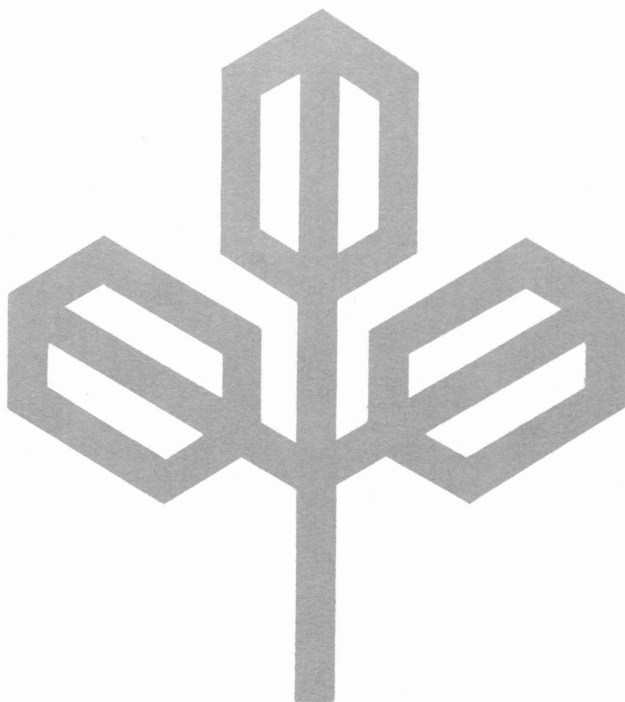


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**Your
Stake
in
the...**

GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION PROGRAM



**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
J. E. Hutchison, Director, College Station, Texas**

YOUR STAKE IN THE . . .

THE GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION PROGRAM

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What is the Great Plains Conservation Program?

The Great Plains Conservation Program, Public Law 1021, was enacted by the Eighty-fourth Congress, second session, August 7, 1957, to amend the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938. It is intended to help speed up the objectives of the Great Plains program in producing a more stable agriculture.

On November 18, 1969, Congress extended contract initiation to December 31, 1981 and included some new practices.

Does this program replace existing programs?

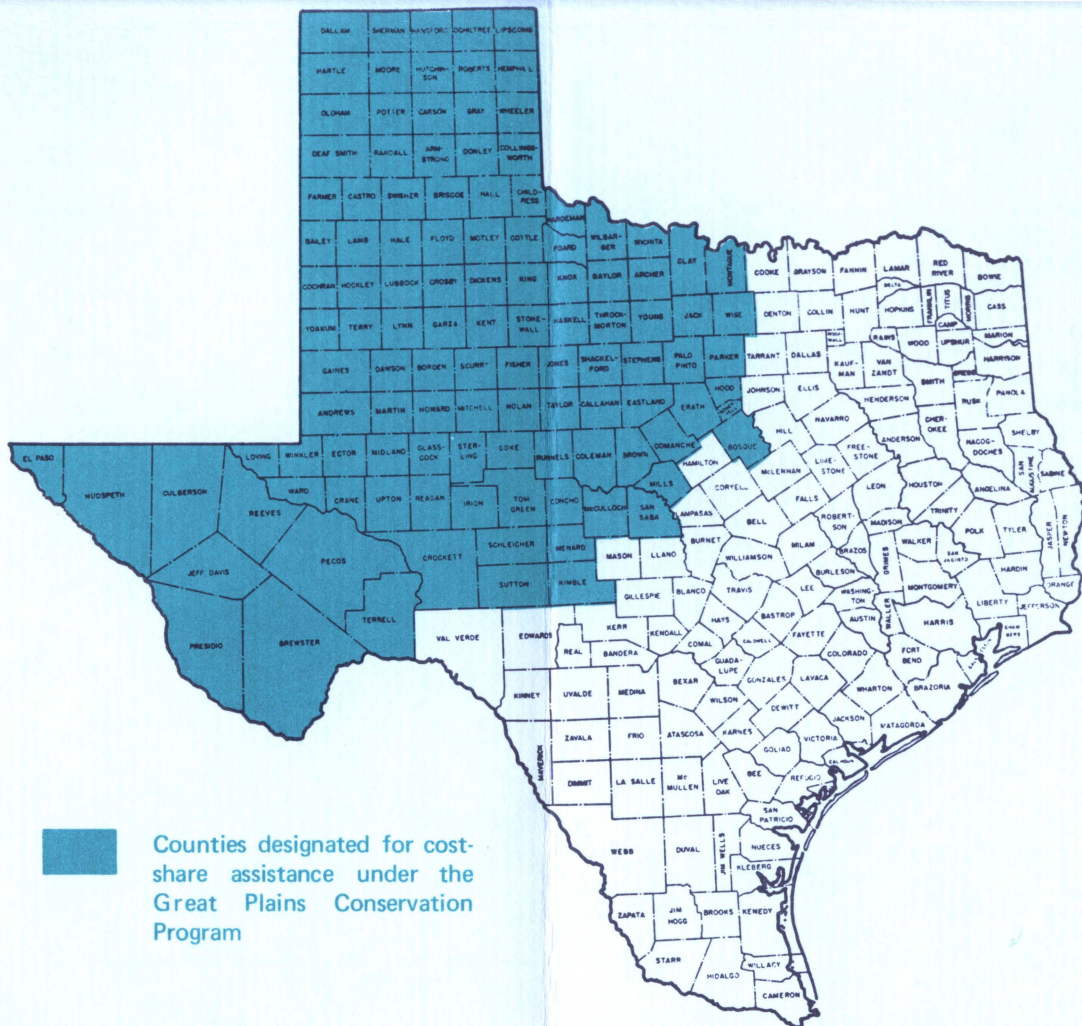
No, this is a program designed to meet special needs and problems of producers in the Plains region. Farmers and ranchmen who participate in this program will be encouraged to use other programs that contribute to the objectives of a more stable agriculture on the Great Plains.

