

Conservation Reserve program evolving

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State to lose 100,000 CRP acres

The 2012 Conservation Reserve Program general signup resulted in 104,298 acres enrolled into the 10-year CRP starting on Oct. 1, according to Dan Steinkruger, state director for USDA's Farm Service Agency.

"We are excited to enroll or re-enroll over 100,000 acres into this critical conservation and environmental program in Nebraska; however, the CRP program is downsizing in Nebraska and nationally," Steinkruger said.

Nebraska has a little over 201,000 acres coming out of CRP on Oct. 1. With the recent signup there will be a net loss of 100,000 acres of CRP across the state. These acres are being returned to crop production or for grazing.

This reduction will leave about 900,000 acres in CRP in Nebraska, down from peak enrollment of over 1.34 million acres in 2007.

"For more than 25 years, CRP has protected natural resources in Nebraska while providing economic and environmental benefits to rural communities through the state," Steinkruger said. "The newly accepted CRP offers will continue the CRP legacy by improving water and air quality, increasing wildlife habitat and preventing soil erosion."

All CRP signup 43 offers were evaluated and ranked using the Environmental Benefits Index that consists of the following five environmental factors plus cost: wildlife enhancement, water quality, soil erosion, enduring benefits and air quality. The national average rental rate per acre for this signup is \$51.24.

Nationwide, USDA accepted enrollment of 3.9 million acres bringing the total program enrollment to 29.6 million acres.

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Landowners enrolled in CRP receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Accepted contracts will become effective Oct. 1.

“The change in CRP acreage in Nebraska and nationally is driven by the economics of higher commodity and livestock prices,” Steinkruger said. “With economic changes impacting CRP it is important that landowners and farmers evaluate enrolling small acreages and/or special CRP practices so that we can continue the environmental, wildlife and outdoor economic activity benefits of CRP across the state.”

For more information about the Conservation Reserve Program, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.