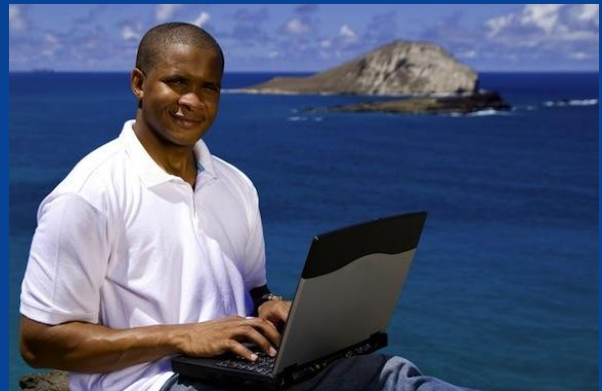
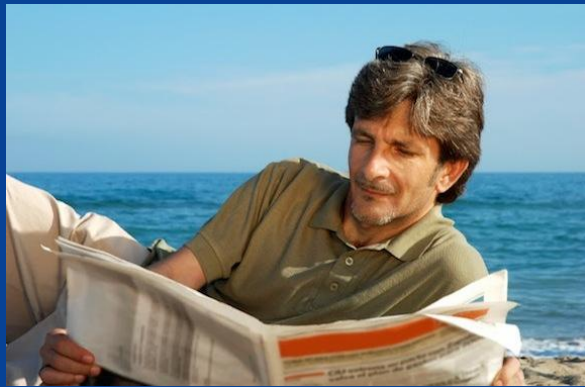




**WATER WORDS
THAT WORK**



**Pennsylvania Farmers on CREP
Report on Focus Groups and Interviews
June 2021**

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Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts seek to increase enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a.k.a CREP, in the state of Pennsylvania.

To inform future promotional efforts, PACD funded a series of focus groups and interviews with farmers around the state to gather their impressions of the program and identify what types of farmers might be promising candidates and the messages they may respond to.

Between March and May 2021, Water Words That Work, LLC worked with PACD to conduct focus groups and interviews with Pennsylvania farmers. We segmented our groups by watershed — Ohio River, Chesapeake Bay, and Delaware River — and also by age, size of farm, and history of participation in the CREP program.

Research Methodology

We conducted this research during the Covid-19 pandemic, and this posed many challenges to the project. We had to make many adjustments to our usual focus group methodology for this reason.

Recruitment

We relied on PACD's member districts to promote the focus group opportunity using their email, social media feeds, and personal connections with local farmers and farm organizations. This was an appropriate strategy for the available budget, but we acknowledge that this recruitment approach will skew our sample towards farmers that have a positive working relationship with their local District. We infer that these farmers may hold government agricultural programs in higher regard than Pennsylvania farmers as a whole.

Of note, despite our best efforts, we failed to secure a satisfactory number of participants in the Delaware River watershed. There are far fewer farmers in this part of Pennsylvania than elsewhere, and there are only 8 districts in the watershed to assist with recruitment.

As the project progressed, we found it necessary to both increase our incentive payment from \$125 to \$250, and to switch from group discussions to one-on-one interviews.

Focus Groups vs. Interviews

For this project, we conducted 10 focus groups, with participation ranging between 2 & 11 participants, and 11 one-on-one interviews.

Because face-to-face gatherings were off the table during the pandemic, we conducted these focus groups using the Zoom online meeting platform. Using Zoom was largely — but not completely — successful.

The pros of Zoom focus groups were:

- Farmers could participate from around the target watersheds — a large geographic area — and did not have to travel to a centralized location to join the conversation
- Most participating farmers were able to use the software successfully
- We captured a mix of qualitative and quantitative feedback

The cons of the Zoom focus groups were:

- If even one participant struggled with the software, that individual held up the conversation for all others
- Participants were less likely to break into spontaneous conversation amongst themselves, and this is the goal of successful facilitation
- We used online forms instead of paper exercises during the facilitation, and some farmers were unable to complete these

For the final weeks of the project, we switched the format to one-on-one interviews in order to complete the research in a timely manner. By offering interviews, we were able to schedule the conversations at the farmers' convenience rather than requiring them to be available on the date and time we selected.

Bottom Line: Now that the pandemic is winding down, we would recommend returning to in-person focus groups to gather input from working farmers in Pennsylvania. However, we believe Zoom could be a useful focus group tool for other audiences.

Important Note: In this report, we provide farmers written feedback verbatim, including spelling and typographical errors.

Top Findings

CREP is most attractive for flood-prone land, and less attractive for other types of marginal ground

“CREP is very field specific,” one participating farmer told us — neatly summarizing the range of opinions we collected during this project. “What you are taking out of production with the CREP program is extremely marginal ground at this point,” said another.

The farmers had the kindest words for CREP when discussing low-lying land along waterways. Farmers reported high risk that they could lose their crops — even hay — to floods on these lands. They widely acknowledged that allowing livestock direct access to streams was undesirable.

They were less favorable about using CREP for steep or rocky lands. For these lands, farmers preferred to keep the land in production, because even a small hay crop would be more than a CREP payment, and they simply prefer to farm land if they can.

Overall, feelings about the CREP program are mixed

Out of 50+ farmers who participated in this project, 11 told us they had enrolled land in CREP in the past. And of those, nearly half of them had decided not to re-enroll.

Overall, not quite half of the farmers (25 out of 51) reported they would consider enrolling or re-enrolling their land in CREP. The farmers who were positive about the program said things like this:

- I already re-enrolled my land. The field I took out of production was in the floodway... My CREP payment is better than I could count on making from the land year after year.
- I have land I don't have an immediate use for that I could make money on without putting major work into while focusing on my other acreage and rentals.
- Depending on payments, markets, health and help. It's a possible option to have some income
- If somebody wants to retire from farming, I can understand why CREP would be great for you. You can keep the land and use the CREP payment to pay your property taxes, etc. It's a great safety net.

Environmental regulations are NOT pressing farmers into the CREP program

Environmental regulations were a sore spot for some participants, but only a handful identified it as their top challenge. Furthermore, none of the participating farmers linked

CREP to environmental compliance concerns specifically. Several focus group participants voiced appreciation for the environmental goals of the program:

- The draw was to put in a physical barrier that protect the stream, protect my cattle, and prevent the stream from changing direction and eroding my land.
- I like what I see in improved water quality in my streams. However I am not going to put highly productive land in CREP unless it is directly next to a stream or waterway.
- I'm a believer that animals don't need to be in the stream. We like to play in the stream, but anything we do affects those downstream. CREP was going to put a fence in, and I wouldn't have to do it or pay for it, and it would keep the animals in the pasture, and out of the stream. If my animals cross the stream, they are on a road. The animals know how to find open fences. The fence, the plantings, the monitoring and I liked all that.

As for changes and challenges on the farm, focus group participants were much more likely to point to rising costs for fuel, fertilizer, chemicals, and costs to rent land. Many of the farmers indicated they were aging and winding down — and only some of them expected to hand the farm over to a younger individual in their family.

In their own words, they described the changing nature of farming using language like this:

- I fear that operating costs will continue to rise and our profit margin will narrow even more.
- input cost- ie fertilizer, land rent
- My retirement and transition to my children as owners
- My son will take my operation over

Most participating farmers report <25% marginal land

All the participating farmers acknowledged that they had at least some land that was too steep, too rocky, too wet, too shady, or otherwise difficult to farm. The farmers with the fewest acres were the most determined to squeeze some revenue out of their difficult land. Those with acres to spare were more receptive to putting the land into CREP.

In their own words, they described dealing with their marginal land language like this:

- i really have nothing to do with it
- if its not steep, leave it grass and make one or 2 cuttings a year, if its too steep we mow it once a year and leave it lay
- Much of ours is degraded woodland, and I have not found a way to deal with it yet.

- The land that used to be marginal cornfield, I reseeded it and put it into pasture. I have pretty much fenced everything in so I can do rotational grazing.
- Recently into crep, before that we did the best we could

The participating farmers are generally positive about NRCS and can distinguish between programs

By a margin of 31 to 19, farmers told us they recognized that some NRCS programs were a good fit for their operation, while other programs might not be. This suggests that most farmers would be willing to learn more about the CREP program before making up their mind, and only a minority would rule the program out based on their overall impression of the NRCS.

The participating farmers were most familiar with — and held the most favorable views towards — the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Many reported using this program to purchase high tunnels and make other investments in more conservation-minded programs. The participating farmers were less likely to be familiar with the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

In their own words, participating farmers described their positive experiences with NRCS using language like this:

- My experience [with NRCS] has been positive, and they've given a good deal of support with agroforestry. I'm currently waiting to see if I will receive EQIP funding for a high tunnel and forest management plan, and I applied for the forest management plans three years ago.
- My experience has been good working with the folks at NRCS. However I do not agree with the details of some of the programs.
- We've had a positive experience. Easy to get along and keep in compliance.
- They were helpful with mapping and infrastructure to build my farm when I was starting out
- my father has worked in the past with nracs and had a good experience, i have used the reap program and was very happy with it

The farmers who reported negative experiences with NRCS usually described situations where the final cost of their projects were higher than initially budgeted, but the agency did not increase its initial cost-share offer to match:

- NRCS helped pay for us to put in a manure pit. Everything was fine, but they had no clue about what the actual price of excavation is these days. The excavator gave a bid of \$20k, but the bill was \$60k. When I told the NRCS this was the price, the

agent said he had no idea. So that's why they haven't been doing a lot of projects around here.

- We did a project to do water runoff from the shed. We installed gutters that would carry water into a pipe and take it to a diversion ditch. The goal was to take the water away from the septic field. It was supposed to be a 50/50 cost share situation, but we needed a lot more material than we thought, so they only ended up covering 30% of the costs.
- Working with NRCS is a miserable experience. The bureaucracy is nauseating. The paperwork isn't bad, but the way it is structured is backwards. You have to sign a contract before any engineering is done, by the time the engineering is done, the cost usually goes up, but NRCS only pays the amount from their original contract.

