

**Fact Sheet****Farmable Wetlands
Pilot Program****Background**

The Farmable Wetlands Pilot (FWP) Program is a six-state voluntary program to restore up to 500,000 acres of farmable wetlands and associated buffers by improving the land's hydrology and vegetation. Eligible producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota can enroll eligible land in the FWP through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). FWP was authorized by the fiscal year 2001 agricultural appropriations act, section 1102.

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 birdwatching and hunting.

State Acreage Allocations

FWP is limited to no more than 500,000 acres in the six states, and no more than 150,000 acres in any one state. The state acreage allocations are:

- Iowa - 100,000 acres;
- Minnesota - 100,000 acres;

- Montana - 25,000 acres;
- Nebraska - 75,000 acres;
- North Dakota - 100,000 acres;
- South Dakota - 100,000 acres.

Signup

FWP signup begins June 4, 2001. Offers will be accepted on a continuous signup basis and are automatically accepted provided the acreage and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Acceptance is not determined by a competitive offer process.

Eligible Land

Eligible acreage includes farmed and prior converted wetlands that have been impacted by farming activities. The maximum acreage for enrollment of wetlands and buffers is 40 acres per tract. A producer may enroll multiple wetlands and associated buffers on a tract as long as the total acreage does not exceed 40 acres.

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 is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.
- A wetland must be 5 acres or less.

- A buffer may not exceed the greater of 3 times the size of the wetland or an average of 150 feet on either side of the wetland.
- Participants must agree to restore the hydrology of the wetland to the maximum extent possible.

Conservation Practices

The conservation practices authorized under FWP are:

- CP27 - Farmable Wetlands Pilot Wetland; and
- CP28 - Farmable Wetlands Pilot Buffer.

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:

- Annual rental payments for a 10- to 15-year period. The rental rate is based on the weighted average dryland cash rent.

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- Upfront CRP signing incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre depending on contract length. This one-time payment is made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met.
- Practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible costs of installing the practice. This one-time payment is made after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met.
- Incentive amount equal to 20 percent of the weighted average dryland cash rent.
- Up to 50 percent cost-share for establishing permanent cover.

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.

Producers can find out details and sign up at their local FSA or NRCS office, both of which are listed in telephone books under "United States Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

More Information

Information about FSA and its conservation programs is available on the FSA website at: www.fsa.usda.gov

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