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and **Soil Water Conservation**

United States
Department of
Agriculture
Soil
Conservation
Service

NOVEMBER 1988

Volume 9, Number 8



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SOIL WATER CONSERVATION
VOLUME 9, NUMBER 8

Cover: Pheasant in switch-grass planted on highly erodible land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve program (CRP). Vegetation on CRP acres is providing food and cover for a number of wildlife species.

(Photo by Ron Nichols.)

Soil and Water Conservation News is the official magazine of the Soil Conservation Service. The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of public business required by law of this Department. Use of funds for printing *Soil and Water Conservation News* has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. *Soil and Water Conservation News* (ISSN-0199-9060) is published 12 times a year. Postage paid at Washington, D.C.

Richard E. Lyng
Secretary of Agriculture

Wilson Scaling
Chief, Soil Conservation Service

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Nancy M. Garlitz
Editor

Paul D. Barker
Associate Editor

Kim M. Berry and Kathleen Diehl
Contributing Editors

Christopher Lozos
Design Consultant

Magazine inquiries
Send inquiries to: The Editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, Public Information Division, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013-2890.

Subscriptions
Send subscription orders to: Superintendent of Documents U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, DC 20402

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Comments from the SCS Chief:

CRP Benefits Soil, Water, and Wildlife

THROUGH THE CONSERVATION Reserve Program (CRP) of the Food Security Act of 1985, landowners are protecting soil and water resources and providing food and cover for wildlife.

The trees and grass planted on the more than 25 million acres enrolled in the CRP are substantially reducing soil erosion. This vegetative cover helps to improve water quality and increase water quantity by filtering sediment and reducing runoff.

More than 1 million CRP acres have been planned specifically to attract wildlife. And all of the program's goal of 40 to 45 million acres will provide some food and cover.

States and private wildlife organizations are offering landowners free seed and cost sharing for establishing approved plantings and food plots in addition to the Federal cost sharing provided for establishing grass and trees.

Some States are already reporting a resurgence in upland game birds such as quail and pheasant. Good wildlife populations encourage multiple uses of rangeland and other lands. Wildlife attracts hunters and wildlife enthusiasts who spend money for lodging, food, and supplies, boosting rural economies.

Vegetative filter strips on cropland fields along waterways have been approved for enrollment in the CRP, and other lands are being considered. This will help provide the diverse habitat wildlife need.

The CRP is a program that benefits individual landowners as well as society. Landowners can earn a guaranteed income on land of marginal value for cultivated crops as they improve and protect soil, water, and wildlife resources for the good of all.



Bringing Back Wildlife

IN IOWA, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) of the Food Security Act of 1985 is putting more than 1.5 million acres of highly erodible farmland into grass and trees. In addition to protecting soil and water resources, the grass and trees are bringing back wildlife.

For many years, Iowa led the Nation in pheasant harvest, and the cover on CRP land may soon put it back in the lead. Iowa's 1986 pheasant harvest was 800,000, and in 1987, the year after the first CRP plantings were established, the State's pheasant harvest reached 1.4 million.

"If mild winters prevail, and there are a series of warm, dry springs, pheasant harvests could return to the 2 million bird mark of the 1960's," said Richard Bishop, chief of the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "CRP acres are going to significantly improve pheasant numbers and hunting

opportunities unless severe winter storms reduce the breeding population."

To provide winter food and cover for pheasant and other wildlife, Pheasants Forever, a private wildlife organization, is providing landowners cost sharing assistance and free seed to establish food plots and native grasses on CRP land.

One native grass highly recommended for use in CRP plantings is switchgrass because of the excellent winter cover it provides. When the CRP began, the main drawback to planting switchgrass was its high cost. But more seed producers are working to meet rising demands, and the cost should be coming down.

Bishop says CRP land is more valuable for wildlife than a field in alfalfa rotation because the alfalfa is mowed for hay during the peak nesting season. Under normal conditions, CRP plantings are left undisturbed after they are mowed the first summer to control weeds.

Pheasant finds ready cover in stand of switchgrass.
(Photo by Ron Nichols.)



“The CRP is good for farmers because they can earn a guaranteed income on land of marginal value for row crops, and it’s good for society as a whole because of the other benefits it provides,” said Bishop.

