Planting trees boosts chances for acceptance into the General CRP.

The General Conservation Reserve Program is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). The program cost-share tree planting and grass establishment on highly erodible land and pays landowners an annual rental payment for up to 15 years. Sign-ups for the general CRP are announced by USDA.

Under the general CRP sign-up landowners can receive between $100 to $150 per acre land rental rates and 50% cost-share reimbursement for installation of the CRP practice. The general CRP involves a highly competitive bidding process that uses an Environmental Benefit Index (EBI) to score each bid. There are several ways to improve your offer or bid using trees:

- **Plant Trees**: Trees provide additional EBI points because they remain a vital and integral part of the landscape long after the expiration of the CRP contract. Trees also provide the most efficient long term method of locking up atmospheric carbon. Tree plantings are eligible for 15 years of land rental payments. They may also be eligible for a tax year re-enrollment in CRP under the existing tax practice (CP1) prior to the expiration of the original CRP contract.

- **Plant Good Habitat**: A mix of either trees or grasses that provides maximum benefits to wildlife in your area will maximize your offer. Assistance with species selection and planting for tree plantings is provided by IDNR Forests.

- **Enter the Steepest, Most Erodible Soils**: Some CRP offers may be enhanced by dividing fields and excluding flatter less erodible soil from your bid offer. Work with your county FSA office or DNR forester or biologist to determine if this option would improve your chances to get into the program.

- **Plant Hardwoods**: Hardwood tree plantings offer the most EBI points of all CRP practices.

Incentive payments from the Continuous CRP

The continuous sign-up under the Continuous CRP Reserve Programs provide excellent financial incentives for landowners who want to protect highly sensitive environmental areas such as riparian areas adjacent to streams and creeks and other water bodies and wetland areas. Tree planting practices eligible include: bottomland timber planting, living snow fence, field windbreaks, forested buffers, and shelterbelts. Land is eligible for this program if it has been or considered planted 4 years from 1996 to 2001 or it is marginal pastureland that is suitable for the intended CRP use. An eligible landowner may sign up at any time. Financial benefits include:

- **50% cost share reimbursement for establishing tree and shelter-cove.**
- **40% practice incentive payment for installing a forested riparian buffer or field windbreak (this brings total cost-share reimbursement to 90%).**
- **An upfront sign-up bonus payment of $100 per acre.**
- **A 15 year annual rental payment averaging between $120 to $150 dollars per acre on cropland and $40 dollars per acre on marginal pasture.**

How to sign up for CRP

The Continuous CRP Reserve Programs are administered through the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. FSA technical assistance for tree planting is provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Iowa DNR Bureau of Forestry. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will make a determination on land eligibility and the IDNR Bureau will assist with project planning. Contact any of these agencies for more information on tree planting assistance through CRP. Local offices, including DNR district foresters, are located in USDA Service Centers– usually in the county seat.
They’re growing Iowa’s Woodlands - You can, too.

Facts about Iowa’s Woodlands

It’s a fact. Landowners like the five couples featured in this publication have helped replant Iowa. In fact, Iowa’s forests had dwindled from an original 7 million acres to only 1.4 million acres in 1974. The state now has 2.8 million acres, surpassing the acreage of woodlands more than a century ago.

How much of that woodland is privately owned?

About 138,000 woodland owners own 90% of the woodlands in the state.

Other interesting facts:

• Since 1954 Iowa has annually lost 5,800 acres of oak forest. Iowa is currently losing about 1% of its oak forest annually.
• According to the Iowa Society of American Foresters, forests contribute more than $800 million to the state’s economy each year.
• More than 12,000 Iowaans are employed in the woodland industry.
• There are two private, non-profit organizations devoted to supporting sustainable forestry in Iowa: the Iowa Woodland Owners Association and the Iowa Tree Farm system.

If you like to see wildlife

Most people who plant trees want to see more wildlife on their land. District foresters of the IDNR can help you develop a long-term plan to provide wildlife habitat for specific species as your woodland grows and changes. A few things to keep in mind:

• Selecting trees to plant. Favor trees and shrubs that produce seed, berries and fruit. Plants such as dogwood, chokecherry and staghorn hold their fruit, berries or fruit through the winter to supply critical food.
• Include conifers. They supply important winter cover for wildlife.
• To optimize habitat for the widest range of species, try to maintain as much vegetative diversity as possible.
• Woodlands openings, especially along ridgelines, add wildlife “edges” for species needing edge.
• Large, mature trees that produce nuts and acorns and offer nesting are essential habitat for turkeys, squirrels and deer. Especially important for turkey nesting are large trees on ridgelines and along lowland drainage banks.
• Periodic brush cutting, understory burning, and alternating tree thinning will improve understory vegetation, a critical part of woodland habitat for wildlife.
• Don’t allow livestock to overgraze, trample, and compact soil in woodlands.

Trees BesT for Land

Trees are the best use of the land in many cases. Iowa Woodland Owner’s Association, Jack believes it makes sound economic sense to plant timber on your land. District foresters can help you develop a plan.

Other interesting facts:

• Iowa farms have 2.8 million acres, surpassing the acreage of woodland in the state.
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