Many participating farmers believe *their* CREP payments would be too low, but *others* are getting paid too much

Only about a third of participating farmers (18 out of 51) reported favorable opinions of the CREP payments. The farmers who were most familiar with CREP perceive that payments have not kept up with rising input costs and commodity prices. Many simply believed the program just isn't as attractive as it once was. In their own words, they described the situation using language like this:

- I guess I would consider the dollar value to the acreage. If it was close to the top of the range, I think a lot of farmers would say that might be a good deal. If it's at the lower end of the range, is it worth the paper work?
- Until recently, the CREP payment has been better than farming because it's there to preserve land, but I'm not sure if that is true anymore.
- I came out of the program because the value of the commodities has gone up. I just can't afford to do CREP anymore. I got \$100 per acre per year. So I was getting a check for \$1800 every year. Today, on 18 acres I can probably triple that with the price of commodities off the same acreage.
- Back in our county, a lot of land went into CREP in the early 2000s, but not a lot of that has been renewed. It's not just us feeling the land pressure. I can name 6-10 farmers who were in CREP, but they aren't in it anymore.

While complaining about the low payments per acre that NRCS offered them, many participating farmers also simultaneously felt that the CREP was making it harder for them to lease the land they need:

- As an active farmer, I have to compete with CREP rates to rent land, and I just can't. There is no way for me to expand or grow, it's hard for a new farmer to start up in this area because we can't compete with the government to rent land.
- I see whole entire farms enrolled in the program, not just small strips of marginal land. I pass these programs when I drive to the next county over trying to find land

to rent. So my rental rates are up, and my transportation costs are up. I want to see a fair rental rate so I could rent land closer to home.

- We took some land out of CREP because we are getting tremendous pressure on land around here, so I had to take some land out of CREP because I can't find the land to rent. We only put our home farm land in CREP.

Long contracts are a barrier to participation

Only about 1/3 of participating farmers (11 out of 51) were favorable about the terms of the contract. They described the lengthy commitment

- Because it's a 15 year commitment, that's what's scaring away many farmers. And if I can farm land, there's a possibility of making more per acre than CREP. If I have access to the land and I can farm it, I can probably beat the CREP payment. So I can understand a farmer not wanting to taking the personal land and implement it.
- Cost to meet requirements is now more than payment to have land in CREP for such a long term, 15 years.
- The 10 year contract, just because in farming 10 years is a very long time.

CREP paperwork and maintenance requirements are too much hassle for only a few acres

Only about 1/3 of participating farmers (12 out of 51) were favorable about the required paperwork. The smaller operators were the most likely to cite the paperwork as a barrier:

- I think CREP favors the big farmers with big projects. They figure they are getting more bang for their buck on those.
- If you only have a few acres that you can put into this program, is it even worth the paperwork? Everything in this farm is already in grassland, except what is already covered in forest. So I don't think this program would work for me.
- [If it is only] a half acre, I don't think it would be worth it to try to put it into CREP.
- I probably only have about 5 acres that would actually be worth even thinking about. Five acres at 25 bucks an acre? Might as well just leave it go instead of doing all the paperwork.

Implications for Marketing and Messaging

Farmers with flood-prone land are clearly the best candidates

The farmers who participated in our focus groups believe that agriculture is constantly changing and land that is “marginal” today might not be tomorrow. Several participants noted that the higher commodity prices had made once-marginal land attractive to farm again. Others reported that higher operating costs pressed them to farm land that they used to think was too much hassle.

Some farmers were experimenting with new crops and livestock species that might thrive on land that would be marginal for corn, soybeans, and cattle. Several reported using NRCS programs to experiment with beekeeping, goats, sheep, and pasture conversion on land that might otherwise have been a candidate for CREP.

For all of these farmers, the 10-15 year contract length is a big barrier to participation.

But the farmers who participated in this research project clearly recognize that land that has flooded in the past will flood again in the future. The steady CREP payment looks attractive when weighed against the risk of losing everything on those acres. Farmers were also most likely to accept that removing riparian lands from production legitimately serves the best interest of the public.

Large farms are likely to be better candidates than small farms

The operators with the fewest acres were the most negative about CREP overall. They report that the payments wouldn’t justify the paperwork and maintenance requirements. They felt the most pressure to wring some profit out of every available bit of land. In contrast, those with acres to spare were more receptive to taking some of that land out of production, especially if it was prone to flood.

Farms that have never enrolled in CREP are likely be better marketing candidates than renewals

The farmers who participated in this research project mostly described their CREP decision making as a careful calculation of the bottom line. Only a few reported feeling motivated by the opportunity to improve water quality and/or be good stewards of the land by participating in this program.

This suggests that if a participating farmer has determined not to re-enroll, they are unlikely to respond to a marketing message — no matter how persuasive — unless there is a change to the terms of the program that they are unaware of.

Rural farms are likely to be better candidates than exurban farms

Some of our participating farmers were from areas feeling population growth from major metropolitan areas. These farmers report skyrocketing rates to rent good land — and felt great pressure to make the most of whatever land they own, marginal or not.

In contrast, the participating farmers who were far from growing cities were generally more positive about the prospect of putting their poor land into CREP and renting good land somewhere else to make up the difference.

Ohio River vs. Chesapeake Bay watershed doesn't make much difference -- but the Delaware River watershed is not promising for CREP

This is basically the same point as the previous one. We were only able to secure a few participants from the Delaware River watershed region of Pennsylvania, but the ones that we did recruit answered every question by describing the pressure they feel from population growth out of Philadelphia and New York.

There were no meaningful distinctions between the responses we received from farmers in the Ohio River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

Older farmers and part-time farmers may be more receptive than younger or full-time farmers

Many of the participating farmers are aging and beginning to wind down — without an obvious heir to the land. For these farmers, it may be attractive to collect (relatively) easy payments for the difficult land, while focusing their waning energy on the land that produces the most revenue.

Less dedicated farmers — those who wish to keep land in the family but have their primary income from off the farm — may also be receptive to putting land in CREP, if another farmer isn't stepping forward to rent the land at a higher rate.

Non-farmers may be surprisingly good candidates

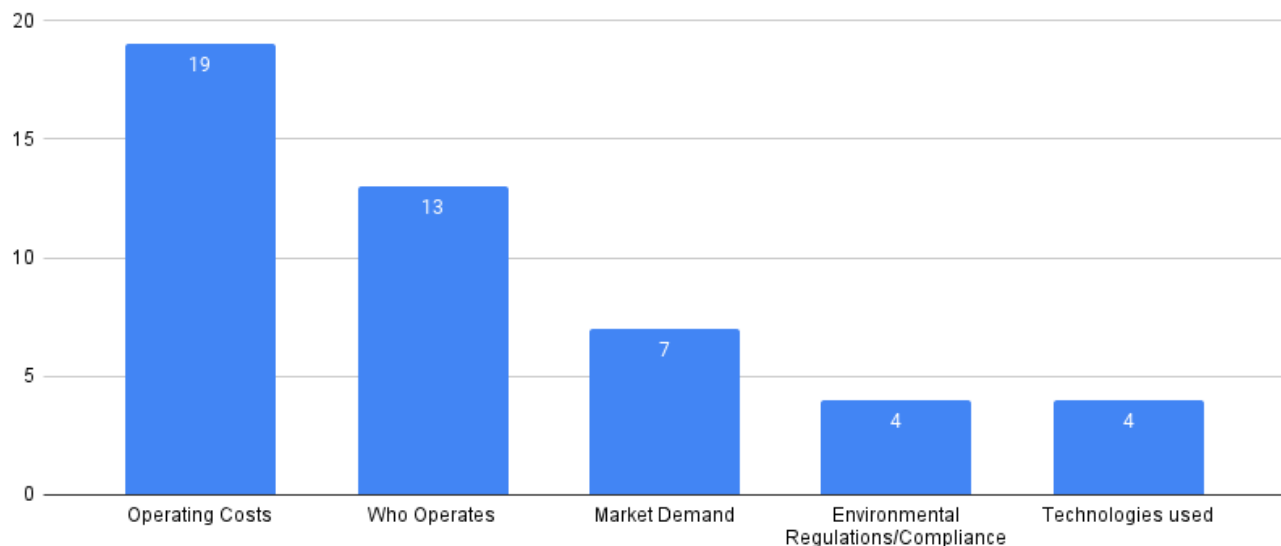
This is closely related to the previous two points. Several of our focus group participants reported occasions when new buyers of farmland — who never intended to farm — placed good land into CREP to help finance the purchase. This made the farmers angry, because they believe productive farmland should be in production.

But if PACD and NRCS are simply focused on increasing enrollment in the program, non-farmers who purchase farmland may be good candidates.

Focus Group Questions

Perceptions of Their Farm

Question #1: Which of these have changed the most on your farm over the past few years?



Question #2: In your own words, what will change the most on your farm over the next few years?

- Amount of hired help, amount we produce, hopefully not too much costs change
- Crop prices, try to buy more ground
- Demand continuing to increase, but our ability to meet (meat) that demand is unclear. Hopefully, we can acquire adjoining acreage, and refine our processes/improve our ground to be able to continue to meet increasing demand.
- Environmental regulations. I think that the legal system is jumping on that bandwagon. There isn't one night that goes back that I don't see 3-4 lawyers on TV asking if used Roundup. Now they are talking about paraquat. That's pushing us.
- And there is a change in the government. When we went to the more liberal, left side of the equation, they are pushing for that. I've used roundup for 40 years, and before that we use atrazine. Atrazine is still out there and nobody is complaining about it. We watched a test case go through California. Some janitor who sprayed Roundup around the school got Parkinsons. I have a neighbor who farms 1200 acres and he uses it 300 gallons at a time.

