



## The Farm Bill Conservation Programs



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Across America, farmers and ranchers are using voluntary programs provided through the Farm Bill to be better stewards of our natural resources. Land afflicted by erosion, rivers and streams harmed by farm-related pollution, and wetlands and grasslands converted to agricultural fields are all being restored through incentives provided in Farm Bill conservation programs. Good agricultural policy can help us head off environmental problems before they become a crisis.

As one of the nation's leading wildlife conservation organizations, Defenders of Wildlife recognizes that conserving the full suite of plants and animals will require the enthusiastic cooperation of landowners across the country. Almost 60 percent of at-risk species exist on private and/or state lands. Nearly 40 percent of listed plant and animal species are found only on private lands, and 70 percent of the land area of the United States is in private ownership for ranching, forestry or agricultural use. Incentives programs are one of the best ways to help landowners help wildlife. Farm bill conservation programs offer a proactive approach to address the long-term health of the landscapes that support American agriculture.

### Farm Bill Land Conservation Programs

#### **Conservation Security Program**

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is one of the newest voluntary programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Under this program, farmers and ranchers can receive income support for their efforts to maintain and enhance the quality of the soil, water, air and habitat on their operations. The Conservation Security Program currently offers three tiers of enrollment based on the scope of resources addressed and the amount of farmland involved. Contracts are for five to 10 years, with an annual payment based on the duration of the contract. The best stewards can receive up to \$45,000 per year.

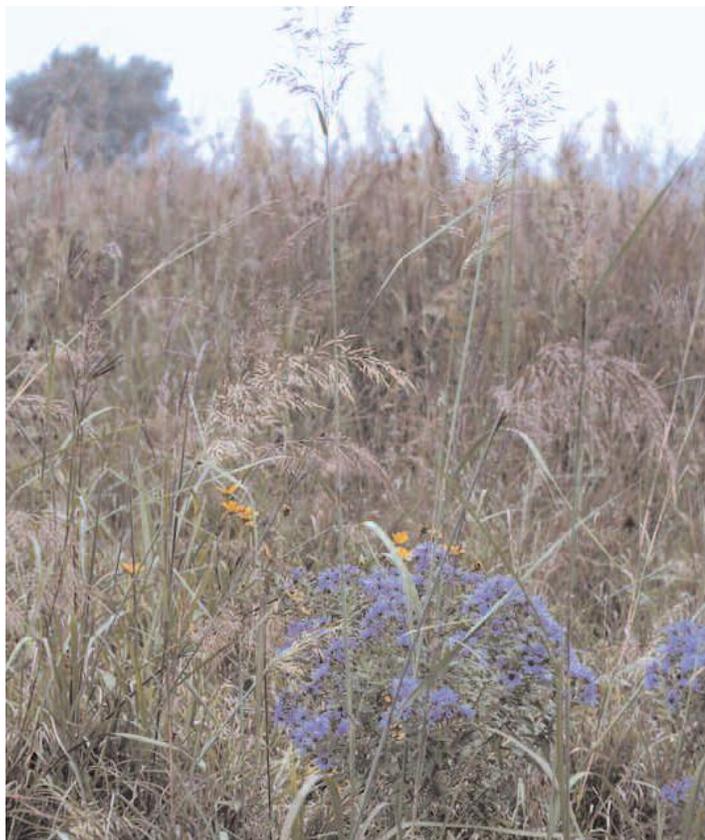


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## **Conservation Reserve Program**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the nation's largest conservation program, was established in 1985 to help farmers reduce soil erosion. CRP pays farmers to take croplands out of production and plant grasses or other year-round cover to stabilize soils and improve wildlife habitat values. "Continuous enrollment" allows farmers to sign up any time for assistance with planting grasses and trees along streams to reduce stream-bank erosion. Landowners receive rental payments and up to 50 percent cost-sharing.



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## **Wetlands Reserve Program**

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) helps restore and protect wetlands on agricultural lands. WRP pays for conservation easements on enrolled lands and provides up to 100 percent funding for habitat restoration work. To date, WRP has restored nearly 1.8 million acres of wetlands.

## **Grassland Reserve Program**

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) helps landowners protect and restore grasslands, pasturelands, rangelands and other lands supporting shrubs and forbs. The program funds up to 90 percent of restoration costs and pays landowners for conservation easements or an annual rental agreement.

## **Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program**

The Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP) helps protect agricultural land from urban sprawl and other development. The landowner agrees to a permanent conservation easement and receives a onetime, up-front payment equal to the fair market value of the development rights and continued use of the land for agricultural purposes. This permanent easement keeps the land from being developed.

## **Cost-Share Incentive Programs**

### **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) provides cost-share assistance to restore and promote healthy habitat for animals and plants. Any landowner can use WHIP to create or enhance upland or wetland habitat and receive up to 75 percent cost share. For species of concern, 15-year contracts and 100 percent costshare are available.

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) assists farmers with technologies and practices to reduce air and water pollution, energy use and wildlife habitat impacts, while maintaining operations that are productive. EQIP offers up to 75 percent cost sharing for approved conservation measures.