

## Where to Go for Assistance

The NRCS, DSC, and SWCD staff are located at the USDA Service Center in every county in Iowa. They provide free technical assistance on a voluntary basis to landowners to help them conserve and protect the soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources on their land.

The Iowa DNR has wildlife biologists located throughout the state, with private lands biologists who specialize in providing technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve wildlife habitat. Phone 515-281-5918 for the name of a DNR biologist or forester near you.

Numerous other organizations and agencies provide conservation assistance or programs, including local Pheasants Forever Chapters, Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Iowa State University Extension, and Resource Conservation and Development offices. Contact your local NRCS office for ideas and local contact information.

## Abbreviations of Conservation Agencies

**NRCS**—USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
[www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov)

**SWCDs**— Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
(*See DSC website*)

**DSC**—Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Division of Soil Conservation  
[www.agriculture.state.ia.us/soilconservation.html](http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/soilconservation.html)

**FSA**—USDA Farm Service Agency  
[www.fsa.usda.gov/ia](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ia)

**Iowa DNR**—Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

**FWS**—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)



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# A Guide to Conservation Programs

*for Iowa Landowners*



*Your quick reference to financial and technical  
assistance for conservation on private lands.*

 **NRCS** Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

Des Moines, Iowa, August 2006

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

**Purpose:** To provide incentives to landowners to establish wetlands for water quality improvement in the tile-drained regions of Iowa.

**Practices:** Wetland restoration and adjacent buffer establishment.

**Eligibility:** Enrollment is on a continuous basis. Eligible land must be in one of thirty-seven counties in North-Central Iowa, and must meet the basic eligibility requirements for USDA's Conservation Reserve Program. Eligible lands must be in landscape positions to intercept significant tile flow while not obstructing normal drainage.

**Contract:** Landowners will enter a 15-year contract similar to the Continuous CRP. State funds are used for additional one-time, up-front incentive payments to encourage participating landowners to enter into a required additional 15-year agreement or permanent easement. USDA and State funds provide for 100% cost-share.

**Contact:** SWCDs, DSC, FSA, NRCS

## Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

**Purpose:** To reduce erosion, increase wildlife habitat, and improve water quality through the application of conservation plans (landowner sets aside cropland with annual rental payments).

**Practices:** Tree planting, grass cover, small wetland restoration, prairie restoration, and others.

**Eligibility:** Varies by soil type and crop history. For general signups, land is accepted into the program if the offer qualifies. Continuous signup is open for buffers, waterways, and environmental practices. Living snow fence practice now pays for 100-foot wide snow catch area with a match for areas near state highways, non-floodplain wetlands restoration initiative, and

northern bobwhite quail habitat initiative.

**Contract:** 10-15 years depending on type of practice. Transferable with change in ownership.

**Contact:** NRCS, FSA, SWCDs

## Conservation Security Program (CSP)

**Purpose:** To reward farmers and landowners for past conservation work and provide technical and financial assistance to develop conservation plans that address specific natural resource concerns.

**Practices:** Most structural and management practices are eligible with the exception of animal waste storage and treatment facilities.

**Eligibility:** Most agricultural land in Iowa is eligible except for land in WRP, CRP and GRP. Sign up is open on a watershed-by-watershed basis.

**Contract:** 5-10 year contracts in three different tiers of participation. Maximum annual payment ranges from \$20,000 to \$45,000 per year.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs, FSA



## Conservation Technical Assistance

**Purpose:** To assist landusers to plan and install resource management systems that improve and protect natural resources on their land.

**Systems:** Include many different practices to reduce soil erosion; improve soil, water, and air quality; improve and restore wetlands; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; improve pasture and rangeland; reduce upstream flooding; and improve woodlands.

**Eligibility:** All landusers may receive technical assistance from the NRCS. Landusers are encouraged to work through their local Soil and

breaks, land use conversion practices, and traditional erosion control practices.

**Eligibility:** Landowners who are SWCD cooperators enter into voluntary agreements with the district to install and maintain approved conservation practices under a conservation plan.

