

# FARMLAND CONSERVATION

**INDICATOR:** Acres in conservation land retirement programs under state and federal farmland programs

## WHY IS THIS INDICATOR IMPORTANT?

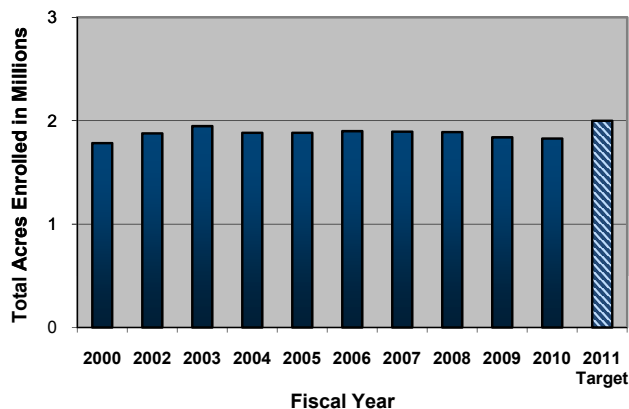
Farming has dramatically altered the landscape in Minnesota's agricultural areas. Wildlife populations declined as the historic prairie wetlands of southern and western Minnesota were converted to croplands. Federal farm policy has played an important role in shaping this landscape. The Federal Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has provided substantial conservation opportunities on agricultural lands. The 2008 Federal Farm Bill continues to provide significant conservation provisions vital to habitat conservation. Unfortunately, with the expiration of existing CRP contracts and competing demands for production for food and biofuels, Minnesota and other states are currently losing lands enrolled in this important conservation program.

## WHAT IS DNR DOING?

DNR is increasing collaboration with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), federal conservation agencies, conservation organizations, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and others to promote the full range of conservation provisions of the 2008 Federal Farm Bill on private lands. For example, DNR continues to provide funds in partnership with BWSR and Pheasants Forever to hire farm bill technicians who work out of local SWCD offices and help landowners enroll in Federal Farm Bill and state land retirement conservation programs. DNR is encouraging enrollment in continuous CRP, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the state's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve program. We will continue to work with other conservation partners to further expand and improve the conservation provisions within federal farm policy. We will also work with partners to develop and apply tools to target conservation to marginal agricultural lands and lands with high potential to provide multiple benefits for fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and soil erosion.

**TARGET:** Have at least 2 million acres enrolled in conservation land retirement programs by the end of the 2008 Farm Bill and maintain enrollment of the highest priority acres following CRP contract expirations. Rising land values, changing program requirements, and a reduced national CRP cap, make it difficult to maintain enrollment after contract expirations. DNR is working with partners to encourage contract extension or renewal. CRP retention, sustainable agriculture, and other conservation programs need to be addressed during the implementation of the 2008 Federal Farm Bill conservation provisions.

Acres in State and Federal Conservation Land Retirement Programs



This graph represents multiple land conservation programs such as: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP), Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP).



Nearly 2 million acres of land have been enrolled in conservation programs to improve soil and water quality and increase wildlife habitat. Natural resource staff help tailor conservation programs to individual farming operations.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- Land conservation grant programs at: [www.mndnr.gov/grants/land](http://www.mndnr.gov/grants/land)
- Financial assistance at: [www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/conservation/funding.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/conservation/funding.aspx)
- Farmland programs at: [www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/easements)