



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

**Farm Service Agency**

March 2004

**Fact Sheet**  
**Farmable Wetlands Program**

**Montana State  
Producer Handbook**



**Background**

The Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) is a voluntary program to restore up to 1,000,000 acres of farmable wetlands and associated buffers by improving the land's hydrology and vegetation. Eligible producers can enroll eligible land in the FWP through the Conservation Reserve Program - Continuous Signup. FWP was authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002.

**Benefits**

Restoring wetlands will reduce downstream flood damage, improve surface and groundwater quality, and recharge groundwater supplies. Wetlands provide vital habitat for migratory birds and many wildlife species, including threatened and endangered species, and provide recreational opportunities such as bird watching and hunting.

- FWP is limited to no more than 1,000,000 acres and no more than 100,000 acres in any one state (part of overall CRP acreage cap).

**Signup**

Signup begins annually on October 1 and runs through September 31 of the following year. Offers will be accepted on a continuous signup basis and are automatically accepted provided the acreage and producer meet certain eligibility requirements.

**Eligible Land**

**Wetlands**

Eligible acreage includes farmed and prior converted wetlands that have been impacted by farming activities. The maximum acreage for enrollment of wetlands is 10 acres of wetland, although not more than 5 will be eligible for payment.

**Adjacent Buffers**

The buffer needed for wetland protection is not to exceed three times the area of the farmable wetland, or the current width limit (150-ft.) of either side, whichever is greater. No minimum buffer width is required.

**Acreage must meet the following FWP eligibility requirements:**

- Land must be cropland planted to an agricultural commodity 3 of the 10 most recent crop years and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.
- A wetland must be 10 acres or fewer (5 acres eligible for payment).
- A buffer may not exceed 3 times the size of the wetland.
- Participants must agree to restore the hydrology of the wetland to the maximum extent possible as determined technically feasible by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

- Vegetative cover must be established and the restoration can not impede upstream drainage.
- Wetlands (W), Farmed Wetlands (FW), and Prior Converted (PC) as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), will be eligible except for any wetland in the floodplain adjacent to a perennial stream or a perennial riverine system.

**Contract Duration and Effective Date**

FWP contracts are from 10 to 15 years in exchange for annual rental payments, incentive payments, and cost-share for installing necessary practices. The effective date of the contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval.

**Payments**

Eligible producers may receive the following types of payments:

1. Annual rental payments for a 10- to 15-year period. The annual rental rate is based on the weighted average dryland cash rent, and a maintenance incentive rate.
2. Up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing permanent cover.
3. CRP signing incentive payment (SIP) equal to \$100 to \$150 per acre depending on contract length (made after the contract is approved and

- all payment eligibility criteria is met).
4. One-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible costs of installing the practice (made after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met).
  5. Incentive amount equal to 20 percent of the weighted average dryland cash rent.

### ***Cooperating Agencies***

The FWP is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; state agencies; and local soil and water conservation districts.

### ***For More Information***

Additional information may be obtained at local FSA offices or through the Montana FSA Web site at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mt](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt)

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