



USDA Programs Benefiting Missouri Wildlife

Through its 100 county field offices and other special project offices, nearly 400 NRCS employees in Missouri administer a number of programs that provide financial and technical assistance to land users. Several of NRCS' programs provide assistance that has a profound effect on wildlife.

NRCS' work with private land users to improve wildlife habitat is greatly enhanced because of its partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC).

MDC houses an area biologist in each of NRCS' four Area Offices, a private lands program biologist in the NRCS State Office, four wetland biologists on NRCS wetland teams, and about 60 biologists and foresters working out of NRCS county offices.

Missouri landowners benefit from this cooperative effort because they have access to a more complete technical base. Total resource planning is a reality in Missouri field offices due to the mix of agencies and professional disciplines. The following pages highlight some of the USDA programs that benefit landowners and wildlife.

“For many years, Missouri has been a leader in the management of natural resources to benefit wildlife. Part of the reason is the willingness of federal and state agencies to work together for the common good.”

- Missouri State Conservationist J.R. Flores





WRP

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) helps landowners restore wetlands on agricultural and non-agricultural lands. Landowners receive payments in exchange for perpetual easements or 30-year easements to ensure the areas will be maintained as wetlands. WRP is the nation's premier wetland restoration program. Restored wetlands provide critical habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species and other wetland wildlife.

Wildlife Benefits

Missouri has lost 87 percent of its historical wetland base to other land uses. WRP has been essential to restoring wetlands in areas where historical wetlands once existed. Of the 316 species of wildlife, 50 species are directly dependent upon wetlands. Since 1992, a total of 134,000 acres resulting from 921 easements have been recorded in Missouri. Missouri is one of the top five states in restoring wetlands back into the landscape.



WRP Economic Benefits

Since 2000, Missouri NRCS has paid approximately \$82 million through WRP. This has stimulated the state's economy by creating \$104 million in additional sales and by creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 776 people working full-time for one year.



MBHI

The Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI) was implemented to improve habitat conditions and food sources for migratory birds likely to be impacted by the Deepwater oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Missouri is the northernmost state of the eight states included in this initiative. Landowners in eight counties in central and western Missouri, and in 10 counties in southeastern Missouri were eligible to participate in MBHI.

Wildlife Benefits

The focus of MBHI in Missouri has been to utilize EQIP contracts, WHIP contracts and Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) easements to provide seasonal wetland habitat for migrating water birds. MBHI practices ensure adequate shallow water acreage for numerous shorebirds and waterfowl during critical times of their migration. Many other species of wetland wildlife also benefit.

EQIP and WHIP portions of MBHI were used to install practices to control water levels and enhance habitat to attract migratory birds to 94,000 acres of flooded rice fields and other cropped fields in the Bootheel portion of Missouri. Landowners submitted about 550 applications representing more than 135,000 acres of shallow-water habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl.

WRP easements were enhanced by entering into 3-year to 5-year contracts with landowners who agree to pump water in early fall and early spring to create shallow-water areas, to disk and mow pools to enhance pioneering and feeding areas, and to provide sources of high-energy foods for migrating water birds. During the life of these MBHI-WRP contracts, 31,760 acres of habitat will be provided. The habitat provides critical wetland areas for migrating water birds, and the food provides the energy the birds require for their successful egg-laying efforts and feather molt processes. MBHI also allows landowners to accelerate management on some WRP land in the Missouri counties included in the initiative.



MBHI Economic Benefits

By the end of Fiscal Year 2011, a total of \$5.3 million will be distributed through EQIP, WHIP and WRP to MBHI participants within Missouri's 18 eligible counties. This will create a stimulus to the state's economy by creating \$12 million in additional sales and creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 79 people working full-time for one year.



CSP

The Conservation Stewardship Program, which replaced the Conservation Security Program, encourages agricultural and forestry producers to undertake additional conservation activities while improving and maintaining the existing conservation on their land. The program provides financial and technical assistance to landowners to restore and enhance fish, wildlife and pollinator habitat.

Wildlife Benefits

CSP offers enhancements to landowners to restore and enhance fish, wildlife and pollinator habitat. Examples include: establishing nectar and pollen-producing plants in non-cropped areas; improving plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas; extending existing field borders for protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat; creating vegetative wildlife corridors to connect habitat areas; restoring habitats recognized as rare or declining, such as tall grass prairies, oak savannas, woodlands and glades; and deferring crop production on temporary and seasonal wetlands until after the spring migratory bird season to promote early successional wetland habitat.



