

Farmers put acreage on hold in program

By **MARY THOMPSON**

Courier Farm/Business Writer

Northeast Iowa farmers have enrolled 22 percent of the acreage accepted in Iowa in the fourth round of signing up for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

A total of 1,029,762 acres have been tentatively accepted in Iowa from 12,388 farmers, including 227,669 acres in 20 Northeast Iowa counties.

With the total program enrollment — including 358,553 acres in the first three sign-ups — 5.8 percent of the state's 24 million acres of cropland will be enrolled in the CRP.

Winneshiek County had the highest number of bids accepted at 369 with a total acreage of 30,648. Woodbury County had the highest acreage accepted at 34,952.

Wayne County is believed to be the only county in the state to have reached the maximum enrollment level of 25 percent of the cropland, according to Bill Hawks of the Iowa office of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS). He added that there was discussion the county may request a waiver to accept additional acreage.

Hawks said state officials hope to notify counties today of bids that have been tentatively accepted.

		Mitchell 183 8,563 1,375	Howard 273 25,702 5,700	Winneshiek 369 30,648 7,289	Allamakee 246 20,416 3,200		
		Floyd 201 13,421 2,963	Chickasaw 198 16,420 3,663	Fayette 213 16,613 3,532	Clayton 306 24,256 11,000		
Franklin 125 6,205 1,817	Butler 178 12,750 2,507	Bremer 91 4,856 416					
		Black Hawk 29 1,316 55		Buchanan 50 2,356 589	Delaware 99 6,319 1,255	Dubuque 180 14,337 1,000	
Hardin 263 3,505 536	Grundy 19 642 0						
		Tama 171 14,287 3,450	Benton 73 5,057 1,646	Top number: Bids accepted Middle: Acres accepted Bottom: Acres in previous sign-ups			

Final acceptance depends on if the property meets ownership and erodibility requirements. "In many cases, that has not yet been investigated," Hawks said. "With a three-week sign-up, we had a lot of paper work flying."

Jim Thompson, Winneshiek County ASCS director, was not surprised that his county topped the state in number of bids.

The change in eligibility require-

ments made quite of a bit of the county's 310,000 cropland acres eligible, he noted. Producers have become more informed about the program with each sign-up and "the bonus was great," he added.

Only 134 bids and 6,900 acres were accepted in the county in the first three enrollment periods, he noted. If all the acreage is accepted from the fourth sign-up, the county will still be less than halfway to the allowable 25

percent limit of 77,000 acres.

For the fourth sign-up, which ended Feb. 27, Iowa is second in acres enrolled to Texas, which has 1,324,181 acres. Nationally, 20 million acres of land have now been enrolled, just under half of the goal of 45 million acres.

Under the program, farmers submit bids for rental to be paid in exchange for removing the land from production for 10 years.

There was substantial interest in the fourth sign-up because of changes making more land eligible for the program, and a one-time bonus payment of \$2 per bushel on the yield on the number of acres the crop base is reduced.

Producers enrolling in the program also are eligible for cost-sharing funds to establish a conservation cover on the land.

The Department of Agriculture estimates the latest sign-up in Iowa will cost \$79.3 million, plus \$122 million in bonus payments.

The maximum bid excepted in Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Fayette, Grundy, Howard, Tama and Winneshiek counties is \$85. In Hardin, Franklin, Butler, Floyd and Mitchell counties, the maximum is \$90 per acre.