



# Prairie Strips

**Prairie strips support farmers' soil, water, and wildlife conservation goals.**

*Results from more than eight years of trials showed that converting just 10 percent of a crop field to prairie strips could reduce:*

*soil loss  
by 95  
percent,*

*phosphorus  
runoff by  
90 percent,*

*nitrate-nitrogen  
runoff by 84  
percent, and*

*water  
runoff by  
44 percent.*



## **Prairie strips are eligible for cost-share via the Conservation Reserve Program(CRP)**

In the 2018 farm bill, lawmakers approved prairie strips as an eligible practice under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA) with a goal of enrolling 8.6 million acres of agricultural land nationwide.

- Continuous CRP enrollment lists prairie strips as Conservation Practice 43 (CP-43) within the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative.
- Subject to eligibility requirements, farmers could enter into 10- or 15-year contracts to implement the practice on land that is actively farmed, or was recently farmed, including land within a transmission line corridor.
- Cost-share benefits through CRP include annual rental payments for the duration of the contract and payments of up to 50 percent of the cost of practice establishment.
- Land must be cropland that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity four of the six years between 2012-2017 and is physically and legally capable of being planted (no planting restrictions due to an easement or other legally binding instrument) in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.
- **Prairie Strips within Continuous CRP receive a 5% Climate Smart Incentive, a 20% Water Quality Incentive, a 50% Practice Incentive Payment and a Sign-up Incentive Payment equal to 32.5% of the first full year's annual rental payment.**

# Why Are Prairie Strips Important?

## Soil and Water

- Initial data indicate a trend toward reduced sediment and nutrient loss through surface runoff from fields with prairie strips compared to those without.

## Plants and Pollinators

- The frequency of blooming plant species is greater in prairie strips compared to typical conservation plantings, which are often planted to cool-season grasses such as smooth brome.
- The number of bees and bee species increases with the plant diversity of the conservation planting. The greater abundance of flowers likely contributes to the higher bee abundances and species richness.
- Prairie strips also bolstered a plot's natural pest defenses with a larger abundance of spiders.

## Economic

- At \$28-35 per protected acre per year, prairie strips are one of the most cost-effective mechanisms for achieving farmland conservation. The annualized cost scales with the opportunity cost of removing land from corn-soybean production.
- Cost to farmers is ~\$8 per protected acre if the prairie strips are enrolled in CRP.

## Birds

- Fields with prairie strips have significantly higher density of birds compared to fields with conventional grass and filter strips. Strongest responses are from dickcissels, common yellowthroats, and red-winged blackbirds.
- Some species in need of conservation assistance, including the dickcissel, eastern meadowlark, and grasshopper sparrow, have responded positively to the presence of prairie strips.
- Preliminary results indicate that red-winged blackbirds fledge young 2.1 times as often from nests in prairie strips compared to low-diversity vegetated areas on farms, dickcissels fledge young 5.6 times as often, and vesper sparrows fledge young 8.4 times as often.

## For More Information:

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United States  
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## Where can prairie vegetation fit on your farm?

Prairie vegetation can fit anywhere on the farm, including small areas (<1 acre), as long as the area is accessible to mow in the first crucial years of establishment.



### In-field strips

Plant contour prairie strips at least 30 feet wide within row crops. You can increase width to match your field layout and farming equipment.



### Edge-of-field plantings

Establish or improve field buffers to retain sediment and nutrients within the field, and increase wildlife and pollinator habitat.



### Marginal and unprofitable areas

Convert low-profit areas out of row crop production to reduce time, effort, and inputs, and improve overall field profitability.