

Let's talk about the CRP Land Conservation Program. Did you know that December 2020 marked its 35-year anniversary? Over the next year there will be highlights that impacted the program that was created in 1985 and the many stewardship-minded farmers, ranchers and landowners who have participated over the years.

CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the U.S. The program was originally primarily intended to control soil erosion and potentially stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. This Farm Bill program has evolved over the years, providing a variety of conservation and economic benefits from coast to coast.

A couple of the highlights of CRP Land are the benefits to bees and other pollinators and increased populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds, which will be good for the future of our kids and grandkids. The program has also prevented more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks. The program reduced nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95 and 85 percent respectively and sequestered an annual average of 49 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to taking 9 million cars off the road. And it has also created more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, enough to go around the world 7 times.

The CRP program helps the farmers and ranchers through the United States. With the exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and agree to plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP run 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. If you are interested to see if you qualify for the program now is the time, general signup is running from Jan. 4, 2021 through Feb. 12, 2021. In Kansas, 72% of applicant acres qualified as CRP Land as of 2020.\