You are cordially invited to a CRP and Ecosystem Services Webinar

The Webinar will be held Thursday August 13th at 2:00 pm Eastern time. Mark Vandever of U. S. Geological Survey will be presenting "**Assessing restored wetland habitat in an agricultural landscape: using amphibians as a metric".**

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers the 27.1 million acre Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a program that improves enhances wildlife populations, water quality, sequesters carbon, reduces erosion, and provides other environmental benefits. The CRP does this by working with producers and landowners to identify and protect fragile croplands by placing them into conserving covers. FSA's Economic and Policy Analysis Staff (EPAS) has established a Monitoring, Assessment, and Evaluation project to quantify and document the multiple benefits generated when lands are placed into the CRP, and to identify successful innovative practices.

EPAS, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and our partners are collaborating to present a series of webinars. The series will highlight the monitoring and assessment activities of FSA and how partnerships within and outside USDA are working together to fill critical gaps and develop tools to better inform policy and management decisions. You are cordially invited to the webinar, **Assessing restored wetland habitat in an agricultural landscape: using amphibians as a metric**, which will be presented by USGS Scientist, Mark Vandever, on August 13, 2013 at 2:00 PM (Eastern Time). The CRP has adopted practices that are designed to benefit water quality but have ancillary effects, and this study along with others studies being conducted will therefore provide key information to drive conservation and policy decisions.

Recent amphibian population declines have highlighted the impacts of anthropogenic activities on the landscape and illustrated the need to monitor the effects of chemical contaminants, emergent diseases and habitat loss on amphibian populations throughout the Midwest. For example, in the past two hundred years

the Iowa landscape has changed immensely with the advent of tile drainage technology that allowed for 90% of the wetland area to be drained and replaced with row-crop agriculture. The USDAs Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) has helped target and restore wetlands lost to landscape modifications and aims to safeguard ground and surface water by reducing nutrient export (especially nitrogen) from agricultural lands. While some research has been focused on assessing grassland bird density and waterfowl production on these sites, little is known how nutrient removal wetlands affect local amphibian populations. This collaborative project is examining the ability of CREP and natural remnant wetlands to support amphibian biodiversity by using a variety of metrics. Data are being collected on anuran species richness, population size, disease and health of individuals as well as water quality, including pesticides. Results from this study will help USDA assess the utility and wetland function of CREP wetlands in the Des Moine Lobe.

The monthly webinars are designed to present the results of the projects that identify and quantify the environmental services generated by CRP. The webinars provide conservationists, decision makers, scientists, and policy analysts with the opportunity to review preliminary results and talk with the scientists conducting the monitoring and assessments. EPAS's goal is to engage in an open dialogue on how to measure benefits from the CRP and to better administer the program.