

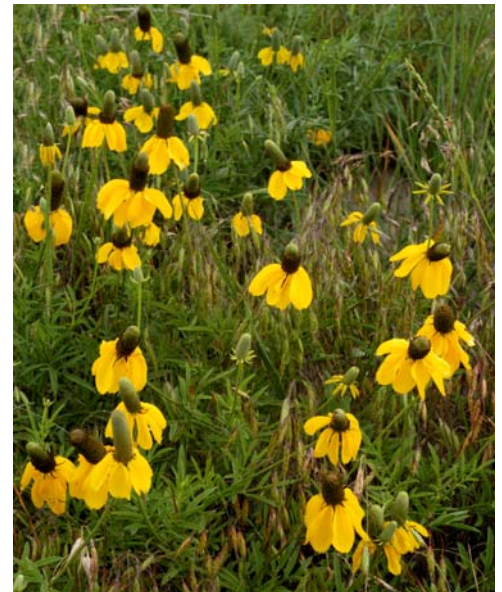
Expiring CRP?

Keeping Wildlife in Mind

As of 2009, Kansas had just over 3 million acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Established in 1985 to protect highly erodible and other environmentally-sensitive lands, CRP has created valuable habitat for many species of wildlife, including popular game species such as pheasants, Bobwhite Quail and prairie chickens. By 2011 over one-half of the CRP contracts in Kansas will have expired. Due to a national reduction in authorized acres some of these expiring acres will not qualify for re-enrollment.

When a CRP contract expires, landowners are faced with management decisions that will affect wildlife populations, water quality, soil erosion and income producing opportunities. The basic alternatives include returning all or part of the land to crop production, retaining the vegetation for livestock or forage production, using the land for recreational purposes such as hunting or enrolling at least parts of the land into other conservation programs or some combination of these. Economics will generally determine land use decisions, and each alternative will need careful consideration. The real estate value of rural land with good wildlife habitat is increasing as many buyers look for opportunities for outdoor activities.

Most land enrolled in the CRP was highly erodible and difficult to farm. Returning such land to crop production requires meeting highly erodible land conservation compliance rules to retain eligibility for U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA) commodity or conservation programs. Landowners should consider “farming the best and leaving the rest” if the land is returned to crop production. Fortunately, the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) can help landowners do exactly that. Marginal lands with the least potential for profitable farming may be eligible for payments through the CCRP and therefore could be maintained as permanent vegetation and left for wildlife. The CCRP practices can diversify farm income and maintain the environmental benefits achieved by CRP. Under CCRP, USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) may enroll eligible land devoted to certain conservation practices at any time. The FSA accepts qualified offers without a bid process. CCRP contracts are for 10-15 years and may pay an enhanced rental rate.

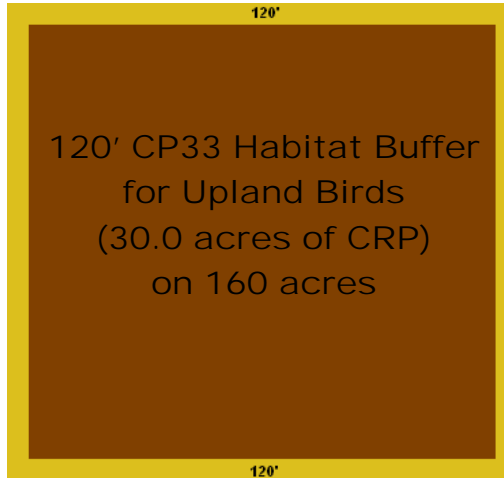
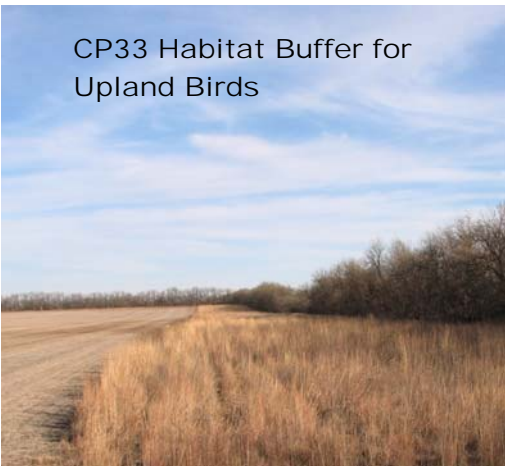


Options for Re-enrolling Parts of the Field in Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP)

