

Incentive payments

- ▶ Signing Incentive Payments of up to \$100 per acre.
- ▶ Annual rental payments and maintenance costs. Producers will receive annual rental payments for the length of the contract (10 years). The payment is a weighted average of the county specific rental rate for comparable land, plus practice maintenance (\$5 acre per year).
- ▶ Cost-share assistance of up to 50% of the eligible reimbursable practice costs.
- ▶ Practice Incentive Payments of up to 40% of the eligible establishment cost.



Sign-up

Program sign-up at local Farm Service Agency offices begins October 1, 2004, and will run on a continuous basis (meaning eligible land may be enrolled at any time) until the state's 9,400 acres have been enrolled, or December 31, 2007, whichever comes first. Eligible acres are automatically accepted instead of being competitively ranked as in the general Conservation Reserve Program.

Information

Additional information on the Conservation Reserve Program Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative is available at your local USDA Farm Services Agency office and on the FSA web site at www.fsa.usda.gov

Assistance

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Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Foundation:

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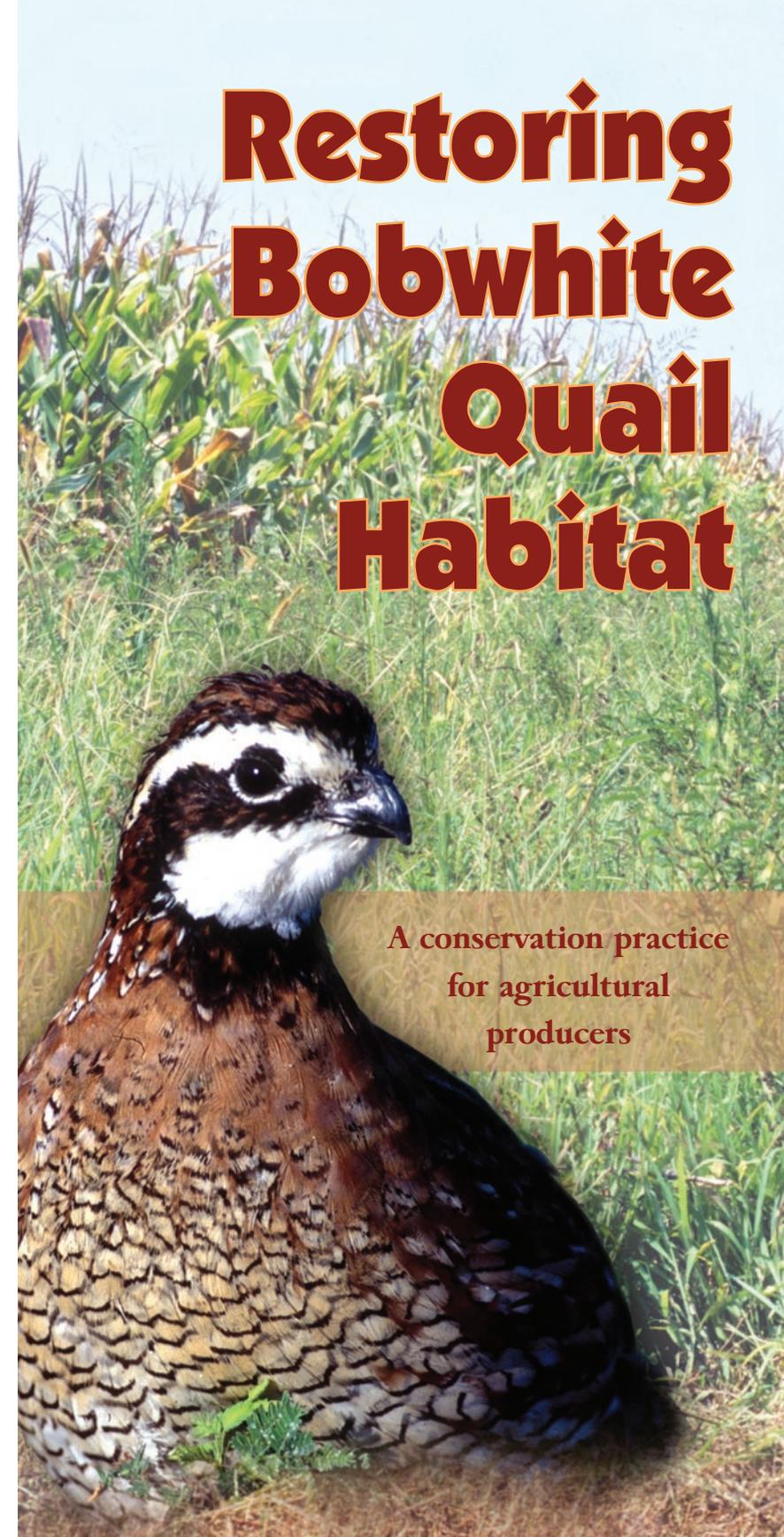
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Photographs by Wes Burger, Stephen Dinsmore, Fred Faulk, Joe Mac Hudspeth, USDA-NRCS

