

What can the CRP Program Do for Me?

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was established in 1985 to encourage farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas to grass and trees on land that needs protection from soil quality. The vegetative cover improves water and soil quality and also provides food and habitat for wildlife.

Landowners agree to seed this land down for a period of 10 to 15 years based on the practice. In return, landowners receive annual rental payments, incentive payments, and cost-share assistance to establish vegetation. Farmers can also receive a one-time sign-on bonus on most practices. Landowners can apply for signup incentives for contour buffer strips, shallow water areas for wildlife, and contour buffer strips on terraces through the Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Funding is provided to the Districts by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation through their Buffer Initiative Program. Other practices receive the signup incentive through Farm Service Agency, Commodity Credit Corporation. In addition to this incentive a practice incentive payment of 40% of the eligible practice installation cost is paid, plus 50% cost share for establishment of the practice.

Eligible landowners must have owned the land for at least one year or operators must have leased the acreage for at least one year. Acres are automatically accepted into the program at a rental per acre based on the soil types. Landowners may signup anytime throughout the year. Eligible land includes cropland that is physically and legally capable of being cropped, that has been planted to a commodity crop during any 4 of 6 years from 1996 to 2001.

Eligible practices include:

Filter Strips can be established on cropland adjacent to streams, wetlands, or the river. A seeded area of 20' to 120' will be established to grasses.

Riparian Buffer Strips are acres of trees and/or shrubs and grass planted 35' to 180' next to streams, wetlands or the river to filter out pollutants from runoff, as well as provide shade for fish and other wildlife. Certain marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment in this practice without meeting the cropping history requirement.

Shelterbelts & Field Windbreaks are belts of trees or shrubs planted in single or multiple rows to help reduce wind erosion. They protect growing plants, provide habitat for wildlife, and may also help shelter structures and livestock. In most cases a three row minimum is required.

Grassed Waterways are channels that are planted to suitable vegetation to prevent soil erosion during storms. Grass waterways help and prevent gullies and washouts, greatly reduce loss of topsoil, and prevent the sedimentation of water bodies. The width is based on the drainage area coming into the channel.

Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife provide cover and water for wildlife. The water may be confined using embankments, berms, or chisel-dripping out of the soil to hold water. The adjacent areas are planted to permanent vegetative cover.