Good establishment of the first CRP seeding should mean that little maintenance will be needed. Bishop said that spot treatment of weeds causes less disturbance of nesting cover.

In addition to the cost sharing that the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture provides landowners for establishing grass and trees on their CRP acres, the State of Iowa offers cost sharing for establishing food plots on CRP land in the northern half of the State. Cost sharing on the food plots, which must be included in the plan approved by the Soil Conservation Service and the local soil conservation district, ranges up to \$70 an acre. A combination of corn and grain sorghum or forage sorghum is recommended. The State is also cost sharing the establishment of major windbreaks around farmsteads to provide winter cover.

In Iowa, in addition to pheasant, CRP acres are benefitting quail, eastern wild turkey, white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbits, and songbirds.

“The CRP is good for farmers because they can earn a guaranteed income on land of marginal value for row crops, and it’s good for society as a whole because of the other benefits it provides,” said Bishop. “Those other benefits include protecting soil and water resources and creating wildlife habitat.”

Nancy M. Garlitz, editor, *Soil and Water Conservation News*, SCS, Washington, D.C.



Richard Bishop, chief of the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, shows wildlife use of a food plot. (Photo by Lynn Betts.)

In addition to reducing soil erosion, the CRP vegetation is improving wildlife habitat for deer and upland game birds.

Northern Utah Improves Habitat

PHEASANTS HAVE BEEN seen around Clarkston, Utah, recently for the first time in years. Just as unusual, sharp-tailed grouse have been coming down from the forested uplands to feed in the grasslands.

These changes in northern Utah's Cache County have come hand in hand with local farmers' participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). More than 270 Cache County farmers have now planted 19,000 acres of highly erodible cropland to permanent vegetation as part of the CRP. In addition to reducing soil erosion, the CRP vegetation is improving wildlife habitat for deer and upland game birds.

Changes are particularly noticeable in the area of white knolls around Clarkston. Cache County is a valley more than 40 miles long and 15 miles wide, and the white knolls are on the foothills between the forested uplands and the valley floor. White knolls occur where the topsoil has eroded, exposing the subsoil and soft parent material.

Before the CRP, most farmers in the area practiced a 2-year rotation of winter wheat and summer fallow. The Soil Conservation Service estimated that sheet and rill erosion on the steeper areas (10 to 20 percent slopes) exceeded 15 to 20 tons per acre per year. The average rate on CRP land in the county is now 1-4 tons per acre per year.

A high percentage of the CRP land has been planted to intermediate wheatgrass, alfalfa, and sweet clover and is already heavily used by deer. In addition, about 20 farmers in the county have planted 3,000 acres of CRP land specifically

for wildlife as part of a program of the State Division of Wildlife Resources (DWLR).

Since the CRP began in 1986, the Utah State Legislature has appropriated approximately \$100,000 a year to DWLR to assist in seeding areas of wildlife cover on CRP land. This program pays half the seed costs, which is that part not paid by the CRP. The DWLR also delivers the seed and has purchased a machine to plant shrubs.

SCS staffs at the Logan field office and Utah State office have worked closely with DWLR specialists in selecting appropriate sites and developing suitable seed mixes. A typical wildlife planting in an area larger than 25 acres is about two-thirds tall grass and one-third short grass species. Shrubs to provide windbreaks and travel lanes are usually planted a year later.

The two agencies—SCS and DWLR—have also worked closely with USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Utah State University to develop additional planting materials. A plot of nearly 3 acres is used for grass and forb tests to find plants best suited to the eroded white knolls. Seed has been obtained from several sources, including SCS plant materials centers and private suppliers.

With more than 25,000 acres still eligible, Cache County is a long way from having its maximum allowable acreage in the CRP. The county can expect many more farmers to plant highly erodible cropland to permanent cover that will reduce erosion and improve wildlife habitat.

William I. McMullin, soil conservationist, SCS, Logan, Utah

In all, 81 Glacier County farmers had acreage in the CRP at the end of 1987. Twenty-seven additional CRP contracts were enrolled during the sixth sign-up period in February 1988.

Two Montana Farmers Happy with CRP

THEY MAY have to fight weeds and grasshoppers, but farmers in Glacier County, Mont., think the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is worth it.

