

## Minnesota leads the nation in CRP signup with number 50

A decrease in acres and grassland enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) nationwide means there's uncertainty and anxiety across the country about the future of CRP. However, there is good news coming out of Minnesota as the state does its part to preserve these important conservation lands.

Ryan Galbreath, State Resource Conservationist with the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), explains, "There's an estimated 2,400 offers on 33,400 acres in Minnesota. Based on these numbers the state has approximately 30% of the total number of CRP contracts accepted and 20% of the national acres for sign up number 50."

There's a heavy workload and a short window of time left for local partners to get these contracts completed and landowners into their offices to sign by the December 12, 2017 deadline that contribution agreement documentation is due to the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD).

Currently, Traverse County leads the state with over 210 CRP plans to be completed and signed by the deadline.



Landowner Steve Grimes, CRP Participant, Trudy Determan, SWCD Administrative Assistant and Casey O'Leary, SWCD Farmbill Technician at the Traverse County/SWCD office Wheaton.



Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists Dustin Van Thuyne and Nick Smetana meeting with Brown County landowner Gary Rathman.

"What's positive about Traverse County's workload is that our entire service center, SWCD, NRCS, and FSA staff are working together to complete contracts for landowners in Traverse County. Our staff have undertaken a substantial workload this year to prepare for the influx of contracts and now we are working in unison to execute them all before the deadline. We are invested in conservation and strive to provide the best customer service possible." Sara Gronfeld, District Manager, Traverse SWCD.

Minnesota's Farm Bill Assistance Program (FBAP) is the main reason Minnesota has been so successful in managing this heavy workload. FBAP is made up of MASWCD, the Board of Water and Soil Resources, NRCS, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Pheasants Forever. All are working with the Farm Services Agency who administers this landmark program.

As the new federal farm bill is debated there is strong interest from conservation and agricultural groups in raising the 24 million acre CRP cap to allow for higher participation levels similar to the 1990's.