- We jump to quick on some of these things. The lawyers are leading it. And the politicians are leading it.
- Depending on how stringent some of these regulations, it could cut back on yields. I think some people would like that we didn't use herbicides at all. Homeowners can spray that stuff as much as they want, but I'm licensed and I have to keep records of everything. If these things are outlawed, it will affect yield, how many acres you can plant, it will affect the whole food supply chain.
- Probably within the next five years. I won't have this farm anymore. But the profitability is not there. I can tell you that I'm not alone in this. A farmer I just talked to is ready to say Forget it. Hay prices are way up. They can command much higher prices in New Jersey and in Southeast Pennsylvania than we can here. The average horse farmer is making enough to pay their bills, but they aren't putting anything away for the future. And maybe that's true for farmers in general. Hay prices are going up because fertilizer and fuel prices are going up, and they can't get help. Things have changed.
- Growth of the farm
- How much land we have in vegetable (and small fruit?) production. The possibility of expanding our herd.
- I fear that operating costs will continue to rise and our profit margin will narrow even more. The environmental regulations are something we should be concerned about, just watching.
- I'll be 75 years old. At least as far as I can project, we'll be doing pretty much the same thing. We'll have to be more strategic in marketing our product. There's a market out there for ethnic festivals and major holidays, and there is a lot of demand for goat meat. We have only begun to tap into that market. It's available to us in State College and south of there towards Harrisburg. We have contacts who have contacted for pre-sale for goat meat and they break for this ethnic foods market. The timing is critical for Ramanadan and other religious occasions. My wife is investigating that and I think we'll be doing a lot more of that in the next five years. I think we can hope for better and more stable income from that than 4-H and the markets we serve currently. That's hindered slightly because our local slaughterhouses don't necessarily meet these customers criteria. It's not just about how we manage our farm and our animals, but the butchers have to meet the ethnic market needs. I think all that will be our biggest change.
- improved processes and improved land (hopefully)
- Increased fuel costs and regulations.
- input cost- ie fertilizer, land rent
- labor situation

- Less Income for my milk
- literally everything
- lower operating costs due to infrastructure will be completed
- Management due to input costs
- more people
- Moving to more custom and purchased feeds as I grow older.
- My farm is in the start-up phase, so many, many things will change over the next 5-10 years. Primarily, the biggest change will be harvests of agroforestry products, as well as integration of silvopasture and hopefully the success of a large market garden.
- My retirement and transition to my children as owners
- My son will take my operation over
- Operating cost
- operator
- Our plan is to turn the farm over to our niece. She is the one who got us into switching over to beef cattle. We are making the switch slowly, we've spent \$3000 on fencing. We have problem with deer and bears running through the electric fence, but our new fence means we won't have to worry about it so much.
- In the next five years or less, we're hoping to turn it over to my niece. We hope to help her out and keep her going, we don't want to see the farm get developed and turn into houses.
- Ownership of farm will transfer to me
- People watching and ready to complain
- Pressure from our government is what we can do for climate change. I see recommendations for policy is increased funding for federal programs to help farmers reduce emissions. More funding for ag research to help farmers adapt to climate change. On our farm, we have good boys and good minds, we're talking about reducing emissions by 2025 and by 2050 to reducing emissions to be carbon neutral. We have a methane digester and a lot of solar, and we believe that we are pretty close to carbon neutral about now. We are offsetting any fuels that way. We sell enough electricity from cow poop and solar neutral to power about 300 homes. We expect the new government to push all of that.
- prices, tax issues and labor
- Probably environmental costs along with operating costs

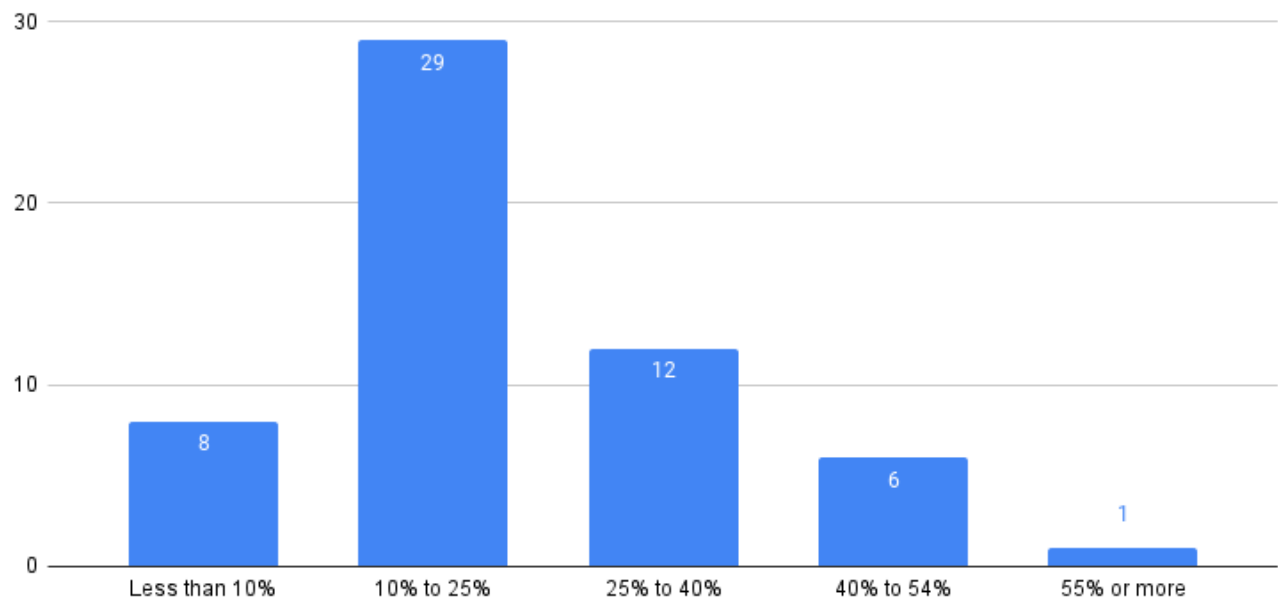
- Process of transitioning to next generation
- Production costs
- Production emphasis: Cease corn/soy production; move to specialty perennial crops including hazelnuts, lavender, and conservation practices.
- Reclaim land and show more profit
- Retirement
- Scale. We have been building our herds and customer base to support each season
- Technology
- Technology and Diversification
- Technology and newer crops
- technology in farming
- I also think we're going to lease more land so we can grow more vegetables. The market that we target is second homeowners from New York/NJ area. The vacation people come up for the summertime, and those are the people that we market to. They have an ability to pay more for food than the average wayne county residents.
- The complications of running my operation
- The environmental stuff is changing a lot. I'm not against the environmental thing. I believe it's easier to educate than to enforce. I believe that if we show people the right thing, leading the horse to the water is better than pushing the horse to water trough.
- We're all into this we need to save the planet, but the idea that you have to do a certain type of crop in your area, or do a certain type of process (like no till). You have to show the farmer that there is a lag in time in production from no-till, 2-3 years of less production, but then you will get more. Nobody likes to be forced. Choices give us a sense of power.
- The increased yields of crops, increased efficiency
- The place my sales will occur and buildings on my farm.
- trying to become more efficient, so that we can continue to operate the farm as we get past retirement age and beyond, explore alternate opportunities besides row cropping
- Urban development
- We are a family farm and are aging. Our kids do not plan to farm. We have difficult decisions ahead. We are looking at all sorts of thoughts about how this farm

could be used. We've looked at various programs that bring people onto the farm to help in exchange for them living on the farm for a while and enjoying rural life. We're both very active in community and social activities. My wife volunteers a lot and serves on the library board. Long story short, we're both active socially.

- In 5 years, we probably won't be farming the land. We may lease it out, we may have somebody using the buildings. It might be that somebody could come do cider here, maybe a CSA. We're looking at options. We're losing interest in trying to keep it as a relic.
- We plan to add a next gen to the operation which will spur expansion, new technologies and crops, etc.
- We will begin to market our products by how we run our farm We won't be subject to the generic market, because we will be retailing our own product. It will be in my label, with my packaging, and I control the price. We're constantly looking at ways to be more responsive to the market. The average dairy farmer has lost the face of their consumer. I know who I'm producing for, I know their names and faces.
- WE are looking at going GMO free on our grain. Milk is technically not GMO, even if the cow eats GMO grain. But some consumers still have concerns about that.
- We are gonna have some change on the farm, my wife and I are in our 60s. We aren't going to retire, but we are gonna slow down some.
- what is grown
- Who does the bulk of the work and crop focus
- Who operates the farm

Perceptions of Their Land

Question #3: About how much of your land do you consider to be marginal, less productive, or unproductive?



Question #4: In your own words, how do you deal with your marginal, less productive, or unproductive land?

