Oregon farmers are

Planting Trees Under Conservation Reserve

- It may fit your land
- The returns are attractive
The Conservation Reserve has emerged as the strong phase of the National Soil Bank Act passed in the spring of 1956. Much has been written about the aim of the Soil Bank to reduce surpluses of major farm crops. If a farmer will cut down on the acreage he customarily plants to small grains or certain other crops, and if he will plant another crop that will protect the land and at the same time not present a surplus problem at harvest, he can get financial payments from the government.

Timber is a crop that fills the bill on both counts. Therefore, through the Conservation Reserve Program farmers can enter into contracts with the government and receive certain payments for planting and growing trees on lands taken out of specified crops.

Many County Planning Councils have recommended planting poor cropland to trees.

"In addition to the logged over area, there are about 15,000 acres of open grassland and cropland in the lower foothills that probably will return greater annual revenue per acre from timber over a long period than if used for pasture or crop production." (Benton County Farm and Home Planning Council, September 10, 1957).

"Many areas of farmland in Yamhill county should be placed back in forest crops for the future." (Yamhill County Agriculture Planning Conference, 1957).

The cover photograph was made by the Oregon State Game Commission. Tree planting machines like this can be used on most Conservation Reserve areas and will speed planting up to 1,000 trees an hour.

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A Benton county landowner had 30 acres in a grain crop that barely paid a profit. This landowner signed up 30 acres for tree planting in 1957 and 1958. The tilled acreage is seen in the background of figure 1. The land in the foreground is not eligible because it has not produced a crop within the past two years nor is it in a crop rotation. Tree planting by machine is scheduled in 1957 and 1958.

**Receipts over 10-year period**

Considering recent history of this cropland, the receipts over a 10-year period under Conservation Reserve are attractive. They may total $160 per acre to the landowner. This total includes one payment of 80% of the cost not to exceed $30 per acre for purchase and planting of trees and $130 in government payments for land rental over the 10-year period ($13 per acre yearly).

**Other advantages**

This landowner saw the Conservation Reserve as the best all-round use for his 30 acres which had been growing oats. The land was being depleted but will now be growing a valuable timber crop adding value at the rate of $10 to $20 per acre yearly. After establishment, the tree crop calls for little attention or expense. The land is being built up, beauty is added to the countryside, and wildlife and recreational values are enhanced.

Figure 1.
The Case of the Rancher with an Isolated Field

A 17-acre field in Wallowa County is signed up under the Conservation Reserve because it is located some 20 miles distant from the main ranch. Because of the field’s remoteness, small size, and low crop yield, the owner decided that tree planting in the Conservation Reserve was the best course.

Figure 2.

The Case of the Absentee Owner

A Columbia County farmer has 120 acres, including 30 acres of cropland. The cropland was hilltop soil that never produced good crops; about half of it was in grain and half in hay. The entire 30 acres was signed up for tree planting in 1956 and the job was done in the fall of the same year. A contract planter was hired. He used a machine for all but the steeper land, which was planted by hand.

The owner, who lives some distance away, believes that trees are the best crop in his case. The farm is not large enough to be a self-supporting enterprise by itself, and part-time farming by the owner proved unsatisfactory. The land was signed for one-half of the annual payments at the regular full rate ($13) and one-half at the non-diversion rate ($6.50). If the owner had signed up in 1958 or later, the non-diversion rate might have been equal to the full rate.

The Case of the Long-Term Investor

A small tract was purchased in 1956 by a forester who, knowing the rapid rise in value of young forests, wanted to own land and grow a crop of trees. By signing up in Conservation Reserve he will receive a total of $160 per acre in the 10-year contract period. The land is located in the foothills on the west side of the Willamette Valley and had been growing oats. The field is shown after being prepared thoroughly for machine planting in the fall of 1957. A person wanting to do this now probably will have to wait a year before he can sign up in the program. It is advisable to check with the county ASC committee before buying a farm with this in mind.

