



NORTH DAKOTA  
STATE DEPOSITORY  
DOCUMENT

# INCOME ALTERNATIVES for Farmers and Ranchers



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- Mark Fisher    U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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- Judy Carlson    North Dakota Department of Agriculture

## NDSU

**Extension Service**

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**F**arming and ranching in North Dakota have a long history and are recognized as the foundation of the state's economy. Agricultural operations are not without risk, however. Producers must manage their operations to reduce risk to stabilize income. Diversification is commonly known as one way to manage risk, but farmers and ranchers may not know what programs are available to help them diversify their operations.

Many North Dakota farms have land parcels that do not produce a profitable crop most years. Saline areas, steep slopes, wet or severely eroded sites, and frequently flooded areas are examples of marginal income lands. These parcels intermingle with productive land and often are farmed for operational convenience, even though they may be a drain on farm income. Converting these areas to a more profitable alternative can be costly in the short term and therefore may not be implemented.

Various programs, private and governmental, have been initiated through the years to help defray, or totally fund, the cost of converting marginal lands to a profitable alternative. In addition, many programs reimburse landowners for continuing alternative use. These programs may help produce a higher net profit than when the parcel is used as cropland.

This publication summarizes programs that can help convert marginal lands to a profitable alternative. Some programs can be used in combination to address multiple off-farm organization needs and on-farm revenue potential. Landowners interested in exploring uses for marginally productive cropland should contact the various agencies or groups for specific program details. These programs may increase farm profitability, increase soil moisture, reduce erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

Off-farm organization objectives and on-farm operational situations that the programs listed address include: squaring out a wetland, flood irrigation using wetlands, wildlife food plots, filter strips, odd area management, cover for salinity management, erosion control, residue management, gated wetlands, tree planting and habitat plots.

A wide array of programs addressing land use options are available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Ducks Unlimited and North Dakota Natural Resources Trust. Terms and agency expectations vary with each program. Ask questions that clarify terminology and expectations. Explore various management options, as many programs offer flexible terms.

Contact them for more information. Cost sharing and multiagency participation may help address your needs and increase your profit margins.

**Note: Many of these programs affect cropland, which affects bases, which affect government payments on your farm. Before you enroll in these programs, make sure you check with the Farm Service Agency to see how the program you are interested in will impact your cropland and bases. This is very important!**

# Program Summary

## I. Crop and/Income Alternatives

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
Beginning Farmer Program		Financial incentives, including downpayment assistance and interest rate buy-down, are available for real estate purchases by producers who qualify for either the North Dakota First Time Farmer Finance Program or Beginning Farmer Real Estate Loan Program.	North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Grass Plantings	Habitat Plot Program	Varying acreage habitat plot projects are readily available. Payment is generally \$9 to \$34 per acre, depending on soil classification. Six-year agreement with options for 10-, 15-, 20-year contracts possible. The landowner must agree to public hunting access.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	Food Plot Program	The NDGFD Food Plot program provides an annual establishment and rental payment for planting agricultural crops left unharvested for a wildlife food source during winter. Landowners must allow walk-in access.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	N.D. Waterbank Program	The North Dakota Waterbank Program provides a maximum of \$30/acre for cropland seeded back to grass. The site must have a maximum of a 4-1 ratio of upland acres to wetland acres. Seeding costs also are covered. Five- or 10-year agreements (usually 10) with the option to renew are available.	North Dakota Agriculture Department
	N.D. Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program	The PFW program offers grassland establishment assistance on private lands. PFW will provide from 40 percent to 100 percent cost share for native or tame grass/legume seed mixes and planting costs to establish hayland, pastureland, wildlife habitat or buffer strips along wetlands and streams. Landowners/producers are required to sign a PFW agreement for a minimum of 10 years.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	Wetlands Reserve Program	75 percent cost share for seeding cropland acres back to native grass. Program focuses on restoration of wetlands. A 30-year easement is required on offered acreage.  Cost sharing is available for native grass seeding to landowners enrolled in WRP. Cost-share is available for the 25 percent not covered by NRCS. The USFWS' Partner for Fish and Wildlife Program also may cover grass planting costs not to exceed 25 percent on WRP projects in specific counties in the state. An Extension agreement must be signed for the same length as the WRP agreement. Contact USFWS for details.	Natural Resources Conservation Service  North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
Wetland Reserve (WRP) Incentive	The NDGFD offers a one-time incentive payment on WRP sign-ups. This program can be applied to new WRP applications and current WRP contracts and only is available for the 30-year easement feature of the WRP program. The NDGFD will provide an additional 15 percent of the appraised land value not to exceed \$100 above the 75 percent appraised land value that would be paid by the USDA.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department	

