

# **Benefits of CRP SAFE for Wildlife**

Native, healthy grasslands are important for many iconic Oklahoma species like northern bobwhite quail. Enrolling eligible cropland into CRP SAFE is a great way to enhance habitat for wildlife while receiving rental payments through the USDA's Farm Bill program.



## **CRP SAFE Conservation Benefits:**

- ✓ **Restores native grassland vegetation.**
- ✓ **Provides important year-round habitat for grassland-dependent wildlife.**
- ✓ **Increases food diversity for wildlife.**
- ✓ **Increases nesting habitat for birds.**
- ✓ **Provides nectar-producing wildflowers for butterflies and other pollinators.**
- ✓ **Increases biodiversity.**
- ✓ **Protects highly erodible soils.**
- ✓ **Improves water quality.**
- ✓ **Enhances soil productivity.**
- ✓ **Reduces downstream flood damage.**
- ✓ **Sequesters carbon.**

## **How CRP SAFE Works:**

- 1) Landowners in eligible counties apply through their county USDA office.
- 2) USDA biologists visit the property and/or assist landowners through the enrollment process.
- 3) Landowners follow guidelines and receive CRP SAFE payments annually from the USDA.

## **General Landowner Requirements:**

- Enrolled cropland is planted to native vegetation, including no less than 8 grasses and 10 forbs.
  - a. 50% forb mix when monarch butterfly is primary target (30% when monarch is secondary target).
- At least 1% of acreage will be planted to sand plums if these shrubs were present historically.
  - a. Plums will be planted on 3-5 foot spacings with a minimum patch size of 30 foot X 50 foot.
- Invasive and noxious weeds will be controlled through spot treatment.
- Mid-contract management will occur twice during the contract period including between years 5-8 and years 10-13. Mid-contract management options include:
  - a. Prescribed Burning
    - i. Conducted outside of the May 1 to July 1 primary nesting season.
  - b. Strip Disking
    - i. Conducted only between December 1 and March 1.
  - c. Strip Spraying
    - i. Conducted during the growing season but outside of the May 1 to July 1 primary nesting season.
  - d. Forb/Legume Interseeding
    - i. Requires some type of prior disturbance for optimum germination of the forb/legume seed.
  - e. Mowing
    - i. Conducted only from February 1 through March 15.

## **Habitat Type to be Restored:**

Mixed- and tallgrass prairie, sand sage/bluestem shrubland and sand plum shrubland.



# Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program

Continuous Enrollment Period

**FACTSHEET**  
January 2021

## Overview

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will conduct a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) continuous enrollment indefinitely in 2021.

CRP is a federally-funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead devoted to conservation benefits. CRP participants establish long-term, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. Accepted contracts for this CRP enrollment period will become effective Oct. 1, 2021.

CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (the 2018 Farm Bill). FSA administers CRP, while other USDA agencies and partners provide technical support. Additional information on CRP is available in the FSA fact sheet, "**Conservation Reserve Program.**"

## Submitting CRP Offers

Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP may be offered for enrollment during this CRP general enrollment period. In addition, CRP producers whose CRP contracts are expiring on Sept. 30, 2021, including acres expiring from certain State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practices and the Highly Erodible Lands Initiative (HELI) contracts may submit offers.

To submit CRP offers, producers must contact their local FSA office.

## Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to the end of this CRP enrollment period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstance of the acquisition presents adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

## What Land is Eligible?

To be eligible for the CRP continuous enrollment period, land must be cropland (including field margins) that is planted, or considered planted, to an agricultural commodity four of the six crop years from 2012 to 2017, and be physically and legally capable of being planted (no planting restrictions due to an easement or other legally binding instrument) in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Alfalfa or other multiyear grasses and legumes grown in a rotation not to exceed 12 years may



USDA photo



## CRP Continuous Enrollment

### Additional Cropland Requirements

In addition to the eligible land requirements for the CRP continuous enrollment period, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of eight or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acres; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

### CRP Payments

FSA provides those applicants who are selected for CRP general enrollment with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance.

- **Rental Payments:** In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent subject to a statutory 85 percent proration. County office staff working with the producer will calculate the maximum CRP rental rate for each offer prior to enrollment. Producers may offer land below the rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.
- **Cost-Share Assistance:** FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance cannot exceed 50 percent of the participant's costs to establish approved practices.

### Ranking CRP Offers

FSA will rank offers for the CRP continuous enrollment period according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data (primarily based on location, soils information and selected conservation practice) and determines the environmental indices for the land offered.

FSA ranks each eligible offer in comparison to all other offers and selects from that ranking. After the enrollment period ends, the Secretary of Agriculture will decide where

to make the EBI cutoff. Those who have met previous EBI thresholds are not guaranteed a contract under this enrollment period. Producers may consult with local FSA and Natural Resource Conservation (NRCS) staff on how to maximize EBI points and increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

More information on EBI for the CRP enrollment period is available by reading the FSA fact sheet, "**Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment, Environmental Benefits Index.**"

### CRP Continuous Enrollment

Producers at any time can participate in CRP continuous enrollment period, in which producers can enroll the most environmentally sensitive land. More information on CRP continuous enrollment is available in the FSA fact sheet, "**Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-Up.**"

### More Information

This fact sheet is for informational purposes; other conditions may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator).