

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Wetland Initiatives

Overview

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

Wetland Initiatives

The Wetland Restoration Initiative (CP23) is designed to restore the functions and values of wetland ecosystems that have been devoted to agricultural use. This 500,000 acre initiative enrolls wetlands and buffers within the 100-year floodplain. These wetlands prevent degradation of the wetland area, increase sediment trapping efficiencies, improve water quality, prevent erosion and provide vital habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

The Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain Initiative (CP23A) is designed to restore wetlands and playa lakes, which are shallow, depressional wetlands that are located outside the 100-year floodplain. This 250,000 acre initiative provides vital habitat for many wildlife species, filters runoff, recharges groundwater supplies and sequesters carbon.

The Duck Nesting Habitat Initiative (CP37) is designed to restore wetlands and wetland complexes that are located outside the 100-year floodplain that will benefit duck nesting. Restoration of 150,000 acres of such wetlands under this initiative will provide

critical habitat and nesting cover for upland ducks, sandhill cranes and other wildlife species by filtering runoff, reducing downstream flooding, and recharging groundwater supplies. With full enrollment, it is estimated that the initiative will increase duck numbers by 60,000 birds annually.

The Bottomland Hardwood Initiative (CP31) is designed to restore flood plains through the restoration of primarily bottomland hardwoods. This 250,000 acre initiative improves air and water quality and provides carbon sequestration benefits through reduction of greenhouse gases as well as increasing wildlife habitat. Additional incentives are expected to increase enrollment in this initiative. Planting 250,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods would sequester over 500,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.

Sign-up

Offers are accepted on a continuous sign-up basis and are automatically accepted provided the acreage and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Acceptance is not determined by a competitive offer process.

Producers can make offers at local FSA County Offices/Service Centers.

Incentive Payments

Eligible producers may receive the following types of payments:

- Up to 50 percent cost share for establishing permanent cover.
- Annual rental payments for a 10- to 15-year period. The rental rate is based on the weighted average dry-land cash rent.
- An additional incentive equal to 20 percent of the weighted

average soil rental rate is authorized for CRP participants restoring wetlands, establishing bottomland hardwood forests, or creating duck nesting habitat.

- Upfront CRP signing incentive payment of \$100 per acre. 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.

For More Information

For more information about FSA and its conservation programs, visit your local FSA service center or online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

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