

Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program

Iowa



Background

Water-saturated portions of cropland fields can cause environmental issues and financial losses for Iowa farmers in the Prairie Pothole Region. To help overcome these issues, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering the **Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program** to farmers in this area. The new program provides farmers an opportunity to implement conservation practices on wet areas.

Pothole Region

The Prairie Pothole Region extends from Canada south and east, and through parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. In Iowa, many potholes are found in the Des Moines Lobe, an area that spans the north-central part of the state, ending around the Polk-Story county line and the vast majority of potholes are farmed.

Prairie Pothole Farming

Water Quality

Standing water from farmed potholes are often drained through tiling, field or road ditching, or diking. Moving water from floodprone areas degrades water quality by carrying nutrients through surface inlets and into nearby streams, lakes and rivers.

Wildlife Habitat

Potholes naturally produce moist soil plants which are valuable sources of forage and cover for many waterfowl, shorebird and wading bird species. Under normal cropland production, the native vegetation is restricted on these sites through mechanical and chemical control.

Financial Losses

Crop fields in the Prairie Pothole Region often yield poorly and drag field yield averages down. Iowa farmers can go consecutive years without yielding a productive crop in the

pothole region. This new program may actually provide a more positive return on investment for producers.



New Opportunity

The **Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program** is a new funding opportunity available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). When enrolled, producers are eligible for payment on cropped wetlands.

How It Works

In Iowa, farmers may choose from three levels. Participants sign 5-year EQIP contracts and begin at a Level 1, 2 or 3 option, depending on whether their potholes are drained.

Where potholes have been drained, farmers will only have the Level 1 option. This involves implementing Conservation Cover the first year and maintaining wetland habitat the remaining years.

In areas where potholes remain, eligible producers will receive five-year wetland wildlife habitat management payments at a Level 2 or 3. In Level 2, the producer ceases cropping a two-acre area or smaller and maintains the hydrology. In Level 3, the producer refrains from harvesting crops in a two-acre or smaller area during the primary nesting season.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program, wetlands must be:

(Levels 1, 2 and 3)

- Cropped Wetlands
(Levels 2 and 3)
- Two acres in size or less as identified on the National Wetlands Inventory
- Intact Hydrology

Monitoring

Examples of monitoring include but are not limited to: photo points with comparisons to surrounding wetlands, regeneration or breeding success, completing an annual management records log, documenting wildlife sightings, documenting location and species of invasive plants and condition of vegetative and structural treatments.

Practice Descriptions

Conservation Cover

Conservation cover is permanent vegetation, including a mix of introduced cool season grasses and legumes or native grasses and forbs, established on cropped wetland areas that need permanent vegetative cover to help improve water quality and provide wetland wildlife habitat.

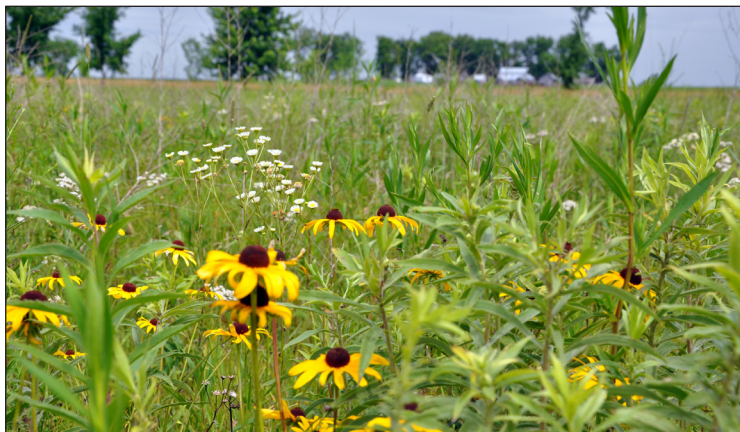
The wetlands must be wholly or partially in cropland, typically two acres in size. Wetland hydrology has or could be diverted from the wetland.

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management means retaining, developing or managing wetland habitat and communities for wetland wildlife. The purpose is to maintain habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, fur-bearers, reptiles and amphibians, or other wetland-dependent flora or fauna.

The practice addresses wildlife habitat for wetter or water-saturated portions of cropland fields. The wetlands must be wholly or partially in cropland. Wetland hydrology has or could be diverted from the wetland through tiling, field or road ditching, diking or any other feature that removes wetland hydrology.

The planned area must be adequately covered with permanent and/or annual (non-persistent) vegetation. The cessation of cropping and maintenance of hydrology provides adequate forage and cover in areas where normal cropland production restricts the growth of cover and forage sources. Monitoring assures hydrology is intact and provides wildlife water and habitat. Acres will be assessed and score 0.5 or greater as both Wetlands and Cropland on the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide. Monitoring will be used to determine if the hydrology remains intact and cover is adequate and free of invasive weed species.



Conservation Cover



Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

For More Information

Go to www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov for more information about the Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program, or contact your local NRCS office.

Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program Payment Rates for FY2022

Level	Practice	Applicable Years	Payment Rate	HU Special Payment Rate
1	Conservation Cover	Year 1	\$429.01/acre	\$429.01/acre
1	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.	Years 2-5	\$381.55/acre	\$390.33/acre
2	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.	Years 1-5	\$385.80/acre	\$395.43/acre
3	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.	Years 1-5	\$276.00/acre	\$283.93/acre

*Historically Underserved Producers in Iowa

Historically Underserved farmers include: Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged Producers (American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Black or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders or Hispanics), Limited Resource Farmers, Veteran Farmers, or Indian Tribes.






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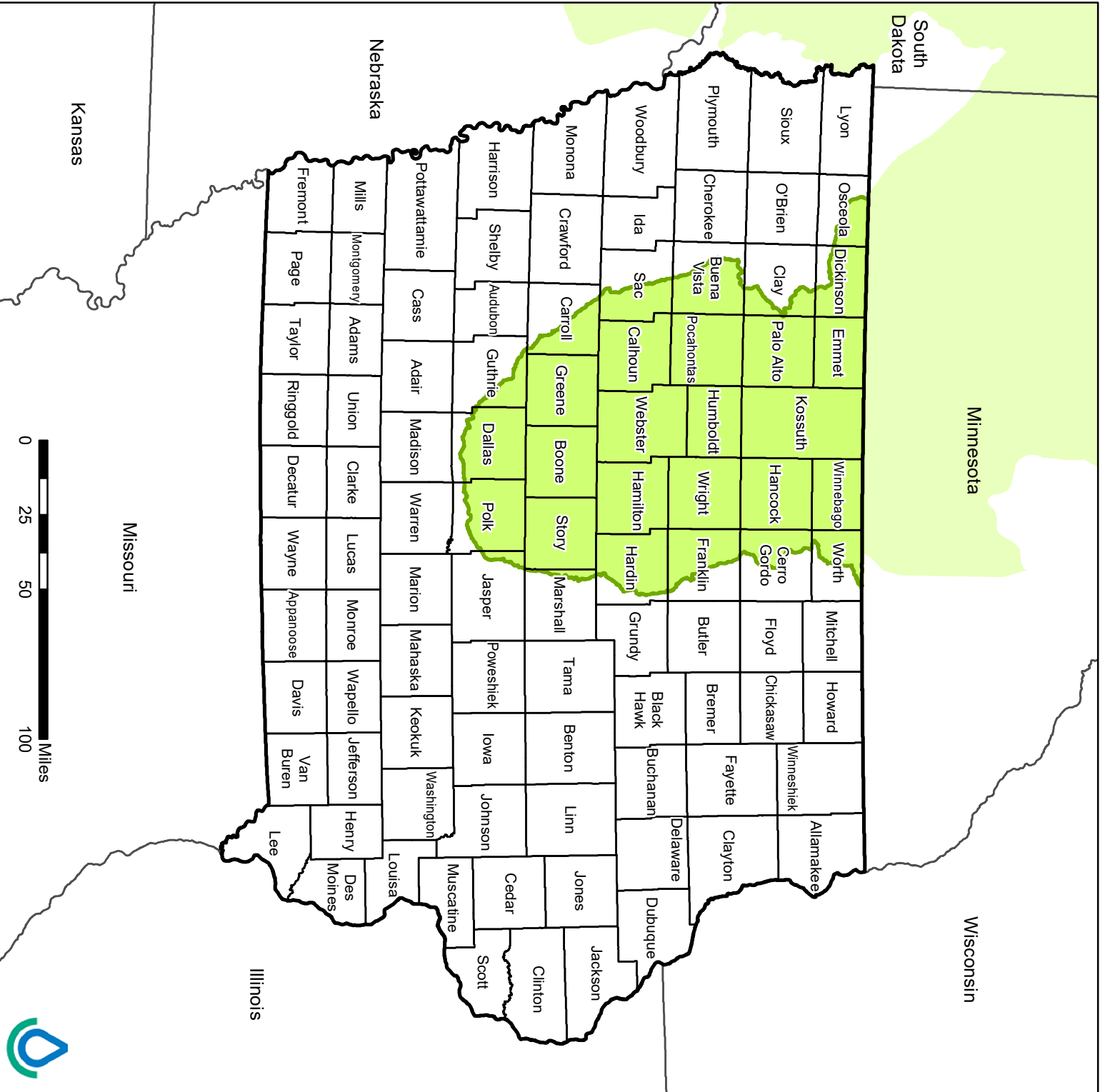
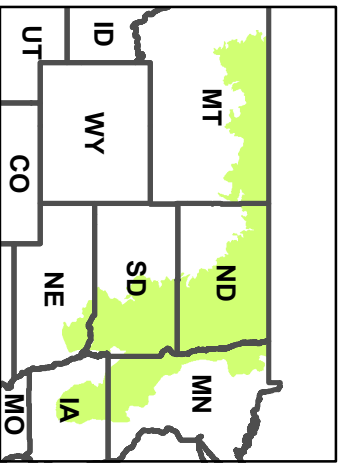
Prairie Pothole Region

Iowa

Iowa
Natural Resources
Conservation Service



 Iowa - Prairie Pothole Region



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