**Contracts:** Up to 75 percent cost-share and up to a 20-year maintenance agreement.

**Contact:** DSC, SWCDs, NRCS

**Note:** DSC funds are administered through local SWCDs.

## Technical Server Provider Initiative (TSP)

**Purpose:** To allow producers to choose between using the NRCS or an external technical service provider to plan, design, install, and implement conservation practices under a USDA/NRCS program contract.

**Practices:** A producer may always use the services of a TSP to plan, design, install, and implement any conservation practice. EQIP practices eligible for reimbursement are nutrient management and waste management practices associated with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP).

**Eligibility:** No contract is needed to utilize the services of a TSP, however, producers must have a signed NRCS conservation program contract to be eligible for full or partial reimbursement of TSP costs.

**Contract:** EQIP is the only program reimbursing technical assistance for practices planned, designed, installed, or implemented by a TSP.

**Contact:** Your local NRCS Service Center

## Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

**Purpose:** To develop and implement a restoration plan for wetlands that were previously altered for agricultural use.

**Practices:** Wetland restoration and wildlife habitat establishment.

**Eligibility:** Land that has been owned by the applicant for one year and that contains eligible soils that can be restored to wetland conditions.

**Contract:** Landowners may restore wetlands using permanent easements, 30-year easements or 10-year contracts. Permanent easements pay 100 percent of the difference between the fair market value of the land now and the fair market value of the property once the proposed easement is in place and 100 percent cost-share for restoration; 30-year easements pay 75 percent of the difference between the fair market value of the land now and the fair market value of the property once the proposed easement is in place and 75 percent cost-share for restoration; 10-year contracts pay 75 percent cost-share of restoration work only. Permanent or 30-year easements are conveyed with an easement document that is recorded at the county level. Ten-year contracts do not use recorded documents.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs

## Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

**Purpose:** To develop or improve fish and wildlife habitat on privately owned land through the application of a conservation plan.

**Practices:** Seeding, tree and shrub plantings, fencing, instream structures, and prairie restoration.

**Eligibility:** Nearly all land is eligible, including agricultural and non-agricultural land, woodlots, pastures, and streambanks.

**Contract:** Usually 5-10 years to install and maintain habitat. Up to 75 percent of restoration costs, to a maximum of \$25,000. Other organizations may provide the remaining 25 percent cost-share.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs

## Onsite Wastewater Systems Assistance Program (low interest loans)

**Purpose:** To provide low interest loans to rural homeowners to replace inadequate onsite septic systems.

**Eligibility:** For homeowners in unincorporated areas. Must be able to secure the loan, be capable of repaying the loan, and be approved by the county sanitarian.

**Loan amounts:** Minimum \$2,000; maximum based on project cost.

**Contacts:** County sanitarians, DNR

**Web site:** [www.iowasrf.com](http://www.iowasrf.com)

## Shelterbelt Program

**Purpose:** To provide funding for tree and shrub planting for energy conservation and wildlife habitat.

**Practices:** Funding to establish new or expand existing tree and shrub shelterbelts around farmsteads or feedlots for energy conservation benefits.

**Eligibility:** Statewide. Plantings must be around occupied farmsteads and feedlots.

**Contract:** Iowa DNR provides up to 75 percent of the total cost, not to exceed \$200 per row, for 8- to 14-row shelterbelts. Trees and shrubs must be planted around farmsteads or feedlots for energy conservation benefits.

**Contact:** DNR



## State Cost-Share

**Purpose:** To provide cost-share or incentives on permanent and management conservation practices to control erosion and reduce sediment.

**Practices:** SWCDs set priorities for practices to fund. Examples include terraces, waterways, and structures.

**Eligibility:** Any landowner who is a district

cooperator and enters into a voluntary agreement with the district to install and maintain an approved conservation practice.

**Contracts:** Up to 50 percent cost-share and up to a 20-year maintenance agreement.

**Contacts:** DSC, SWCDs, NRCS

**Note:** DSC funds are administered through local SWCDs.

## State Loan Program

**Purpose:** To provide no-interest loans to eligible landowners for constructing permanent soil conservation practices under a conservation plan.

**Practices:** SWCDs set priorities for practices to fund. Examples include terraces, waterways, and structures.

**Eligibility:** Landowners must be able to secure the loan, be capable of repaying the loan, and be a cooperator with the SWCD.

