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# The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Compliance---Two components of the 1985 Farm Bill

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Department of Agronomy

# Soil Science News & Views



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The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation  
Compliance---Two Components of the 1985 Farm Bill

Monroe Rasnake

## The Conservation Reserve Program

This component of the 1985 Food Security Act is still open to participation by qualified landowners. Participation in CRP provides for farmers to be paid an annual rental fee for ten years to take highly erodible land out of row crop production and maintain a conservation cover crop. The annual rental fee for CRP land already signed up in Kentucky has averaged about 58 dollars per acre.

To be eligible for CRP, a field must be determined to contain predominantly (2/3) highly erodible land and have an estimated erosion rate that is three times the tolerable rate (T) for those soils. The highly erodible classification of land is based on the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS) determination of potential for erosion and not on how much it is eroding now. The field also must have been planted to a commodity crop such as corn, wheat or soybeans for at least two years between 1981 and 1985. There are exceptions to these rules such as the following:

1. If a farmer is willing to plant trees, only 1/3 of the field needs to be classed as highly erodible land and the estimated existing erosion rate must be at least 2T.
2. Filter strips between 66 and 100 feet wide can be established on lake and stream borders to protect them from sediment coming from adjacent eroding lands. These strips do not have to meet the erodibility requirements.

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The U.S.D.A. has announced that the next sign-up period for the CRP will be July 18 through August 5, 1988. More Kentucky farmers should think about taking advantage of this program for use of some of their steeper, highly erodible fields.

The eligibility requirements for CRP will probably continue to change. So, farmers should not give up just because their bids were not accepted in previous sign-up periods. They should check with the SCS before the next sign-up period to see if their fields may now be eligible.

#### Conservation Compliance

Conservation compliance, another part of the 1985 farm bill, is scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 1990. This provision requires that farmers have an approved conservation plan developed for use of their highly erodible land if they desire to maintain their eligibility for most U.S.D.A. farm program benefits. During the process of developing these plans is a good time to decide which fields should be bid into the CRP program. The SCS advisor can point out which fields would be eligible for CRP and help the farmer decide if CRP might be the best use of the land. In developing an approved conservation plan to meet conservation compliance requirements in 1990, CRP should be considered as a way to meet the requirements of conservation compliance on some of our more highly erodible land while providing a rental fee from U.S.D.A. Farmers should be working with the Soil Conservation Service now in developing conservation farm plans that will be required by conservation compliance.

It is important that farmers not wait until next year to start working on their conservation farm plans. It should be done now to avoid the rush next year and to be ready to take advantage of programs like the CRP.

*Monroe Rasnake*

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