# I. Crop and/Income Alternatives (continued)

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
Grass Plantings (continued)	Grassland Reserve	The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program that helps landowners and operators restore and protect grassland, including rangeland, and pastureland and certain other lands while maintaining the areas as grazing land. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. The program offers several enrollment options. Applications may be filed for an easement or rental agreement with NRCS or FSA at any time. Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices; produce hay, mow or harvest for seed production (subject to certain restrictions during the nesting season of bird species that are in significant decline or those that are protected under federal or state law); conduct fire rehabilitation; and construct firebreaks and fences.	Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Environmental Quality Incentive Program	Cost share levels up to 50 percent are available to seed land back to grass for the purpose of hayland, pastureland or rangeland. Incentive payments for management also may be available.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Working Lands Program	Recognizes and rewards landowners for activities that have a positive impact on wildlife habitat without requiring land retirement and provides public access. Payments range from 50 cent per acre to \$3 per acre.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	Coverlocks for Conservation	A partnership among NDGFD, USDA, Pheasants Forever and the private landowner that creates financial incentives to establish high quality wildlife habitat and provides public access. Lands must be in the southern counties of N.D. to be eligible.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	Conservation Reserve Program	The CRP offers producers cost-share and incentive payments to retire environmentally sensitive acreage from agricultural production. Grass planting is an approved/recommended practice for erosion control, water quality and wildlife habitat. Cost share rates up to 50 percent and incentive payments up to 25 percent may be available on selected practices. Contracts are for 10 to 15 years.	Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service
	CRP Continuous Sign-up	Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of 4 percent on selected practices. The Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) is at \$10/full year/acre on selected practices.	Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service
Residue Management	Environmental Quality Incentive Program	The EQIP offers producers incentive payments to reduce erosion rates substantially through residue management. Incentive payments of \$9/acre for no-till and \$6/acre for mulch till with a maximum of 800 acres are available over three years.	Natural Resources Conservation Service

## II. Wetland Income Alternatives

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
Wetland Restoration	Wetland Restoration on CRP	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers wetland restoration assistance on CRP lands. The PFW program will provide 100 percent of the cost of plugging or filling drainage ditches. Landowners are required to sign a PFW agreement for the period of the CRP contract. Incentive payments also may be available.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; also need to coordinate with Farm Service Agency
	Wetland Restoration on Non-CRP	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers wetland restoration assistance on private lands. PFW will provide up to 100 percent of the costs to restore drained wetlands. Practices eligible for funding include dirt work, reseeding disturbed sites and purchase of necessary water control structures. Landowners are required to sign a 10-year agreement.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	Grasslands for Tomorrow	Technical and financial assistance on a limited basis is available to restore drained wetlands.	Ducks Unlimited
	Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CP-23A)	Cost-share is available to restore wetlands hydrology at a rate of 50 percent with 4-1 ratio/acre upland. Incentive payments also may be available for this practice. Rental rates on land are based on soil productivity and average cash rent in each county.	Farm Service Agency/ Natural Resources Conservation Service
	CRP Wetland	Depending on length of contract, one-time payments range from \$20 to \$30 per restored acre or \$100 to \$150 per restored basin. This program may be coupled with the PFW program described above.	North Dakota Natural Resources Trust; also need to coordinate with Farm Service Agency
	Wetland Reserve Program	Cost-share rate of 75 percent is available for restoration of wetlands. Land payment is based on 75 percent of appraised value of the land. 30-year easement on enrolled acreage.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
		Cost-sharing is available for wetland restoration to landowners enrolled in WRP. Cost-share is available for the 25 percent not covered by NRCS.	North Dakota Natural Resources Trust
	WRP Assistance	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers wetland and grassland assistance on Wetlands Reserve Program (WPR) lands. PFW cost-share payments are available on 30-year WRP contracts. PFW will provide 25 percent of wetland restoration costs and may provide 15 percent to 25 percent of grassland restoration costs, depending on the location of the tracts. Landowners are required to sign an agreement for the period of the WRP contract.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## II. Wetland Income Alternatives (continued)

