



Government Conservation Programs

Policy Resolutions Webinar 2017

Illinois Farm Bureau

Governmental Affairs & Commodities Division

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CURRENT IFB POLICY

- Some programs mentioned in Policy 33: Soil Conservation
 - RCPP, EPA 319, CRP, CREP, EQIP
- Policy 74: Conservation Reserve Program





POLICY 33: SOIL CONSERVATION

We support:

4. Using available funding sources, such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program or Illinois EPA Section 319 grants, to support SWCD efforts.
14. Allowing an exemption to the NRCS manual for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) money to be used for streambank stabilization practices prior to the adjacent land's expiration in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract or a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) contract.



POLICY 74: CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

We support:

1. The continued funding of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) through current methods, plus private sources of contributions (e.g. conservation groups, hunting groups, and environmental groups) to remove fragile lands from production.
2. Basing the judging criteria for CRP enrollment upon the land's erosion potential as cropland and not on its current erosion status.
3. Conservation programs with a focus on protecting environmentally sensitive areas with filter strips, buffers, and other beneficial practices while reducing overall program costs.
4. An expansion of the continuous signup CRP acreage to include:
 - A. Filter strips along waterways.
 - B. Greater widths of waterways, filter strips, field borders, and riparian buffers.
 - C. Setbacks at road intersections.
 - D. Crop protection product setbacks around tile inlet structures.
 - E. Up to one acre filter strips around standpipes and other intakes where surface water enters directly into subsurface water.
 - F. Grassed terraces.
 - G. Buffers around villages, timbered areas, irrigation reservoirs, ponds, and stormwater retention basins.
 - H. Expanding the statewide allocations on field borders and upland restoration projects.
 - I. Approving a 20 percent incentive for all projects using native prairie grasses, forbs, shrubs, or trees.
 - J. Allowing enrollment of and acceptance of "infeasible to farm" acres (an area that is too small or isolated to be economically farmed).
 - K. Farms declared not insurable in the crop insurance program because of wildlife crop damage to be eligible to be enrolled in the CRP.
5. Legislation which ensures that both tenant and landlord interests will be fairly protected.
6. Limitations on participation rates so as not to adversely affect local farm land rental rates.
7. The practice of planting vegetative filter strips along both sides of ditches and waterways to improve water quality. Strips of variable widths should be eligible for the CRP.
8. Programs being made available to give farmers viable economic options to traditional crop production following expiration of CRP contracts.
9. The ability of all drainage district easements to be included in the CRP filter strip program.
10. Provisions that would allow farmers and landowners to terminate participation in the CRP if the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) cannot meet the agreed contractual payment amount within 30 days of its due date or is forced by budget constraints to reduce the annual payment amount as set forth in the CRP Contract. If the farmer opts out of the CRP all past due monies will be paid with accrued interest.
11. Continuation of CRP on fragile and environmentally sensitive lands formerly enrolled in CRP if the CRP is not continued at current levels. Qualified land areas should be determined by county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

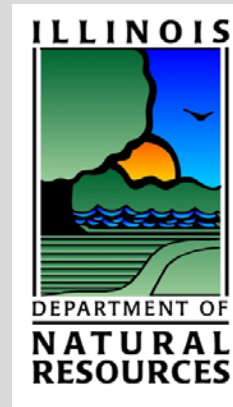
12. Encouraging USDA to give adequate credit during CRP sign-ups for areas throughout the nation that experience wind erosion on sandy soils.
13. The broadening of criteria for enrollment or re-enrollment of land in CRP. Examples of the criteria include but are not limited to:
 - A. Land with the highest environmental benefits index (EBI).
 - B. Land targeted based on type of CRP cover or conservation practice, with priority given to land in trees, alley cropping, or with special conservation attributes.
 - C. Land targeted based on water quality, air quality, soil quality, and wildlife.
 - D. Land that, if cultivated, would be most damaging to the environment. For example, land that would likely opt out of farm programs and conservation compliance due to high compliance costs.
14. The elimination of the Erodibility Index as an exclusionary consideration for concentrated CRP sign up.
15. Wildlife habitat improvement, especially on CRP acreage.
16. The Conservation Reserve Program's State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) practice that provides financial incentives to producers.
17. Recognition in the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) that qualifying established cover practices on acreages being re-enrolled in the CRP provide certain benefits over destroying existing stands to plant preferred species.
18. The evaluation of all CRP property by the county NRCS office staff to ensure that previously recommended Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been maintained before the property can be re-enrolled in CRP.
19. Haying and grazing of CRP acres at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture in weather-related or other emergency situations in a timely manner.
20. Each state Farm Service Agency (FSA) office determining CRP rates and acreage qualifications as opposed to the national USDA office.
21. Increasing the enrollment of filter strips in the CRP and offering incentives for re-enrollment.
22. The continuation and expansion of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) with full funding.

