

Conservation Reserve Program: Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative

Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative aims to restore up to 200,000 acres of certain wetlands located outside of the 100-year floodplain in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Restoring these wetlands will provide nesting ducks with critical habitat, nesting cover, security from predators, and food. The initiative is estimated to increase duck numbers by 90,000 birds annually.

Benefits

This initiative will further CRP's large-scale achievements in protecting our country's wetlands and wildlife. CRP has restored two million wetland and wetland buffer acres nationwide. Through wetland restoration, CRP is credited with adding 2 million new ducks to our country's flyways each year.

Creating an additional 200,000 acres of large wetland complexes will:

- Provide vital habitat for upland ducks, sandhill cranes, and many other wildlife species;
- Filter runoff;
- Recharge groundwater supplies;
- Protect drinking water;
- Reduce downstream flooding; and
- Provide recreational opportunities, such as bird watching and hunting.

Eligibility

Enrollment is limited to Prairie Pothole Region land located outside the 100-year floodplain. For land with fewer than 25 duck pairs per square mile, participants may continue to enroll acreage at a 4-to-1 upland-to-wetland ratio under Conservation Practice (CP) 23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain. This means for every one acre of wetlands, there must be four acres of surrounding upland habitat.

For land with 25 or more duck pairs

per square mile, participants may enroll acreage up to a 10-to-1 upland-to-wetland ratio under CP37, Duck Nesting Habitat. The purpose of this practice is to increase duck populations by restoring the functions and values of wetland ecosystems that have been devoted to agricultural use.

Cropland must be suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of wetlands. Land eligible for the program must be capable of being restored to CRP wetland standards. Wetlands must include a buffer that will protect water quality and provide quality nesting habitat.

In addition, the producer must satisfy the basic eligibility and cropping historical criteria for CRP. These requirements are listed in the CRP fact sheet available on FSA's web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp>.

To determine individual eligibility for the initiative, landowners should check with their local FSA office.

Hydrology

The site's hydrology must be restored. Vegetation in the wetland area will either be established or allowed to revegetate naturally.

Payments

FSA will offer the following types of payments:

- Annual Rent Payments for which FSA offers financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the soil rental rate for field windbreaks, grass waterways, filter strips, and riparian buffers;
- An upfront incentive payment (CRP-SIP) up to \$100 per acre for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time SIP will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met;
- A practice incentive payment (CRP-PIP) equal to 40 percent of

the eligible installation costs for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time PIP will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met; and

- Cost-share Assistance of up to 50 percent of eligible practice installation costs.

Sign-up

Program sign-up at local FSA offices began Oct. 1, 2006, and will run continuously (meaning eligible land may be enrolled at any time) until 200,000 acres have been enrolled.

For More Information

More information on the CRP Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative is available at local FSA offices and on FSA's web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

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