

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM

Description and Guidelines

Introduction

The Nebraska Buffer Strip Program (NBSP) was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 1998. The program encourages landowners to establish buffer strips, specifically filter strips and riparian forest buffers, along vulnerable surface water resources. Buffer strips are an effective means of reducing sediments and other pollutants in runoff. Funding for the program is from a fee assessed on pesticides registered for sale in Nebraska, and is administered by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA), Nebraska's natural resources districts (NRDs), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Eligible Areas

Land eligible for enrollment in this program is cropland (in annual crops or legumes as part of a rotation) adjacent to perennial streams, seasonal streams, wetlands, permanent bodies of water, or existing buffer strips established after January 1, 1996. The area of the streams, wetlands, and permanent bodies of water are not eligible for enrollment except that three-dot blue line seasonal streams on USGS quadrangle maps that are cropped may be eligible for out of channel flow filter strips. Fields adjacent and parallel to the area to be buffered must be cropped (in annual crops or legumes as part of a rotation).

- Perennial streams are any solid blue line on USGS quadrangle maps or other streams with perennial flow that are verified on-site.
- Seasonal streams are any three-dot blue line on USGS quadrangle maps or any areas of concentrated flow with a defined bed and bank that has either a scoured bottom (from normal flow) or hydrophytic vegetation.
- Wetlands are any wetlands that meet permanently flooded, intermittently exposed, semi-permanently flooded, or seasonally flooded criteria. The wetlands protected by buffer strips cannot be cropped during the life of the contract.
- Permanent bodies of water are surface water bodies, such as lakes or ponds that provide water cover throughout the year.
- Areas in expiring NBSP contracts are eligible for re-enrollment within six months of expiration date.
- Areas in expiring continuous or regular CRP contracts are eligible for enrollment, provided the eligibility criteria above and NRCS practice specifications are met.
- Areas in NBSP, CRP, or CREP contracts which were cancelled early must wait two years before they are eligible for the NBSP, provided eligibility criteria and NRCS practice specifications are met.

Payment Rates

- For dryland cropland that is enrolled in the CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs, the NBSP payment rate per acre shall be 20% of the weighted average soil rental rate.
- For dryland cropland that is not enrolled in CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs, the NBSP payment rate per acre shall equal 120% of the CRP weighted average soil rental rate plus \$5, minus payments from any other source. (The CRP weighted average soil rental rate is the amount calculated before the incentive and maintenance rate are added.) In no case may the payment from all sources exceed \$250 per acre.
- For irrigated cropland enrolled in CRP, CREP, and/or any other governmentally-funded program, the NBSP payment rate per acre shall equal \$250, minus payments received from all other sources.
- For irrigated cropland not enrolled in CRP, CREP, and/or any other governmentally-funded program, the NBSP payment per acre shall be equal \$225, minus any other program payments.

Deadlines

- Funding availability for new applications is reviewed annually near the start of each calendar year but applications may be submitted at anytime. Depending on funding availability and program demand, applications may be held, reviewed, and approved on a periodic basis.

Process

1. The landowner works with the NRCS on tentative buffer strip locations and to complete the application.
2. The landowner submits the completed application to the NRD.
3. The NRD and the NDA consider the application.
4. If approved, the landowner enters into a formal agreement with the NRD.
5. The landowner establishes and maintains the buffer strip according to NRCS FOTG practice requirements.

General Terms

1. The contract length cannot be less than five, or more than ten, years.
2. Eligible buffer strips are filter strips (NRCS FOTG practice 393) and riparian forest buffers (NRCS FOTG practice 391).
3. The established vegetation must meet NRCS FOTG practice requirements.
4. Limited haying and grazing is allowed provided it meets NRCS FOTG practice requirements.
5. Minimum width is 20 feet for filter strips and 55 feet for riparian forest buffers (35 feet must be trees and 20 feet must be grass), unless NRCS FOTG practice requirements are greater.
6. Maximum width is 120 feet for filter strips and 180 feet for riparian forest buffers, unless NRCS FOTG practice requirements are greater. For streams, the maximums apply to each side of the stream.
7. Minimum size per application is one acre.
8. Fields adjacent and parallel to the area to be buffered must be cropped (in annual crops or legumes as part of a rotation) for the duration of the contract.
9. Failure to maintain the buffer strip according to contract requirements may result in forfeiture of past and future payments.
10. Early cancellation of all, or a portion of, a contract may warrant penalties of not more than the total of all payments received, plus 25% of one year's payment.
11. Buffer strips will be subject to compliance checks by NRD and/or NDA staff.

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM
Application for Participation

Name of Landowner: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Social Security Number: _____ or Tax Identification Number: _____
 Natural Resources District: _____ County: _____
 Farm Number: _____ Tract Number: _____

Site Information									
Site	Section	Township	Range	A	B	C	D	E	F
				Filter Strip Acres	Riparian Forest Buffer Acres	Stream Length	Total Buffer Length	Non-irrigated Acres	Irrigated Acres
1									
2									
3									
4									
Totals									

- A. Enter acres offered in filter strips. (Note: A + B = E + F)
 B. Enter acres offered in riparian forest buffer.
 C. Enter length of stream protected by buffer or distance around wetlands or permanent bodies of water.
 D. Enter total length of buffers (for streams with buffers on both sides, total each side of the stream).
 E. Enter acres of non-irrigated cropland.
 F. Enter acres of irrigated cropland (assessed for tax purposes as irrigated).

