

Conservation Reserve Program

Upland Bird Habitat Buffers

Restore Wildlife Habitat | Reduce Soil Erosion | Enhance Water Quality



Why Choose CRP? You Benefit Land, Water, and Wildlife.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a proven land performance and management solution. Whatever the challenge—soil conservation, water quality protection, or wildlife habitat enhancement—CRP provides a range of opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

Administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency, CRP provides financial and technical assistance to remove environmentally sensitive farmland from production and convert it to conservation cover for a 10- to 15-year contract period.

What are Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds?

Over the past two decades, many field edges and hedgerows have been plowed under to create more cropland. These buffered borders served as vital living space for quail, pheasant, and other grassland birds whose populations have been declining. Planting native grasses and other vegetation in buffers around crop fields restores this nesting and brood-rearing habitat to important farm wildlife.





Creating Habitat Buffers

By creating buffers along cropped fields or establishing vegetative cover in pivot corners, farmers can provide important habitat patches and corridors to facilitate wildlife movement across agricultural landscapes. These areas of native vegetation are critical to reversing the decline in upland bird populations.

Establishing conservation cover in these less productive portions of the field not only provides habitat for grassland-dependent birds and other wildlife, but also benefits both the farmer and the whole environment in a variety of ways. This practice:

- Protects water quality by reducing erosion and trapping agricultural runoff before it can reach streams, wetlands, and other waterbodies
- Provides wintering shelter for fields after crops are harvested
- Attracts hunting, birdwatching, and other recreational activities that contribute to the growth and vitality of rural economies
- Reduces weed and pest invasion on cropland

Buffered crop fields have been shown to contain more northern bobwhite coveys and birds per acre than cropped fields that were not buffered.



For more information about FSA and its programs, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

Photo Courtesy of Lynn Betts, NRCS