In what part of Texas does this program apply?

One hundred and fifteen counties in the Great Plains area may be recommended for designation on the basis of climatic and erosion hazards, local interest and leadership for the program.

Who is eligible to participate?

Any farmer or ranchman in a designated county who owns or rents land considered as an operating unit can take part. A landowner whose tract of land is operated as part of such a unit cannot participate unless the entire farm or ranch is included.



What does a farmer or rancher need to do to participate in this program?

STEP 1. File an application for participation with your local Soil Conservation Service office.

STEP 2. Develop a "plan of operation" for your farm or ranch as a basis for a cost-sharing contract. Each plan of operation must meet SCS standards for farm and ranch conservation planning.

STEP 3. Sign a cost-sharing contract with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, as prepared by the district conservationist, based on your plan of operation.

STEP 4. Carry out the recommended changes in land use, cropping systems and conservation practices, according to your plan of operation and cost-sharing contract. Cost-share payments depend on satisfactory performance of these provisions as rapidly as weather and individual financial resources permit.

STEP 5. Apply for cost-sharing payments at your local SCS office. After the application has been made, the district conservationist will visit your farm or ranch to observe the completed parts of your plan of operation. He also will check to see that no practices have been adopted which tend to defeat the purposes of the program.

What should a "plan of operation" include?

A plan of operation for your farm or ranch must include the following information.

1. Name and location of your farm or ranch.
2. A conservation-plan map of your farm or ranch with each field marked clearly for identification; conservation practices and changes in land use and cropping systems can be indicated on this map.
3. A brief statement for each conservation treatment unit in your farm or ranch, describing how the

land will be used and treated. A conservation treatment unit is a field with common characteristics and requirements as land use, management and conservation practices. This statement should include field identification, acreage involved, conservation practices to be applied and cropping or grazing plans.

4. A time schedule for each conservation treatment unit showing the amount and kinds of practices to be applied each year. These practices should be listed in order of priority for application or installation.

Where can I get help in preparing a plan of operation?

SCS provides technical help in developing and carrying out a plan of operation. You can get information and advice from your county agricultural agent on the management practices and problems, and on the expected net income from different crop and livestock systems.

What does the "cost-sharing contract" involve?

It is a written agreement between you and the USDA. You agree to make land-use changes—and apply conservation practices according to your plan of operation. USDA agrees to share in the cost of establishing these practices.

If you are a tenant on a rented farm or ranch and wish to take part in the program, you must provide satisfactory evidence, such as a written lease or rental agreement, that you have control over the operation unit for the contract period.

How long do these contracts run?

They range from 3 to 10 years. Under the present law, a contract may begin no later than December 31, 1971, and end no later than December 31, 1981. The 10-year extension authorized in 1969 will permit initiation of contracts up to December 31, 1981, and will extend the life of the contract to as late as December 31, 1991. Within these limits, the contract should be for the least time needed to apply the conservation practices included in your plan.

Can a contract be amended, transferred or ended during the contract period?

