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## **Grassland Protocol Changes from Version 2.0 to Version 2.1**

February 13, 2020

The Grassland Protocol Version 2.1 incorporates the following significant changes from Version 2.0.

### **Section 2. The GHG Reduction Project**

- Project Developers may now protect a project area through more than one easement. The Grassland Owner (grantor) and the Easement Holder (grantee) must be the same for all easements. (Section 2.2)
- Project Developers may now expand a project area after the initial verification as long all areas meet the eligibility requirements. All areas within a project will be given the same start date as the initial project area. Project expansions may not be allowed in cases where the new area would change the eligibility of the original project area, in those cases the new area should be submitted as a separate project. (Section 2.2.1)  
Implications of area expansions are addressed throughout the protocol.

### **Section 3. Eligibility Rules**

- The project start date may now be 12 months prior to project submission. (Section 3.2)
- Transference of ownership to the Federal Government to demonstrate commitment to long-term management and protection of grasslands is no longer allowed. The Reserve is now adding the requirement to establish a perpetual conservation easement under Federal Ownership. (Section 3.2)
- The local cropland assessment (second option to evaluate cropland suitability) must be applied to farmlands within 30 miles of the grassland projects rather than within the same county. (Section 3.3.1.2)
- Added the requirement for all Qualified Conservation Easements to include a statement indicating it is granted pursuant to the enabling statute for conservation easements in the state where the project is located.
- Added flexibility to satisfy Ecosystem Health requirements with alternative methods explained in Section 6.4. (Section 3.7)

### **Section 5. Quantifying GHG Emission Reductions**

- The protocol now relies on the values for global warming potential (GWP) published in the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

- The evidence for previous land use is no longer classified as category A or B. Project Developers may now use two types of any evidence to justify grassland cover based, with examples of evidence listed in Section 5.1.3.
- Equation 5.13 was updated to quantify reversals using a tonne-year accounting approach. (Section 5.4)

## **Section 6. Project Monitoring**

- The protocol is now less prescriptive in terms of how to prevent overgrazing. The protocol now provides a list of potential self-enforceable mechanisms that the project developer may use such as:
  - Terms within the conservation easement that prevent overgrazing;
  - Enforceable vegetation management plans (which would be violated in the event of persistent overgrazing);
  - Enforceable monitoring of specific conservation values (which would be compromised in the event of persistent overgrazing);
  - Periodic review and re-approval of a grazing management plan by a government agency; or,
  - Other forms of legally enforceable limitations on overgrazing. (Section 6.2)
- The minimum requirements for the overgrazing prevention mechanisms are:
  - To include requirements for monitoring and enforcement; and,
  - To define the entity or entities responsible for the enforcement of the overgrazing prevention mechanism. (Section 6.2)
- While the protocol keeps the Technical Reference 1734-6 “Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health” (IIRH) as the default mechanism to monitor ecosystem health, project developers may now request the Reserve’s approval to use alternative assessment methods in lieu of the IIRH. (Section 6.4)