- 50% of our land is covered by cattail marsh and button bush. We have a creek that borders our property for a good ways. We have an old oxbox creek channel and that area is always wet. And between the wet areas there are pin oak trees, which do good in wet areas. Black willow, some augers. We use some of that land as replacement wetlands to replace wetlands that other people have needed to take out of wetland status for industrial use or other things. We have a 70 acres of cropland and 70 acres of this marginal land that's primarily all wetlands.
- Develop a plan, for the current year or in the future. This year is timbering 20 acres for silvopasture development. Also tree fodder for drought.
- Develop plan to better utilize the land based on Soil Tests or other management practices.
- Find different crops that perform in the marginal ground. Put in crep
- Graze it, make grass hay off on it, let it go, plant riparian buffers on it
- Hunting!
- i really have nothing to do with it

- if its not steep, leave it grass and make one or 2 cuttings a year, if its too steep we mow it once a year and leave it lay
- Install tilling or drainage pipe to remove excess water and improve soil health
- Just leave it
- Keep clearing trees to fence or use for timber on the steep ground
- Leasing to a friend for Bee's in a deep corner, fertilizing and reseeding a more productive crop, working with a co-op of people to produce a type of community garden.
- lime and fertilize it
- Low priority
- Low priority for hay making
- Manage as a wood lot
- Move mobile fencing through and around obstacles
- Much of ours is degraded woodland, and I hve not found a way to deal with it yet.
- No till or not farm it at all
- Not a good solution for deer damage, deer harvest programs don` t mitigate much.
- not much
- On the steep land, I'm just letting the trees go. We have fenced out the stream. My brother takes care of the stream ground, we thought about putting it in set-aside, like CREP. We drew up the plans with NRCS, but my brother was goign to be difficult about it. The NRCS people were sitting back aghast as the family had an argument about the CREP program. Then a couple of years later, he began managing that streamside land just as if it was in CREP -- it's a grass buffer -- but we aren't getting any CREP payments for it.
- I pasture the areas that I can, but sometimes I just do nothing with this ground because I have 99 irons in the fire and I don't need one more. I did sell a few walnut trees from the steep ridge last year.
- When we have time, there is a campsite in the woods with a fire ring. It was the end of our hayrides.
- For the most part, our marginal land is either mildly taken care of, or ignored.
- I have been trained by my father to respect the land, so I don't tear it up with ATV or anything. I don't let others use their 4x4s or ORVs on my land.

- Our best land is in CREP. It's 4-5 years left in the contract. Our farm is at the headwaters of a stream that flows to the Ohio. We have water issues. Water retention is an issue for us, rain runs off very quickly. Potter County had the first conservation district in the state, by the way. And back in the 1940s, they were encouraging building ponds. It's very difficult to do that now. In our CREP land, there's a wet spot on a hilltop. The state highway department has expanded a road in that area, so we have water constantly running out the wetland, down the road, and into our property. I want to restore those wetlands and maybe put in some ponds to retain water. I think the Conservation District in Potter County is pretty good.
- Part of ours is the headwaters for water source that we protect
- Participating in some NRCS programs, stream bank buffers. For the rest, you are bush hogging it. The land is that is too steep, we bush hog it.
- Put in crep Or go to forage
- Put it in CREP or hay
- Put it into CREP. Wet areas they planted trees. Steep slopes they planted trees. Another way was to tile the land and put in pasture in some areas.
- Put that unproductive land into CREP
- Recently into crep, before that we did the best we could
- The issue is the streams, we have a lot of streams running through the property, so we put a lot of acres into CREP. We don't crop farm it, we grass farm on it. We would probably make more money if we farmed right up to the stream, but if it floods we would lose it all. If we put it in grassland, then we don't have to worry about that.
- It would be great production if we didn't get flooded out, but if we get flooded out, we get nothing. It's our highest risk land, so we put it in grass and make hay off of it. It doesn't pay as well, but it's lower risk. Sometimes it's just so muddy that you can't get through. In dry years, you get your best crop from that ground. If I try to farm that land, I would probably go broke. I couldn't pay near the money for that land because I couldn't get the production out of it.
- The land that used to be marginal cornfield, I reseeded it and put it into pasture. I have pretty much fenced everything in so I can do rotational grazing. I want to see really nice pastures, we want to maintain about an acre or two per horse. We have some woods, and that will always stay wooded. So we have put everything in pasture, that's how we handle the marginal land.
- The land I used to grow my own hay on, I lease it to another farmer and he raises one crop on it, but he doesn't try to maximize production.

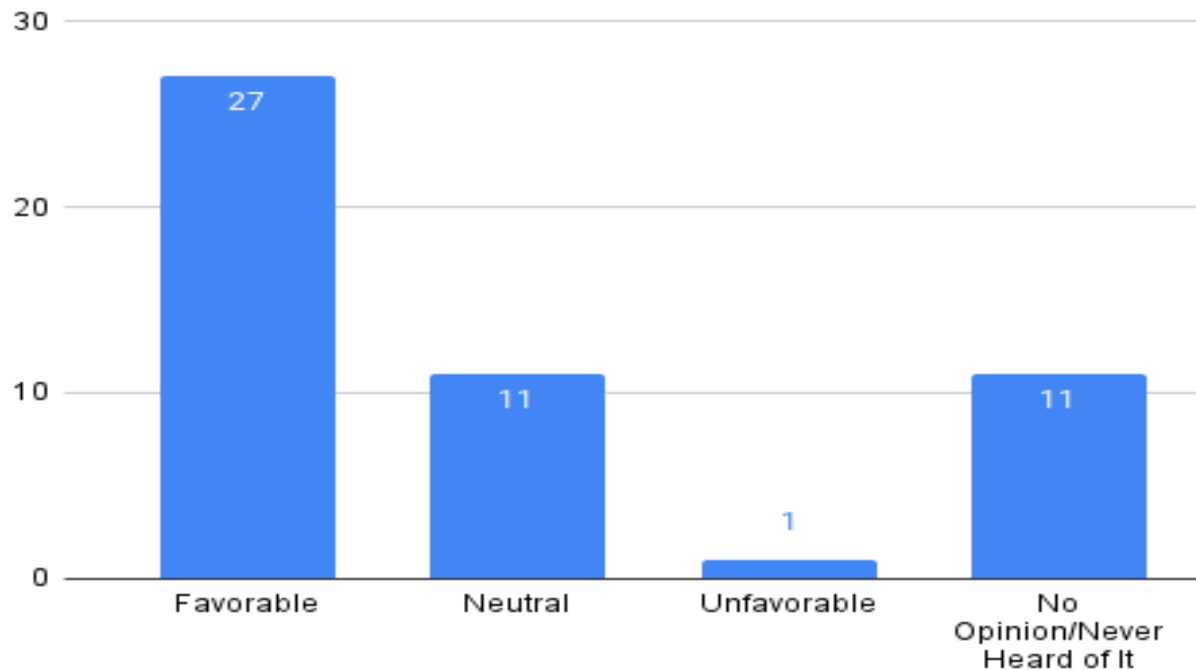
- The largest amount on the home farm, we have converted to permanent pasture. That land is too steep for crops. Some of it are a 15% grade or more. My cows can harvest it just fine. When I was a kid, we tried to farm it and we would tip over our wagons. It was just a frustration.
- We have some bottom ground right along the Genesee headwaters, that has all been seeded to trees, 17-18 years ago.
- The unproductive land we have is unfarmable. Marginal land is typically in hay this land is used for making bedding round bales for the winter, and feed for dry cows since it will not grow good enough crops. also this land is very low rent.
- try to clean these areas up sheep grazing
- We enjoy the beauty of it, also we have in CREP and Debt for Nature. We have photo people come in as well. Pollinators
- We fenced it off and we let it go. We fenced it off to keep the cows out .It's across the road and it's really wet. The deer go down there. When the deer come out of there to cross the road, they often get hit by a truck or something. That area might be 5 acres, we couldn't do anything with it if we tried. It's steep and it's wet.
- We leave the wooded area in woods. We have a field behind the dairy barn that we used grow corn, but it was just so wet. We were always getting stuck as we try to chop the corn. I told my husband You better stop chopping corn over there, or I'm gonna shoot myself.
- Sometimes it's so wet we can't even make hay. We can do it in a dry year. We just leave it alone, it's kind of like a bottomless pit.
- We graze wet ground when conditions allow, take steps to mitigate those areas (bale feeding, etc) and open new chunks of woodlot with silvopastured pigs, followed later that year by cattle and/or sheep. Ash borer has crushed woodlot a lot, but left a firewood resource.
- We have a very hard soil with poor drainage, so depending on what you are trying to grow, it can be marginal or it can be productive. Right now we aren't doing anything with it. We had an EQIP contract years ago to fence the cows out of it. So right now it's just sitting there. That land is right along the stream and it's really wet.
- In one spot, we did try to farm it a little bit for squash and we put in a cover crop. But we just seeded it for a perennial grass, but it's too much work to keep stormwater from eroding that particular field so we are just going to leave it alone.
- We implemented agroforestry corridors in low, wetlands. I hope to implement rotational grazing to improve and build soil on the areas with little top soil, and in our woodlands, we plan to grow mushrooms- and other forest dwelling plant products.