"Besides CRP being a good deal economically, it gives the land a rest and keeps the soil from blowing away," said Gloria Sundquist, whose farm is 35 miles northwest of Cut Bank. Sundquist established grass on her CRP acreage by seeding a grass and legume mix into standing stubble. Her stand is composed of alfalfa and sweet-clover, crested wheatgrass, smooth brome grass, and slender wheatgrass.

Sundquist also intends to plant trees on her CRP ground. "I'm planting trees along the edge of what is now the strip," she said. "I think trees will slow down the wind for when I farm this ground again."

Jerry Johnson is another Glacier County farmer who has established grass on CRP acreage. Johnson, who farms 9 miles west of Cut Bank, began his program by spraying a pre-plant herbicide in the early weeks of May 1987. He seeded about 5 pounds of pure live seed per acre using an air seeder with Dutch knives. Following Soil Conservation Service recommendations of seeding into a firm seedbed, Johnson seeded into both his chemical-fallow and spring grain stubble from the 1986 crop.

"I got better results from my CRP planting than I did trying to establish alfalfa," Johnson said. "In that planting, I used 10 to 12 pounds of seed per acre."

Presently, the alfalfa is the main component of the stand providing for a good grass and legume cover as well as additional habitat for wildlife.

Problems came for both farmers in the form of weeds and grasshoppers. Sundquist has some Russian thistle growing but felt that the alfalfa would stifle it. The weeds didn't become a problem for Johnson until August when the soil moisture content was greater. However, because he had a good stand of alfalfa, they were not a major problem.

The grasshoppers worsened as the volunteer grains were consumed, leaving only the grass seedlings to be attacked. Johnson sprayed as needed for this problem, but Sundquist only sprayed the edges of her fields, sometimes making a second pass when the grasshoppers were especially bad.

In all, 81 Glacier County farmers had acreage in the CRP at the end of 1987. Twenty-seven additional CRP contracts were enrolled during the sixth sign-up period in February 1988.

David Spengler, soil conservationist, SCS, Cut Bank, Mont.

On weekends and during spring break, wildlife management students from Washington State University in Spokane and local elementary school students volunteered.

Washington Plants for Wildlife, Too

EARLIER THIS YEAR, nearly 53,000 trees and shrubs were planted to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and improve wildlife habitat on about 500 acres of farmland in Whitman County, Wash. The cost: less than \$1 a plant.

The plantings were financed through a \$39,000 grant from the Washington Conservation Commission. The grant, obtained by the Whitman Conservation District for purchase of the planting stock, came from funds earmarked for projects that reduce nonpoint source pollution.

Work crews headed by the Washington State Department of Wildlife planted nearly 53,000 trees and shrubs on about 500 acres of highly erodible land in Whitman County, Wash. (Photo by Ron Nichols.)

Working with the Washington State Department of Wildlife, the Soil Conservation Service contacted 28 farmers who had highly erodible land on which they were interested in planting trees and shrubs. Most of the farmers were SCS cooperators who had already decided to use the land for wildlife habitat. Some of the land was former cropland that had been taken out of production as part of the Conservation Reserve Program or other set-aside programs.

Planting sites were carefully selected for maximum benefits. The planting was done between February and April 1988 by work crews headed by the Washington State Department of Wildlife. On weekends and during spring break, wildlife management students from Washington State University in Spokane and local elementary school students volunteered. On some sites, help was provided by 25 State prison inmates in a supervised work release program.

The work crews scraped away the grass sod with hoes and drilled planting holes with power augers. After the seedlings were placed in the holes and the soil was tamped down, plastic collars were installed to protect the seedlings from rodents.

Planted were pines, junipers, caragana, honeysuckle, Russian olive, chokecherry, hawthorne, buffalo berry, suma, sandberry, and other hardy varieties of trees and shrubs suited to the area's cold, dry climate. Besides helping to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation of streams, these species will improve the habitat for deer and upland game birds.

Adapted from an article in the Colfax, Wash., *Gazette*, April 28, 1988.



When Bowers found out that he had a 141-acre field of highly erodible cropland eligible for the CRP, he knew exactly what to do. He placed the field in the CRP and is using it to create more wildlife habitat.

CRP Habitat, A Natural

FOR JOHN BOWERS, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was a natural.