**Contracts for conservation practices:** Cooperators may borrow up to \$10,000 for a 10-year period and sign a 20-year maintenance agreement.

**Contracts for livestock program:** Minimum loan of \$10,000; lifespan not to exceed 20 years; plans must be approved by the DNR.

**Contact:** SWCDs, DSC, NRCS

**Note:** DSC funds are administered through local SWCDs.

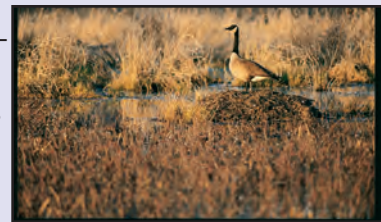
## State Watershed Protection Practices

**Purpose:**

Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) funds and Iowa Watershed Protection Program provide

cost-share or incentives to address local water quality protection needs.

**Practices:** Each SWCD sets priorities for practices. Examples include tree plantings, wind-



Water Conservation District (SWCD) to become district cooperators.

**Contract:** Contracts vary by program and practice.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs

## Debt Cancellation Conservation Contract (Debt for Nature)

**Purpose:** To provide opportunity to cancel a portion of indebtedness in exchange for a conservation contract.

**Eligibility:** Landowner must owe the FSA and have marginal croplands or other environmentally sensitive lands for conservation, recreation, and wildlife purposes.

**Contract:** 10, 30 or 50 years.

**Contact:** FSA, NRCS, FWS

## EPA Section 319 Program

**Purpose:** To provide funding for watershed-based water quality projects that demonstrate and implement conservation practices to protect priority water bodies from agricultural and other nonpoint pollution sources.

**Practices:** Funds can be used for a variety of traditional and innovative conservation practices that provide water quality benefits.

**Eligibility:** Individual landowners and legal entities such as non-profit organizations and communities participating in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Section 319 water quality projects.

**Contract:** Funding may provide up to 75% of conservation practice costs. Funding is typically administered through contracts with local SWCDs.

**Contact:** Iowa DNR, SWCD, EPA, NRCS

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

**Purpose:** To provide technical and financial assistance to landowners to develop and imple-

ment conservation plans that address specific natural resource concerns.

**Practices:** Livestock manure management, grazing land management, soil erosion control, and water quality improvement practices are eligible for cost-share statewide. Assistance for other practices is available in selected priority areas.

**Eligibility:** Agricultural producers on agricultural land are eligible. Projects are selected based on environmental benefits per United States dollar expended.

**Contract:** 5-10 year contracts. Agricultural producers may be eligible for up to 75% cost-share, up \$450,000 for all contracts for the length of the 2002 Farm Bill.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs, FSA

## Farm Pond Program

**Purpose:** To provide quality fishing opportunities for pond owners and other licensed anglers.

**Eligibility:** The Iowa DNR will stock fish into qualifying ponds at a nominal fee

(\$25/acre plus tax). Qualifying ponds must be newly constructed or renovated and free of fish, be at least one-half acre in size, be at least 8 feet deep when full, be fenced to exclude livestock, and have a minimum buffer of 60 feet between fence and pond.

**Contract:** Agreements state that pondowners retain full rights to control access to their land, fishing is subject to Iowa DNR fishing regulations, pondowners must meet the DNR stocking truck at convenient locations, only DNR fish are to be stocked (except with approval), livestock are excluded from the impoundment area, and no undesirable fish are to be present at the time of stocking.



**Contact:** For additional information contact a DNR Fisheries Biologist or the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov). Click on “Fishing” and then ‘Farm Pond Information.’

## Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

**Purpose:** To assist landowners develop and implement a forest management plan.

**Practices:** Forest stand improvement, tree planting, site preparations for natural regeneration, agro forage, watershed protection, wildlife habitat improvement, invasive species control, savanna restoration and forest stewardship planning.

**Eligibility:** Landowners with two or more acres.

**Contract:** Agree to maintain practices for estimated life span. A management plan is required. Up to 75 percent cost share is available.

