

Agriculture's Contribution to Habitat and Conservation in Minnesota

AGRICULTURE & CONSERVATION GO TOGETHER

Minnesota is a leader in conservation on private farmland as well as one of the nation's top 10 agricultural states. A strong agricultural economy is good for the environment, making it easier for farmers to invest more of their own resources in conservation or idle some of their cropland.

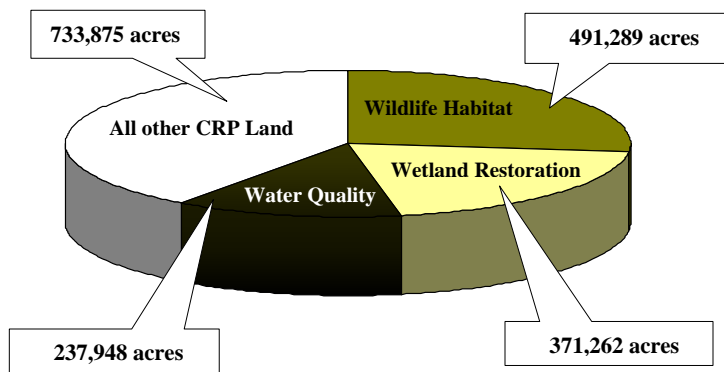
- ❑ Marshall County, among the top 2% of wheat producing counties in the nation, is also one of the highest in the country in the percentage of cropland set aside for conservation (26%).
- ❑ Polk County is first in sugarbeet production and among the top 1% of wheat producing counties nationally and also has 17% of its cropland set aside for conservation.
- ❑ Otter Tail County, ranked second in the state for number of beef cows, has 14% of its cropland set aside for conservation.
- ❑ Stearns County, ranked second in the state in milk cows and milk production, has more than 6% of the cropland set aside for conservation and over 28,000 acres enrolled in the Conservation Security Program (CSP) for working agricultural lands.

CRP LAND IN MINNESOTA

	Minnesota acreage ¹	MN's share of the total U.S. acreage
CRP Wildlife Habitat acres	491,289	12%
CRP Wetland Habitat acres	371,262	18%
CRP Water Quality Buffer acres	237,948	9%
Total special-purpose CRP	1,100,499	13%
All other CRP land (native and other grass or trees)	733,875	3%
Total land in CRP	1,834,374	5%

¹Source: USDA Farm Service Agency's Monthly Active CRP Contract Report for May 2007, including lands enrolled via CRP General and Continuous signups and about 85% of Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) acres.

CRP LAND IN MINNESOTA: 60% IS DEVOTED TO HABITAT OR WATER QUALITY



FARMERS INVEST IN HABITAT & OTHER CONSERVATION

Minnesota farmers invest significant amounts of their own out-of-pocket cash resources to voluntarily establish and maintain habitat, restore wetlands and establish other conservation practices.

- ❑ Minnesota farmers have invested at least \$70 million of their own non-reimbursed cash resources to establish and maintain grasslands, plant trees, restore wetlands and other wildlife habitat, and install water quality buffers on land voluntarily set aside in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Farmers also pay property taxes on the set-aside land.
- ❑ Since 1996, Minnesota farmers have matched federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds with approximately \$135 million in non-reimbursed expenses to implement conservation practices on agricultural working lands. Environmentally sound management of land in production not only improves farm productivity, it also helps protect wetlands, buffers and wildlife habitat.
- ❑ In recent years, Minnesota farmers matched CRP, EQIP, and other federal and state conservation program dollars with an estimated \$40 million per year in non-reimbursed expenses in order to participate in these voluntary programs. (This does not include the property taxes farmers pay on set-aside land, or the expenses incurred to maintain conservation practices over time.)

MINNESOTA IS A CRP LEADER

Minnesota farmers' high level of participation in the Conservation Reserve Program and other voluntary conservation programs has made the state a consistent leader in conservation.

- ❑ Minnesota ranks third nationally in the number of farms participating in CRP. More than 33,000 Minnesota farms or 42% of all farms in the state currently participate.
- ❑ Minnesota ranks seventh nationally in total CRP acreage, with over 1.8 million acres or 7% of all Minnesota farmland currently enrolled.
- ❑ 60% of CRP lands in Minnesota are specifically devoted to restoring or enhancing wetlands, wildlife habitat or water quality, compared to just 24% nationwide. The remaining CRP lands, consisting of native and other grasses and trees, also benefit wildlife and water quality, while reducing soil erosion.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about agricultural perspectives on habitat and conservation contact **Chris Radatz, Minnesota Farm Bureau, 651-905-2104, cradatz@fbmn.org.**

For more information about the data in this fact sheet contact **Barbara Weisman, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), 651-201-6631, barbara.weisman@state.mn.us.**

For more information about wetland restoration opportunities contact your **local Soil & Water Conservation District** (directory available at:

www.bwsr.state.mn.us/directories/SWCDs.pdf) and **local USDA FSA** and/or **NRCS** office (directory available at: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=MN>).