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Restoring Bobwhite Quail Habitat

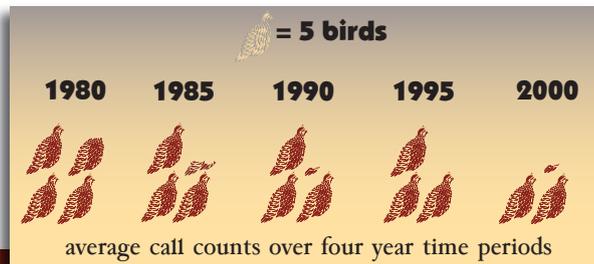


A conservation practice for agricultural producers



Habitat Initiative

Throughout their range, bobwhite populations have declined from an estimated 59-million birds in 1980 to about 20-million in 1999. Their habitats are disappearing due to urbanization, loss of native grasslands, intensive agriculture, and a transitioning of once grassy fields into forests.



Reverse the Trend by Creating New Habitat

250,000 acres
35 states

In late 2004, the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency introduced a new conservation practice under the continuous Conservation Reserve Program intended to create 250,000 acres of habitat for the northern bobwhite quail in 35 states. The Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative introduces a conservation practice of early successional native grass buffers along agricultural field margins.

Conservation Practice

This new conservation practice, CP 33: Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, provides food and cover for bobwhite quail in cropland areas. The practice must be applied around field edges of eligible cropland. The practice involves natural regeneration of native grasses and forbs or planting of native warm-season grasses, legumes, wildflowers, forbs, and limited shrub and tree plantings. Plantings will be specified in the program participant's approved USDA conservation plan.

Buffers have long been regarded for reducing soil erosion and protecting water quality by trapping sediments, nutrients, and agrichemicals. However, research has demonstrated that grass buffers provide needed habitat for bobwhite quail and upland birds; as well as reptiles, amphibians and aquatic species. Many of which are regionally declining and of conservation concern.

Buffers not only provide food and cover for bobwhite quail and upland birds but also reduce soil erosion from wind and water, increase soil and water quality, and protect and enhance the on-farm ecosystem.



Eligibility

The initiative is limited to 250,000 acres in 35 states with geographic areas that have the greatest potential to restore bobwhite quail. Of these 250,000 acres, Mississippi has been allocated 9,400 acres. To be eligible, cropland must be suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of bobwhite quail. In addition, the applicant must satisfy the basic eligibility and cropping history criteria for the Conservation Reserve Program. Cropland does not need to be classified as highly erodible, but must have been cropped at least four out of six years (1996-2001). To determine individual eligibility for this practice, landowners should check with their local Farm Service Agency office. Wildlife biologists listed on the back of this publication can assist with development of a conservation plan that meets landowner wildlife objectives.

CP 33: Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

- Provides habitat for bobwhite quail and other wildlife
- Provides incentive payments for producers.
- Sign up begins October 1, 2004, and will run on a continuous basis.
- Automatic enrollment of eligible acres.