

## Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative

### Overview

The Bottomland (hardwood) Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative is an initiative under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that works to improve air and water quality as well as increase wildlife habitat along wetland areas. The initiative allows producers to enroll in a CRP practice on lands suitable for growing bottomland hardwood trees or adapted shrubs that will provide multipurpose forest and wildlife benefits.

The Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) through CRP, a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers safeguard environmentally sensitive land.

Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance for 10 to 15 years.

Producers can enroll in CRP for the Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative anytime through continuous CRP sign-up. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding. More infor-

mation is available in the FSA fact sheet “Conservation Reserve Program - Continuous Sign-up.”

Producers in all U.S. states and territories are eligible to participate in the initiative.

### Goals

The purpose of the initiative is to establish a stand of trees that will:

- Control sheet, rill, scour, and other erosion;
- Reduce water, air, or land pollution;
- Restore and enhance the natural and beneficial functions of wetlands;
- Promote carbon sequestration; and
- Restore and connect wildlife habitat.

### Acreage Limit

The total acres allowed nationwide for the initiative is 250,000 acres. Every U.S. state has specified acreage limits.

### Ownership Eligibility Requirements

An owner is eligible to offer land for enrollment for this CRP initiative if the owner meets one of the following requirements:

- Owned the land for 12 months prior to filing for enrollment;
- Acquired the land by will or succession as a result of

death;

- Acquired the land under circumstances other than for placement in CRP, as determined by the FSA National Office.

Ownership eligibility requirements are satisfied if there is any combination of continuously leasing and owning by the same “person” during the 12-month period before filing for enrollment.

### Eligibility for Operators

- Operated the land for 12 months before filing for enrollment; and
- Provides satisfactory evidence, as determined by the FSA county committee (COC), that control of the land will continue uninterrupted for the contract period.

Satisfactory evidence may include any of the following:

- Statement signed by the owner;
- Written lease for the appropriate time period; or
- Owner’s signature on the CRP contract.

Operator eligibility requirements shall be satisfied if there is any combination of leasing and owning by the same “person” during the 12-month period before filing for enrollment.

**Cropping History Requirements**

Eligible cropland enrollment in the CRP Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative includes cropland that is both of the following:

- Planted, COC-approved prevented planted, or considered planted to an agricultural commodity during any 4 of the 6 crop years, 2002 through 2007; and
- Physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity in a normal manner during a normal cropping season.

Acreage for which a producer received a crop insurance indemnity payment for prevented planting shall be considered planted for that year for CRP cropping history purposes.

Field margins that are incidental to the planting of crops, such as turnrows, field borders, and center pivot corners, are eligible to be offered. Field margins do not include other areas within a field.

Acreage that received planted and considered planted credit for crop acreage base protection is considered planted for purposes of CRP cropland eligibility.

COC's determination must be based on whether the cropland could be planted to an agricultural commodity in a normal manner during a normal cropping season. Acreage permanently under water is ineligible to be offered for enrollment.

**Sign-up**

Enrollment for the Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands Initiative began Dec. 1, 2003. For continuous sign-up, the effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to 6 months.

If the acreage is currently under CRP contract and is within one year of the scheduled expiration date, the effective date is Oct. 1 following the expiration date.

**Incentive Payments**

Eligible producers may receive the following types of payments:

- Up to 50% cost share for establishing permanent cover.
- Annual rental payments for a 10- to 15-year period. The rental rate is based on the weighted average dry-land cash rent.
- An additional incentive equal to 20 percent of the weighted average soil rental rate is authorized for CRP participants restoring wetlands, establishing bottomland hardwood forests, or creating duck nesting habitat.
- Upfront CRP signing incentive payment of \$100 per acre. This one-time payment is made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met.
- Practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible costs of installing the practice. This one-time payment is made after the

practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

**For More Information**

For more information on this and other FSA programs, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

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