Bowers has been establishing wildlife habitat on his farm in Garfield County, Okla., since 1972, when he became a cooperator with the Garfield County Conservation District. At that time, the Soil Conservation Service helped him plan wildlife plantings on 120 acres. Then, in 1986 the CRP was established. When Bowers found out that he had a 141-acre field of highly erodible cropland eligible for the CRP, he

knew exactly what to do. He placed the field in the CRP and is using it to create more wildlife habitat.

"I have always been interested in wildlife and enjoy seeing the birds and animals that good habitat attracts," said Bowers. He already has quail, rabbits, and pheasants. After his new plantings are well established and wildlife populations increase, he may consider leasing the land to bird dog trainers.

Under the CRP, farmers enter into a contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that requires them to keep highly erodible cropland out of produc-



tion for 10 years. In return, farmers receive annual rental payments from USDA. The land must be established to permanent vegetation and cannot be grazed or used for hay.

This past spring, Bowers sprayed the CRP land to kill the existing cover of volunteer wheat and brome grasses, leaving the residue to protect the soil and new seedlings. He then seeded most of it to a native grass mixture including little bluestem, sand bluestem, sand lovegrass, switchgrass, sideoats grama, and indiagrass.

"The native grasses will provide excellent food, cover, and nesting

areas for quail, pheasants, and other birds," said Steve Tully, State biologist for the Soil Conservation Service.

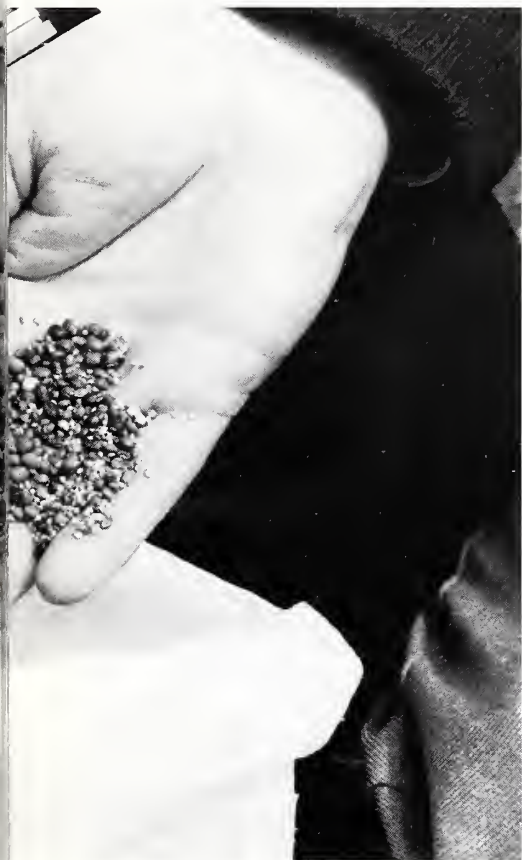
Additional cover will be provided by six shelterbelts covering about 12 acres and consisting of 1,800 trees. Rows of eastern redcedar, Austrian pine, bur oak, redbud, lace bark elm, and sycamore have been planted across the field. Other areas of various sizes have also been planted to trees, including an area around the site where a pond is to be built.

Food plots are being developed by planting Illinois bundleflower, partridge pea, and Maximilian sunflower in pure stands so that

seed can be harvested for use in other areas. Quail Unlimited, an organization that promotes habitat for quail, donated 40 pounds of a wildgame seed mix for planting adjacent to the shelterbelts.

"Mr. Bowers' CRP plan provides all the needed requirements for good wildlife habitat," said Tully. "And we encourage other farmers entering the CRP to consider similar wildlife habitat plantings along with their grass plantings."

F. Dwain Phillips, public affairs specialist, SCS, Stillwater, Okla.



John Bowers leased a drill from the Garfield County Conservation District to seed native grass mixture on his farm in Garfield County, Okla. The existing cover was sprayed with an herbicide to prevent competition.

Seed mix provided to John Bowers by Quail Unlimited is designed to produce plants important to good quail habitat.

Dike Designed For Wildlife

THE UTICA MARSH, a habitat nestled in the city of Utica and the town of Marcy in Oneida County, N.Y., offers city and town dwellers a place to enjoy nature's beauty and serenity. The marsh also serves as a rich educational resource for youths and adults.

When the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) needed an acre of the marsh to build a major highway, the Soil Conservation Service and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) sought to ensure that damage to the wetland would be minimal.