Contract Length Requested = _____ years – (minimum of five years and maximum of ten years)

Rental Payments Received from Other Sources (does not include buffer establishment cost-share)

Enter \$/acre/year, practice establishment date, and contract expiration date for each source. If none, check here . (CRP/CREP includes the weighted average soil rental rate, plus incentives, plus the maintenance rate. List NRD pmt. for CREP separately)

USDA CRP, CREP	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
NRD	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
Other (list) _____	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
Total Dollars	\$/acre/year _____		

Were the offered acres previously involved in a canceled NBSP, CRP, or CREP contract? ____ Yes ____ No
 If so, enter cancellation date: _____. Describe below and indicate on plan map the number and location of the acres involved.

Required Attachments

- Aerial photo – Identify the boundary of each buffer strip in ink. For buffer strips adjacent to wetlands, NRCS wetland determination must be delineated on the photo. List the length, average width, and acres for each buffer strip on the photo. Highlight each buffer strip with a yellow highlighter. A yellow highlighter facilitates any needed photocopying.
- USGS quadrangle map – With a yellow highlighter, highlight perennial and seasonal streams that are associated with the buffer strips. Do not put any ink or pencil marks on the USGS quadrangle maps. For streams not shown on USGS quadrangle maps, describe the conditions that make the buffer strips eligible in the remarks section below.

Remarks: _____

I certify that the above information is true, and I understand that if this application is approved, I will be required to enter into an agreement with the above-named Natural Resources District.

Landowner Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participation in this program is contingent upon review and approval of this application and the availability of funds.

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM (For Office Use Only – To Be Completed by NRCS)

Ranking Points Calculation

Stream Classification Points	Watershed Points
Percentage of acres adjacent to: (enter % in decimals, i.e., 90% = 0.9)	Percentage of land within a priority watershed – see Nebraska Unified Watershed Assessment (enter % in decimals, i.e., 90% = 0.9)
Perennial Stream = _____ x 9 = _____	8 digit HUC _____
Seasonal Stream = _____ x 6 = _____	
Wetland = _____ x 5 = _____	High Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 3 = _____
Perm. Water Body > 5 acres = _____ x 6 = _____	Medium Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 2 = _____
Perm. Water Body < 5 acres = _____ x 3 = _____	Low Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 1 = _____
Total Points _____	Total Points _____
New Application Point – One (1) point for buffers to be installed after the date of this application, i.e., not pre-existing.	
Stream Classification Pts. _____ + Watershed Pts. _____ + New Application Pt. _____ = Grand Total Pts. _____	

Weighted Average Soil Rental Rate (SRR) Calculation

(Complete this for non-irrigated cropland only.)

	Map Unit Symbol	Acres	CRP Soil Rental Rate	Rent
Primary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
Secondary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
Tertiary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
	Total Acres =		Total Rent =	\$ _____
$\text{\$ } ______ \text{ (Total Rent)} \div ______ \text{ (Total Acres)} = \text{\$ } ______ \text{ (Weighted Average Soil Rental Rate (SRR))}$				

Buffer Strip Payment Calculation

Non-irrigated Cropland without CRP, CREP or other governmentally-funded program (complete 1; complete 2, if applicable)

- 1.20 X _____ (Weighted Average SRR) = \$ _____ + \$5 = \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate)
- \$ _____ (NBSP pmt. rate or \$250, whichever is less) - \$ _____ (other pmts. from prev. pg.) = _____ (NBSP pmt. rate)
 _____ (NBSP payment rate from 1 or 2, whichever applies) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Non-irrigated Cropland with CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs (complete 1; complete 2 and 3 if applicable)

- 0.20 X \$ _____ (Weighted Average SRR) = \$ _____ (NBSP payment)
- \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate) + \$ _____ (other pmts. from prev. pg.) = \$ _____ (total payments)
- If "total payments" > \$250, then \$250 - \$ _____ (other pmts. from prev. pg.) = \$ _____ (NBSP pmt. rate)
 _____ (NBSP payment rate from 1 or 3, whichever applies) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Irrigated Cropland without CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs

- NBSP pmt. rate = \$225 - _____ (other pmts. from prev. pg.) = \$ _____ (NBSP pmt. rate) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Irrigated Cropland with CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs

- NBSP pmt. rate = \$250 - _____ (other pmts. from prev. pg.) = \$ _____ (NBSP pmt. rate) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Total Annual Buffer Strip Payment = \$ _____

Remarks _____

NRCS Representative _____ Date _____

NRD Action Approved _____ Disapproved _____ returned to landowner for more information _____

NRD Representative _____ Date _____

NDA Action Approved _____ Disapproved _____ returned to landowner for more information _____

NDA Representative _____ Date _____