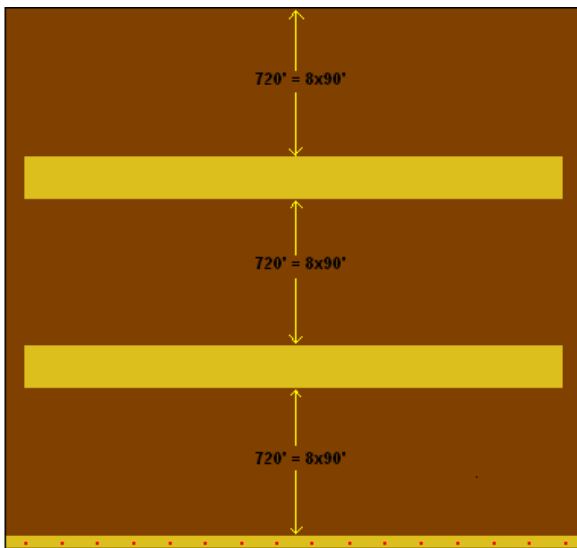
Careful planning before breaking out CRP grassland will help maintain critical habitat for wildlife and provide other environmental benefits. Areas around streams and other water bodies can be protected with CP21, Filter Strips. Wetlands within cropland may be eligible for protection and restoration providing valuable habitat for waterfowl and pheasants using continuous practices CP23, CP23a, CP27 and CP28. Practices devoted to creating habitat for wildlife include CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds and CP38E, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE). These practices and others may give landowners financial incentives to maintain nesting, brood rearing, travel corridors and winter cover that is often lacking within intensively farmed areas.



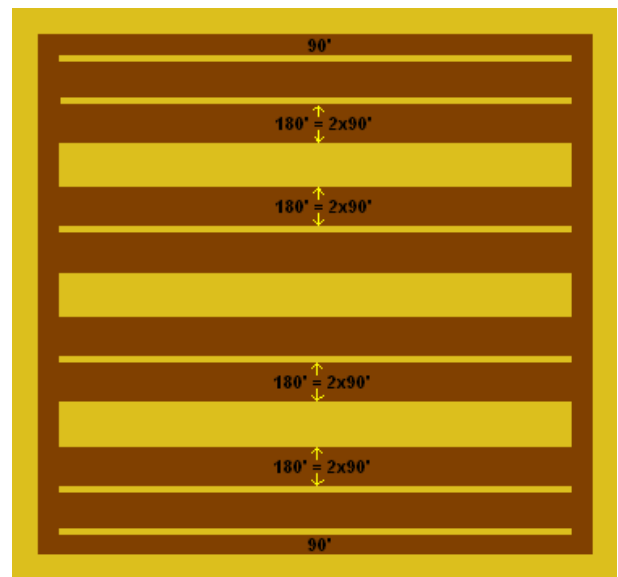
By combining multiple CCRP practices on the same field it may be possible to maximize re-enrolled acres on expiring CRP. These examples were laid out to accommodate a 90 foot sprayer but can be tailored for any planter, sprayer or drill width. Landowners should contact their local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office for planning assistance.



Waterway straightened to facilitate farming with "Flexible Buffer" CP38E State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



(2) 200' CP38E Safe Buffers and (1) 60' CP38E SAFE Buffer underneath the power line adds up to 26.0 acres of CRP.



Multiple CCRP practices adds up to 66.0 acres of CRP on 160 acres. 120' CP33 Habitat Buffer (3) 200' CP38E SAFE buffers and (6) 25' CP24 Cross Wind Trap Strips.

Ranching and wildlife management are generally very compatible. Good rangeland management and good wildlife management, go hand in hand, especially for prairie chickens. Because CRP land was formerly cropped, adequate fencing and water sources are often lacking. Landowners who want to use expired CRP for livestock production should check with the local NRCS office about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which offers cost-share funding for cross-fencing, watering, controlling invasive trees, managed grazing and prescribed burning on eligible land. Landowners with an interest in improving habitat for wildlife can contact their local wildlife biologist and check on cost share opportunities and planning assistance through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Park's Landowner Incentive Program.



For additional information on Continuous CRP visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

For information on EQIP and WHIP visit: <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

To contact a Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Biologist go to: <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news> or call 620-672-5911

For additional information on the economics of alternative uses of CRP go to: www.oznet.ksu.edu/library See - MF-2827 "Decision Considerations for Expiring CRP Contracts" March 2008.

Examples of Continuous CRP Practices that can maintain many of the benefits achieved with CRP

- CP8A Grass Waterways**
- CP15A Contour Grass-Strips**
- CP15B Contour Grass Strips on Terraces**
- CP21 Filter Strips**
- CP23 Wetland Restoration, Floodplain**
- CP23A Wetland Restoration, Non-flood plain**
- CP24 Cross Wind Trap Strips**
- CP27 Farmable Wetlands**
- CP28 Farmable Wetlands Buffer**
- CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds**
- CP38E State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)**



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