12-6-1999

Improve your bid for CRP

Ralph Mayer
Iowa State University

Duane Miller
Iowa State University

Michael J. Tidman
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews

Part of the Agricultural Science Commons, Agriculture Commons, and the Agronomy and Crop Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
Mayer, Ralph; Miller, Duane; and Tidman, Michael J., "Improve your bid for CRP" (1999). Integrated Crop Management News. 2165.
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/2165

The Iowa State University Digital Repository provides access to Integrated Crop Management News for historical purposes only. Users are hereby notified that the content may be inaccurate, out of date, incomplete and/or may not meet the needs and requirements of the user. Users should make their own assessment of the information and whether it is suitable for their intended purpose. For current information on integrated crop management from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, please visit https://crops.extension.iastate.edu/.
Improve your bid for CRP

Abstract
Landowners will be able to sign up for the next round of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) between January 18 and February 11, 2000. The CRP is designed to improve natural resources by protecting millions of acres of topsoil from erosion. Landowners participate in CRP by taking crop and grazing land out of production and planting vegetative cover in its place. Planting cover restores habitat for wildlife and improves water quality in streams, ponds, lakes, and rivers.

Keywords
Agronomy

Disciplines
Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Agronomy and Crop Sciences

This article is available at Iowa State University Digital Repository: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/2165
Improve your bid for CRP

Landowners will be able to sign up for the next round of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) between January 18 and February 11, 2000. The CRP is designed to improve natural resources by protecting millions of acres of topsoil from erosion. Landowners participate in CRP by taking crop and grazing land out of production and planting vegetative cover in its place. Planting cover restores habitat for wildlife and improves water quality in streams, ponds, lakes, and rivers.

Signing up for CRP is a competitive bid process and is almost certain to be especially competitive in 2000, due to low commodity prices. Use ISU Extension Publication FM-1822 Conservation Reserve Program Participation Worksheet to calculate the bid needed to be competitive with anticipated prices.

The USDA uses the environmental benefits index (EBI) to evaluate and prioritize bids. The EBI measures potential environmental benefits obtained from plans for enrolling land in CRP. Those who submit CRP bids will want to maximize EBI scores to ensure that their bid is accepted. Bidders need to understand the EBI scoring system when preparing their CRP bid. The EBI is composed of six environmental factors totaling 410 points, with a seventh factor (cost) contributing to the final score (see table).

For most Iowa landowners, there are many factors that can be influenced to increase EBI scores. Because the cutoff is decided after analyzing the EBI numbers of all the offers, the EBI cutoff used in previous sign-ups may not be sufficient to guarantee a contract. To improve the odds of a bid being accepted, landowners should focus on areas that make a difference.

The seven national ranking factors in the EBI scoring system are as follows:

1. wildlife habitat
2. water quality
3. on-farm reduced erosion
4. enduring benefits
5. air quality
6. conservation priority areas
7. cost

Scoring for the wildlife habitat factor is flexible. Elements of the CRP bid evaluated for wildlife habitat include the mix of species for the cover. Including a mix of at least five native species (a diverse grass-legume mix) can earn up to 50 points. Planting food plots, restoring wetlands, planting trees, the proximity to water of the land submitted for bid, restoring prairie
or other rare habitat, and the presence of threatened or endangered species all contribute to higher scores in the wildlife factor.

The water quality factor is scored on the impact that the CRP bid has on surface water quality. This factor can be influenced by protecting agricultural drainage wells and sinkholes, restoring cropped wetlands, and protecting land that has a high leach index. Land that lies in a state-designated water quality area or is close to a perennial stream also scores high.

**On-farm reduced erosion** includes enrolling land that is especially susceptible to wind, sheet, and rill erosion.

Woody vegetation (planning for trees and shrubs), provides **enduring benefits** and scores higher on the EBI. Indicating permanence with trees, which are likely to last beyond the CRP contract, can score up to 50 extra points. Some wetlands restorations also earn 25 enduring benefits points.

The **air quality** national ranking factor evaluates the bid's impact on reducing wind erosion and dust pollution, especially on land nearby highly populated areas. In Iowa, it is difficult to score in this category because there are few population centers.

If the land offered for CRP lies within a national or state **conservation priority area**, an additional 25 points may be awarded. There are seven counties as a state-designated water quality area (Mitchell, Howard, Floyd, Chickasaw, Butler, Bremer, and Black Hawk), and 25 counties in a national CRP wildlife priority area in north central Iowa, including Osceola, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Winnebago, Worth, Clay, Palo Alto, Hancock, Cerro Gordo, Buena Vista, Pocahontas, Humboldt, Wright, Franklin, Calhoun, Webster, Hamilton, Hardin, Greene, Boone, Story, Dallas, and Polk.

The **cost** formula is written after all bids have been submitted. To earn extra EBI points, landowners can decline cost share for 10 points, or, for every dollar under their rental cap that they bid, landowners are awarded one additional point (up to 15 points).

Before bidding for the general CRP sign-up, landowners may want to consider the continuous sign-up option of the CRP. Land that is eligible for high-priority conservation practices includes riparian buffers, filter strips, contour grass strips, grass waterways, field windbreaks, and shallow water wildlife areas.

By enrolling some of these areas under the continuous sign-up, which is noncompetitive, a landowner may be able to increase EBI points (increasing the likelihood of acceptance) on the balance of the parcel offered in the general CRP sign-up. Landowners also should know that bonus payments are often associated with parcels that qualify for the continuous sign-up that are not offered in the general sign-up, which may raise the level of total payments.

Technical assistance and equipment rental for establishing native vegetation, planting trees, or restoring wetlands or special habitats are available from several agencies and organizations. Consider working with conservation nonprofits like Pheasants Forever or Ducks Unlimited to establish habitat.

For more information on the CRP, or for a copy of FM-1822, contact the nearest USDA Service Center or your local county extension office.

**Table 1. Environmental benefits index.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife habitat</td>
<td>Up to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water quality</td>
<td>Up to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-farm reduced erosion</td>
<td>Up to 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enduring benefits</td>
<td>Up to 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air quality</td>
<td>Up to 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation priority areas</td>
<td>0 or 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This article originally appeared on pages 197-198 of the IC-482(25) -- December 6, 1999 issue.

Source URL: http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/ipm/icm/1999/12-6-1999/crpbid.html