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Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Montana FSA: USDA Launches New Conservation Pilot Program for Prairie Pothole Producers to Plant Cover Crops

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WASHINGTON, D.C., February 24, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced a new pilot program that enables farmers in the Prairie Pothole region to receive payments for planting cover crops on their land for three to five years. The new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) pilot is available to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. The signup for this pilot starts March 30, 2020 and ends August 21.

“We are excited to provide a short-term Conservation Reserve Program option tailored to the unique soil health needs of producers in the Prairie Pothole region,” said FSA Administrator Richard Fordyce. “The number of acres that can be enrolled in the program are limited, and participation will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Interested landowners should act now by contacting their FSA county office for an appointment to apply.”

Through SHIPP, producers have the option of three-, four- or five-year CRP contracts to establish cover crops on less productive cropland in exchange for payments. This pilot enables producers to plant cover crops that, among other benefits, will improve soil health and water quality while having the option to harvest, hay and graze during certain times of the year. Up to 50,000 acres can be enrolled.

Cover crops, whether used in a single crop rotation or over multiple years, can improve the productivity of soils and soil health on a farm for generations and increase the bottom line for the farmer. Soil health, or soil quality, by definition, is the capacity of soil 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 talk to their FSA county office soon about whether this pilot fits their operation or consider another longer-term option such as the CRP General signup that ends February 28 or CRP Continuous signup that is

ongoing.

For more information, see the [fact sheet](#) or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp and contact your local office. To find your local USDA Service Center office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov/service-locator>.

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