After many negotiations, DOT decided to build a dike and two shallow wetlands to replace the

area taken for the road. SCS designed and provided the cost estimate for a 600-foot dike that dramatically improved wildlife habitat in the 90-acre North Pool area. DOT completed the dike in spring 1987 for about \$23,000.

The dike allows water to enter and leave the pool through the use of flashboards, according to SCS Assistant State Conservationist Dwight Holman, who was district conservationist in Oneida County at the time. According to Holman, water stands about a foot deep in much of the pool.

Holman said he and other SCS field personnel were interested in the project because they recognized the need to preserve one of the State's few wildlife refuges in an urban area. They also recognized the educational importance of the marsh.

The marsh's lush vegetation and alluvial soils support a diverse wildlife population. More than 130 bird species have been spotted by local bird clubs. Fox, deer, coy-

otes, and raccoons roam freely. Frogs, garter snakes, and turtles are also common.

The Children's Museum and the Rogers Environmental Education Center in Sherburne conduct classes for teachers and youth group leaders on ways to use the marsh as a teaching tool. Scouts and adult groups can be seen trekking through the marsh, observing the wildlife and plant life.

The marsh also is used for recreation, including snow shoeing, cross-country skiing, and bird watching. No hunting is allowed.

John Page, a senior wildlife biologist with DEC (the owners of the marsh and the education center), believes the efforts of SCS in this unusual project have paid off for the people of Oneida County.

"The marsh seems to be saved...in spite of the new highway," Page said.

Sylvia Rainford, public affairs specialist intern, SCS, Syracuse, N.Y.

Den Mother Carol Schneider helps Cub scouts, from left, Mark Williams, David Schneider, and Frank Cardanone to identify some "wild" things they've found in the Utica Marsh. (Photo by Karen Williamson.)



Pismo Lake Recreated

MANAGING A WETLAND in the semi-arid climate of the Pacific southwest is challenging at best. When the wetland lies within the corporate limits of two cities, and the watershed is undergoing rapid urbanization, it can become a juggling act bordering on the impossible. The 50-acre Pismo Lake Ecological Reserve in San Luis Obispo County, Calif., presented such a challenge.

Pismo Lake had been a stable wetland area until the late 1970's when urbanization and storms caused sedimentation that reduced the 30-acre open water wetland within the reserve to just 2 1/2 acres.



A restoration plan was developed through the Santa Maria field office of the Soil Conservation Service and the California Department of Fish and Game. Funding for the project was provided by the Department of Fish and Game and SCS. The SCS share of the funding was provided through the Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council.

Four islands ranging in size from 1/2 to 2 acres were developed in 18 1/2 acres of open water. The islands were constructed by soil excavation and stockpiling. The islands were completed in fall 1986. Vegetation work was completed in spring 1987. The project was designed to recreate the historical natural environment to provide habitat for the wide range of waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife native to the area.

Another important part of the project was the effort by the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District and the

RC&D area council to urge local officials to enforce erosion control requirements for developers to prevent sedimentation from again ruining the preserve.

Water recreation is not permitted on Pismo Lake Ecological Reserve. However, the urban wetland is within easy commuting distance of two major universities, two junior colleges, and dozens of high schools. Biological research will be permitted as well as wildlife and bird watching activities.

Gerald J. Czarnecki, district conservationist, SCS, Santa Maria, Calif.

Sediment was excavated to restore open water for wildlife in the Pismo Lake Ecological Reserve, San Luis Obispo County, Calif.



“Habitat evaluations in the area the past 3 years show the land treatment program has improved quail habitat from fair to good,” said Pat Graham, SCS biologist in Missouri.

People's Choice for Big Creek

WHEN CONSTRUCTION began in the East Fork of Big Creek Watershed Project, the plan to use many small dams instead of a few large ones was known as “The People’s Choice.” Three years later, the people in northeastern Missouri are more convinced than ever that their choice was the right one.

With technical and financial assistance from the Soil Conservation Service, 111 flood-control dams and 90 land-stabilization dams were constructed to reduce flooding and gully erosion within and below the watershed. Local residents say the project has achieved its goal.

“I think it’s working great,” said Howard Simpson, a Ridgeway farmer. “When we had so much rain this year, we just had a nice, easy stream of water down below our structures. Before construction, rain that hard would have gutted the fields.”

