



*Providing a Voice for Northeast Colorado*

## Conservation Reserve Program

AWN-2009-18

**WHEREAS**, The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a cost-share and rental payment program under the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), and is administered by the USD Farm Service Agency (FSA); and

**WHEREAS**, Although the roots of the program had been established in the 1950's, the real public push for conservation occurred in the 1980's. In the 1970's farmers began to farm "fence row to fence row", which from time to time removed certain habitat and vegetative stands from the fields, which might lead to having detrimental effects on soil, water, and habitat quality throughout the agricultural regions; and

**WHEREAS**, The Farm Bill of 1985 officially established the CRP program and officially established the number of "highly erodible" lands that qualified and subsequently raised from 5 million acres to 40 millions acres as the national target total acres; and

**WHEREAS**, The 1990 Farm Bill expanded the list of eligible lands to include marginal pasture land converted to wetland or established as wildlife habitat prior to enactment of the 1990 Farm Bill as CRP qualified; and

**WHEREAS**, The 1996 Farm Bill established the cropping history of a piece of land and lands with an erodibility index of over 15 as criteria for CRP qualification; and

**WHEREAS**, The 2002 Farm Bill defined that land under expiring contracts is automatically eligible to be considered for re-enrollment and existing vegetative covers must be retained, if feasible, when expiring contracts are re-enrolled; and

**WHEREAS**, The 2008 Farm Bill stated that alfalfa grown in approved rotation practice is to be considered an agricultural commodity and can be used to fulfill requirement that eligible land be cropped in four out of six previous years; and

**WHEREAS**, Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time under continuous sign-up; and

**WHEREAS**, Three main types of payments within the CRP program are:

1. rental payments,

[www.progressive15.org](http://www.progressive15.org) · [cathy@progressive15.org](mailto:cathy@progressive15.org)

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2. cost share assistance, and
3. financial incentives

**WHEREAS**, One of the primary methods of fighting the concept of global warming is the reduction of carbon in the atmosphere. CRP establishes carbon sinks, which are vegetation patches that pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere during the process of photosynthesis and deposit it into the soil; and

**WHEREAS**, As of October 31, 2008, there were 33,570,000 acres enrolled into CRP; and

**WHEREAS**, One of the recognized benefits of CRP is the improvement of water quality due to the reduction of runoff reaching water bodies. The Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute estimated 278 million pounds less nitrogen and 59 million pounds less phosphorus left fields in 2007 due to CRP, 95 and 86 percent reductions; and

**WHEREAS**, In 2007, CRP reduced soil erosion by an estimated 470 million tons from pre-CRP levels: and

**WHEREAS**, Certain wildlife benefits are attributed to CRP including:

1. The ducks in the Prairie Pothole region have seen a 30 percent increase in population since 1992,
2. Research has shown that four percent increase in CRP lands in prime pheasant regions has lead to a 22 percent increase in populations
3. The introduction of CRP in sage grouse territory has slowed the decline of these birds by 25 percent between 1970 and 1988, and
4. Studies have estimated that without the influx of CRP lands, grassland bird populations could have declined anywhere from 2 to 52 percent.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,**

1. Progressive 15 supports the continuation of the CRP program, primarily the continuous sign up, the 10 and 15 year contracts, and the four out of six years cropping requirements for enrollment.
2. Progressive 15 supports the emphasis of soil conservation as the principle goal of CRP.
3. Progressive 15 supports continuation of CRP as a natural method of sequestering carbon from the environment.
4. Progressive 15 supports the emphasis of wildlife benefits arising from CRP while recognizing the private property rights of private land owners over the stocking rates and regulations afforded to any specific species of wildlife.
5. Progressive 15 supports the water quality benefits that is attributed to CRP lands.

*Adopted this 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2009*

## Policy Statements

### **PS-2007-1**

Progressive 15 urges the Governor and the Commissioner of Agriculture to be actively involved in promoting and defending Colorado's agriculture interest in international trade negotiations and engage Colorado's agriculture organizations in developing a strategy to this end.

