

# Conservation Reserve Program

## Improving Soil Health



### Why Choose CRP? You Benefit Land, Water, and Wildlife.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a proven land performance and management solution. Whatever the challenge—soil conservation, water quality protection, or wildlife habitat enhancement—CRP provides a range of opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and landowners.

Administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency, CRP provides financial and technical assistance to remove environmentally sensitive farmland from production and convert it to conservation cover for a 10- to 15-year contract period.

### The Importance of Soil Health

By retiring low-yield land from agricultural production and converting it to perennial vegetation, farmers not only reduce costs and improve the bottom line of their farming operations while also addressing environmental concerns.

Improving soil health is vital to ensuring that crops thrive without excessive input of fertilizer and other resources. As a result, focusing on soil health is one of the most effective steps farmers can take towards maintaining long-term farm sustainability and productivity.



Photos Courtesy of MO Dept. of Conservation and Peter Berthelsen respectively



## Improving Soil Health

Soil erosion is a natural process in which topsoil is gradually worn away by water and wind. The loss of topsoil, which is high in organic matter and very fertile, reduces crop yields. Topsoil relocation also clogs drainage channels and contributes to watercourse pollution. Other soil health concerns include soil compaction, low organic matter, loss of soil structure, poor internal drainage, and increased soil salinity and acidity.

Conservation practices implemented by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners can slow erosion and maintain soil health. Simple actions like leaving pivot corners idle and establishing native seed mixes can improve soil health dramatically. These and other practices are incorporated in several different CRP options which are designed to target the most environmentally sensitive and highly erodible cropland.

### Soil Health Practices

Introduced Grasses and Legumes  
(CP1)

Native Grasses and Legumes (CP2)

Softwood Tree Planting (CP3)

Hardwood/Longleaf Pine Tree  
Planting (CP3A)

Windbreaks (CP5A)

Contour Strips (CP15A)

Shelterbelts (CP16A)

Prairie Strips (CP43)

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Photo Courtesy of Lynn Betts, NRCS