Amendment of a contract is possible when necessitated by: (1) loss of control of part of your farm or ranch or acquiring additional land; (2) change in the time schedule of land use and practice application; (3) failure to carry out a provision of the plan because

of weather or other circumstances which do not justify ending the contract.

Contracts as such cannot be transferred. As an owner or tenant, if you transfer your right of interest in the farm or ranch during the contract period, your contract ends. You then lose the right to any further cost-share payments. You may have to refund all payments made previously under the contract. Payment losses and refund provisions do not apply if the new owner or tenant enters into a contract to carry out a plan of operation under this program.

Contracts can be ended before the expiration date; (1) by mutual consent of the farmer or rancher and the USDA; (2) as a result of substantial violation of the contract by following practices which tend to defeat the purposes of the program. When all the provisions of the contract have been met and the contract period is over, the contract expires.

What happens if I violate my contract?

If the violation is such as to warrant ending the contract, you forfeit all rights to further cost-share payments and will be required to refund all previous payments.

If the violation does not justify ending the contract, you may be required to accept payment adjustments or to refund part or all of cost-share payments received under the contract.

Generally speaking, the purpose of the contract would be defeated by knowingly or negligently destroying or breaking up a conservation practice in the plan of operation unless written approval has been obtained from the SCS.

What payments can I get if I participate in this program?

Cost-share payments up to 80 percent of the established rates for applying or installing approved conservation practices according to the plan of operation will be made, after these practices are completed satisfactorily.

Payments will be made by the state SCS office when a certificate of performance has been issued by the local SCS that you have completed an identifiable unit on your farm or ranch. Payments will be divided among the individual contract signers according to their contributions in performing the practices. Furnishing land or the right to use water will not be considered a contribution. It is possible to earn cost-share payments for some practices under the regular Agricultural Conservation Program. Payments cannot be earned from both

the ACP and this program for the same practice on the same land. No income or rental-type payments will be made under this program. There is a \$25,000 limitation on the cost-share payments that can be earned by any farmer or rancher. Cost-sharing in excess of \$2,500 will not be made for constructing, enlarging, deepening or lining dams or ponds for irrigation.

Funds also will be limited on irrigation practices to \$2,500 for any contract or no more than a fourth of the total contract obligation, whichever is larger. However, these limitations do not apply to irrigated acreage which constitutes 5 percent or less of the total operating unit if this is used to supplement forage supplies for the farm or ranch.

What conservation practices are eligible for cost-sharing?

Eligible practices may vary from county to county. The list of practices for your county is available from your local county agent, SCS, ASCS or FHA office.

The extended program states that "such plan also may include practices and measures for (a) enhancing fish and wildlife and recreation resources; (b) promoting the economic use of land, and (c) reducing or controlling agricultural related pollution."

The maintenance of any practice or installation under the program is your responsibility. No cost-sharing will be available for such maintenance after a practice is completed during or after the contract period.

Will participation in this program reduce my farm acreage allotments?

Acreage allotments will not be reduced during the contract period because of changes in the use of cropland required by the contract. Acreage which will be diverted from production of any commodity subject to acreage allotments or marketing quota will be considered acreage devoted to the commodity for the purpose of establishing future state, county, and farm acreage allotments.

Can land placed in conservation treatment units under this program be grazed or harvested during the contract period?

Yes, crops can be grazed or harvested from land in this program, provided such use is consistent with good management. The basic purpose of this program is larger and more stable net farm income through improved land use and conservation, not production control.

Will it pay to take part in the Great Plains Conservation Program?

Since no two farms or ranches are alike, you must decide whether the program will increase and stabilize your net income in future years. The program provides for financial and technical assistance in developing and carrying out long-range plans for best land use, cropping system, soil and water conservation and other management practices under Great Plains conditions.

In reaching your decision, consider the following advantages and disadvantages.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Financial assistance in making land use changes and in applying well-planned conservation practices.
2. Technical assistance from state and federal agricultural agencies in making and implementing plans.
3. More stable and possibly greater net farm income.
4. Flexibility to permit adjustment to variations in weather and farm income conditions.
5. Flexible contract period (3 to 10 years) based on time needed to carry out the plan of operation.

DISADVANTAGES:

1. Entire farm or ranch operating unit must be included in the plan of operation.
2. Possible required refund or payments if practices are followed which tend to defeat contract purposes.
3. Uncertainty of length of tenure on rented farms and ranches with problems of landlord-tenant relationships if owner or tenant should change during contract period.