



USDA Launches New Conservation Pilot Program for Prairie Pothole Producers to Plant Perennial Cover

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Contact: FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 24, 2020 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced a new pilot program that enables farmers in the Prairie Pothole region to receive payments for planting perennial cover for conservation use for three to five years. The new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) pilot is available to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. The signup for this pilot starts March 30, 2020 and ends August 21.

"We are excited to provide a short-term Conservation Reserve Program option tailored to the unique soil health needs of producers in the Prairie Pothole region," said FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce. "The number of acres that can be enrolled in the program are limited, and participation will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Interested landowners should act now by contacting their FSA county office for an appointment to apply."

Through SHIPP, producers have the option of three-, four- or five-year CRP contracts to establish perennial cover on less productive cropland in exchange for payments. This pilot enables producers to plant perennial cover that, among other benefits, will improve soil health and water quality while having the option to harvest, hay and graze during certain times of the year. Up to 50,000 acres can be enrolled.

Perennial cover, whether used in a single crop rotation or over multiple years, can improve the productivity of soils and soil health on a farm for generations and increase the bottom line for the farmer. Soil health, or soil quality, by definition, is the capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.

The SHIPP pilot is the latest option in a full suite of opportunities available to producers through CRP and other conservation programs offered by USDA. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to talk to their FSA county office soon about whether this pilot fits their operation or consider another longer-term option such as the CRP General signup that ends February 28 or CRP Continuous signup that is ongoing.

For more information, see the [fact sheet](#) or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp and contact your local office. USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While our program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our producers by phone, and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Correction: This release has been revised to replace the term "cover crops" with "perennial cover for conservation use".

Farm Service Agency:

1400 Independence Ave.
SW Washington, DC 20250

Contact:

FPAC Press Desk
FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov