

Expiring CRP Land: Alternatives & Options

Nebraska Fact Sheet

April 2009

Your CRP contract is expiring. What are your options?



Land in CRP is considered cropland, however not all cropland is created equal in terms of erosion and yield potential. In fact, many of the acres enrolled in CRP may be best suited to other land uses such as cropland with buffers, pasture, hayland, or wildlife habitat.



It's a good idea to take a look at your soils and consider these land use alternatives before making any decisions. Areas with steep slopes or more erosive soils may be best suited to stay in CRP or used for pasture and hayland with some renovation and investment. Other areas, including wetlands, concentrated flow areas, field borders or areas where you may have established trees or shrubs could continue to provide excellent wildlife habitat and add diversity to your farm. Some of these areas may be eligible enrollment in Continuous CRP. Land coming out of CRP also presents a unique opportunity to initiate a continuous no-till or organic cropping system.

More than likely the decision you make will depend on a variety of factors:

- **Personal goals and interests**
- **Profitability**
- **Soil and site limitations**
- **Rental rates**
- **Taxes**
- **Family situations**
- **Yield expectation**
- **Livestock access**

Your choices impact the local economy, landscape and environment.

Options:

- **Enroll eligible acres into Continuous CRP**
- **Return to a cropland rotation**
- **Utilize and enhance forage as pasture or hayland**
- **Manage the expired CRP for wildlife**
- **Potential contract extension or re-enrollment in general CRP**



Before deciding what to do when your CRP contract expires, it is important to consider several factors: soil productivity and limitations, past yields, commodity prices, production, conversion or renovation costs and other required investments. To guide you through the decision process, review the following questions. Some are

more general while others are specifically related to potential land use(s) you may be considering. Feel free to discuss these questions or issues with the staff at your local NRCS field office.

Land Use Decision Checklist

Enroll eligible acres into Continuous CRP

- Is the entire contract eligible for a Continuous CRP practice?
- Is a portion of the contract eligible for a Continuous CRP practice?
- How many years will your CRP contract be enrolled for?
- What is the new CRP rental rate?
- What enhancements or renovations will be needed if the land is enrolled in Continuous CRP? (More species diversity, weed control, brush removal, mid-contract management, etc.)

Return to a cropland

- How will you convert existing vegetation to cropland?
- Can you apply a burn-down herbicide the fall before planting?
- Do you plan to farm or rent the land for cropland?
- What is the planned crop rotation and expected yields?
- Do you have a current soil test?
- Can you maintain soil quality by using a no-till system to initiate cropping?
- What conservation practices will be required for conservation compliance on HEL fields?
- Are you considering planting winter wheat or spring planted crop in the year of expiration?
- Are there more productive soils on the farm that are more practical to crop?

Utilize or enhance existing forage for pasture or hayland

- If you don't own livestock would you consider leasing the CRP as pasture(s) to another operator?
- Would you need additional cattle to make a grazing system economical?
- Is there an adequate source of water available?
- What type of fencing would you use? Are current fences adequate?
- Is there a noxious weed problem on the fields?
- Is the existing forage (grass and legumes mix) adequate for grazing and or haying?
- Would you use any of the pasture for hay?
- What management activities (renovation, fertilization, weed control, prescribed grazing, etc.) are required to maintain or improve the existing stand?
- Is there cost-share available for fencing and water development (EQIP, NRDs, etc.)

Manage the expired CRP for wildlife

- Do you plan to build a home or some other structure on the site someday?
- Which species of wildlife do you want to support?
- Can managed grazing to maintain a healthy plant community enhance the area for wildlife?
- What improvements are needed for desired wildlife species?
- Other income or cost-share sources? (fee hunting, NRDs, NE Game and Parks, PF, etc.)

Potential contract extension or re-enrollment in general CRP

- Is this option available or when would it be available?
- What type of vegetative enhancements would be required (e.g. native grasses & forbs)?
- How will the land be managed in the interim (fee hunting, wildlife habitat, pasture, hayland)?

Where to get help: Contact your local NRCS office for assistance and continuous CRP options.