Figure 3.
The Case of the Rancher Desiring a Wildlife Planting

A Umatilla rancher with a large wheat acreage likes tree and shrub plantings for wildlife, windbreak, and esthetic purposes. He developed a pond and is planting about 10 acres near it to trees and shrubs, and he has wildlife plantings at other locations. The recent plantings are signed up under the Conservation Reserve at the full rate of $14 per acre yearly payments. The land had been in wheat. Plantings were made under cooperative agreement with the Oregon State Game Commission. The Commission has been assisting ranchers in wildlife cover plantings for ten years. The Conservation Reserve is a stimulus to this program.

The Case of the Farmer Wishing To Retire

A 40-acre field in Yamhill County had been growing grain for a number of years, but was somewhat steep and not easily accessible. It was difficult to get any one to farm it. The owner is a widow who wanted to be relieved of the decisions and problems of yearly crops. She signed up the 40 acres for Conservation Reserve tree planting. A contract planter using a tree-planting machine set the trees in the fall of 1957. The 40 acres were all in grain in 1955, half in grain and half in hay in 1956. Two-thirds of the total was eligible for annual payments at the regular full rate and the remaining one-third was eligible for payment at the non-diversion rate.

The Case of the Timber Company Acquiring a Farm

Timber companies and large tree farmers are buying farm woodlands. In recent years they frequently have bought whole farms to get the woodlands. The size and location of the cropland may prevent farming it separately. Since the companies are primarily interested in timber, a number of them have signed up their eligible fields for CR tree planting. Anybody who buys land for this purpose probably will have to wait a year before entering into a Conservation Reserve contract.
The Conservation Reserve offers two classes of annual rental payment: (1) The regular or full rate and (2) the non-diversion or partial rate.

**Eligible at regular or full rate**

The field in figure 6 has been in oats for the past two years. Oats are a soil-depleting crop and such crops are considered as making the Soil Bank base. In other words, the average acres of soil-depleting crops during the previous two years give you the acres of Soil Bank base. This field or any other eligible acres on the farm may be put into the Conservation Reserve at the regular full rate up to the amount of your Soil Bank base. You would reduce cropland by the same acreage and you couldn't break out new cropland. Any amount of eligible land in excess of the Soil Bank base may be designated at the non-diversion rate. See page 10 for further explanation of the Soil Bank base.

**Eligible for non-diversion or partial rate**

A pasture as shown in the foreground of figure 7 is eligible if it is in a crop rotation, or if it was seeded since 1953 and was cropland at the time of seeding. It is not soil depleting and so it doesn't count in determining the farm's Soil Bank base. Therefore, it can't be put into the Conservation Reserve at the regular full rate, unless there is other cropland on the farm that does qualify for Soil Bank base. If there is no Soil Bank base for the farm, or if it is used up, this pasture can qualify only for the non-diversion rate. This will range from 30% to 100% of the regular full rate. See page 10 for further explanation of these rates.

The above rates are the annual payments. The other payment, for cost sharing, will be 80% of the cost, up to $30 per acre.

**Examples of Eligible Lands**

- Cropland as shown in the foreground of figure 7 is eligible if it is in a crop rotation, or if it was seeded since 1953 and was cropland at the time of seeding. It is not soil depleting and so it doesn't count in determining the farm's Soil Bank base. Therefore, it can't be put into the Conservation Reserve at the regular full rate, unless there is other cropland on the farm that does qualify for Soil Bank base. If there is no Soil Bank base for the farm, or if it is used up, this pasture can qualify only for the non-diversion rate. This will range from 30% to 100% of the regular full rate. See page 10 for further explanation of these rates.

**Examples of Lands Not Eligible**

Only cropland is eligible for the Conservation Reserve. The purpose of the program is to take land out of agricultural production and to put it into conservation uses. Land already out of production (abandoned two years) is not eligible. Stump pasture never was cropland so is not eligible.

*Not eligible:* Cropland abandoned five or six years back, such as that in figure 3, cannot qualify for the Conservation Reserve under any circumstance. If the owner wishes to plant it to trees he can get financial assistance through the county's Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP).

*Not eligible:* Stump land as shown in figure 4 never has been cropland; however the county's Agricultural Conservation Program offers financial help for the planting of trees on this class of land.
Eligible Lands

Figure 6. Soil depleting crops

Figure 7. Pasture in rotation or planted since 1953
Non-Eligible Lands

Figure 8. Abandoned cropland

Figure 9. Stump pasture
Questions and Answers

What payments can be earned? You can receive up to $30 an acre to help get seedlings planted. This can include the ground preparation to get rid of sod, the cost of the trees, and the actual planting of the trees.

