

# About the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)



CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.

Signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers and landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion, and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species.

## **BRAW's Concern**

The CRP does not clearly define "structure". This raises questions about the inability to deploy Bluebird nest boxes on land participating in the Conservation Reserve Program. This becomes a concern for BRAW because deployment of nest boxes on protected land is specifically done for conservation of the Eastern Bluebird in Wisconsin.

Our President, Steve Sample, drafted and sent a letter to Senator Tammy Baldwin requesting her to ask The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to clarify the term "Structure". Specifically, to ensure that the term "structure" does not include or apply to native bird boxes, and to notify Farm Service Agency (FSA) Offices to stop prohibiting their placement on CRP land.

Click [here](#) to see/read President Sample's letter to Senator Baldwin.

If interested, please join BRAW's effort in this matter by writing to Senator Baldwin expressing your concern and the importance of not restricting the placement of native bird boxes on CRP land. After all, it's all about land and wildlife conservation and the two go hand-in-hand.



**Bluebird  
Restoration  
Association of  
Wisconsin, Inc.**

Steve Sample  
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Madison, Wi. 53705

March 1, 2021

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Der Senator Baldwin:

My name is Steve Sample and I am President of the Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin. Our name explains our efforts for the last 35 years. BRAW's monitors report that they are unable to place nesting boxes on private property enrolled in the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

CRP goals support enhancing wildlife and most CRP land is good habitat for bluebirds. The Eastern Bluebird is a native open area insect eating species that has been out competed for natural nesting sites by the invasive species such as Starlings and House Sparrows. Our organization works to ensure its nesting success to help maintain a healthy population in our state by erecting nesting boxes.

The fact of the matter and problem is that there is a provision in the Conservation Reserve Program that prohibits structures from being placed upon these designated land areas. Bluebird nesting houses require a thin pole with a nesting box about 5 feet off the ground usually placed on the periphery of open fields. These nesting boxes are being labeled as a "structure" by FSA and our monitors are prohibited from placing any of these nesting boxes in these designated CRP lands.

It would help our efforts and support the wildlife conservation aspect of the CRP if inconspicuous bluebird housing units, placed 100 to 200 yards apart, were excluded from being labeled a "structure." I am certain the idea of structures is referring to large structures that would hinder the purpose of the Conservation Reserve Program.

Can you help by asking the USDA to clarify that the term "structures" does not include native bird nest boxes and to notify local FSA offices to stop prohibiting their placement on CRP lands?

Sincerely yours,

Steve Sample