

Does your CRP contract expire this year? Don't delay! CRP sign-up runs March 12 to April 6.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering a limited four-week general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up opportunity. Formally known as General Sign-Up 43, the period will run from March 12 to April 6, 2012.

New acres or acres under an expiring Sept. 30, 2012, contract may be eligible to enroll. Contract duration is 10 to 15 years.

Schedule an appointment TODAY at your USDA service center to learn more.

How do I know if my land qualifies for CRP?

Offers for CRP are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). This ranking helps determine the environmental benefits for each parcel offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections are made from that ranking.

FSA uses the following EBI factors:

- Wildlife habitat with diverse grasses and forbs
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion run-off and leaching
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion
- Cost
- Pollinator habitat
- Wildlife food plots

Staff at your local USDA service center are eager to further explain EBI to you. They will also work with you to maximize your EBI points to help make your bid competitive.

What is CRP?

CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits.

Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving cover to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is 10 to 15 years.

Help you can count on...

The State of Minnesota recognizes that CRP and other USDA programs have a major influence on our water, soil and wildlife resources. It is our goal to fully utilize every available option to assist our private landowners in practicing the best methods of conservation on their farms.

Knowledgeable staffs are ready to assist with CRP and put forth a competitive offer for enrollment that works for you and your operation. For further information call or stop by your USDA service center today.

- *Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Partnership*

Contact your local USDA service center for assistance.



Farming and conservation.

"The most important resource in ensuring a stable food supply for the world is our land. Proper use of our land includes smart conservation. That means using environmentally sound agricultural production that conserves the most sensitive land as a means to enhancing the productivity of work-ing land by protecting soil, water, air and wildlife.

This is a challenge that can only be met through broad-based cooperation between farmers, ranchers, businesses, all levels of government and nongovernmental organizations. But we can and will meet the challenge and make a positive difference locally and globally."

Thank you for your work for conservation!

Linda Hennen

FSA Minnesota State Executive Director

Don Baloun

NRCS Minnesota State Conservationist

CRP you can sign up for anytime of the year.

Continuous CRP allows participants to enroll acreages into certain conservation practices at any time during the year. Enrollment in Continuous CRP is voluntary and landowners receive annual payments, incentive payments for certain activities and cost-share for establishment. Offers are not subject to competitive bidding as they are with General CRP.

Priorities include:

- Wetland restorations
- Constructed wetlands
- Flooded prairie wetlands
- Diverse native grass/forb plantings
- Filter strips
- Living snow fences
- Field windbreaks
- Grass waterways

Did you know?

Minnesota has 290,000 CRP acres scheduled to expire this year and more than 820,000 acres scheduled to expire over the next five years.

Other conservation programs and practices. . .

There are a number of other programs and tools available to protect certain types of land while encouraging conservation. Contact your local USDA service center for more information.

Wetlands Reserves Program (WRP)

WRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands and associated uplands on their property. Landowners receive technical and financial support with their wetland restoration efforts to achieve the greatest wetland function and value, along with optimum wildlife habitat on every acre enrolled in the program.

Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)

The RIM Reserve program permanently protects economically marginal, flood prone or highly erodible lands by restoring wetlands, adjacent native grassland wildlife complexes and riparian buffers. This voluntary program compensates landowners for granting conservation easements and establishing native vegetation habitat. RIM is potentially eligible to be used in conjunction with certain CRP practices and WRP for additional benefits.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

This program provides either rental or easement payments to landowners to manage their grasslands. This is a working lands program that could be used on expiring CRP lands or existing grasslands for grazing and related conservation values.

CRP - Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA)

WHPA is a program established to protect groundwater and drinking water resources related to public water supply wells utilizing CRP with additional incentives. The goal of WHPA is to prevent well contamination by managing potential contaminant sources in all or a portion of a well's recharge area.

CRP - Constructed Wetlands (CP39)

CP39 helps develop constructed wetlands to improve water quality, reduce nutrient and sediment loading and improve wildlife habitat. The constructed wetland and associated buffer may be up to 40 acres per tract. Eligible landowners may receive annual rental payments, cost share for establishment and additional incentives.

Additional responsibilities for CRP participants.

CRP participants have additional responsibilities during their CRP contract period including, but not limited to the following:

- Annually certify your CRP with FSA before July 15 of each year.
- Do not disturb the CRP acreage during the primary nesting and brood rearing season from May 15 through August 1, except when prior approval by FSA has been granted to conduct spot maintenance treatment in the immediate area of infestation.
- Conduct applicable management activities listed in the conservation plan as scheduled.
- Request approval from FSA in advance of conducting any acreage management not scheduled in the conservation plan, such as burning, light disking, managed haying and grazing, etc.
- Notify FSA of any changes that may affect CRP payment eligibility or interest in the CRP contract acreage such as transfer of ownership, establishment of trusts or entities, etc.
- Please review your CRP-1 Appendix for details on your responsibilities as a CRP participant; if you do not have a copy of the applicable Appendix, please contact your local FSA office to receive one.

Mid-Contract Management

Promotes plant diversity and wildlife benefits under an existing CRP-1 contract.

- Grass Practices - burning, light disking, inter-seeding, or mowing
- Must be scheduled in the NRCS Conservation Plan and approved by the local COC prior to implementation
- Must be completed outside of primary nesting season (before May 15th or after August 1st)
- Tree Practices - pruning or thinning
- Complete by end of year 6 of a 10 year contract
- Complete by end of year 9 of a 15 year contract

Weed Maintenance on CRP.

CRP participants are responsible for ensuring that CRP acres are maintained throughout the contract period.

Regularly visit and evaluate the condition of your CRP cover to ensure:

- Vegetative cover and conservation practice is being properly maintained to adequately control erosion, protect air and water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Undesirable weeds (including volunteer trees on grass practices), invasive plants, insects, pests and rodents are being controlled.
- CRP acreage is in compliance with the state noxious weed law as determined by the state or local noxious weed commission.
- CRP maintenance activities may be conducted anytime outside the established primary nesting and brood rearing season, May 15 through August 1, without FSA approval; however, spot treatment of specific areas in critical need of maintenance may be conducted anytime with prior approval by FSA.

FSA randomly spot checks CRP acreage; if the acreage is found to have areas not in compliance, a violation will be determined by the county FSA committee (COC).

When a violation occurs, the participant will either be assessed a payment reduction on the affected acres or the affected acres may be terminated and payments refunded.

The established payment reduction for lack of control of undesirable weeds on CRP is \$30, or more, per acre in violation.



USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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expire this year?**
Want to sign up new CRP?
Sign-up period
March 12 to April 6, 2012
CRP details inside!