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
Wetland Restoration (continued)	ND Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers wetland creation assistance on private lands. The PFW program will pay up to \$1,200 per surface acreage of water created for the construction cost and necessary water control structures. Landowners are asked to share the costs if the project exceeds \$1,200 per surface acre of water created. Landowners must sign an agreement for a minimum of 30 years.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Wetland Preservation	Wetland Easement	A perpetual easement to protect the wetland from burning, draining or filling. Payment is based on an appraisal of the property, wetland complex and total wetland acres protected. The landowner still may graze, hay or farm these wetlands when naturally dry.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	ND Waterbank Program	Annual payments to landowners with wetlands and adjacent upland cover. Agreements are for five or 10 years.	North Dakota Department of Agriculture
Other Wetland Options	Environmental Quality Incentive Program	Up to 50 percent cost-share is available for the restoration and creation and enhancements of wetlands.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) Flood Plain Easements	Three categories of perpetual flood plain easements for restoration purposes are available landowners with eligible frequently flooded agricultural land in the flood plain.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Conservation Easements	Potential wetland and upland easements will be considered on a donation basis.	Ducks Unlimited

### **III. Range. Pasture and Hayland Income Alternatives**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Payment and Terms</b>	<b>Contact</b>
	Idled Hayland or Pasture	Idling of hayland or pasture acres. Payment can be \$9 to \$12 per acre. Acreage requirements vary. Tracts of land 80 acres or more are preferred. The length of the agreement is three to six years, with an option to renew. Landowners must agree to public hunting access.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	Environmental Quality Incentive Program	The EQIP offers producers cost-share and incentive payments for fencing, water developments and native and introduced grass seedings for pasture, hayland and rangeland uses.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Grazing Systems	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers rotational grazing system assistance on private lands. PFW will provide from 40 percent to 80 percent cost-share, up to a maximum of \$10 per acre of the cost to establish the system. Boundary fencing may be included if cropland conversion to pastureland occurs on a minimum of 25 percent of the overall grazing system acreage. Retired CRP or Federal or State Waterbank will all qualify for the boundary fencing exemption.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
	Riparian Protection	The USFWS' Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program offers riparian protection assistance on private lands. PFW will offer up to 100 percent cost-share for fencing to exclude livestock from buffers along rivers, creeks, streams and marshes. The landowner must sign a 10-year agreement.	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## IV. Tree Planting Alternatives

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
	Tree Planting Cost Share Program	The NDGFD Tree Planting Cost Share Program offers cost-share funds to landowners as incentive for establishing wildlife tree plantings on private land.	North Dakota Game and Fish Department
	Stewardship Incentive Program	Involves planting and renovating shelterbelts; 75 percent cost-share. Landowners who participate must have a Forest Stewardship Plan.	North Dakota Forest Service
	Conservation Reserve Program	Tree planting is cost-shared for establishing living snow fences, field windbreaks, shelterbelts and wildlife plantings. Cost share rate is 50 percent. Up to 20 percent incentive payments for specific practices may be available. Contracts are 10 to 15 years. Land rental rates are established in each county by soil productivity indexes and average cash rent.	Farm Service Agency/ Natural Resources Conservation Service
	Environmental Quality Incentive Program	Cost share is available for field farmstead and feedlot windbreaks. Windbreak renovation also is cost-shared through EQIP. Cost share rates up to 50 percent are available.	Natural Resources Conservation Service

## V. Native Forest Alternatives

Activity	Program	Payment and Terms	Contact
	Private Forest Conservation Program	<p>Conservation of native forest.</p> <p><b>Short term option:</b> The landowner receives an annual \$10-per-acre lease payment and has the option to renew annually within a six- to 10-year contract period.</p> <p><b>Long term option:</b> Landowner receives variable annual payments based on forest acreage, land value and term of conservation agreement. Agreement term ranges from 10 to possibly 30 years. Compensation starts at 35 percent (10-year agreement) and increases 1.5 percent each successive year to a maximum of 65 percent (30-year agreement) of the land value.</p>	North Dakota Game and Fish Department

## **VI. Other Areas (Salty sites, eroded sites, wetland edges, odd areas, drainage ways, occasionally flooded cropland).**

1. Squaring out a wetland
2. Grassed waterways
3. Flood irrigation-wetlands
4. Wildlife food plots
5. Filter strips
6. ODD area management
7. Cover for salinity management
8. Salt tolerant cover
9. Erosion control
10. Critical area management
11. Cropland protective cover
12. Gated wetland
13. Drainage way opportunities
14. Renovation of abandoned farmsteads.

