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## Stearns County Soil & Water Conservation District

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For Immediate Release

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### **Conservation Reserve Program Changes Benefit Landowners & Wildlife**

In October, 2008 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that soil rental rates for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will increase nationwide. This is the third year in a row that the Farm Service Agency has updated soil rental rates nationwide in order to stay current with the market. In Stearns County soil rental rates increased an average of 8 percent. This increase makes soil rental rates for CRP approach cash rental rates.

The USDA also announced that they will provide additional payment incentives for select CRP practices. Additional incentives are now available for the following CRP practices: CP-23 and CP-23a wetland restorations, CP-31 bottomland timber establishment on wetlands and CP-37 duck nesting habitat. These practices are aimed at increasing vital habitat and nesting cover for wildlife, reducing and filtering runoff, controlling erosion and sedimentation and recharging groundwater supplies. This means that a CRP contract with any of the above practices may receive 120% of the average SRR for their property, 50% cost share and 40% practice incentive payment to establish the approved cover as well as the one time \$100 per acre signing incentive payment. "We hope that with these new economic incentives bring CRP payments closer to cash rent, and that producers will look at their less productive, frequently flooded lands and consider enrolling," stated Jason Selvog, Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist.

To be eligible for CRP a landowner must have owned the land for at least 1 year prior to enrolling and the land must meet the crop history requirements set forth by the Farm Service Agency. Under CRP, landowners enter into a 10 to 15 year contract and agree to establish the required cover on the enrolled acres. In return landowners will receive cost share for establishment, annual rental payments and a one time signing bonus for enrolling.

## **Minnesota CRP-SAFE Practice Acres Still Available!**

The State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative began this past April. The purpose of CP38E is to restore grasslands for pheasant, prairie chicken and for declining grassland songbirds. Examples of eligible land may be: land that meets cropping history requirements (four of the six years from 1996 to 2001), <10 acre fields adjacent to existing habitat that collectively form a minimum of 10 acres, land that comprises 10 to 40 acre blocks and irrigation corners.

In addition to the annual payment, CP38E participants receive a one-time signing bonus of \$100 per acre and a one-time practice payment up to 40% of the installation costs for acres enrolled. There is also up to 50% cost-share assistance for approved cover establishment.

Minnesota had been allocated 23,100 acres for enrollment starting April 14, 2008. To date, 15,300 acres have been approved or are pending approval. **That means there is still time to sign up!**

There are several CRP practices available to landowners, check out the Natural Resources Conservation Service Website for a full list:

[www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/agron/crp/CCRPeligibility.html](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/agron/crp/CCRPeligibility.html).

If you are interested in learning more about the Conservation Reserve Program on your property please contact the Stearns USDA Service Center at 320-251-7800 Ext.3.

All programs and services of the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.