

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM



MAKE CONSERVATION PART OF YOUR FARM

Small farmers, sometimes referred to as hobby farmers, aren't always in it to make a living. They, like Ron Main, have mixed motivations for keeping and working their land.

Main is a small-scale Wayne County farmer who works full-time at another job. He says the cost of modern machinery is one reason he doesn't farm more ground. Main owns 300 acres and about four years ago put 100 of the steepest acres into the Conservation Reserve Program.



"I'm an avid hunter and fisherman," he says. As hunting ground becomes more restricted, Main's CRP acres guarantee he has a place to hunt and quality habitat to attract the birds.

With higher corn prices, Main says it will be tempting to go to crops and cash rent when the contract expires, but a renter can't guarantee the same payment for 10 years.

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Conservation Reserve Program land helps reduce the decline of grassland birds like the above dickcissel.

Carl Joy, another southern Iowa farmer, likes to hunt and uses CRP to build up his hunting ground and bring more birds into the neighborhood. But Joy also uses CRP to replace hard-to-farm, small-point rows on less productive soils. Joy says the CRP grasses he plants are easier to work, and might yield a few birds, too.

Other landowners may use the program to build up waterways to control erosion and improve water quality in their watershed.

For the small landowner or hobby farmer, the Conservation Reserve Program is a powerful tool to use to achieve their goals.

For more information, contact your local DNR biologist found on the enclosed letter, or go to www.iowadnr.gov.