In addition you can receive $8 to $14 per acre (payments vary by counties) yearly rental payments during the contract period.

How long does a tree planting contract run? The contract period is 10 years. It may be extended if enough trees cannot be obtained or for certain other reasons. For field windbreaks and for game plantings five or 10 year contracts are offered.

What lands are eligible? Only cropland is eligible. It must be land you had in cultivation the year preceding the sign-up date, or land in regular crop rotation. The latter may include land put into grass or other permanent cover since 1953, but must have been in crops at that time. Land from which a crop of hay or ensilage was harvested during either of the last two years also is eligible.

What types of cropland are not eligible? Many Oregon farmers have stump pasture and abandoned land. They frequently ask if these lands are eligible. They are not eligible for the Conservation Reserve under any circumstances. Lands in orchards or nut trees are not eligible. The regulations mention other types of ineligible lands, but we have few of those types in Oregon.

How much land can you put into the Conservation Reserve? The limit on the annual payments to one person is $5,000 a year. The smallest amount is one acre, if all eligible land is put into Conservation Reserve. If only a portion of the eligible land is used, but forest tree planting is put on all of that, then at least two acres must be planted.

If the Soil Bank folds up, will my payments stop? Once the contract is signed and approved, the government is obligated to continue it regardless of what may happen to the Soil Bank program.

What is the deadline for my putting land under a Conservation Reserve contract? You should ask your County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee (ASC), U. S. Department of Agriculture. Up to this writing the requirement has been that you have your contract signed and filed with the County Committee by April 15 of the first year of your contract. You will need to make your application well in advance of that date. Congress has set December 31, 1960, as the final date for accepting applications for the Conservation Reserve.

Where can I get trees? In this state you will probably get your trees from the State Forestry Department, Salem, Oregon, or from one or more private nurseries. For up-to-date information on this point see your county agent or local state forester.

If I sign up and cannot get trees for planting this year, will I get the payments? You will receive your annual payment this year, and your contract will be extended another year. Thus you will get 11 annual payments. However, cost-sharing will not be paid until the trees are actually planted.

Where can I hire experienced planters to do the job for me? Contract planters can be hired to do the planting in any section of Oregon. A list of
trained men who do this work has been compiled by the U. S. Forest Service. See your county agent or local state forester to find out who is available locally.

*Suppose part or all of my planted trees are killed by dry weather or by fire which I could not control. Do I have to return the payments I have received up to that time?* No, you do not have to return any payments. In fact, additional help may be given for reestablishing the planting.

*Am I required to hold on to my trees after the contract period runs out?* No. When the contract expires you can cut and sell every tree planted if you want to do so. Actually, you would be wise to hold them, or thin out the poorest and hold the best. Within 10 to 20 years most of your trees will be reaching the minimum sizes for pulpwood, poles, and small sawlogs.

*Can I cut any trees during the contract period?* Yes, if your farm forester advises you that your trees need to be thinned out. Only those trees removed under sound management as determined by the County Committee can be used for such things as stock poles, fence posts, corral poles, or other small products. However, plantations in Oregon will not normally produce the above products before they are 15 to 20 years old. Christmas trees or greenery cannot be sold during the contract period.

*How much are the annual payments?* Annual payments vary by counties, ranging from $8 to $14 in Oregon with an average of $12. The annual payments are of two kinds: (A) regular rate, and (B) non-diversion rate.

(A) The regular or full rate applies when changing from Soil Bank base crops that are, in general, cultivated crops and are considered soil deplet-
c. Protect during the contract period the acreage allotment (base) history, if any acreage of allotment crops is diverted into the Conservation Reserve.

2. The person signing the contract for tree planting agrees to:
   a. Plant specific tracts of land to forest trees.
   b. Keep these tracts in Conservation Reserve for the full 10-year life of the contract.
   c. Harvest no crop (including Christmas trees or greenery) from this land except timber under good forest management, or wildlife.
   d. Permit no grazing. (No cost-sharing can be allowed for fencing).
   e. Control noxious weeds on this land.
   f. Reduce cropland by as many acres as are placed in Conservation Reserve, and not break out any new cropland.