“I think the creek was just out of its banks once this year in East Fork, and it wasn’t out very long” said Hadley Callaway of Bethany.

“It didn’t even hurt any of the corn right next to it. In the past, if we got a rain like that the creek would have been out a day and a half.”

Callaway has three of the dams on his farm. One has a permanent pool of 8 acres. The others have permanent pools of 5 acres. Each is designed to catch and hold runoff from the hills until it can be released slowly through overflow pipes.

“We’ve got farmland right below our structures, and all that rain hasn’t hurt our farmland down there at all,” Callaway said. “The structures have made my place a lot better place to farm.”

Pipeline Leaves Area Wild

THE TENNESSEE Gas Pipeline Division of Tenneco recently installed a 30-inch pipeline across 7 miles of Tioga State Forest in north-central Pennsylvania. For the special care it took to protect and enhance the environment along the pipeline right-of-way, the company was named “Outstanding Developer” by the Susquehanna Conservation District.

Tennessee Gas constructed the pipeline alongside an older one, more than a mile of which crosses woodland now designated as the Asaph Wild Area. The company followed recommendations of the conservation district and the Soil Conservation Service for installing practices to control potential soil erosion on steep slopes, avoid sedimentation of streams, and restore vegetation.

Construction began in 1985. After the pipe was in place and the trench was filled in, the right-of-way was limed, fertilized, and seeded, with a layer of hay mulch applied to protect the seeds and promote germination. Following the winter snows and spring rains of 1986 it was clear that careful attention to erosion control paid off. Streambanks remained intact and soil loss was minimized through ridgelike water bars contoured into the slopes.

The company then planted 77,000 white spruce and red pine seedlings along the edge of the right-of-way and pockets of fruiting shrubs and bushes to provide food and protection for wildlife.

Lillian Theophanis, manager, Susquehanna County Conservation District, Montrose, Pa.

The project has also improved wildlife habitat. "Habitat evaluations in the area the past 3 years show the land treatment program has improved quail habitat from fair to good," said Pat Graham, SCS biologist in Missouri. "The protected grass areas around the flood-control structures are also providing excellent pheasant nesting cover. The new lakes are providing good habitat for waterfowl."

Reduced road maintenance is another benefit. Simpson, who has run a road grader in Grant Township for many years, has noticed that road ditches and low spots that he used to remove silt from on a regular basis cause him no reason to stop now. "We used

to have all kinds of problems with those road ditches, but where the structures are, we don't have any damage anymore," he said. "You can just see the difference."

Richard Elliot, Harrison County commissioner, said one dam with a county road built on it has solved one long-standing problem. He said Road 310 in Trail Creek Township was notorious for having its culvert wash out during heavy rains. Each time, the county would replace the washed out culvert with a larger one. The last time, instead of replacing the 6-foot metal culvert the road was put on a dam with a 10-inch overflow pipe.

There has been no trouble there since. "This road has been a problem for 20 years," he said, "and we feel that it is now solved."

Elliot said the county commission routinely hears praise of the project and has allocated \$5,000 to the Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District to promote a similar, but larger, project for the West Fork. As approved by Congress, the West Fork Watershed Project will include 352 water-retarding dams and 209 grade-stabilization structures. And, like the project on the East Fork, it will be "The People's Choice."

Charlie Rahm, public affairs specialist, SCS, Columbia, Mo.

Wildlife Plan Developed

DALE HUTTUNEN can tell folks what it's like being dealt a one-two punch by Nature. The St. Louis County, Minn., farmer wanted to establish wildlife habitat on his 80-acre spread. But a tornado in 1969 and a fire in 1975 left his land ravaged.

"In 1981, I attempted to reestablish my wildlife habitat by planting my property with 20,000 red pine seedlings," said Huttunen. "When my neighbors did the same thing, we realized we had created a monoculture, which meant poor habitat for wildlife, particularly deer, grouse, and songbirds.

In 1987, Huttunen finally realized all his efforts since the fire to establish his dream had failed. He approached the Soil Conservation Service through the North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District for help in developing a wildlife plan. SCS asked for the assistance of a biologist from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The resulting multiagency effort helped Huttunen evaluate his resource areas and plan the installation of prescribed management practices as scheduled in a 5-year long-term agreement.

