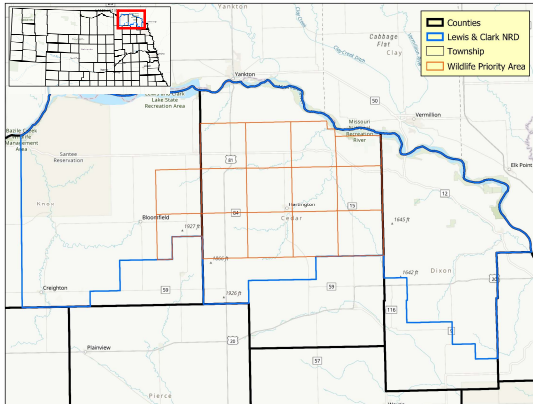


Small Grains Incentive Program

- Available to any landowner or tenant operating farmland within the Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District (see map)



- Payment of \$8 per acre during the year a small grain is grown as part of a crop rotation
- Additional payments available for post-harvest practices that benefit wildlife
- Simple application process (see back cover)
- Available funding for the program will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis

Questions? Contact:

Jason Thiele, Private Lands Biologist
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Norfolk, NE
jason.thiele@nebraska.gov
402-370-0010

Or your local NRCS office:
Hartington 402-254-6855
Bloomfield 402-373-4914
Ponca 402-755-2277

To apply for small grains incentive payments, pick up a Notification of Interest form from any of the following locations:

Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District
608 N. Robinson Ave.
Hartington, NE 68739

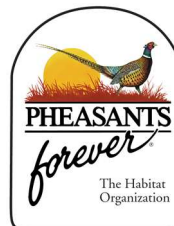
Cedar County USDA Service Center
102 E. Elm St.
Hartington, NE 68739

Knox County USDA Service Center
111 N. Washington St.
Bloomfield, NE 68718

Dixon County USDA Service Center
105 E. 4th St.
Ponca, NE 68770

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Northeast District Office
2201 N. 13th St.
Norfolk, NE 68701

The small grains incentive program is a cooperative effort of the following partners:



Northeast Nebraska Small Grains Incentive Program

Troy Walz, University of Nebraska Extension



Get paid to add small grains to your crop rotation!

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission



Increase pheasant populations on your land!

Gary Lesoing, University of Nebraska Extension



Natural Resources Conservation Service



Improve the profitability and sustainability of your farm!

Farm Benefits

Small grains can provide multiple benefits to the profitability and sustainability of farming operations when they are incorporated into crop rotations. Some of the potential benefits include:

Improved Soil Health

Because small grains have different growing seasons than corn and soybeans and mature earlier in the year, planting a cover crop post-harvest is much more feasible. The combination of a small grain followed by a cover crop allows living roots to remain in the soil virtually year-long. Beneficial organisms increase in the soil, which leads to increased soil organic matter and improved soil structure. Healthier soils can hold more water and nutrients for crops.

Reduced Erosion

Small grains generally establish ground cover quickly after planting and form dense root systems, reducing the potential for soil to be washed away. Planting cover crops following harvest of small grains can provide further protection from erosion.

Better Water Quality

Small grains are effective at scavenging residual nutrients, such as nitrogen, from the soil. As a result, fewer nutrients are leached from the soil into groundwater. Also, as noted above, small grains can reduce erosion potential, which in turn reduces the amounts of sediment-bound nutrients, like phosphorous, that end up in surface waters, producing algal blooms and other water quality issues.

Lower Input Costs

Adding small grains to crop rotations can help to break the life cycles of pests and diseases, reducing the amount spent on herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. Small grains also require less water during the growing season, reducing irrigation costs. Finally, small grains require less added fertilizer than many other crops.

Increased Yields

Farmers have known for generations that rotating crops generally results in higher yields for all crops in the rotation than can be expected if the same crop is planted in consecutive years.

Wildlife Benefits

Many species of wildlife benefit from more diverse agricultural landscapes. As a case in point, the decline of ring-necked pheasant populations across the Midwest can be partially explained by the loss of small grains in many areas. Wildlife biologists recognize the benefits that a return of small grain fields to the landscape in northeast Nebraska could have for pheasant populations. Small grains can provide the follow habitat needs for pheasants:

Nesting Cover

Some small grains, such as winter wheat, can provide valuable nesting cover in the spring. In fact, studies in multiple states have demonstrated high nest success in wheat fields, perhaps due to the structure of the wheat that conceals incubating hens and the large size of many of these fields, which reduces predation risk compared to some other traditional nesting habitats like fencerows and road ditches. Spring-planted small grains, such as oats, can also provide nesting cover, especially for hens that are reneesting following the loss of an early clutch.

Brood Cover

Pheasant chicks require abundant protein from insects to grow to adulthood. Fields of small grains such as oats can contain abundant insects to provide food for pheasant chicks during the summer and early fall. Chicks can move around beneath the canopy while being shaded from the sun's heat and less visible to predators.

Winter Cover

Small grain stubble, if cut at a suitable height and left standing through the fall and winter, has value to birds as thermal cover and escape cover and also provides a food source from the waste grain left behind after harvest. Alternatively, some cover crops that are planted following small grains can provide excellent winter cover and food sources for pheasants and other wildlife.



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

I'm interested in adding small grains to my operation. How do I get started?

Producers who want to start growing small grains may first want to visit their local USDA Service Center and speak with a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) representative about applying for conservation crop rotation payments through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). NRCS personnel can also provide technical advice on growing small grains.

Additional incentive payments for growing small grains are available from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's (NGPC) Berggren Pheasant Plan, the Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District (LCNRD), and Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever (PF). These incentives are separate from the NRCS programs and available to any producers within the LCNRD boundaries. The above organizations will pay \$8 per acre during the year that a small grain is grown in a particular field. Incentive payments are capped at 160 acres per producer except in wildlife priority areas identified by the NGPC.

To ensure that the small grain crop will have value as nesting/brooding habitat, certain minimum criteria must be met and verified by a NGPC biologist or PF Farm Bill Biologist before payments are made. The small grain would need to be planted either in the previous fall or in the spring to allow enough vegetative growth to provide nesting cover by mid- to late-May. The cover would need to remain through at least July 15 before being cut or harvested to provide reasonable time for clutches to hatch. Slight flexibility in the harvest date could be allowed for abnormal/inclement weather conditions if a biologist is consulted prior to cutting.

Post-harvest management of enrolled fields is at the discretion of the producer, but the NGPC may provide an additional payment of \$2 per acre for producers who adopt wildlife-friendly practices such as leaving tall stubble or planting an approved cover crop that would provide suitable fall/winter cover.



Amy Mayer, Harvest Public Media