

# CRP Land Alternatives & Options Fact Sheet

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

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## Your CRP contract is expiring. What are your options?



Land in CRP is considered cropland, however not all cropland is created equal in terms of erosion and yield potential. In fact, many of the acres enrolled in CRP may be best suited to other land uses such as buffers, pasture or grazing land, hay, and wildlife habitat.



It's a good idea to take a look at your soils and consider these land use alternatives before making any decisions. Steeper portions, potentially the more erosive soils of CRP land may be best suited to stay in CRP or used for pasture and hayland with some renovation and investment. Other areas, including wetlands, saline areas, filter strips or buffer areas where you may have established, grass, trees or shrubs could continue to provide excellent wildlife habitat and add diversity to your farm. These areas may be eligible for re-enrollment under Continuous CRP. Land coming out of CRP also presents a unique opportunity to initiate organic farming production.

More than likely the decision you make will depend on a variety of factors:

- **Personal goals and interests**
- **Profitability**
- **Soil types**
- **Rental rates**
- **Family situations**
- **Yield expectation**

Your choices will impact the local economy, landscape and environment.

### Options:

- **Re-enroll eligible acres into Continuous CRP**
- **Return to a cropland rotation**
- **Utilize and enhance forage as pasture or hayland**
- **Manage the expired CRP for wildlife**



Before deciding what to do when your CRP contract expires, it is important to consider several factors: soil productivity and limitations, past yields, commodity prices, production, conversion or renovation costs and other required investments. To help guide you through the decision process, review the

following questions. Some are more general while others are specifically related potential land use(s) you may be considering. Feel free to discuss any of these questions or issues with the staff at your local NRCS field office.

## **Land Use Decision Checklist**

### **Re-enroll eligible acres into Continuous CRP**

- Is the entire contract eligible for a continuous CRP practice?
- Is a portion of the contract eligible for a continuous CRP practice?
- How many years will your CRP contract be re-enrolled for?
- What is the new CRP rental rate?
- What enhancements or renovations will be needed if the land is re-enrolled in CRP? (more species diversity, weed control, brush removal, mid-contract management, etc.)
- Other income or cost-share sources? (ND Game and Fish PLOTS program, DU, etc.)

### **Return to a cropland rotation**

- Do you plan to farm or rent the land for cropland?
- What is the planned crop rotation and expected yields?
- Do you have a current soil test?
- Do you plan to use a no-till system to initiate cropping?
- What conservation practices will be required for conservation compliance on HEL fields?
- Are you considering planting winter wheat in the year of contract expiration?
- Do you plan to apply herbicide the fall before planting?
- Do you know where the more productive and less productive soils on the farm are located?
- Is salinity a concern in some areas of your CRP?

### **Utilize and enhance forage as pasture or hayland**

- If you don't own livestock would you consider leasing the CRP as pasture(s) to another operator?
- Would you need additional cattle to make a grazing system economical?
- Is there an adequate source of water available?
- What type of fencing would you use? Are current fences adequate?
- Is there a noxious weed problem on the fields?
- Is the existing forage (grass and legumes mix) adequate for grazing and or haying?
- Would you use any of the pasture for hay?
- What management activities (renovation, fertilization, weed control, prescribed grazing, etc.) are required to maintain or improve the existing stand?

### **Manage the expired CRP for wildlife**

- Do you plan to build a home or some other structure on the site someday?
- Which species of wildlife do you want to support?
- Managed grazing can enhance the area for wildlife. Consider livestock to grazing as a management to maintain a healthy plant community.
- Do you plan to apply herbicide the fall before planting?
- What improvements are needed to make the land more desirable for wildlife species of your choice?
- Other income or cost-share sources? (ND Game and Fish PLOTS program, DU, etc.)

**Where to get help:** Contact your local NRCS office for assistance and continuous CRP options.