### **PS-2007-2**

Progressive 15 believes that agriculture is an integral part of its economic base and urges the Governor to convene a task force to assess the future of agriculture in Colorado and make appropriate recommendations as to what the State of Colorado can do to ensure a viable future for this important industry.

### **PS-2007-3**

Progressive 15 urges any changes in policies or laws on use of chemicals in agriculture, mining, etc. are based on sound scientific evidence.

### **PS-2007-4**

Progressive 15 supports protection of personal property rights

### **PS-2007-5**

Progressive 15 believes agriculture land condemnation for economic development should not be allowed

## Principles

### COLORADO 64 WATER PRINCIPLES

Drought is a naturally recurring part of Colorado's climatic cycle. The past four years of drought, culminating in the record-setting parched conditions of 2002, have touched every region of the State of Colorado.

Water shortages throughout Colorado have reached crisis proportions. However, every crisis offers opportunity: opportunity for cooperation, opportunity for understanding, and opportunity to unify diverse positions. Our current drought provides opportunity for all three.

Colorado law recognizes the right to move water from where it flows to where it is needed and to change the historical use of water from one beneficial use to another. In the 130 years since adoption of our constitution, Colorado has grown significantly, both in population and in expanded uses for water. The volume of undeveloped water in Colorado has shrunk tremendously. As our quest for solutions considers transferring water from one part of Colorado for new or different uses in other parts of the state, we must address the impacts such measures have on the people and economies where these waters originate.

We recognize that in the free exercise of private property rights, some water will continue to be transferred from willing buyers to willing sellers, and will continue to move away from traditional uses to new uses. The goal of all parties should be to ultimately advance the economic, environmental, cultural and recreational health of all Colorado communities.

[www.progressive15.org](http://www.progressive15.org) · [cathy@progressive15.org](mailto:cathy@progressive15.org)

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The following principles are offered by , Colorado 64, a coalition representing communities, water providers, and business interests across Colorado to frame the debate about preparing for Colorado's water future. These principles are intended to inform and assist decision makers and water managers in crafting fair and mutually beneficial water projects, as well as balanced water related policy and legislation to address Colorado's water challenges.

The following principles begin our earnest efforts to find water supply answers that benefit all Coloradans, for this and future generations.

In this spirit, this document is intended to be a working document. All parties commit to remain at the table where the principals may be amended or expanded as times and conditions change.

1. All Colorado water users must share in solving Colorado's water resource problems.
2. The State of Colorado should provide assistance, when requested, for local water supply planning and assist in the implementation of consensus-based water resource solutions that respect local authorities, private property and water rights.
3. During the process of planning to meet future needs, water suppliers and utilities should give preference to development of economically viable local water sources and demand management as they consider other options, including development of new water transfers.
4. Additional water storage should be pursued through the improvement and rehabilitation of existing structures and the development of new structures. These activities should be accomplished with local consensus.
5. The right of water rights owners to market their water rights must be protected.
  - a. Colorado must fully explore flexible, market-based approaches to water supply management, including interruptible water contracts, water banking, in-state water leasing and groundwater recharge management.
  - b. Those seeking to transfer agricultural water to another use should consider leasing or other temporary arrangements for transfer of water, rather than relying exclusively on the purchase of water rights. Leasing or other such temporary arrangements could allow for reversion of the water to agricultural purposes under certain conditions.
  - c. In the event that agricultural water is transferred, the transaction must adequately address the need for maintaining the existing tax base, protecting the remaining water rights in the area, and maintaining the proper stewardship of the land including re-vegetation and weed control.
6. Appropriate recognition should be given to preservation of flows necessary to support recreational, hydroelectric and environmental needs concurrent with development of water for beneficial consumptive uses.
7. Adverse economic, environmental, and social impacts of future water projects and water transfers should be minimized; unavoidable adverse impacts must be reasonably mitigated; all communities involved should commit themselves to identifying and implementing reasonable mitigation measures as an integral part of future water projects or transfers.

8. Future water supply solutions must benefit both the area of origin and the area of use.
9. Water conservation measures that do not injure other water rights should be aggressively pursued.
10. There must be an ongoing, concerted effort to educate all Coloradans on the importance of water, and the need to conserve, manage, and plan for the needs of this and future generations.