Planned treatments included three wildlife ponds, 2 1/2 acres of mixed shrubs, 2 acres of permanent food plots consisting of cool season grasses and legumes, and a

half-acre grain food plot to be planted annually. Twelve acres of aspen will also be managed for ruffed grouse and white-tailed deer, and Huttunen is currently interplanting white spruce and white cedar as replacement species in the original 25 acres of pine.

Huttunen is extremely pleased with the assistance provided by both agencies. A spin-off of the project is the formation, this fall, of a St. Louis County wildlife group. The group, still being formed and unnamed until January 1989, will work with SCS, DNR, and private citizen groups to provide planning assistance to landowners who are interested in wildlife habitat.

Michael D. Oja, district conservationist, SCS, Virginia, Minn.

New Food for Quail

"DO YOU KNOW of a perennial that produces winter food for quail and that deer won't eat up? For many years, I used bicolor. But deer won't let me grow bicolor now. They've overrun my place and completely eaten up my bicolor."

Biologists in the Southeast have heard that statement and similar ones hundreds of times in the past 20 years, especially from landowners and quail hunters in areas with dense populations of deer. That's nearly everywhere in the Southeast today, and deer populations are increasing every year.

Until recently, there was no perennial that would produce abundant winter food for quail, yet be browsed little by deer. But today there is. It's Amquail, a new variety of shrub lespedeza released in 1987 by the Americus, Ga., Plant Materials Center of the Soil Conservation Service. SCS biolo-



Charles Owsley, manager of the Americus, Ga., Plant Materials Center of the Soil Conservation Service, inspects plantings of Amquail lespedeza.

gists familiar with Amquail believe it is the biggest advancement in habitat management for quail in the Southeast since the introduction of bicolor about 50 years ago.

Amquail is a perennial summer legume that can be established by transplanting seedlings or by planting scarified seed. It forms a shrub 6 to 8 feet high that, from a distance, resembles bicolor and other shrub lespedezas, especially in winter. But there is one major difference—Amquail is resistant to deer browse, and most of the other shrub lespedezas are not.

Individual plants of Amquail may contain eight or more stems. Young stems are purplish. The flowers are mostly rose-purple, but a few are white. Blooming is at a peak from mid-August to early September.

The hard-coated seed ripen in October and early November. Some fall to the ground soon after they ripen. Others remain on the plant and are shed gradually during fall and winter. The seed are most valuable to quail from late December to early March when other quail foods are scarce.

Amquail is best suited to the upland Coastal Plain soils of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Good sites are field and woodland borders, idle fields, utility rights-of-way, woodland clearings, and along ditchbanks and hedgerows. It grows well on highly erodible lands. One plot of Amquail (about a ninth of an acre) per 12 acres usually supports high quail populations.

Robert E. Waters, State biologist, SCS, Auburn, Ala.;

Forum Focuses on CRP

WHAT WILL HAPPEN to CRP lands in the eleventh year? This was one of the concerns addressed in the third Grazing Lands Forum (GLF) held in Harpers Ferry, W. Va., October 11-13. One objective of the forum was to develop a strategy to capitalize on the opportunities for grazing land conservation and improvement offered by the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

"Current farm programs could cause millions of acres of grasslands established under the CRP to be plowed again after contracts expire," said Lester Vough, president of the Forum and an agronomist with the University of Maryland. Vough represented the American Forage and Grassland Council.

Actions identified for consideration by the GLF member organizations included treating plowout of CRP lands under the sodbusting regulations; extending CRP contracts to the authorized 15-year term; and establishing a committee to recommend priority research needs for CRP.

Members also proposed the development of a Conservation Land-Link whereby two or more parcels of CRP land could be linked together through development of a riparian (streamside) corridor or a field windbreak to provide continuous improved wildlife habitat.

GLP was organized in 1985 as a consortium of independent organizations interested in promoting cooperation in improving stewardship of the Nation's grazing lands.

CRP Land Is Booming

THE BOOMING of the greater prairie chicken's spring mating dance can be heard once again in central Wisconsin. A booming ground is where male prairie chickens gather to perform their spring dance ritual to attract hens. Once established, a booming ground is used year after year as long as site conditions persist.

