



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Montana FSA: USDA Extends Signup Deadline for New Conservation Pilot Program in Prairie Pothole Region

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WASHINGTON, August 26, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is extending the deadline to November 20, 2020, for the Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP), a new pilot program that enables farmers to receive payments for planting perennial cover for conservation use for three to five years. Signup opened March 30, 2020, for the pilot program, which is part of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and available to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

“We want to ensure our producers are given adequate time to enroll in this pilot program to improve soil health on their farms,” said Richard Fordyce, Administrator of USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA). “Landowners interested in planting perennial cover on less productive cropland to conserve and improve soil, water, and wildlife resources on their land should contact their FSA county office about applying.”

Through SHIPP, producers can apply for three-, four-, or five-year CRP contracts to establish perennial cover on less productive cropland in exchange for payments. This pilot enables producers to plant perennial cover that, among other benefits, will improve soil health and water quality while having the option to harvest, hay, and graze outside the primary nesting season. Producers can enroll up to 50,000 acres in the program.

Perennial cover grown over multiple years can improve soil health and productivity for generations and increase a producer’s bottom line. Soil health, or soil quality is, by definition, the soil’s capacity to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans.

The SHIPP pilot is the latest option in a full suite of opportunities available to producers through CRP and other conservation programs offered by USDA. Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to contact their FSA county office soon about whether this pilot fits their operation or if they should consider a longer-term option such as the CRP General signup or CRP Continuous signup that is ongoing.

For more information, see the [fact sheet](#), visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp, or contact your local office. USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While our program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with our producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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