We will oppose:

1. Any effort to allow the public to automatically use or have access to private property that is enrolled in CRP.
2. Further changes in CRP which would allow conservation acreage to be brought back into permanent production before the ten-year contract expires.
3. The use of CRP land for biomass fuel production without a corresponding reduction in CRP payments.



WHO HAS PROGRAMS?



Commodity groups, conservation NGOs, etc...





- **Conservation Stewardship Program (5-year min. contract)**
 - Builds on (and pays for) existing conservation activities
 - Requirements (and pays for) additional enhancements
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**
 - “Fix it”
 - 60% nationally goes towards livestock-related projects
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**
 - More for entities – SWCDs, conservation groups, IDOA



Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (10-15 year contracts)

- 36 practice options to choose from
- Conversion from crop to conservation practice
- Examples: native grasses, wetlands, grassed waterway, filter strip

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- Focused on most environmentally sensitive ground
- 100-year floodplain or Highly Erodible Land (HEL) adjacent to the floodplain
- 20-30% incentive on top of rental rate



WORKING LANDS VS. LAND RETIREMENT

- AFBF Policy 239 National Farm Policy
- Point 7: 2018 Farm Bill Principles: We support:
 - Working lands conservation programs over retirement lands programs
- Example of working lands program: CSP
- “helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation”
- Vs. Land retirement program (i.e. Conservation Reserve Program CRP)
- Farmers “agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality”





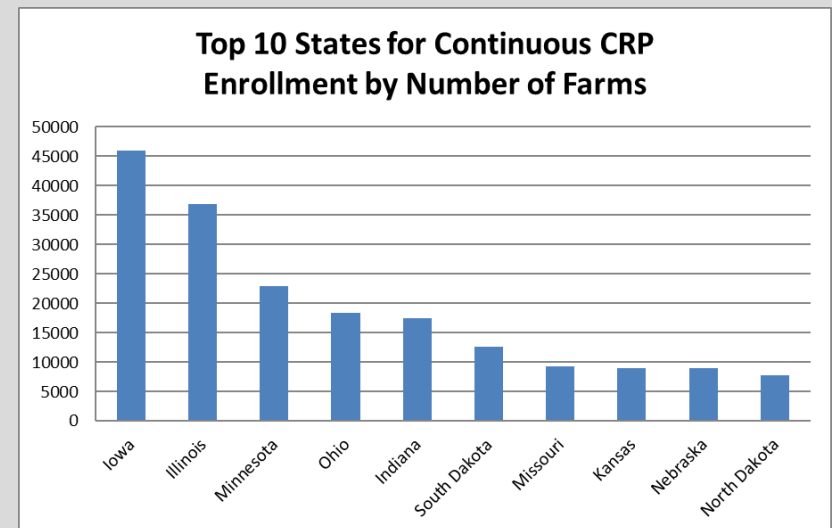
TRENDS IN ILLINOIS

Conservation Reserve Program - VERY POPULAR!