- We put it into a forest buffer, or into woodland; some we are trying woody plants
- We put out contour strips to try to minimize the affect of the steep slope. NRCS does it, they lay out 100 foot wide strips along the contour of the ground. Its a conservation practice to keep the water from running eroding the ground.
- And I had 18 acres in the CREP program and it just came out of CREP last year. I went into the CREP program because I was still working quite a bit. My boys didn't stay with the farm. I put them into CREP because I didn't have the manpower to work them.
- We're not, yet. Still figuring that out. Dealing with family decisions, historical land use, etc...
- work around it and maintain to the best of our ability

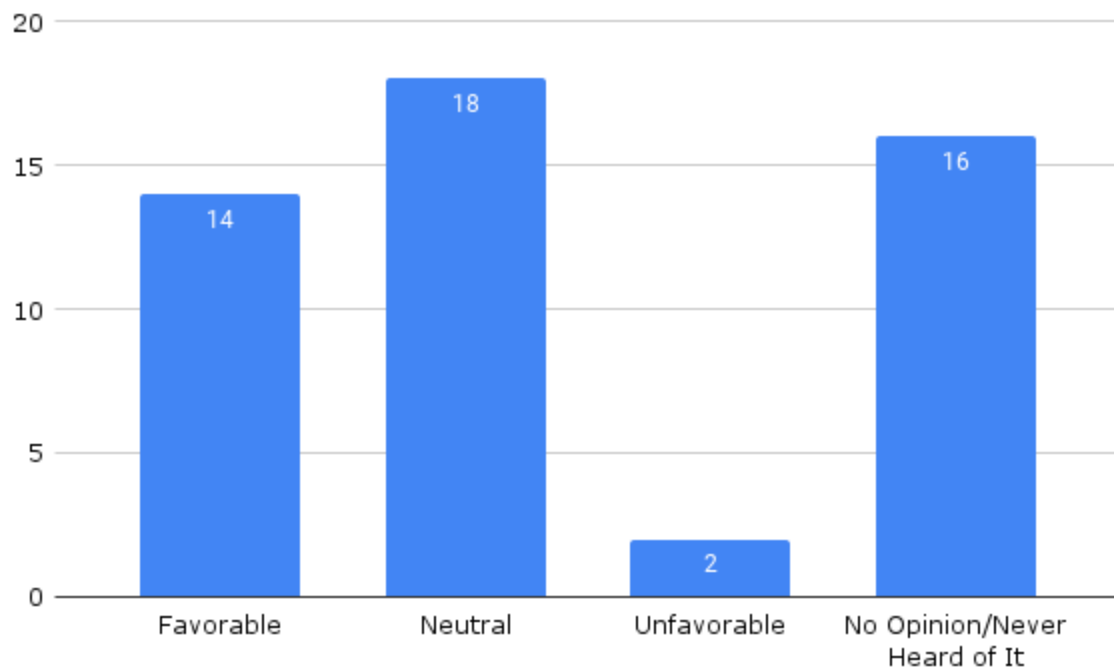
Perceptions of NRCS and its Programs

Question #5: How do you feel about these NRCS Programs?

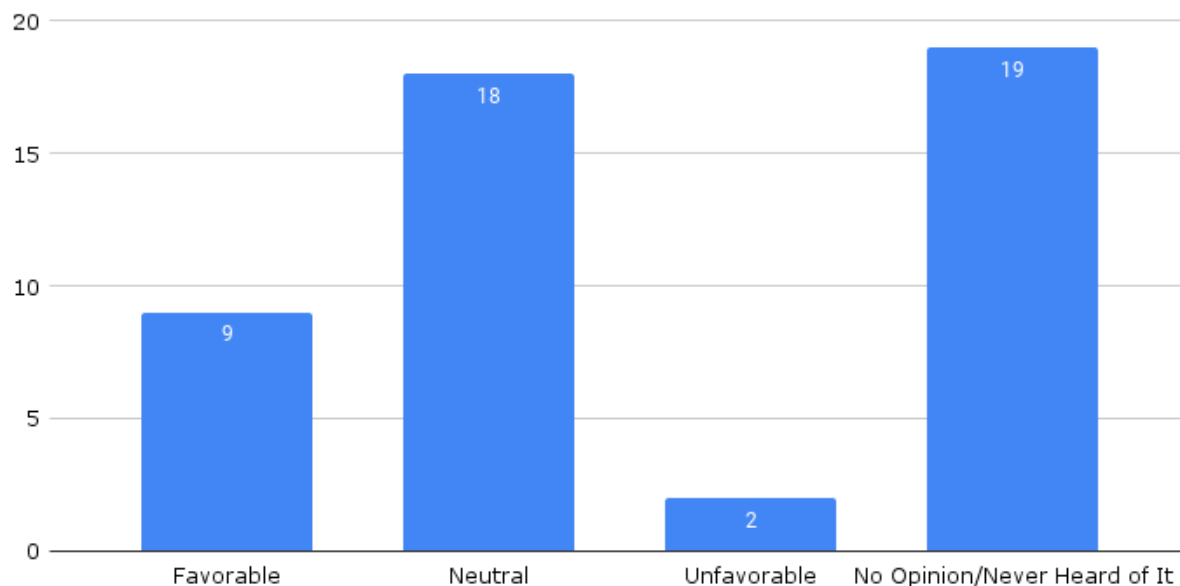
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)



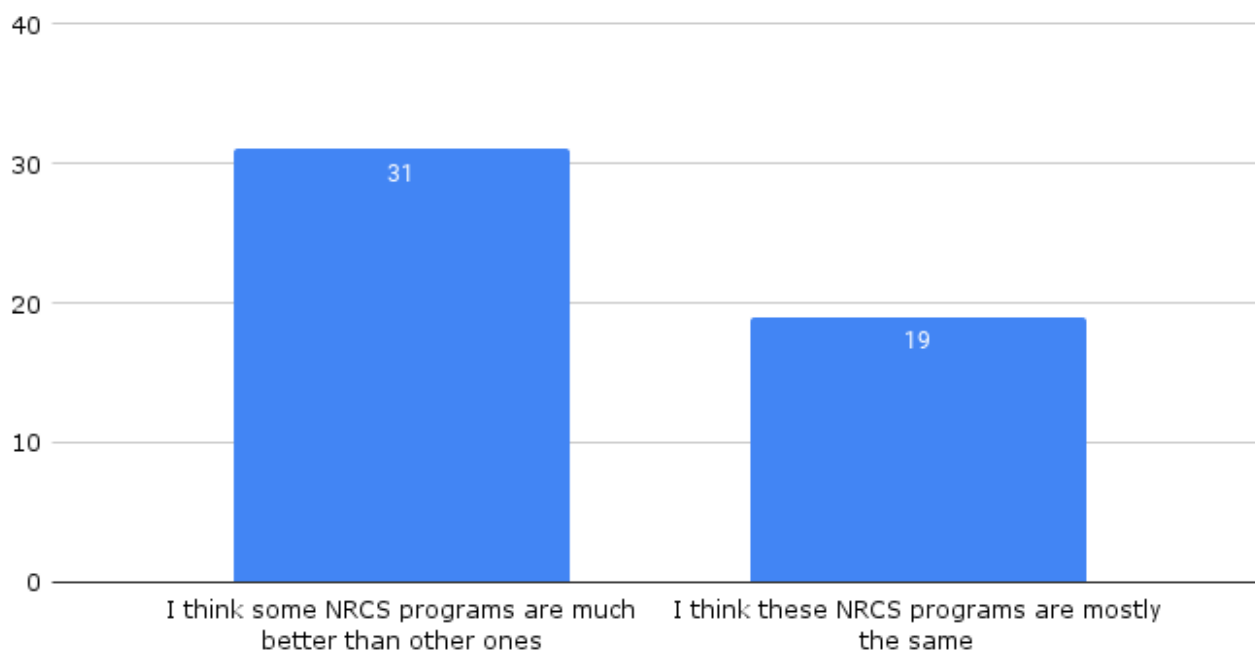
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)



Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)



Question #6: Which of these statements do you agree with more?



Question #7: Please describe your experience working with NRCS conservation programs.

- We've had a positive experience. Easy to get along and keep in compliance.
- We tried to work with them once to fence pastures and there were too many stipulations and hoops to jump through
- very helpful and knowledgeable

- Very good, we have been doing tile. They have been very informative. Apparently I can't make everything thing work on my device
- Very good if you get a good NRCS person
- Unsure
- They where helpful with mapping and infrastructure to build my farm when I was starting out
- They send me the forms once a year for the land that I bought. I sign those forms and get my payment. I have been discussing their pollinator program and the EQIP program. They helped us put in a high tunnel. They paid for about half of that cost. This program still exists, I believe.
- It's generally a good experience for me to deal with them.
- They do alot of good work for a lot of people, it does not work out for everyone though.
- They are helpful. They came to do our Chesapeake Bay program project. They were easy to get along with an explained everything thoroughly. But the project had some surprises. We didn't quite realize what we were getting into. It turned out we needed more materials.
- We did a project to do water runoff from the shed. We installed gutters that would carry water into a pipe and take it to a diversion ditch. The goal was to take the water away from the septic field. It was supposed to be a 50/50 cost share situation, but we needed a lot more material than we thought, so they only ended up covering 30% of the costs.
- We think it was probably the contractor's mistake. The girl from the conservation district relied on the contractor's estimate, she's not a machinery operator.
- That's the only experience we have working with these types of program.
- These programs are pretty similar. They may focus on differnet groups of people, but the overall objectives are pretty much the same. A redneck would say its the government wanting to get in control. I would call it, forced education of resources, whether it be of land or resources. How many kids enjoy class in school? They learn stuff, but they have to be there.
- For me, I wanted to go to shop class to learn and expose yourself to real things. With these programs, they are trying to teach us to think in a more resource-based business aspect. The problem with them. is.. .
- NRCS helped pay for us to put in a manure pit. Everything was fine, but they had no clue about what the actual price of excavation is these days. The excavator gave a bid of \$20k, but the bill was \$60k. When I told the NRCS this was the price, the agent said he had no idea. The excavator should have to be the one to request

more money. They toss the bill to me, and then I go back to NRCS, and they say we have a contract and I'm on the hook for the extra \$40k. So that's why they haven't been doing a lot of projects around here.

- Farmers would love to do more of these projects, because they make their lives better, but we can't count on the NRCS to truly come through their share of the \$.
- The technical folks have been good -- however sometimes a little inexperienced, and sometimes unwilling to consider tweaks to the 'standard' practices.
- the process and application is a little difficult
- The only experience I had was trying to put in manure storage in heavy use areas. In all honestly, I got bogged down in the amount of time it took to work your way through the paperwork and the time lag. I needed a certified nutrient management plan, my interest was there, but I lost interest because it was taking too long. My personal experience is that NRCS has really good people and they want to do really good projects, but in my experience this office was understaffed and they just couldn't help me push the paperwork through.
- I was more involved with NRCS setting up rotational grazing plans. I work for Penn State, so I was the education part of it. I would help NRCS staff make presentations to our programs. They would talk about their specific programs to the people who came to my workshops. It was amazing how many farmers didn't know about NRCS and its programs.
- Horse farmers get into this because they love horses, not because they love agriculture. Some of them don't even think of themselves as farmers. They aren't aware of the government programs that can assist them. Some of the new small farms, I'm not sure they are aware either. The alpaca farmer, sheep breeders, small farmers that aren't huge commercial operations.
- slow/ delayed
- people we worked with were helpful , again, we have just completed our installation this year, we had a lot of questions, and we found they were willing to help, explain as needed
- Overall good experience.
- Nrcs has help us out time in and in the spring we will put in waterways. They have been very helpful
- No experience, yet.
- my father has worked in the past with nrcs and had a good experience, i have used the reap program and was very happy with it
- My experience varies based on the people from NRCS that I worked with. Some were great and some were not.