CSP Economic Benefits

Since 2004, Missouri NRCS has paid approximately \$40 million through the Conservation Security Program to install habitat enhancements and field border practices. This has stimulated the state's economy by creating \$70 million in additional sales and by creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 1,300 people working full-time for one year. Economic-benefits data relating to the Conservation Stewardship Program are not yet available.



EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) promotes producing agricultural products, preserving environmental quality and establishing fish and wildlife habitat as compatible goals. It provides financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

WHIP

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) promotes establishing and managing fish and wildlife habitat. It provides financial and technical assistance on private agricultural land and on nonindustrial, private forestland to help eligible participants develop habitat.

Wildlife Benefits

Wildlife-related practices available in EQIP and WHIP increase the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat by providing assistance that helps landowners: establish wildlife-friendly herbaceous plantings; restore and manage natural communities such as prairies, woodlands, savannas and glades; establish food plots and protective shrubby cover through edge feathering and shrub plantings; utilize felled trees to create quail covey headquarters; create permanent forest openings; leave parts of crop fields fallow; create field borders featuring diverse wildlife-and-pollinator-friendly plants; use controlled burns to manage native communities and control undesirable vegetation; and utilize annual, seasonal flooding to create food and loafing areas on cropland for use by migratory shorebirds and waterfowl.



EQIP Economic Benefits

Since 2003, Missouri NRCS has paid approximately \$3.7 million toward EQIP wildlife practices. This has stimulated the state's economy by creating \$8.8 million in additional sales and by creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 121 people working full-time for one year.

WHIP Economic Benefits

Since 2003, Missouri NRCS has paid approximately \$4.3 million toward WHIP wildlife practices. This has stimulated the state's economy by creating \$10.5 million in additional sales and by creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 171 people working full-time for one year.



CRP

CRP is a voluntary program that helps agricultural producers use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving cover crops to control soil erosion and to improve water and air quality. They also develop and manage wildlife habitat. NRCS provides technical assistance to landowners for implementation of CRP practices.

Wildlife Benefits

Missouri has 33,000 acres under CRP contracts that specifically provide buffers for upland birds. That represents the third-highest acreage in the United States, even though Missouri has fewer row-crop acres than many of its neighboring states. The state's 15,000 acres of CRP land designated for wildlife enhancement also ranks in the top five nationally.

To get an idea of the scope of buffer habitat provided by CRP, consider that if all of the CRP buffer practices installed by Missouri landowners since 1999 were laid end-to-end, they would stretch around the globe. Additionally, the 5,800 miles of streams buffered by CRP practices since 1999 would stretch from Maine to Hawaii.



CRP Economic Benefits

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving vegetative covers, Missouri participants receive annual rental payments up to \$152 per acre from the USDA's Farm Service Agency. In addition to the annual rental payment, some continuous CRP practices are eligible for a one-time incentive payment of \$10 per acre for each year of the contract. An economic analysis conducted by the Food and Agriculture Policy Institute indicates that CRP is economically positive for farmers, even in years featuring strong commodity prices. Though specific analysis is not available, the benefits of those profits positively extend to the Missouri economy.



GRP

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) offers landowners an opportunity to restore and protect grassland and pastureland rather than converting it to cropland or other uses. Landowners receive financial assistance in exchange for permanent easements or rental agreements. GRP provides seasonal habitat for many pollinators, threatened and endangered species and other grassland wildlife.

Wildlife Benefits

GRP preserves grasslands that provide seasonal habitat for many types of grassland wildlife, including Neotropical birds and the state-endangered Greater Prairie Chicken. The restored grasslands are essential to the nesting and brooding of many other species of concern within the state. Missouri has enrolled about 435 easements and rental agreements covering more than 50,000 acres.

10,000 acres of Missouri's native prairie is preserved through GRP. That represents a significant portion of all privately owned prairie in the state.



GRP Economic Benefits

Since 2003, Missouri NRCS has paid approximately \$10 million through GRP. This has stimulated the state's economy by creating \$11 million in additional sales and by creating or supporting additional employment equivalent to 86 people working full-time for one year.

