	15%
Slender Wheatgrass	15%
 Sunflower	15%
Annual Ryegrass	10%
 Phacelia	10%
 Red Clover	5%

 Flowering plants provide pollinators with nectar and pollen.

**Contact the DFWT office for information on where to obtain the seed mix.**

The seed mixture should be planted at 30 - 40 lbs/acre. Adding a nurse crop (barley, oats, or annual ryegrass) is recommended to control weeds and enhance wildlife habitat value in the first year. More salinity tolerant grasses can be included where needed.

# Grassland Set-Aside Management and Program Conditions

## Eligible Acreage:

If demand exceeds available funding, the Set-aside area will be limited to 50% of total farm acreage or 100 acres, whichever is less.

## Contract Length:

Fields may remain in the program for up to **four years**, depending on funding and field maintenance.

Contracts run **April 1 – March 31**. Fields must remain intact until **March 31** of the final year.

**Payments:** Grassland Set-asides receive **\$500 per acre per year**. If the crop is harvested (grain, grass, hay, straw, or silage), payment is reduced to **\$250 per acre** for that year (one harvest allowed annually). Fields that are only mowed, with plant material left in place, remain eligible for the full payment.

## Planting

Applications must be made to DFWT before planting occurs. Grass fields established prior to applying to the program are ineligible for funding. Cooperators are encouraged to laser level and undertake surface or sub-surface drainage management prior to planting a Set-aside if the field is known to have low spots and is prone to extended seasonal flooding. Fields should be planting early in the spring, ideally April or early May, and be **completed by June 15**. All field preparation and seed costs are to be paid by the cooperator.

## Establishment Year

During the establishment year of the Grassland Set-aside, a nurse crop of barley, oats or annual ryegrass is recommended. The nurse crops of barley or oats may be taken to grain or the nurse crop may be harvested as silage or hay, but no other subsequent harvest will be permitted during the establishment year.

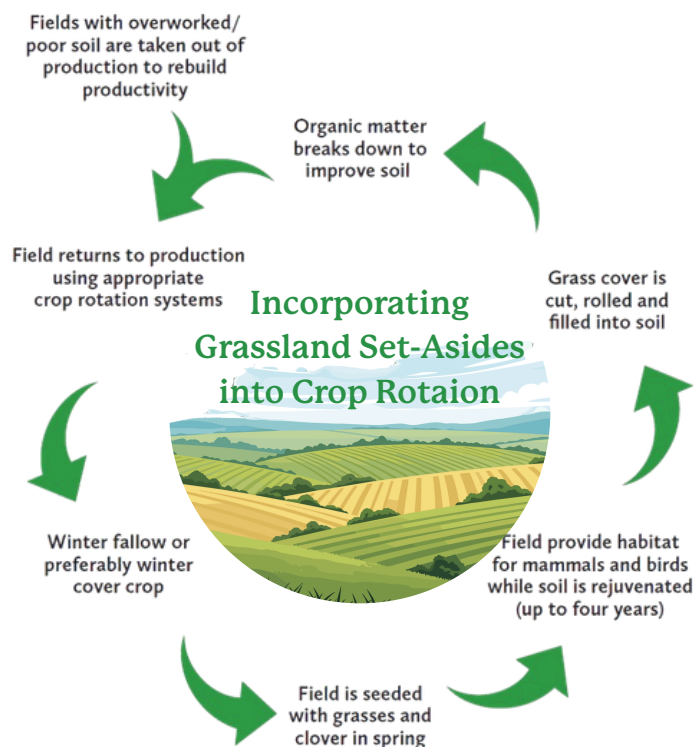
## Soil Fertility

If grass growth becomes slow or stunted, the cooperator will be asked to apply a small amount of manure or fertilizer to the set-aside. If establishment in the first year is deemed, for any reason, to be wholly or partly unsuccessful, soil tests may be conducted, and/or lime applications and/or reseeding may be required. All costs associated with these activities are to be paid by the cooperator.

## Cutting or Mowing

Some cooperators may be asked by DFWT to mow part or all of the Set-aside to increase its wildlife habitat value and to control weeds. Under the program, cooperators are also permitted to take a single cut for harvest of hay or silage per year.

Mowing or harvest should not occur until **after July 15** to minimize impacts on breeding birds.



**Program Eligibility:** Applications to DFWT Grassland Set-aside program should only be made for acreage within Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, BC. Entry into the program is dependent on funding. Applications are treated on a first come, first served basis.

The DFWT Grassland Set-aside Program is currently funded by: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the City of Delta.



Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada

## PARTNERS IN STEWARDSHIP

Our mission is to promote the preservation of farmland and associated wildlife habitat in the Fraser Delta through sustainable farming and land stewardship

[DELTAfarmland.ca](http://DELTAfarmland.ca)

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