At one time the greater prairie chicken was widely distributed in the north-central States. But it's now an endangered species in Wisconsin and limited to a small area in the State. Prairie chickens require wide open spaces and lots of grassy cover—a rarity in a State divided into heavily agricultural and densely forested areas.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources manages three diverse wildlife areas in central Wisconsin for the greater prairie chicken. Near one of these areas, the Leola Marsh, a landowner recently entered more than 800 acres of land into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and agreed to allow the land to be managed in the best interest of the prairie chicken.

Managing land for prairie chickens involves establishing and maintaining grass cover through planting warm season grasses and controlled burning. Observation blinds are set up to conduct population counts. The Soil Conservation Service worked out seeding mixtures using several varieties of

switchgrass provided by the SCS Plant Materials Center in East Lansing, Mich. Today, instead of 800 acres of row crops with a wind erosion problem, the prairie chickens have an established booming ground.

Steve Pernsteiner, district conservationist, SCS, Shawano, Wis.

CRP Improves Water Quality

AT THE SOIL and Water Conservation Society's 43rd annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, this past summer, Soil Conservation Service Associate Chief Manly Wilder discussed the water quality implications of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) of the Food Security Act of 1985.

Wilder said that the grass and trees planted on CRP land can improve water quality by reducing soil erosion that contributes to surface water pollution. Wilder also discussed the water quality benefits of cropland filter strips recently approved for enrollment in the CRP.

Filter strips, approved cropland areas 66 to 99 feet wide along streams, lakes, and estuaries and planted to grass, trees, shrubs, or other forbs, can reduce the sediment load entering waterways, reduce the runoff of crop nutrients and pesticides, and provide habitat and breeding grounds for wildlife. Figures from the sixth CRP sign-up show that 16,000 acres of filter strips have been contracted.

California District Gets Coastal Grant

"THE SONOMA COUNTY Coastal Wetland Enhancement Plan," a grant of \$1.2 million, has been awarded to the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District in Sonoma County, Calif. The grant was given by the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC).

Protecting coastal estuaries and wetlands is one of the major goals of the SCC's coastal resource program. SCC's board of directors approved the 5-year grant to the conservation district to provide erosion and sediment control practices in two Sonoma County coastal watersheds: Estero Americano (49 square miles) and Salmon Creek (35 square miles). In the past 100 years, sediment has largely filled in the estuaries, which are important wetlands and wildlife habitat.

The district will administer the grant and will work with the Soil Conservation Service and Circuit Rider Productions (a not-for-profit corporation) in carrying out the plan. The grant will be used for road repairs, gully stabilization, streambank protection, slope revegetation, and range management practices. Landowners will be asked to sign 10-year contracts for maintaining completed practices.

Eugene E. Guenza, soil conservationist, SCS, Santa Rosa, Calif.

Moving?

Send present mailing label and new address including zip code to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890, Room 6202-S
Washington, D.C. 20013-2890

THIRD-CLASS BULK RATE
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USDA-SCS
WASHINGTON DC
PERMIT NO. G-267

Official Business

Penalty for private use, \$300

Windbreaks Developed

THE TEXAS Forest Service and conservation districts have been cooperating on supplying and selling packets of seedlings to landowners for installing windbreaks designed to attract wildlife.

In total, the forest service grew 208,000 conifer and hardwood seedlings in their West Texas Nursery. Seventy-one conservation districts are selling the windbreak packets at the local level.

The wildlife packets included 25 seedlings of four species per packet (100 seedlings) designed to provide food and cover for upland birds, deer, turkey, and squirrel. Texas conservation districts sold a total of 319 packets. The packets included the following:

- For quail and pheasant - Russian olive, native plum, skunkbush sumac, sandcherry, four-wing saltbush, and lilac.
- For deer - flameleaf sumac, bur oak, four-wing saltbush, and pecan.
- For wild turkey - cottonwood, bur oak, pecan, and mulberry.
- For squirrel - osage orange, little walnut, pecan, and cottonwood.

Dale Allen, public affairs specialist, SCS, Temple, Tex.

CRP Reducing Soil Erosion

Harvey Sprock, area range conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Greeley, Colo., left, and Mark Ball, range conservationist for the National Grasslands Project of USDA's Forest Service, examine sorghum on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land in Colorado. Ball says CRP plantings such as this are helping to reduce wind erosion on private farmland adjacent to land administered by the Forest Service in the National Grasslands. (Photo by Gene Alexander.)