- My experience is favorable. When I went to them, I got what I was looking for. I have a conservation plan on record. They helped me set up the CREP program, that went through FSA.
- When I went into crep, we did 12 acres of warm season grass, and 6 years of cool season grass. The warm seson grass did great, and the cool season grass was a disaster. It gets real weedy. The warm season grass grows 6 feet tall and shades out the weeds, but the cool season grass gets infested real bad. If had to do it all over again, I would have insisted on all warm season grass.
- My experience has been positive, and they've given a good deal of support with agroforestry. I'm currently waiting to see if I will receive EQIP funding for a high tunnel and forest management plan, and I applied for the forest management plans three years ago.
- My experience has been good working with the folks at NRCS. However I do not agree with the details of some of the programs.
- limited
- Largely in an information-gathering phase. We have not received funding or submitted for particular projects with NRCS.
- It's been amazing and the members of our local NRCS have truly become friends. We get phone calls about upcoming programs we can qualify for and more. I can't say enough great things.
- It was a bit of a nightmare as the contract had most of the numbers wrong and I was then held hostage to complete the projects with very little funding.
- It is hard to differentiate between the organizations and the respective programs that they each offer.
- In year 3 of a 5 year CSP contract. I think most of the programs are properly incentiviized, and they provide farm income that I wouldn't receive any other way. Part of the practices we are putting in place, #1 we are leaving some unharevested crops in the field for wildlife. We're planting trees and pollinator gardens as well. I'm pretty cool with all that.
- It's been pretty good give and take with the NRCS folks. We have worked with them on a lot of projects. They helped us put in a manure storage facility. I'm pretty pro-NRCS quite honestly.
- In m opinion, the EQIP program is not focused on our area. These are things that they do that might make sense in Iowa or Ohio. It's too much of a blanket program and it should be regionally designed. For example, in general, fencing cows out of hte stream everywhere is a good idea. Depending on where you are, the distance could be different, but when it comes to getting practices done, the heavy use area

of protection, but how they implement it might not always be the best way for that particular farm. If it doesn't meet national standards, it won't get funded.

- I would like to do more wildflower seeding and I think some of these programs may help.
- Working with NRCS is a miserable experience. The bureaucracy is nauseating. The paperwork isn't bad, but the way it is structured is backwards. You have to sign a contract before any engineering is done, by the time the engineering is done, the cost usually goes up, but NRCS only pays the amount from their original contract.
- I think it's all because they are a national entity. I don't think it's the staff's fault, I think it's just the red tape of a national program that doesn't really reflect local conditions. It's just really difficult.
- I've had very positive experiences with NRCS. Sometimes, it takes some poking around. (CRP-Grasslands was largely unknown in PA---even by our state NRCS Grasslands Specialist!) Need a tour guide sometimes!
- I think it is very helpful for beginning farmers, though some of their practices/policies are outdated.
- I like the individuals at NRCS. They are great to work with. We have worked with them, they go out of their way to explain the programs, walk you through the paperwork. They make us aware of programs that might be good for us. One of them participates in all the Conservation District meetings (I'm an associate).
- We participated in the CSP program and the EQIP program, also there is a cover crop program but I forget the name.
- I have seen farmers from the city put good farming land into CREP, and I don't think they should be doing that. I think this money ought to be used somewhere that it would make a difference. You gotta be using those moneys where the most challenges are, not just deciding to get paid. It's not right to slap CREP on a fairly good field and it takes good land out of production. That money could be used a lot better somewhere else.
- I have personally had a very good relationship with NRCS. The practices that we have done improve the situation for the Chesapeake Bay, and really for every one. Clean streams for fishermen and wildlife, it's good for the Chesapeake Bay. We have really come together for a good program on our farm.
- They have worked really well with us on doing good practices.
- I understand the value of conservation practices, yes it does take a little bit of work on our part to make it happen, to get rid of weeds, etc. I get it that some farmers don't want to deal with that and don't want to take land out of pasture. We're saying we understand the value of putting that land into CREP. And also we are talking about waterways. We don't want our ground to be down in the Chesapeake

or in the streams, we want it to stay on our land. So we recognize the value of doing something over not doing it.

- I have not worked with NRCS outside of the soil conservation plan
- I have not worked directly with NRCS conservation programs. I attended an educational session on high tunnels as a conservation practice but we haven't engaged in that effort (yet).
- I have no experience with the NRCS programs, except to lay out contour strips and that was went fine
- I have no direct experience
- I have been involved with CRP and EQIP. I found both of those very good programs. The CRP is a riparian buffer and some warm season grass plantings. The EQIP program allowed me to repair some gullies in crop fields. My neighbor used the EQIP for barnyard improvements,
- I have actively participated in the CREP program. It's a good way to provide financial assistance for land that is better suited as water quality and wildlife habitat than agriculture. We have some really, really marginal lands or lands that are so close to streams, it's really iffy when you expose ground with conventional tillage, are you gonna get your crop out? CREP gives you an incentive to use that land more wisely and it benefits people downstream. I think that's important.
- The EQIP program, I used it extensively here at the farm. Our heavy use area is much better protected, we control runoff from the barn roof. We keep that water from running through the barnyard. We have reconfigured our waterway systems, we used to have cattle standing in the wet area before we changed our pastures. We redid the terraces so they drain properly.
- In a nutshell, we've used EQIP to make sure the water that runs around the barn isn't polluted and the terraces drain properly.
- NRCS staff are incredibly helpful and I have nothing but positive experiences with these two programs.
- I have a really good conservationist - know her personally- listens to what I say and comes from a farm.
- I do not have any experience, but I have heard of them particularly their high tunnel funding
- Haven't worked with them
- Haven't dealt with them
- haven't had alot of experience with them, but paper work/approval can be slow

- Good trainings for the community. Mapping Software, detail oriented to help know what program fits best.
- For the most part good but They did change the terms in the middle as well on us.
- favorable
- Communication is the Key to success for both parties.
- Chicken mortality shed
- Around the ponds and wet areas Crep worked well to improve use. In sloped fields got over grown, woody even though it can be mowed periodically

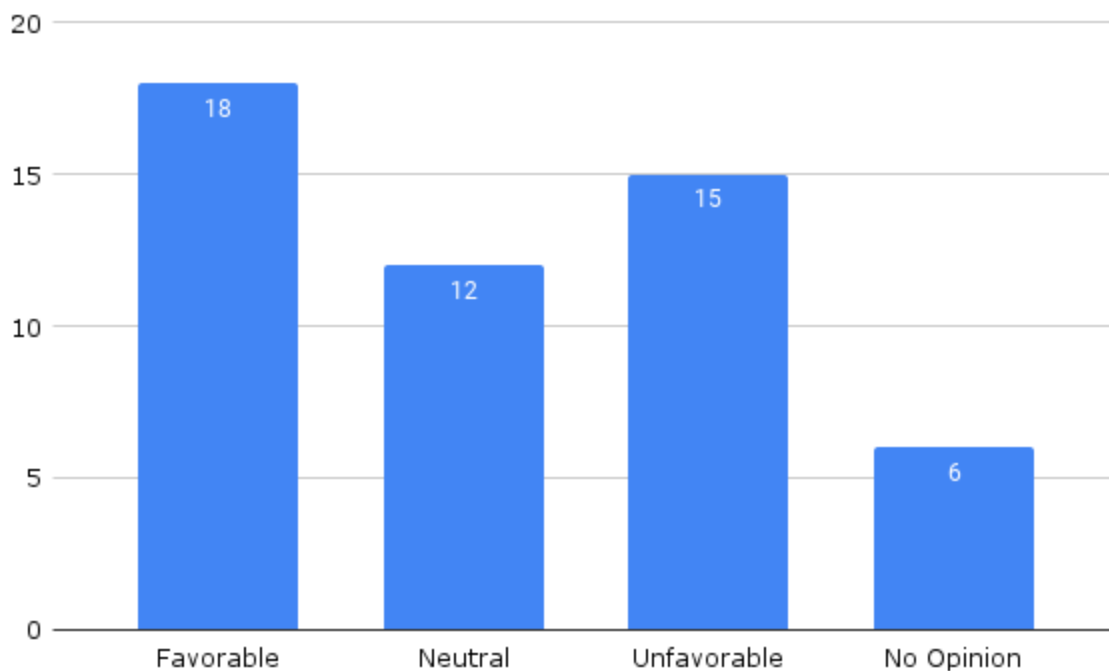
Perceptions of the CREP Program

Prior to these questions, participants read the following statement:

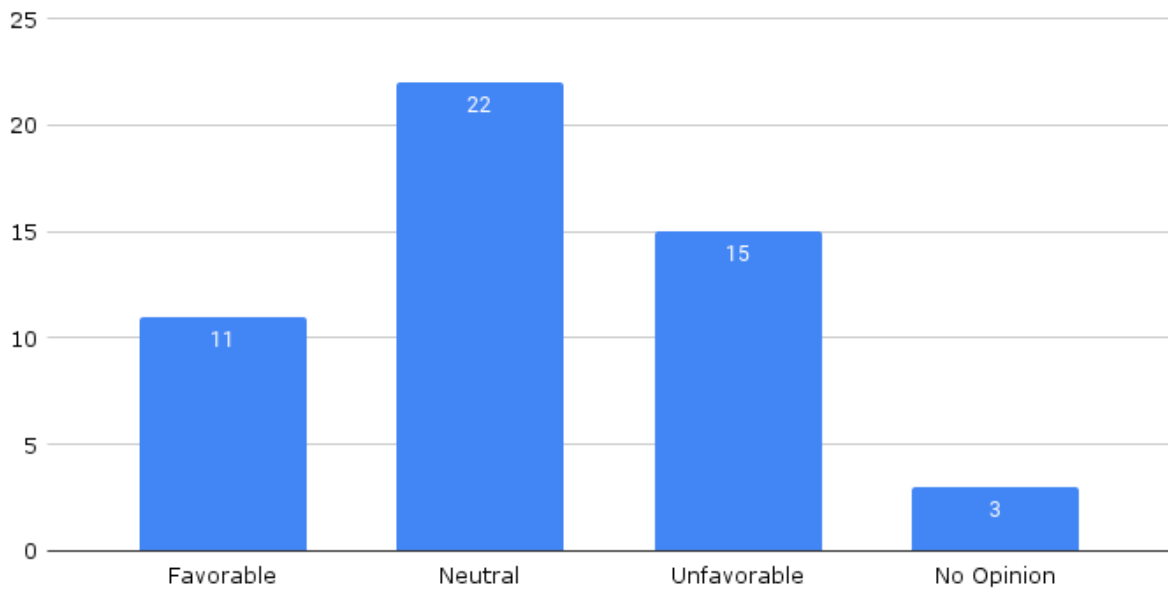
The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) pays farmers to land from production and put tree or grass cover on it for 10-15 years. The payment typically ranges between ~\$20 and ~\$230 per acre. Most farmers choose to enroll their marginal land in CREP, leaving their best acreage in production.

Question #8: What is your opinion of the CREP program on these criteria?

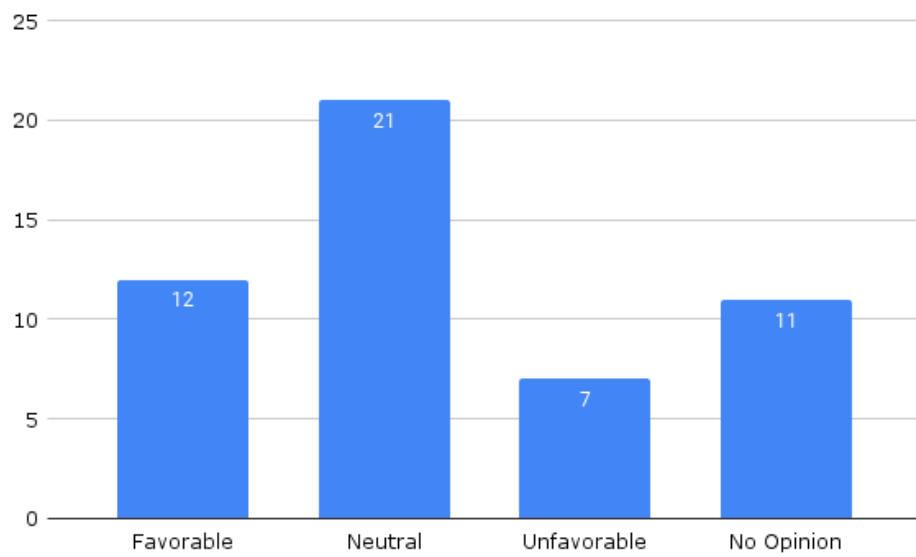
Fairness of Payment



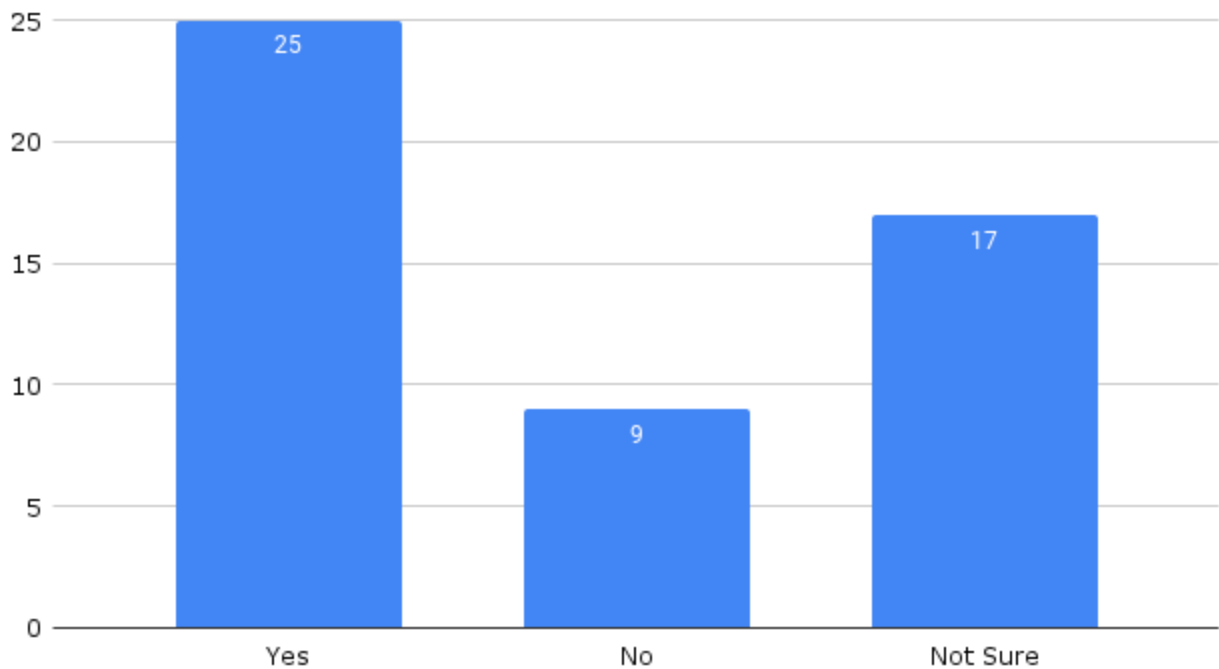
Terms of the Contract



Paperwork Required



Question #9: Would you consider enrolling or re-enrolling your land in the CREP program?



Question #10: In your own words, why do you feel this way?

- A friend of mine had a very negative experience with the CREP program regarding not wanting to use massive amounts of herbicide on their planting, and it ended up going to litigation. Perhaps the framework for participation has changed, but I feel that there are a lot of programs that much more flexible, so I don't have an interest in participating in CREP.
- As an active farmer, I have to compete with CREP rates to rent land, and I just can't. There is no way for me to expand or grow, it's hard for a new farmer to start up in this area because we can't compete with the government to rent land.
- I see whole entire farms enrolled in the program, not just small strips of marginal land. I pass these programs when I drive to the next county over trying to find land to rent. So my rental rates are up, and my transportation crops are up. I want to see a fair rental rate so I could rent land closer to home.
- Because it's a 15 year commitment, that's what's scaring away many farmers. And if I can farm land, there's a possibility of making more per acre than CREP. If I have access to the land and I can farm it, I can probably beat the CREP payment. So I can understand a farmer not wanting to taking the personal land and implement it.
- But we also have people who move into the area, they are older, maybe retired. They buy a farm, put their land into CREP, and use that payment to buy the land.

- If somebody wants to retire from farming, I can understand why CREP would be great for you. You can keep the land and use the CREP payment to pay your property taxes, etc. It's a great safety net.
- But I think CREP works against the engaged farmer.
- I would hope that one of my children wants to continue the farm, but my land is my retirement so I would probably sell it if nobody has any interest in continuing to farm. As I approach the time when I slow down on farming, I would probably just lease less land. it wouldn't make sense to lease land and then put it into CREP.
- Because it was marginal land in first place. I have a good NRCS employee who helps me through any problems
- Certainly, the one glitch we ran into is the 30 acres of DFN and CREP can not be re-enrolled. The contracts were not point specific. That is the only kicker other than that YES
- Completely removed from production instead of least optimal use
- Cost to meet requirements is now more than payment to have land in CREP for such a long term, 15 years.
- Depending on payments, markets, health and help. It's a possible option to have some income
- due to length of contract payments and i could benefit more by making my own decisions
- even with its drawbacks, I feel it is a good program as my farm was truly improved after being in it.
- For my forest buffer practice, the payment continues paying me to grow trees. For the grass practice, the payment exceeds the going rate for leasing it for row crops. Most importantly, these practices build my soil structure and provide an array of environmental benefits.
- I already re-enrolled my land. CREP is very field specific. The field I took out of production was in the floodway. In a drought situation, it would be the best field on my farm. But 8 of 10 years, it would be hard to get in an plant in a timely fashion, or get the crop out . In the years that we have owned it, it has flooded twice with 2-3 feet of water. My CREP payment is better than I could count on making from the land year after year.
- Because it's in grass, I don't have a big problem with weeds. I don't have to deal with headaches of trying to work wet ground, planting or harvesting.
- I don't want the cleared land to grow back into a forest. The family worked so hard to clear that land back in day. Even though it's so steep, I really don't want it back into woods. We did some of our cornfields, we seeded that for hay. If it's too wet,

we can't get into it. But it's a curved strip so I don't even know how you could figure out how to go around that if we put it into CREP. It might only be a half acre, I don't think it would be worth it to try to put it into CREP.