**Contact:** DNR

## Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)

**Purpose:** To help farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture uses.

**Practices:** Must have a conservation plan for any highly erodible land.

**Eligibility:** Entire farms or ranches may be enrolled in FRPP. The farmland or ranchland must contain at least 50 percent of prime, unique, statewide, or locally important soil or contain historic or archaeological sites. Other eligibility requirements apply.

**Contract:** Permanent easements pay up to 100% of the difference between the fair market value of the land now and the fair market value of the property once the proposed conservation ease-



ment is in place. The NRCS share of the easement payment is limited to 50percent of the total easement payment as determined by appraisal.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs, Conservation organizations, partners and land trusts.

## US Fish and Wildlife Service Programs

The FWS offers two types of programs to Iowa landowners, including land acquisition and technical assistance. For details contact the Iowa Private Lands Coordinator, P.O. Box 399, Prairie City, IA 50228, 515-994-3400.

## General Non-Point Source Program (low interest loans)

**Purpose:** To provide low interest loans for water quality improvements.

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be owners of record or have long-term control of property where the project is implemented. Eligible practices include restoration of wildlife habitat, urban stormwater management, landfill closure, and other water quality projects.

**Loan amounts:** Minimum \$5,000; maximum based on project cost.

**Contacts:** DNR

**Website:** [www.iowasrf.com](http://www.iowasrf.com)

## Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

**Purpose:** To develop and implement a grassland resource management plan to help private landowners and operators restore and protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland.

**Practices:** Grazing and haying management, prescribed burns, and fencing.

**Eligibility:** Privately owned lands, such as grasslands; land that contains forbs; or land located in an area historically dominated by grassland or forbs that could serve as wildlife habitat. Must be in a contiguous tract of 40 or more acres.

**Contract:** Permanent easements, 30-year easements or 10-, 15-, 20- or 30-year rental agreements. Permanent easements pay 100 percent and 30-year easements pay 30 percent of the difference between the fair market value of the land now and the grassland value of the property once the proposed easement is in place. The 10-, 15-, 20- and 30-year agreements pay a per-acre annual payment for the life of the agreement.

**Contact:** NRCS, SWCDs

## Iowa District Initiative

**Purpose:** To provide funding to accelerate the implementation of federal conservation programs to protect water quality and fragile land.

**Practices:** All of the practices available through EQIP, WHIP, WRP, and the continuous CRP, including buffer strips, waterways, riparian buffers, contour buffer strips, shallow water areas for wildlife, wellhead protection, etc.

**Eligibility:** Landowners with acreage that qualifies for federal conservation programs. **Contract:** 10-15 years, the length of the CRP contract.

**Contact:** DSC, SWCDs, NRCS

## Iowa Water Protection Fund (WSPF)

**Purpose:** To provide funding for water quality improvement practices in watersheds above priority lakes and streams, and to protect ground water.

**Practices:** Land treatment and nutrient management practices, such as terraces, waterways, grade stabilization, streambank stabilization, manure management, integrated crop management, etc.

**Eligibility:** SWCDs, landowners, and operators in approved Water Quality Projects.

**Contract:** Permanent practices require 20-year maintenance agreements. Management practices require performance agreements.

**Contact:** DSC, SWCDs, NRCS

## Livestock Water Quality Facilities Program (low interest loans)

**Purpose:** To provide low interest loans to livestock producers to protect water quality.

**Eligibility:** Producers must be owners of record and have legal control of property containing the animal feeding operation. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are not eligible.

**Loan amounts:** Minimum \$10,000, maximum based on project cost. Can be used in conjunction with other state and federal grants and cost-share.

**Contact:** Iowa Agricultural Development Authority, DNR

**Website:** [www.iowasrf.com](http://www.iowasrf.com)



## Local Water Protection Loan Program (low interest loans)

**Purpose:** To provide loans for permanent conservation practices to control soil, sediment, and nutrient runoff on agricultural land.

**Eligibility:** Loan applicant must be the landowner where practice will take place. Small manure management projects are allowed but concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are not eligible.

**Loan amount:** From \$5,000 to \$50,000. May be used in conjunction with other state and federal grants and cost-share.

**Contacts:** SWCDs, DSC

**Website:** [www.agriculture.state.ia.us/lwpp.htm](http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/lwpp.htm)