

Fact Sheet



**Conservation Reserve Program
Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative**

Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative is aimed at creating 250,000 acres of habitat for the northern bobwhite quail.

Northern bobwhite quail are a native quail species with an historic range in 35 states. The birds are a valued inhabitant of farm landscapes, an important aspect of rural culture, and are key to the heritage of hunting. However, the bobwhite quail population has declined from an estimated 59 million birds in 1980 to about 20 million in 1999. Their habitats are disappearing due to urbanization, increased grassland cultivation, and a transitioning of once grassy fields into woods and forests -- a process called succession.

The initiative introduces a conservation practice intended to create 250,000 acres of early successional grass buffers along agricultural field borders. The initiative partners FSA with landowners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 32 state fish and wildlife agencies, Quail Unlimited, the Southeast Quail Study Group, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other conservation groups, including local conservation districts.

Benefits

FSA estimates that the nesting and brood-rearing cover created by the initiative will increase bobwhite quail numbers by 750,000 birds annually. Planted buffers will also benefit reptiles, amphibians, aquatic species, and upland birds, many of which are being considered for listing as endangered species. Such bird species include the bell's vireo, orchard oriole, painted bunting, loggerhead shrike, sedge wren, grasshopper sparrow, dickcissel, and henslow's sparrow. In addition, the initiative will reduce soil erosion and protect water quality by trapping field sediments and nutrients.

Eligibility

Because the initiative is limited to 250,000 acres, enrollment is targeted to specific geographic areas in 35 states that have the greatest potential to restore bobwhite quail habitat. The acreage is allocated as follows:

State	Acres
Alabama	6,100
Arkansas	12,000
Colorado	600
Connecticut	500
Delaware	900
Florida	2,800
Georgia	8,600
Illinois	20,000
Indiana	20,000

Iowa	20,000
Kansas	20,000
Kentucky	9,000
Louisiana	8,900
Maryland	2,100
Maine	500
Michigan	2,400
Minnesota	500
Mississippi	9,400
Missouri	20,000
Nebraska	6,000
New Jersey	600
New Mexico	500
New York	500
North Carolina	11,300
Ohio	14,200
Oklahoma	9,500
Pennsylvania	2,200
Rhode Island	500
South Carolina	5,000
South Dakota	500
Tennessee	9,300
Texas	20,000
Virginia	3,600
West Virginia	500
Wisconsin	1,500
Total	250,000

Before an acreage allocation is effective for a state, monitoring, evaluation and other support (outreach, technical assistance, etc.) are required.

To be eligible, cropland must be suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of bobwhite quail. In addition, the applicant must satisfy the basic eligibility and cropping history criteria for CRP. These requirements are listed in the CRP fact sheet,

available on FSA's Web site at:
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/pubfacts.htm>

To determine individual eligibility for the initiative, landowners should check with their local FSA office.

Approved Conservation Practice

Program participants must apply conservation practice CP 33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, around field edges of eligible cropland. The purpose of this practice is to provide food and cover for bobwhite quail in cropland areas. Secondary benefits may include reducing soil erosion from wind and water, increasing soil and water quality, and protecting and enhancing the on-farm ecosystem.

Buffer species may include native warm-season grass, legumes, wildflowers, forbs, and limited shrub and tree plantings, as specified in the program participant's approved USDA conservation plan.

Payments and Other Assistance

FSA estimates the program will provide \$125 million in payments to participants through 2007. FSA will offer the following types of payments:

- Signing Incentive Payments of up to \$100 per acre;
- Practice Incentive Payments of up to 40 percent of the eligible establishment cost;

- Annual Rental Payments. Producers will receive annual rental payments for the length of the contract;
- Maintenance Incentive Payments. CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount up to \$5 per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations; and
- Cost-share assistance of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable practice costs.

In addition, other groups may provide the following assistance:

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and 32 state fish and wildlife agencies are expected to offer technical, monitoring, and evaluation assistance; and
- Quail Unlimited, the Southeast Quail Study Group, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other conservation groups including local conservation districts may provide outreach, technical expertise, and other assistance as appropriate.

Sign-up

Program sign-up at local FSA offices will begin Oct. 1, 2004, and will run on a continuous basis -- meaning eligible land may be enrolled at any time -- until 250,000 acres have been enrolled, or Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

For More Information

More information on the CRP Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative is available at local FSA offices and on FSA's Web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov

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