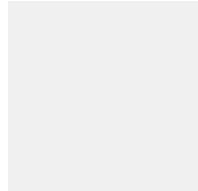


Background on the Farm Bill and Wildlife Connection



What is the Farm Bill?

The Farm Bill is one of the most important federal policies affecting US agricultural conservation. The Farm Bill has existed in different forms for many years and comes up for reauthorization approximately every five years. The last Farm Bill, known as the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, expires in 2012. Most of the Farm Bill funds are spent on nutrition, but commodity programs, crop insurance, energy, and conservation programs are also part of the Farm Bill.

Visit this page to learn more about [how the Farm Bill is funded](#).

How does the Farm Bill help wildlife?

Some of the nation's most successful voluntary conservation programs are funded by the Farm Bill. Across the country, farmers are protecting wildlife habitat, controlling soil erosion and reducing polluted runoff with assistance from Farm Bill programs. Yet these popular programs are woefully under-funded. Many landowners who would like to do more for fish and wildlife are turned away for a lack of funds. It is very important to the future of wildlife on private lands that the next Farm Bill, which should be authorized in 2012, provides sufficient funding to address conservation needs. Visit this page to [learn more about how Farm Bill conservation helps wildlife](#).

Learn about Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Several different Farm Bill conservation programs have helped improve wildlife habitat in the US. Learn about the unique functions of each program in the page below.

- [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP)
- [Grassland Reserve Program](#) (GRP)
- [Wetland Reserve Program](#) (WRP)
- [Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program](#) (WHIP)

- [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#)
- [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)

Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pays farmers annual rental payments under 10-15 year contracts, to set aside marginal land. The program also pays up to half the cost of establishing conservation practices that address soil erosion, water quality, wetland and forest enhancement, and wildlife management. Examples of these practices include establishing vegetative cover or trees on erodible cropland, planting native grasses, thinning or conducting controlled burning of pine forests, and placing filterstrips along stream banks to stem polluted runoff and provide habitat for wildlife. As of February 2012, just over 29 million acres were enrolled in the CRP.



David Davis is proud to be a part of the solution for declining sage grouse populations, which once flourished in western Washington, but have since declined by about 75 percent. Davis and his fellow farmers in Douglas County, Washington have turned nearly 186,000 acres of wheat into sage grouse habitat since CRP was created in 1985. “The birds were disappearing until CRP got going,” Davis says. “This summer, I saw 10 or 12 young sage grouse cross the road just before harvest. I’ve never seen that before.” Davis’s success is being repeated in Oregon, Idaho and Montana, where greater sage grouse also are using CRP habitat.

Grassland Reserve Program

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program that enables landowners to restore or protect native grasslands on portions of their property. Grasslands are valuable wildlife habitat currently in decline. Due to limited funding, there is a backlog of over 800,000 applications from farmers to participate in the GRP.



Jeff Basford owns a farm in Dodge County, MN. According to NRCS, Mr. Basford was able to create valuable wildlife habitat through the Grassland Reserve Program while working to achieve his land management goals. A wide range of wildlife, including many bird species, have benefited from the planting of native grasses on the farm. “You know that old saying: If you make it they will come. Well, they did,” said Basford. The native warm season grasses have provided valuable habitat in both the summer and winter seasons for pheasant populations, according to NRCS.

Wetland Reserve Program

The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) allows interested farmers the opportunity to restore, maintain and protect wetlands on their property. Most lands restored under WRP are marginal, high risk, flood-prone lands that wouldn't be suitable for growing crops. The WRP enables landowners to take these lands out of production and restore them to beneficial use as wetland wildlife habitat.



One of the first WRP projects in Michigan, the Portage River Restoration, has become a perfect example of what can happen when a farmer is willing to take marginal cropland out of production and put it towards a higher use. According to NRCS, this 180 acre wetland restoration located in Jackson County, restored 80 acres of marsh and 100 acres of grassy wetlands and uplands – perfect fall migratory staging and breeding habitat for Sandhill cranes and other migratory waterfowl. This part of Michigan has one of the highest nesting densities of Sandhill cranes in all of North America thanks in part to wetland restoration projects such as

this one. The land remains in private ownership, with a permanent easement to protect it into the future.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that pays up to 75 percent of the cost to private land owners of enhancing wildlife habitat on their land. The program is not limited to agricultural lands, but is open to any private landowners who would like to create wildlife-friendly habitat enhancements to a portion of their land, such as restoring native prairie grasses, performing forest management practices, or improving aquatic areas.



In Moore County, NC, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is helping a local community partner with an equestrian facility with the overall goal of restoring longleaf pine savanna that, according to NRCS will be beneficial to local wildlife. The hope is that the new habitat will be beneficial to the endangered Red cockaded-woodpeckers as well as other types of wildlife, including amphibians, reptiles and grass and shrub- breeding birds. Winter fires are being used to clear the forest floor, allowing for increased sunlight and improved habitat conditions.

Conservation Stewardship Program

Unlike programs that pay farmers to set aside certain lands, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) rewards agricultural producers for environmentally-friendly measures they are willing to undertake on the lands that they keep in production. CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Similar to CSP, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices on their lands. Practices are based on a set of national priorities that are adapted to each state. These priorities include: reduction of point- and non-point source pollution to watersheds and groundwater; water conservation; reduction of soil erosion; and promotion of wildlife habitat for at-risk-species.

