

Recommendations For USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The following are recommendations from South Dakota Grassland landowners, producers, and other stakeholders. These ideas are suggestions to increase the impact CRP has on conserving grasslands.

Remove the 25% payment reduction for non-emergency grazing of general and continuous CRP, while maintaining a 25% payment reduction for non-emergency haying.

Align national CRP enrollment cap with high producer demands

Improve CRP outcomes by boosting CRP rental payments.

In years when emergency use of CRP is authorized, no more than 50% of a general or continuous CRP contract should be hayed.

Provide grazing infrastructure cost-share support for grazing all general and continuous CRP contracts.

Increase the entity limitation on annual rental payments from \$50,000 to a minimum of \$125,000 per entity to account for changes in land rental rates, and other economic factors.

Remove grassland CRP from being counted towards the county enrollment cap for CRP.

Remove one year ownership requirement for CRP enrollment.

See reverse for more on these recommendations

Why are these recommended?

Remove the 25% payment reduction for non-emergency grazing of general and continuous CRP, while maintaining a 25% payment reduction for non-emergency haying.

This recommendation is intended to increase the appeal of participation in CRP, and to encourage the healthy use of grazing livestock on grasslands.

Outside of emergency grazing and haying allowances, most CRP contracts allow grazing at 50% each year, or 100% every two years, with a CRP payment reduction of 25%. Our recommendation is to remove this payment reduction for grazing.

Align national CRP enrollment cap with high producer demands

Grassland CRP is a cost-effective way to support conservation and working lands. However, there is more demand for enrollment than what can be accepted due to the cap on acres that can be enrolled in CRP nationally. This cap includes acres in all CRP programs.

Improve CRP outcomes by boosting CRP rental payments.

To be truly effective at achieving CRP's goal of protecting vulnerable grasslands, payments must be comparable with cropland rental rates.

In years when emergency use of CRP is authorized, no more than 50% of a general or continuous CRP contract should be hayed.

CRP provides a valuable forage reserve for livestock producers in years of weather extremes. However, in years when grassland growth is already reduced, haying of entire fields of general and continuous CRP can be detrimental to the intended soil, water, and wildlife benefits of the program.

Leaving 50% of a CRP field standing maintains these benefits while also providing emergency forage relief to livestock producers when drought occurs multiple years in a row. The remaining 50% of a CRP field also provides some of the best outdoor recreational opportunities in the nation.

Provide grazing infrastructure cost-share support for grazing all general and continuous CRP contracts.

To support grazing on general and continuous CRP, infrastructure is needed. Cost-share for improvements like cross-fencing and water systems will also encourage producers to keep their expired CRP as grasslands.

Increase the entity limitation on annual rental payments from \$50,000 to a minimum of \$125,000 per entity to account for changes in land rental rates, and other economic factors.

CRP payments support those who choose to provide ecological services by maintaining their land in grasslands. Currently, that support is capped at \$50,000 per entity. In some situations, this cap limits landowners' abilities to maintain grasslands.

Conversely, there is no cap on the support provided through subsidized crop insurance to those who choose to use their land for crops. We would like to see the entity limitation raised, or removed, to align with a lack of cap on crop insurance subsidy payments.

Remove Grassland CRP from being counted towards the county enrollment cap for CRP.

USDA can not currently enroll more than 25% of the total cropland in a county in CRP. The total for this 25% combines acres in general CRP, continuous CRP, grassland CRP, CREP, and ACEP-WRE. In South Dakota, the county cap has not yet limited enrollment, however we feel there is no reason for Grassland CRP to be included as it stays in production, being hayed or grazed annually.

Remove one year ownership requirement for CRP enrollment.

Decisions for land use are often made soon after purchase, and having the option to choose to enroll in CRP in the first year could be instrumental in how the owner manages their land.