

Farmable Wetland Program (CP27, 28)

Restoring wetlands reduces downstream flood damage, improves surface and groundwater quality, and recharges groundwater supplies. Wetlands provide vital habitat for migratory birds and many wildlife species, including threatened and endangered species, and provide recreational opportunities such as bird watching and hunting.

► Environmental and Conservation Benefits from Wetlands

These programs not only provide financial incentives to the landowner/operator, but also provide a lot of benefits for the environment. Wetlands help control floods. Every wetland is a tiny flood control reservoir. Without these “reservoirs”, there is nothing to hold the water on the land. The result is devastating flooding like we saw in 1993.

Wetlands help control pollution. They trap excess nutrients and chemical contaminants, and in some cases break them down into harmless substances. Studies at the Leopold Center for the study of sustainable agriculture at Iowa State University showed that a one-acre wetland could effectively purify the nitrate runoff from about 100 acres of cropland. In fact, wetlands are now used to treat sewage, and are just as effective as the “high tech” methods.



Wetlands also reduce siltation of downstream lakes, rivers and oceans. Silt is one of the most serious pollutants we have, and any reduction is a benefit. Many wetlands are important in re-charging ground water supplies. Water that rushes down a tile or ditch doesn't soak into the ground, but standing water in a wetland can.

Wetlands and grassland buffers around wetlands provide tremendous benefits for wildlife that make their homes near or in wetlands. Many wildlife species cannot live without wetlands. We hear a lot about ducks, and they are some of the most visible wetland creatures. However, hundreds of other species ranging from salamanders to muskrats, also require wetlands to survive.

Wetlands provide countless hours of recreation through hunting, photography and nature study. They display the beauty and diversity of nature; they are wild, open spaces that refresh the soul. Perhaps more importantly, wetlands are simply a natural and vital part of our environment.

► Financial Benefits of Farmable Wetland Restoration CP27-28

Financial Incentives include:

1. 50% cost share reimbursement for restoration of the wetland and surrounding buffer.
2. 40% practice incentive payment (this brings total cost-share reimbursement to 90%).
3. An upfront sign-up incentive payment of \$75.
4. A 10-15 year annual rental payment averaging between \$150 to \$190 dollars per acre.

▶ **An Example of How Buffers Pay**

Farmable Wetlands not only benefit the environment, they also benefit your pocketbook. For example, assume you 5 acre area of ponded soil. You decide to put all 5 acres in the Farmable Wetland Program as well as the maximum 3:1 buffer area, or 15 acres. Your total wetland and buffer area is 20 acres.

If your soil rental rate is \$170/acre at the end of a fifteen year period you will have receive \$2,550 per acre or a total of \$51,000. You will probably have invested around \$27 per acre in your wetland restoration and buffer seeding; therefore, your net gain would be approximately \$2,523, per acre or \$50,460.

▶ **Do I Qualify for the Continuous CRP**

The continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is administered through the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA).

▶ **Do I qualify?**

You qualify for the continuous CRP if your land is:

1. You have cropland that was planted or considered planted to agricultural commodities 4 of 6 years between 1996 and 2001.
2. Must be wetlands, farmed wetlands, or prior converted cropland outside of the 100 year floodplain.
3. 10 acres or less of wetland (up to 5 of which will receive an annual rental payment)
4. Participants must agree to restore the hydrology of the wetland to the maximum extent possible.

▶ **When can I sign-up?**

Offers for the continuous CRP are automatically accepted. If your land qualifies and if you are satisfied with the rental rates you are in the program.

▶ **Where do I sign up?**

You can sign-up at your county FSA office. It is a good idea to call in advance for an appointment to avoid a long wait or a wasted trip. If you want some help determining if you are eligible for the program before talking with FSA, a trip to your county NRCS office or a visit from your Wildlife Specialist would be a good idea.

▶ **Where Do I Get Help in Designing My Wetland**

Assistance for planning and installing your wetland is available from the USDA NRCS staff or the IDNR Wildlife Bureau Private Lands Program. Contact your local NRCS office or your Wildlife Specialist for assistance. Your Wildlife Specialist can meet with you on your property and design a plan for your project that will design both the wetland restoration as well as the grassland buffer including matching grass and forb species to the planting site, provide site preparation and maintenance information. Your Wildlife Specialist can also provide you with a list of local contractors as well as seed dealers.

▶ **Contact your Wildlife Specialist**

(<http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/privatelands/staff.html>)

▶ **Where Do I Get Iowa grass and forb seed**

When undertaking any grassland restoration project it is always best to utilize Iowa native plant material. These grasses and forbs will be better adapted to our climate and growing conditions than seeds from other regions of the country. There are several excellent sources for purchasing Iowa native grass and forb seeds available for your wetland buffer planting. Your Wildlife Specialist can provide you with a list of local seed dealers.