- I doubt I would get approved and not a productive way to grow the farm
- I guess I would consider the dollar value to the acreage. If it was close to the top of the range, I think a lot of farmers would say that might be a good deal. If it's at the lower end of the range, is it worth the paper work?
- I probably only have about 5 acres that would actually be worth even thinking about. Five acres at 25 bucks an acre? Might as well just leave it go instead of doing all the paperwork.
- The 10 year contract, just because in farming 10 years is a very long time.
- I have land I don't have an immediate use for that I could make money on without putting major work into while focusing on my other acreage and rentals.
- I have reenrolled my land in CREP. When the current contracts expire in 2023 and 2025, I will not reenroll. There is a lot of housing pressure near me.
- I have seen good crop ground taken out of production that will never be farmed again. the amount paid for acre is pocket change in SE Pa.
- I have some unfarmable acres that I would consider enrolling
- I lease and we plant enough trees. I would much rather have the ability to be paid to plant silvopasture. This is one more of the reason I believe NRCS' policies are outdated. They will not fund any projects for installing or maintaining silvopasture. I also believe that CREP should be at the most a 5 year term.
- I like what I see in improved water quality in my streams. However I am not going to put highly productive land in CREP unless it is directly next to a stream or waterway.
- I think CREP favors the big farmers with big projects. They figure they are getting more bang for their buck on those.
- I came out of the program because the value of the commodities has gone up. I just can't afford to do CREP anymore. I got \$100 per acre per year. So I was getting a check for \$1800 every year. Today, on 18 acres I can probably triple that with the price of commodities off the same acreage.
- I only see CREP acres on properties that can't sustain themselves. Several people that I know, they pulled out of it. What they were offering to reinstate my contract, compared to where the price of commodities are today.
- It's only attractive for very marginal land, what you are taking out of production with the crep program is extremely marginal ground at this point.

- When you can make \$800 an acre with corn, why take a CREP payment of \$100? It doesn't take much crop at all, even with hay at \$5 a bale. Just 20 bales an acre and you are making more than CREP. I can't even imagine how poor the ground must be to only get 20 bales out of it.
- I think these programs have good intentions, but the big operators can game the system. The CREP program is aimed at traditional farms, where chemicals are used to kill vegetation. Is not quite so easy to be an organic, sustainable farmer with the CREP program. The rules are all about using herbicides and conventional methods.
- I just did a native wildflower planting. It takes a while to get the soil prepared. CREP doesn't catered to sustainability. If you are organic, we'll pay you for the seed. But for the long term prospect of really saving soil, it doesn't do it.
- Until recently, the CREP payment has been better than farming because it's there to preserve land, but I'm not sure if that is true anymore.
- I'm supposed to mow my CREP lands, but the amount I'm supposed to mow changes from year to year.
- I would consider enrolling because we haven't before and maybe there is enough flexibility in the terms and the payment that it would be worth my while. So I'd consider it, but I could not make a commitment with what I know now.
- I would need to know more info on the program
- I'm a believer that animals don't need to be in the stream. We like to play in the stream, but anything we do affects those downstream. CREP was going to put a fence in, and I wouldn't have to do it or pay for it, and it would keep the animals in the pasture, and out of the stream. If my animals cross the stream, they are on a road. The animals know how to find open fences. The fence, the plantings, the monitoring and I liked all that.
- Now I know some farmers in the area who put in CREP plantings, and those weeds got out of control. The honey locust make great honey, but they are nasty on tires. I would have never thought that NRCS would do that kind of stuff.
- The draw was to put in a physical barrier that protect the stream, protect my cattle, and prevent the stream from changing direction and eroding my land.
- I'm not sure how it would help achieve a better conservation plan than I already have. I understand that I am outside of the norm, but the environment is very important to me.
- If you only have a few acres that you can put into this program, is it even worth the paperwork? Everything in this farm is already in grassland, except what is already covered in forest. So I don't think this program would work for me.
- It would all depend on \$/acre

- Need more information
- Not any loss to our operation
- Not enough capital incentive
- Not enough money, would rather eventually try to farm
- Now retired and have sons to help can do more with land now and do not like the results of years in CREP. Too much of the woody plants and uncontrolled weeds
- Only if I were to retire
- Part of the program works well around ponds and wet area. 10 to 15 yrs in fields leaves them too rough
- payment for unproductive ground
- put unfarmable land in program
- Quit picking and blaming the farmer for the Chesapeake bay issues
- some land is too steep as my dad pointed out {mr default} not worth the risk of running equip on
- still need to know more about it
- still unsure of the program to make decision
- The marginal land we have enrolled is best suited for the program
- The same waterway concerns others have expressed. Our pastures would be less than half. We enrolled in CRP Grasslands instead, and the requirements are far less onerous.
- We are interested, if we can get all our questions answered favorably.
- We are trying to maximize the land at this time
- We didn't renew because the rates weren't as attractive. We took some land out of CREP because we are getting tremendous pressure on land around here, so I had to take some land out of CREP because I can't find the land to rent. We only put our home farm land in CREP.
- We have a 1,000 cow dairy in the neighborhood, and there are several big cropping operations, and they compete with us hard for the land. I could pay what they are paying, but because my son is the crop guy, most leasors are choosing to go with the bigger operations. Some of them may come back to us if they have a bad experience with the bigger guys.

- Back in our county, a lot of land went into CREP in the early 2000s, but not a lot of that has been renewed. It's not just us feeling the land pressure. I can name 6-10 farmers who were in CREP, but they aren't in it anymore.
- I don't think CREP is paying what it used to when those farms went into CREP the first time.
- Would need to really look hard at the terms of the contract. Would like to see a higher payment per acre.

Question #11: What questions would you need answers for before deciding?

- Have any of the rules changed? Is it still the same as it was years ago? Does the land have to be fenced off? Not fenced off? What's all involved with this.
- None
- What are the management outlook for the land? What is NRCS looking to have done with the land. Do you have to mow it? Or do you just not do anything at all?
- Would they take suggestions on reducing the 10 year contract to a five year contract? I think that would get a lot more people on.
- I already sent a message about enrolling some of my wooded areas. I just need to know how it interacts with my honey and my current nracs contracts.
- Contract and payment details
- Contract terms
- location of it
- The first question I would ask would be, would you consider that ground to be productive, why not rent it to a neighbor? If you want to put into CREP, why not rent that land to another acre. You rent the ground to the government to the for \$100, but I'm sure you can get more than that if you rent it to another farmers.
- What are the maintenance provision that I have to meet? There are requirements there. You get a soil test before you go in the program, and you have to keep the PH levels constant over the life of the contract. That would be a big second question that I would ask. Be sure you understand the maintenance requirements.
- You are supposed to burn off the warm season grasses once every five years. Nobody in their right mind would burn off 7 foot high grass on their own. I had a hard time finding a fire company to come in and support me. How do we get rid of that biomass.
- If you don't burn it off, the grass falls down. Pretty soon it will mulch itself out. If they would let you harvest it off there, that would be different. NRCS says if you do that, you can't use the product. You just have to let the bales sit.

- I have other options. We put in two acres of pollinator crops. It has a similar payment to CREP, but it's a five year commitment instead of 10-15. It seems to have a reason for being. I really like the NRCS pollinator program more than CREP. As an apple/pear farmer, the pollinators are a direct benefit to my operation.
- The CREP program ties up farmland, and I'm a small operator. It can tie up huge acreages. I'm surrounded by people who have put their farms in CREP. There might other uses for that land. It might be that the federal government could help with leases.
- I'm really too old and have too many other interests to really dig into some of these programs. It would be nice if the program were tailored to make it easier for people to get into farming, I'd like to see more African Americans or Native Americans getting into farming with the support of some of these programs.
- An assessment from NRCS about which land they would 'want', what strategies or mitigations we'd need to do or pay for, how much they could pay.
- What land exactly can be enrolled
- Get money for land you're not doing anything with, That wouldn't cut it for me anymore. I would like definitive answers to what would be allowed on the land, what would NRCs would do and not do, and the requirements I would have to meet.
- I don't like the sales pitch that doesn't give details. I want the details. There is always more involved in that.
- What is the paperwork? What are the physical actions that I need to? Maintaining, excavation, planting? What will be actually provided to meet these requirements.
- I think the CREP program has a lot of potential, but it's not for everyone. When money is tight, it's not good to sign on the bottom line without knowing everything. It should be a negotiation. After I've done some programs with NRCS, they come back and they bring another 24 pages that I have to sign.
- Maybe if a consultant came out risk (and paperwork) free and took a look there could be a discussion
- Can I graze the grasslands I plant if I participate in this program? That's really the first and maybe only question I would have.
- How long is it in for and \$/acre
- Land payment vale what you can and can't do with it and what strings are attached
- What is the potential for production in this area in the future.
- Change in payout, length of contract, or change in allowable land use.
- Don't know

- no questions
- What would they pay me
- Would need to know the \$/acre being offered to think about reenrolling.
- payment amount, terms of contract
- how much is payment
- im not clear on what requirements there are to put land in this program, does land have to have been farmed before, or anything thats not being used qualify
- our meeting today did alot of asking our opinion about crep, but some of us still don't know alot of details about it
- need to see how the long term affect of contractor would affect land.
- perhaps if any changes occur - terms, incentives, etc., before up for re-enrollment
- Prescribed grazing of sensitive areas, and stream set back requirements.
- mainly about maintenance
- \$\$\$ - and what if major changes happened
- It was beneficial while we were in the program, but when it was time to renew, it didn't look so good. It would be more attractive if the terms were shorter.
- If I could have gotten the same contract that I got in 2002, I probably would have done it again.
- The biggest question is what are the incentives, it comes down to dollars and cents, and then to look at what other options they might have.
- The other terms they ahve to look at are maintenance, there is some expense with that. They have to take all that into consideration.
- Just basic ones about how the entire process would work.