

KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

2010 Resolution

Strengthening the Conservation Reserve Program

Whereas, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), enacted as part of the 1985 Farm Bill and reauthorized in each successive Farm Bill approved by Congress, has proven to be one of the most successful conservation measures in history -- reducing soil loss and improving water quality in the country's more highly erodible watersheds and providing vital long-term habitat for hundreds of wildlife species; and

Whereas, Congress recognized the far-reaching value of this program by setting an enrollment goal of up to 45 million acres in 1985; and

Whereas, annual enrollment periods are needed to enable agricultural producers to make sound and timely decisions regarding enrollment of highly erodible and other sensitive acres into this program, or to renew expiring contracts; and

Whereas, Congress established water quality, wildlife benefits and reduced soil loss as the purposes of the CRP program, yet administrative rulemaking has added additional purposes to the program, which reduces the co-equal weight shared by soil protection, water quality and wildlife benefits; and

Whereas, individual states--and technical committees tasked with providing advice on the CRP--better understand local and regional land use, land types and optimum conservation practices to attain those soil protection, water quality and wildlife benefit goals set out by Congress; and

Whereas, the CRP provides important benefits by storing large amounts of carbon by restoring marginal cropland to grassland or forest; and

Whereas, many economic uses of CRP land, such as wind energy development, haying, grazing, or biomass harvesting, if not carefully controlled and prohibited where incompatible, have the potential to detract from the statutory purpose of the program.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Kansas Wildlife Federation assembled during its annual meeting, February 27, 2010 in Manhattan, Kansas, hereby urges the President, Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide funding and language to authorize a Conservation Reserve Program enrollment goal of up to 45 million acres; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that KWF urges Congress and the Secretary of Agriculture to direct the Farm Service Agency to restore an annual enrollment period for general CRP contracts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that KWF urges USDA, in their administrative rulemaking, to restore equal weight to the original CRP goals of reduced soil erosion, improved water quality and improved benefits for wildlife as it ranks factors and practices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each state's Farm Service Agency be allowed flexibility to structure enrollment in—and ultimately provide payment for—specific continuous sign up conservation practices more suited to the land types and practices within that state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that KWF urges USDA to adjust CRP rental rates on an annual basis to ensure that rates remain competitive; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that KWF calls on USDA to limit any economic use of CRP land, to those uses that are compatible with the primary purposes of CRP; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that KWF urges the National Wildlife Federation to pursue all of the above aspects of this resolution.