- As of July 2017:
- 78,882 contracts
- involving 43,768 farms
- covering 896,648 acres
- In 2015, USDA invested
- \$153.2 million to enroll 894,391 acres

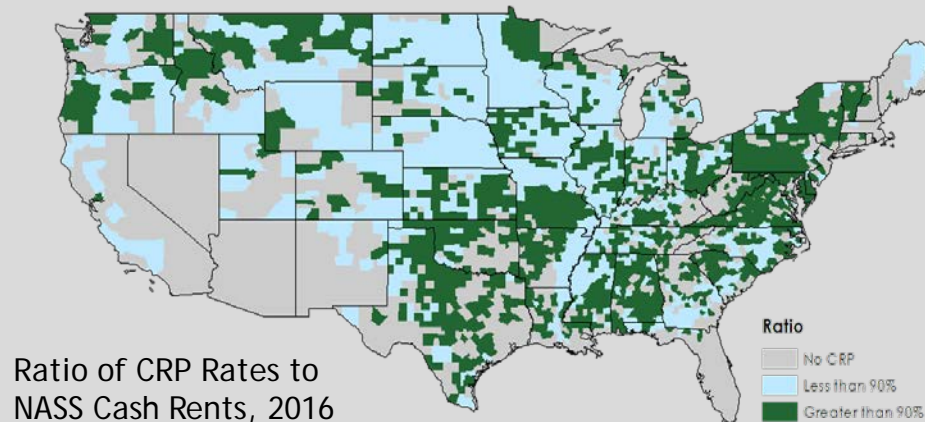
Working lands

- In 2015:
- CSP: USDA invested \$35.7 million
- EQIP: USDA invested \$15.5 million



TRENDS AT USDA

- Considerations for CRP
 - National cap, capping certain acreage limits per practice, reducing incentive payments and rental rate caps
- Conservation Stewardship Program
 - Revamp in 2016 - easier sign up and better service from field offices
- USDA Illinois - NRCS Staff training / certification expectations



TRENDS AT USDA, CONTINUED

Special initiatives:

- **NRCS: Landscape Conservation Initiatives**
 - Mississippi River Basin Health Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
 - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
 - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
 - Working Lands for Wildlife (with USFWS)
 - Monarch butterfly / honey bees
 - Migratory birds
 -
- **FSA: CRP Special initiatives**
 - Examples: Pollinator habitat, upland bird habitat, ...
- Movement away from traditional practices (ponds, waterways)





STATE / OTHER PROGRAMS

IL Department of Agriculture

- Cost-share, streambank stabilization, SWCD support

IL Department of Natural Resources

- Illinois Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

IL Environmental Protection Agency

- 319 Grant for watershed planning and implementation

USFWS Illinois Partners for Wildlife Program, for habitat creation / enhancement

SWCD Programs





IFB 2018 FARM BILL PRIORITIES

- Maintaining the current level of federal risk premium support.
- A livestock disaster program for multiyear disasters with improved coverage levels and partially subsidized premiums.
- Supporting a floating commodity loan program that increases loan rates, addresses conservation goals and the credit needs of beginning farmers.
- Basing farm program payments on the location of the land, not administrative county.
- A one-time sign-up for the farm program that is automatically renewed each year for the duration of the program if there are no changes in the farming operation.
- Giving farmers the option to update yields and reallocate base in the next farm bill.
- Making more timely commodity program payments based on calendar or fiscal year, not marketing year.
- Opposing any expansion of conservation compliance provisions to commodity program participation.
- Supporting an increase in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage and the ability to retire environmentally sensitive land for a period of three to five years.
- Supporting annual updates to county soil rental rates that better reflect current rental market payments and minimize impact on tenant farmers.
- Limiting the size of pollinator tracts with an emphasis on smaller tracts.
- Supporting a fully funded Market Access Program (MAP) and a fully funded Foreign Market Development (FMD) program.
- Raising the loan limit and simplifying the process for FSA beginning farmer loans.
- Allowing farmers to re-apply for FSA beginning farmer loans to diversify their operations.
- Support shorter NASS surveys to improve farmer response rates and survey accuracy.





QUESTIONS

- What kind of conservation programs are most helpful to you?
- Are there issues with how government conservation programs are administered?
- What kinds of special initiatives would we support?



RESOURCES

USDA:

- NRCS
 - [Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
 - [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)
 - [Special Landscape Initiatives](#)
- FSA
 - [Conservation Reserve Program](#)
 - [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#)

IL Department of Agriculture: [Conservation cost-share, streambank stabilization](#)

IL Department of Natural Resources: [State CREP Easement Program](#)

IL Environmental Protection Agency: [319 Grant](#)

US Fish & Wildlife Service in Illinois: [Partners for Wildlife](#)





QUESTIONS / IDEAS

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