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358,553 acres of Iowa farmland is idle through Conservation Reserve programs

The August sign-up for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve will idle another 15,993 acres in Iowa for the next ten years.

USDA announced this week that it accepted bids from 2,928 Iowa farmers at an average bid of \$77.44 per acre. The Conservation Reserve pays farmers annual rental fees for planting highly erodible land to grass or trees.

Iowa ranks seventh in the country in the number of acres accepted in the August bidding. Texas has the most acres accepted, with 827,991, followed by Colorado, 508,320; Kansas, 386,300; Minnesota, 368,112; Oklahoma, 293,271; and Montana, 219,801.

After three bidding periods this year, 358,553 acres have been entered into the program in Iowa. Nationally, the figure is nearly 9 million acres.

"The amount of land accepted has grown with each sign-up," says Mike Nethery, State Conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service. In the first sign-up earlier this year, only 40,951 acres were accepted in Iowa. The second period netted an additional 101,600 acres.

"I think farmers understand the price USDA is willing to pay for the land, and I also think they are becoming aware of the conservation rules USDA is going to use to allow farmers to remain eligible for most USDA programs in the future," Nethery says.

"The farmer who puts his eroding land into the reserve is looking down to road to 1990 and 1995, when he'll have to have his land in a conservation plan and have the land protected. It's a good move, because this steep land could be expensive to treat for conservation and continue to

crop," Nethery says.

With the three sign-ups, 5,248 Iowa farmers have entered 358,553 acres into the reserve at a cost of \$26,783,168 per year.

"Our goal for the first year of the program was 476,600 acres, so we fell short a little. But we still think we can get our longer

term goal of more than 4 million acres in Iowa if the program continues," Methery says.

USDA is expected to announce another sign-up for the reserve later this year. The Agricultural Service and Soil Conservation Service administer this program.