

# CRP program targets fragile farmland

The CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM was authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985. It targets the most fragile farmland by encouraging farmers to stop growing crops on cropland designated by soil conservationists as "highly erodible" and plant it in grass or trees. In return, the farmer receives an annual rental payment for the term of the ten-year contract. Cost shares are also available to help establish the permanent planting of grass, legumes, trees, windbreaks, or wildlife plantings.

The CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM or CRP lists a large number of benefits:

1. Soil erosion reduction onsite and less sedimentation offsite. Reducing soil erosion onsite saves money for the producer by ensuring sustained productivity. Offsite benefits are reduced costs of cleaning up streams and rivers clogged by sediments, herbicides, and fertilizers from cropland, improving water quality.

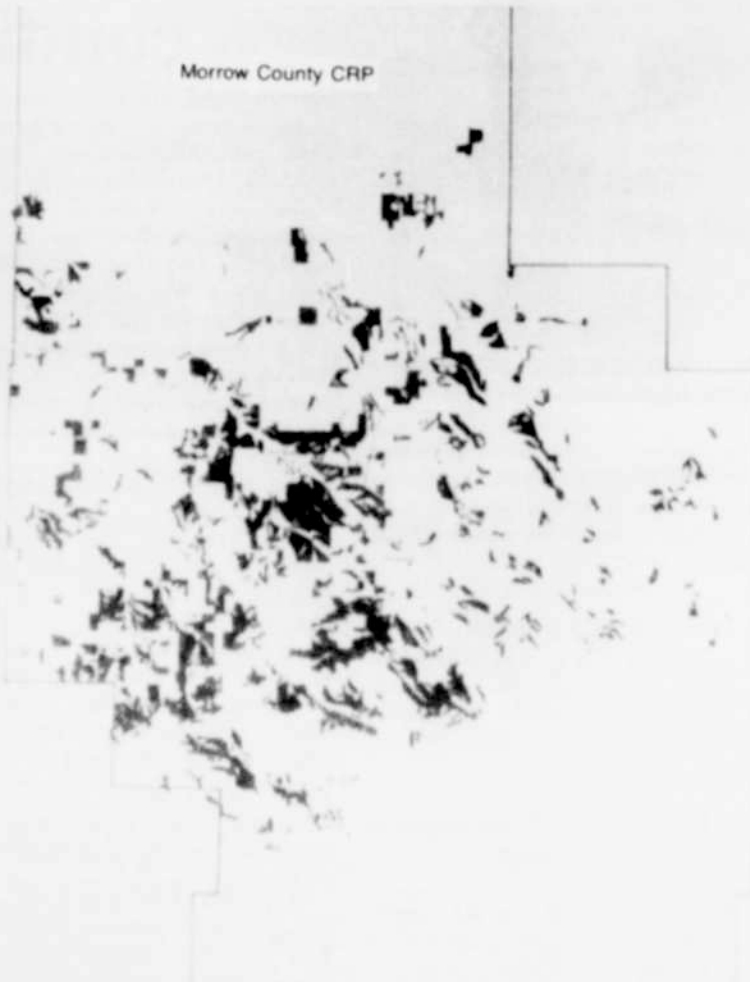
2. Crop surplus reduction, therefore reducing cost of commodity programs.

3. A guaranteed income for 10-years and one-half the cost of establishing valuable, permanent stands of grass and/or trees on eligible acres, improving air quality and enhancing the esthetic value of cropland.

4. Increased wildlife habitat and an opportunity for added income for landowners and operators through hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities.

Nationwide, up to 45-million acres may be retired and Morrow County has a limit of 110,000-acres which is 25% of the total cropland. To date, farmers and landowners in Morrow County have enrolled 108,012-acres of which 103,400 acres have been seeded to permanent grasses and legumes. The 338 contracts range from 2.8-acres to 1,912.2-acres and average 319-acres at an average rent of \$48.44 per acre for a total rental income of \$5,232,440.00 for the County.

