

Elimination of Tall Fescue from Missouri's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grasslands

1 **WHEREAS**, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Conservation Reserve
2 Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that helps agriculture producers use environmentally
3 sensitive land for conservation benefits;

4 **AND WHEREAS**, USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the CRP with technical
5 support functions provided by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) utilizing
6 expertise afforded by the State Technical Committee (STC);

7 **AND WHEREAS** producers enrolled in the CRP plant or maintain long-term, resource-conserving
8 cover to control soil erosion, improve water and air quality and enhance wildlife habitat;

9 **AND WHEREAS** Missouri currently has approximately 1.3 million acres enrolled in the CRP with
10 65.8% enrolled in practices seeded to introduced, cool-season grass species which have become
11 dominated by tall fescue and smooth brome;

12 **AND WHEREAS** USDA has announced another general sign-up that will occur March 12 through
13 April 6, 2012;

14 **AND WHEREAS** Missouri will have approximately 377,473 CRP acres expiring in 2012;

15 **AND WHEREAS** research and the scientific community agree that when comparing tall fescue to
16 native grasses and forbs the native species provide better nesting habitat and structure for
17 ground nesting wildlife, provide improved water retention reducing chemical and sedimentation
18 runoff, sequester carbon at a higher rate, is not toxic to other soil organisms, wildlife and livestock
19 and create superior pollinator habitat critical for the sustainment of agriculture;

20 **AND WHEREAS** CRP offers are scored and ranked using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI)
21 which currently gives points to cool-season introduced species which do not meet the objectives of
22 CRP;

23 **AND WHEREAS** FSA National Headquarters eliminated state authority to designate which CRP
24 cover practices are eligible for Wildlife Conservation Priority Areas (CPAs);

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Conservation Federation of Missouri
26 assembled at the Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark, MO, this 26th day of February, 2012
27 petitions the Secretary of Agriculture, National Farm Service Agency, the Missouri FSA State
28 Director, the Missouri FSA State Committee and the Missouri NRCS State Conservationist to make
29 program eligibility and EBI scoring changes and adjustments to insure that: 1. No CRP
30 reenrollment offers are accepted that contain dominant stands of tall fescue without being converted
31 to native warm-season grasses and forbs; 2. Eliminate tall fescue as an acceptable introduced grass
32 under CP1; and 3. FSA National Headquarters reinstate State authority to designate which
33 conservation practice cover mixes are eligible to receive the wildlife priority zone points when
34 scoring the EBI.