



CRP-Grasslands Program

ICA Fact Sheet
September 2015

What is the CRP-Grasslands Program?

The CRP-Grasslands program was created by Congress through the 2014 Farm Bill. The program will be administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and emphasizes support for grazing lands. Basic provisions for the CRP-Grasslands program along with changes to the general CRP program were announced in a July 2015 edition of the Federal Register.

CRP-Grasslands Eligibility

A maximum of 2 million acres can be enrolled in the CRP-Grasslands program nationally. Iowa may propose up to 1,025,590 acres for inclusion in the State Focus Area. Applications within the State Focus Area will be awarded additional ranking points for consideration. CRP-Grasslands applications are ranked after each batching period using Grassland Ranking Factors, including:

- Existence of expiring CRP or Grassland Reserve Program contract o *Iowa has roughly 3,500 acres enrolled in the Grassland Reserve Program*
- Existing grassland
- Multi-species cover existence and predominance of native species
- Livestock grazing operation
- State Focus Area determined in consultation with State Technical Committee o *Adams, Appanoose, Clark, Davis, Decatur, Lucas, Ringgold, Taylor, Union, Wayne Counties for the state of Iowa*

CRP-Grasslands Payments

In return for following an approved CRP conservation plan, FSA provide will provide an annual rental payment to participants at 75 percent of the grazing value of the land. CRP-Grasslands contracts will be 15 years in length.

Program Cost-share

To participate, farmers and ranchers must agree to use long-term conservation practices on their grasslands, such as rotational grazing or improving pasture cover to benefit pollinators or other wildlife. Up to 50 percent of the cost for employing conservation “covers” can be paid by federal cost share.

Grazing Restrictions

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices, produce hay, mow, or harvest for seed production (subject to certain restrictions during the

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nesting season of bird species that are in significant decline or those that are protected under federal or state law), conduct fire rehabilitation, and construct firebreaks and fences.

CRP-Grasslands Enrollment

Interested participants may file applications with FSA at any time. These applications will be batched and reviewed several times a year to determine which applications can be approved. An eligible producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP enrollment period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

General CRP Program Changes

The rule amended several CRP regulations to implement provisions of the 2014 Farm Bill. Changes pertinent to Iowa cattlemen are listed below.

- Reduced number of CRP acres.
- Eliminated payment reduction for emergency haying and grazing.
- Restricted routine grazing to not more than once every 2 years, with a 25% payment reduction minimum.
 - Beginning farmers and ranchers are exempt to payment reductions.
- Allowed beginning farmers and ranchers to perform prescribed grazing to control invasive species without a payment reduction.
- Penalty-free early CRP contract termination beginning (FY) 2015 for contracts that have been in effect for at least 5 years and meet certain environmental criteria.
- Referenced veteran farmers and ranchers to the Transition Incentives Program.
- Allowed the transfer of land in CRP to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
- Decreased the amount of cropland (not in a National Conservation Priority Area) that can be in a State Conservation Priority Area (CPA) from 33% to 25%.
- Expanded CRP contracts for continuous and general signup to between 10 and 15 years.
Permitted wind turbines on CRP land, provided the number and location are approved.

Stay Tuned

The Iowa Cattlemen's Association is very supportive of the proposed changes to the CRP program, specifically those affiliated with the CRP-Grasslands program. This program in effect, mimics a working lands program that keeps acres in production while generating economic activity in rural Iowa communities.

The enrollment period for the CRP-Grasslands program began in September 2015. Contact your local FSA office to enroll.

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