



Incentives for Fencing Streams

**Best Management
Practices for Water
Quality**



One of the more contentious best management practices in the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Plan is livestock BMP #4 Limiting Livestock Access to Streams and other Water Bodies. The benefits associated with this best management practice include decreased erosion, as well as decreased nutrient and bacteria run-off to streams. While producers agree that these benefits are important, it has been very difficult for many to find an economical and practical way of implementing this practice. Revised cost-share opportunities may make fencing streams more economically attractive to producers.

One way to limit livestock access to streams is by installing buffers along the stream. Often livestock need to be excluded from the buffer area in order to establish vegetative growth. The cost involved in fencing livestock from the stream and providing alternative water sources can be reduced by participating in the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program.

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a cost-share program. Producers can sign-up any time by visiting the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). There is no waiting period for this program and producers do not need to compete against others. A producer's offer is accepted if all eligibility requirements are met.

The incentives of the continuous CRP program include:

- ✓ An up-front signing incentive payment of \$100 - \$150 per acre (depending on contract length) for certain high-priority practices such as filter strips, riparian buffers, and grassed waterways.
- ✓ A practice incentive payment equal to 40% of your eligible practice installation cost. This is in addition to the 50% cost-share paid by USDA for establishing approved buffers. For many producers this amounts to 90% cost-share for installing certain practices such as building fence and planting trees.
- ✓ Increases in maintenance payments per acre for certain activities like tree planting, fencing and water development. Maintenance payments up to \$10 per acre per year are now possible.
- ✓ CRP rental rates have been updated to better reflect the agricultural value of eligible land along streams and around lakes and other water bodies.

Examples of buffers that are eligible for continuous CRP sign up include riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, shallow water areas for wildlife and contour grass strips.

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Buffers slow water runoff, trap sediment, and enhance water infiltration in the buffer itself. They also trap fertilizers, pesticides, bacteria, pathogens, and heavy metals; lessening the chance these pollutants will reach surface or ground water sources. They protect livestock from harsh weather, offer a natural habitat for wildlife, and improve fish habitat. They may add a measure of safety to field operations where crops are planted and harvested adjacent to steep stream banks. Buffers add beauty, recreational opportunities and value to your farm. Buffers are a visible demonstration of the landowner's commitment to conservation.

The Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share program can also provide incentives for landowners needing to install best management practices to improve or protect water quality. The Kentucky Division of Conservation administers this program.

The main focus of the Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share program is to assist farmers in developing and implementing agriculture water quality plans. The best management practices approved through the state cost share program help reduce animal waste nutrients, prevent the loss of topsoil and minimize sediment and other nonpoint source pollutants in Kentucky's rivers, lakes and groundwater supplies.

The program provides financial assistance to individuals to implement best management practices on farms or in forest operations. Any person engaged in agricultural or silvicultural operations is eligible to apply through a local conservation district. There are 121 local conservation districts in Kentucky. These districts oversee the installation of the best management practices.

The local conservation districts submit applications to the Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission. This commission reviews, ranks and approves applications for funding. In the spring of 2000, 877 applications in 104 counties were approved and funded at a cost of \$10.7 million dollars.

The commission gives priority to projects that address animal waste concerns and to individual applicants who are enrolled in agricultural districts with identified water quality programs. Best management practices such as development of riparian areas, establishing stream crossings and rotational grazing with alternative watering sources have been funded through the state cost share program. Applications involving practices to address soil erosion also received funding.

To participate in the continuous CRP program, please contact your local USDA Service Center. To apply for assistance through the Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality program, please contact your local conservation district. For more information on conservation measures and best management practices to improve water quality, contact your local county Extension office, Conservation District Office or NRCS office.

Written by Jennifer Cocanougher, Extension Associate for Environmental & Natural Resource Issues, January 2001. Information compiled from Land, Air & Water, Summer 2000, Kentucky Natural Resources & Environmental Protection Cabinet and USDA Program Aid 1615, revised September 2000.