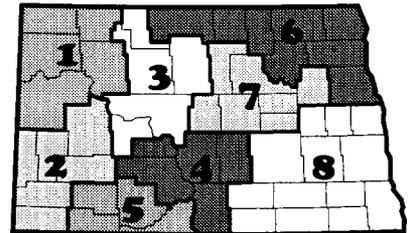
A wide array of programs addressing these operator/landowner situations are available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Dakota Game and Fish Department and private organizations. Contact them with your ideas and concerns. Cost-sharing and multiagency participation will help achieve your conservation and income goals.

## **State Agency Offices and Phone Numbers**

<b>Farm Service Agency</b> P.O. Box 3046 Fargo, N.D. 58108	<b>(701) 239-5224</b>
<b>Natural Resources Conservation Service</b> P.O. Box 1458 Bismarck, N.D. 58501	<b>(701) 530-2095</b>
<b>North Dakota Game and Fish Department</b> 100 N. Bismarck Expressway Bismarck, N.D. 58501-5095	<b>(701) 328-6300</b>
<b>North Dakota Department of Agriculture</b> 600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 602 Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0020	<b>(701) 328-2231</b>
<b>North Dakota Natural Resources Trust</b> 1605 E. Capitol Ave., Suite 101 Bismarck, N.D. 58501-2102	<b>(701) 223-8501</b>
<b>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</b> <b>Wetland Habitat Office</b> 3425 Miriam Ave. Bismarck, N.D. 58501	<b>(701) 250-4403</b> <b>(701) 250-4418</b>
<b>North American Wildlife Foundation</b> P.O. Box 420 Victoria, Minn. 55386-0420	<b>(612) 443-2062</b> <b>(701) 662-8703</b>
<b>Ducks Unlimited Inc.</b> Great Plains Regional Office 2525 River Road Bismarck N.D. 58501	<b>(701) 355-3500</b>

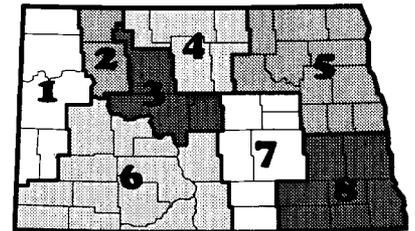
## ND Game and Fish Department - PLI Program

Name	Location	Phone	Zone
Doug Howie	PLI-Assistant Coordinator	328-6333	
Jon Roaldson	CREP-Coordinator	328-6333	
Ryan Huber	PLI-Biologist - Williston	774-4320	1
Nate Harling	PLI-Biologist - Dickinson	227-7431	2
Jeff Long	PLI-Biologist - Riverdale	654-7475	3
Casey Anderson	PLI-Biologist - Bismarck	328-9548	4
Nathaniel Humphrey	PLI-Biologist - Dickinson	227-7431	5
Brian Prince	PLI-Tech. - Devils Lake	662-3617	6
Caroline Littlefield	PLI-Biologist - Lone Tree	324-2211	7
Tom Jones	PLI-Biologist - Jamestown	253-6480	8



## ND Partners for Fish and Wildlife - USFWS

Name	Location	Phone	Cell	Zone
Kevin Willis	PFW Coordinator - Bismarck	355-8526	471-3341	
Scott Collins	Assistant Coordinator - Bismarck	355-8527	226-7109	
Barbie Reynolds	Admin Asst - Bismarck	355-8525	none	
Chad Maier	Bismarck	355-8532	471-3342	6
Monte Ellingson	Crosby WMD	965-6488	629-1458	1
Mike Graue	Lostwood WMD	848-2466	629-1457	2
Dan Duchsherer	J. Clark Saylor WMD	768-2548	none	4
Mark Fisher	Devils Lake WMD	662-8611	230-1285	5
Matt Van Thuyne	Devils Lake WMD	662-8611		5
Chad Klindworth	Audubon WMD	442-5474	391-1681	
Chris Flann	Chase Lake WMD	752-4218		7
Matt Pieron	Chase Lake WMD	752-4218		7
Jesse Lisburg	Tewaukon WMD	724-3598	640-3261	8



**For more information on this and other topics, see: [www.ag.ndsu.edu](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu)**



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