

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM



BEEF UP PRODUCTIVITY ON YOUR FARM

“Farm the best and CRP the rest,” says Fayette County landowner, Dick Jensen, who crops 700 acres and also keeps 140 acres in the CRP and another 160 in woodland.

His farm near Elgin, the “Little Switzerland” of Iowa, includes “good soils that have been abused and neglected.” To Jensen, “soil is a living, breathing part of us.” Putting those soils into CRP improves soil quality over time.

Jensen’s strategy works for any farmer who wants to diversify and reduce risk. Enrolling the least productive and most erodible land into CRP can help guarantee a stable income over the long term.

Dave Hansen of Clear Lake agrees. He’s been fighting a small field on steep ground for years. As equipment grew larger, this piece above the Winnebago River grew more difficult to farm. “I was at a soil commissioners meeting and all of a sudden the solution hit me – CRP.”



Hansen says putting the small field into native prairie grasses and wildflowers pays off in more than updated rental rates. “It also protects water quality in the river and provides habitat for grassland birds.”

Modern GPS-equipped tractors and combines can help crop producers target portions of fields with low yields. It’s easier than ever to decide which parts of the field are only marginally profitable and don’t justify planting when production costs are high.



For livestock producers like Terry Carpenter in southern Iowa, CRP offers a reduced payment option that allows him to mow one-third of the contract acres every year for hay. “I can always use the hay ground,” he says. “I seed it down, save the soil and put up hay.”

When corn and bean prices are high, it pays to remember the threat of increased soil erosion, high levels of frustration and the real costs: more sediment in streams and loss of wildlife habitat. CRP may look like a winner.

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