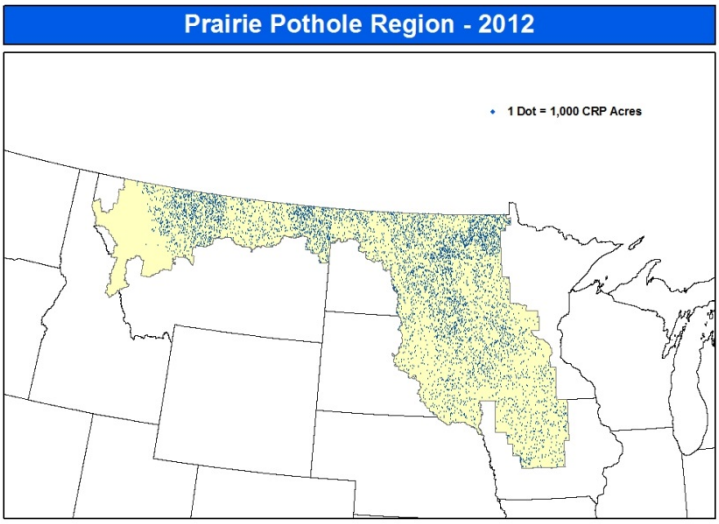
Environmental Benefits of the Conservation Reserve Program

2012

Prairie Pothole Region



		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Land Enrolled*	million acres	8.5	7.7	7.4	7.2	7.1	6.6
In Wetlands	1,000 acres	1,661	1,567	1,558	1,581	1,686	1,605
In Buffers	1,000 acres	314	316	321	321	320	312
Reductions (intercepted by buffers or not leaving field) **							
Sediment	million tons	23	23	23	23	24	24
Nitrogen	million lbs	116	113	113	113	117	113
Phosphorus	million lbs	12	12	11	11	12	12
Greenhouse Gas Reduction **	Mil. metric tons CO2 equivalent/yr	12	11	11	10	10	10

*Cumulative acres. ** Annual estimate, see Estimation Methodology.

- CRP reduces the nitrogen and phosphorus leaving a field in runoff and percolate. CRP reduces the nitrogen and phosphorus leaving a field in runoff and percolate. Nitrogen and phosphorus leaving CRP fields are 95 and 86 percent less, respectively, compared to land that is cropped.
- Grass filter strips and riparian buffers intercept sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other contaminants, before they enter waterways. Because buffers both reduce contaminates on the land they occupy and intercept contaminates from other lands they have disproportionate water quality benefits.
- Using models developed by the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI), CRP reduced nutrient losses in FY 2012, by an estimated 113 million pounds of nitrogen and 12 million pounds of phosphorus, compared to land that is cropped. Sediment losses were reduced by an estimated 24 million tons.
- The CRP has repeatedly been identified as an important conservation program for grassland bird populations by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Serious declines in grassland bird populations have been documented by USFWS. The 2013 'State of the Birds' report states: "Conservation Reserve Program is restoring grassland habitat for breeding birds. Henslow's Sparrow populations, which have declined more

than 95% since the mid-1960s, have rebounded in some areas through CRP. Researchers from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and the University of Montana found that CRP had a large impact on grassland bird populations in the Northern Plains, including two birds designated as species of continental importance by Partners in Flight.

- The United States Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that the CRP contributed to a net increase of about 2 million additional ducks per year (30 percent increase in duck production) since 1992 in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Northeastern Montana.
- Upstream CRP lands reduce downstream flood damage. Peak flows are reduced by slowing, storing, and infiltrating storm water runoff. CRP restores Prairie Pothole floodwater storage function – USGS estimated that CRP wetland catchments could store approximately 458,000 acre-feet of water annually, reducing water available for downstream flooding.