

Conservation Reserve Program

RESTORING WILDLIFE HABITAT

Enhance Wildlife Habitat | Reduce Soil Erosion | Enhance Water



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.

Why Restore Wildlife Habitat?

As land is converted for development or agricultural uses, wildlife is left with fewer natural areas for breeding, nesting, brooding, and thermal cover. Managing land for wildlife is compatible with farming and ranching operations. By retiring land providing low agricultural yields and converting it to buffers, wetlands, forest, prairie, and sage habitat, farmers not only reduce costs and improve the bottom-line of their farming operation but help wildlife populations thrive. As an example, 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. The additional habitat created protects water quality by reducing erosion and preventing agricultural runoff from reaching streams, wetlands, and other waters. At a larger scale, such areas provide recreational and aesthetic benefits, such as hunting and wildlife viewing, potentially of benefit rural economies.

Photos Courtesy of MO Dept. of Conservation and Peter Berthelsen respectively



Restoration of Wildlife Habitat

Over the past two decades, 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 native vegetation in buffers around crop fields gives bobwhite quail and other important farm wildlife additional nesting and brood rearing habitat. A less recognized but critical role for these buffers is the wintering shelter they provide after crops are harvested.

The wildlife using these buffers attract hunters, bird watchers, and others. The dollars they spend in pursuit of these recreational activities contribute to the vitality of rural economies. Farmers, ranchers, and forest owners potentially benefit through sale of wildlife leases and personal use of the habitat created.

Establishing Conservation Cover

- Restores habitat patches in agricultural landscapes
- Decreases chances of weed or pest invasion on cropland
- Intercepts sediment and nutrients, protecting water quality

Restoring Wildlife Habitats

- Hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing support a multi-billion dollar industry
- Revenue from hunting and fishing licenses, federal excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment, and funds raised by private conservation organization, complement state and federal appropriations that support wildlife conservation in the US
- Conservation practices implemented by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners help to recover populations of wildlife species of concern

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