The operator must manage the grass stand during the length of the contract, 10-years, and no grazing or haying is allowed at this time, but



The shaded areas of this photo shows all the CRP in Morrow County

could change due to drought or natural disaster. All noxious weeds on the County weed "A" list must be controlled at the operator's expense. Cost shares are available for weed control within one year of planting if deemed necessary for the establishment of the grass stand. This control can be either mechanical clipping or chemical spraying and must be on the advice of a licensed consultant or the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Grass seed recommendations were made by USDA Soil Conservation Service and are based on "The Interagency Seeding Guide for Oregon." This guide takes into consideration such factors as soil pH and, most importantly, annual precipitation zones. In Morrow County, this ranges from 7-inches in

the northern part to 18-inches in the south end. Crested and Siberian wheatgrasses are used in the lower precipitation areas along with Covar Sheep Fescue and Sherman

Bigbluegrass, Whitmar Beardless Bluebunch, Secar Bluebunch, and other native grasses when available. As the precipitation increases, more plantings of Intermediate wheatgrasses, such as Greenar, Greenleaf, and Oahe, are used for their rhizomonous characteristics.

Luna Pubescent wheatgrass is also a very popular variety, and at high rainfall areas, Paiute Orchardgrass was planted. In addition, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Department furnished one-pound of dryland alfalfa seed per acre at no cost to the farmer. Rambler and Ladak were the most used alfalfa variety. The use of legumes was to encourage big game habitat as well as for the nitrogen-fixing property.

The seeding of the CRP ground was closely monitored by SCS personnel to assure accurate seeding depth, rates, and weed control to enhance grass stand establishment. Seed was carefully analyzed to insure quality and much of this was by Oregon State University Seed Laboratory.

Methods of seeding ranged from broadcast seeding to the use of no-till drills to aerial seeding. Perhaps the best stands of grasses were established using regular grain drills and were seeded into summer fallow in the springtime thereby eliminating most cheatgrass and using the available moisture as is done with planting a grain crop.

Individual reasons for enrolling acreage into the Conservation

Reserve Program varied from farm to farm but economics was probably the most important with erosion control a distant second. Many absentee landowners found the CRP program to their liking as they had less costs and many contracts were written whereby the operator would receive 2/3rds of the annual rental payment the first four or five years and the landowner 2/3rds for the remainder of the contract. Many farmers were reaching retirement age and had no heirs or family members interested in farming the ground. Some farmers were pressured by lending institutions to place eligible land in CRP to reduce operating costs and others put in fields that were isolated or too small.

Many local businesses feared a loss of business due to the retirement of machinery, smaller grain harvests, and fewer farm employees, and, to a small extent, this has happened. Since most of the cropland that was retired was the poorest of soils, average crop yields are higher and farmers are managing the remaining acres and increasing yields through wiser use of chemicals, fertilizers, and reduced tillage operations.

The one-and-one-half-million tons of soil saved yearly in Morrow County will surely outweigh all the negative aspects the Conservation Reserve Program may have instilled in the non-farming community.

## VanArsdale Const. Co.

DIVERSION  
DITCHES  
LAND  
LEVELING  
ROAD  
CONSTRUCTION



(drainage is our specialty)

STOCK  
PONDS  
SILT  
DAMS  
ROCKING

### FREE ESTIMATES & RECOMMENDATIONS

2 D8s with Ripper  
2 D6s  
2 Graders  
2-621 Carryall (scraper)  
5 Dump Trucks  
966 Front End Loader

Shop: 676-5083

Office: 989-8549

## TUL TEC

Engine Repair

"OUR SPECIALTY"

Ione/Lexington Hwy Rhea Creek

Call us 24 hour service for total engine repair

Days - 422-7432 Nights - 422-7114

Commercial Accounts Delivery & Pick Up Service  
Mark Tullis Ione, Oregon 97843

