

an era of high commodity prices. That could drive down the incentive to re-enroll idled land; putting it back into row crops.

It also comes as Congress debates authorization of the next Farm Bill, with strong indications the CRP enrollment 'cap' will drop substantially. Currently, that cap is 32-million acres. Early drafts suggest a cap of 25-million in the next program. As landowners across the country decide--including those in Iowa with 1.7 million acres currently in CRP and nearly 232,000 coming out this fall -they are anticipating a significant drop in the acres to be offered.

That would mean at least a couple years, under the new Farm Bill, before there could be future general signups.

"Chances are very good the acreage cap will decrease. Opportunities to sign up in the future would be few and far between," cautions Kelly Smith, private lands coordinator with the Department of Natural Resources. "We know there is an opportunity this year. Landowners who sign up (get) a 10 or 15 year contract. If there are fewer acres authorized (in the next Farm Bill), there may not be an opportunity." In Cerro Gordo County, landowner Dave Hansen sold on the environmental benefits of CRP. "You stop a lot of the erosion; especially on your steeper slopes. You stop a tremendous amount of erosion by having filter strips

or areas that are highly erodible (planted) to grasslands and protected," he points out; walking a steep, irregular field corner.

Hansen just last year placed the four-acres into the program; a small parcel, but a headache for his operation.

"It is D and E slopes; very steep. It's odd shaped and with today's equipment is almost impossible to farm," stresses Hansen. "You spend more time trying to maneuver than actually planting...It just relieves a lot of problems."

CRP turns it into a 'win win' proposition. Besides a payment to leave it idle; the land becomes productive in a different way. "The (native) grasses need nitrogen. Some of the forbs will actually be our legume and provide the nitrogen and (provide) a better stand."

"CRP provides clean water and air for all Iowans. It preserves the land for future generations, by keeping the soil where it belongs," reminds Smith; pointing out that losses of grassland acres across the Midwest have negative effects on many wildlife populations; ranging from pheasants to songbirds.

The Farm Services Agency of the USDA is holding CRP information meetings across Iowa. Information can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/ia

Youth Shooting Event Looking for Participants

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POLK CITY - The Drake Sportsmen's Club is hosting its inaugural youth shoot and education day for 20 youths age 12 and older on April 14, from noon to 4 p.m., at the Charles 'Butch' Olofson Shooting Range, near Polk City.

The youth shoot and education day will teach kids firearm safety from licensed instructors and college shooters and allow them to fire shotguns, .22 rifles, BB guns, and bow and arrows.

Parents or guardians are required to fill out a release of liability waiver prior to the event. To register for the event and receive a copy of the form, contact the event coordinator and club president Uriah Hansen at 641-640-1273 or by email at uhansen6@gmail.com. The completed form must be returned to Hansen.

DNR to Hold Public Meetings to Discuss Fall Hunting and Trapping Regulations

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is hosting public meetings tonight to discuss possible changes in the hunting and trapping regulations for this fall.

The changes would affect deer and waterfowl hunters as well as hunters and trappers who pursue bobcats and ot-