Grazing on CRP Lands: Experiences and Challenges

Forum on Grazing on Public and Privately Managed Non-Pasture Grasslands

Ames, Iowa
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Conservation Reserve Program Basics

• Authorized in the 1985 Food Security Act and amended/reauthorized in subsequent farm bill

• Objectives include reduced soil, wind and water erosion, improvement of wildlife habitat and populations

• Landowners enter into contract to retire previously productive land from production, 10-15 year contracts

• Largest federal (USDA) private land retirement program
  – Approximately 31.4 million acres; $1.8 billion in annual payments, cost-sharing, incentives, maintenance
  – Iowa claims 5.35% of CRP acres (1.68 million acres), 12.5% of annual payments ($214 million annually)
Conservation Reserve Program Basics

- Enrollment achieved through two signup types
  - General – competitive enrollment, based on Environmental Benefits Index ranking, whole-field practices
  - Continuous – noncompetitive, partial-field practices
- Landowners receive annual rental payments, cost-share assistance, maintenance and other incentives
- Per-acre annual rental payments are capped at a maximum soil rental rate based on soil types, land productivity, other parcel characteristics
  - National average: $46 / acre
  - Iowa average: $108.28 / acre
Iowa’s EBI strength comes from its non-cost EBI components due to high soil rental rates, which are penalized in the EBI.
CRP Acreage as a Fraction of Farmland
County Level Results

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Grazing Procedures

Concern is primary nesting season for wildlife

• Established jointly by state FSA and NRCS technical committees

Two grazing authorizations

• Managed grazing: allowed to improve the performance of the cover established by landowners

• Emergency grazing: relief to livestock producers in the event of certain natural disasters
Managed Grazing

• Not more frequently than 1 out of every 3 years

• Location specific – some areas may not be allowed managed grazing

• Ineligible if emergency grazing occurred in any of previous two years

• Authorized for a single period of 120 days or two periods, 60 days each.

• Landowner must file request with local FSA office
1. Authorization provided by National FSA

   - Eligibility determined on a county-by-county basis

   - Requires at least a 40% loss in pasture production and
     - drought characterized by at least 40% reduction in precipitation in previous 4 months,
     OR
     - excessive precipitation – 140% greater than normal during previous 4 months

   - Acreage for grazing restricted to county or portion of county, based on prevailing conditions
Emergency Grazing

2. Authorization provided by State FSA

- County FSA offices may request emergency grazing for a county (or portion of) based on Drought Monitor (D3, D4)
- Up to 120 days in a single period (consecutive)
Restrictions to Grazing

• Payment reductions required
  – 25% for managed grazing
  – 10% for emergency grazing

• Request filed with county FSA office

• Modified conservation plan must be developed with the NRCS before grazing can occur
  – Must address local wildlife needs and concerns
  – Must maintain vegetative cover, minimize soil erosion, and protect water and wildlife habitat quality

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Restrictions to Grazing

Conservation Practices (CPs) eligible for grazing

- **CP1** – New introduced grasses and legumes (7% of coverage nationally)
- **CP2** – New native grasses (20% of coverage nationally)
- **CP4B** – Wildlife corridors (< .1% of coverage nationally)
- **CP4D** – Wildlife habitat (3.5% of coverage nationally)
- **CP10** – Existing grasses (36% coverage nationally)
- **CP18B and CP18C** – Salinity reducing vegetation; continuous signup practice (< 1% coverage nationally)
Acreage by CP in Iowa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CP</th>
<th>New &amp; Introduced Grasses</th>
<th>New Native Grasses</th>
<th>Wildlife Corridors</th>
<th>Wildlife Habitat</th>
<th>Existing Grasses</th>
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CP: CODE POINT

- **New & Introduced Grasses:** 11%
- **New Native Grasses:** 8%
- **Wildlife Corridors:** 16%
- **Wildlife Habitat:** 24%
- **Existing Grasses:** 24%
Restrictions to Grazing

In addition to CP restrictions…

• Not allowed on useful life easements

• Not on land within 100 feet of stream or permanent water body
Emergency Grazing Allowances

• 2006 – emergency haying & grazing in 30 states due to drought (started in OK & TX due to wildfires)
• 2007 – emergency grazing on large scale (nationally)
• 2008 – USDA announces authorization of 24 millions acres of CRP to be used for livestock feed but action was blocked by National Wildlife Federation lawsuit.

• Local grazing allowances occur yearly (flooding in IA, for example)
Direction of Program Going Forward

• 2008 farm bill language weighted toward “working land” conservation, movement away from land retirement

• Budget issues surrounding next farm bill likely to diminish support for a CRP that reduces production
Thank you for your time!

Questions?
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