



News Release

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For Immediate Release

Playa Lakes CRP Acres Could Go Fast

Signup begins today for a new initiative under the Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) aimed at protecting [playa lakes](#). The initiative is of particular importance to Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas where nearly all playas exist.

The [Wetlands Restoration Non Floodplain Initiative](#), or CP23a, provides farmers financial incentives to protect and restore playa wetlands. Signup is on a continuous basis starting today through December 31, 2007. Although signup is continuous, many resource managers estimate that given the regional resource need, playa lakes states will be fully enrolled within the first year.

"We are urging producers with playas to contact their local Farm Service Agency as soon as possible if they are interested in enrolling," said Barth Crouch, Regional Biologist for Pheasants Forever and Vice Chairman of the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV).

Playa lakes - sometimes

Playas are the most numerous wetlands in the region, totaling about 60,000 in the Southern and Western High Plains.

Of the 250,000 acres set aside nationally for the initiative, 56,600 have been allocated to playa lakes states. If all are enrolled, the initiative could bring an estimated \$35 million to landowners in the region.

The initiative provides cost share, annual rental payments and other financial incentives to landowners to restore and protect playas and other wetlands located outside the 100-year floodplain. Wetlands must have been farmed four out of the past six years (from 1996 to 2001) and buffers of up to four times the wetland acreage are also eligible for enrollment. Unlike other CRP wetlands programs, this new initiative has no maximum wetland size, which will allow larger playas to be enrolled.

"We are excited that we have a program that works just for playas," said Mike Carter, PLJV Coordinator. "This new initiative in combination with the [Farmable Wetlands Program](#) means that both large and small playas have a home in the Farm Bill."

Signup also begins today for the

The program provides cost share, annual rental payments and other financial incentives to landowners to establish 30 to 120-foot native grass buffers around crop fields. Like with the wetlands restoration initiative, land must have been cropped four out of the past six years to qualify for enrollment. The USDA estimates the initiative will pay out \$125 million nationally, and of that, \$27 million is estimated to go to landowners in playa lakes states.

Both the wetlands and upland bird initiatives are subject to the same 25 percent acreage cap as other CRP programs. So landowners in counties that have already reached the cap will not be able to enroll. However, PLJV partners are urging landowners to express their support for these programs, even in capped counties.

Farmers interested in enrolling in either program can sign up through their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. To find your local office, visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

The Playa Lakes Joint Venture is a partnership of federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups and private industry dedicated to the protection of playa lakes, other wetlands and grasslands for the

referred to as buffalo wallows - are shallow, seasonal wetlands that collect water from the surrounding area after heavy rainfall or runoff events. They are the [primary source of recharge](#) for the Ogallala Aquifer and host millions of migrating, breeding and wintering birds throughout the year.

new [Upland Bird Habitat Buffer Initiative](#), or CP33, under CRP. The initiative aims to create 250,000 acres of nesting and brooding cover to increase numbers of northern bobwhite quail by 750,000 birds annually. The initiative allocates 56,600 acres to playa lakes states which host approximately 25 percent of the breeding population of bobwhite quail.

benefit of birds and other wildlife. For more information about the PLJV, visit: www.pljv.org.

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