What is meant by Soil Bank base?

1. It is the amount of land on which is usually grown the Soil Bank base crops. It is used to determine:
   a. Starting point in reducing crops, and
   b. The amount of annual rental payment at the regular rate.

2. It is established by averaging the acreage devoted to Soil Bank base crops during the previous two years. For instance:

   Soil Bank base crops in 1956 .................. 80 acres
   Soil Bank base crops in 1957 .................. 70 acres
   150 acres

   Soil Bank base (150 divided by 2) ............... 75 acres for 1958

3. The regular rate annual payment can be earned for only the amount of acres in the Soil Bank base (under certain conditions non-diversion rate may equal the regular rate).

   Does cropland have to be reduced if land is planted to trees under the Conservation Reserve? A reduction in Soil Bank base crops must be made by the amount of land put into Conservation Reserve at the regular rate. However, a reduction in Soil Bank base crops is not necessary if all the acreage on a farm designated for Conservation Reserve is to be under the tree planting practice at the non-diversion rate.

   Is there a way I can increase my eligible land? Your total acreage of eligible land cannot be increased.

   What will my planted trees be worth at the end of the contract period? All signs point to an increasing demand for wood products, and there is a definite trend to a market for small logs or pulpwood. It has been said that trees are the only major crop not now in surplus and not facing the prospect of a surplus.

   At the end of the contract period of 10 years, your forest stand will be 12 years old (you plant two-year-old seedlings). You should have a well-stocked and perhaps even a fully-stocked stand. Few natural stands are fully stocked so yours will have higher value. Trees grow exceptionally fast on cropland as other vegetative competition for the moisture has been eliminated. At 12 years of age your trees will not be large enough to harvest for the usual products of sawlogs, pulpwood, or poles, but your highly produc-
tive timber crop will have a definite value acknowledged by people interested in timber. There have been buyers willing to pay $150 per acre for a 20-year-old Douglas-fir stand—the land and the trees—but it is to the advantage of the landowner to hold his promising crop. If held into the saw-timber stage, well stocked stands of Douglas-fir will average a growth of a thousand board feet per acre each year. You can apply your own local prices to a thousand board feet of timber either on the stump or delivered to the pond.

Where can advice be obtained? Technical help in the forestry phases can be obtained from representatives of the State Forestry Department, Salem. Farm foresters are located in Oregon City, Hillsboro, Salem, Eugene, Medford, and Prineville. In other areas the district warden will furnish assistance. Local foresters with the U. S. Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service also will be glad to give advice.

The Extension Agent in each county is ready to explain the forest tree planting phase as well as others possible, such as grass planting, windbreak planting, and wildlife practices.

The County Committee of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) organization will explain the details of the program and make the actual contract. The ASC office will be listed in telephone books under U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Figure 10. Planted trees gain value fast. Stands like this 20-year-old plantation of Douglas-fir in Polk County have been appraised up to $150 per acre.
# Two Programs to Assist in Tree Planting

These two programs help you establish and maintain stands of trees for woodlands, shelterbelts, windbreaks, watershed protection and other forestry purposes.

## Conservation Reserve

1. Reduce surplus crop production.
2. Establish conservation practices.
3. Increase farm income.

## Agricultural Conservation Program

1. Encourage tree or shrub planting on the farm where it would not ordinarily be done without program assistance.
2. Establish conservation practice.
3. Increase farm income.

## Acceptable Location

**Conservation Reserve**
Cropland suitable for growing trees and tame hay land that produced hay or ensilage during at least one of the last two years.

**Agricultural Conservation Program**
Any site suitable for growing trees.

## Cost-Sharing

**Conservation Reserve**
Varies by counties but does not exceed:
- 80% of cost of land preparation, planting, and cost of trees or shrubs, totaling up to $30 per acre.
- $1 per cultivation per acre for first two years after planting, when recommended.
- No fencing allowance.

**Agricultural Conservation Program**
Varies by counties but does not exceed:
- 50% of cost of trees and shrubs and planting up to $25 per 1,000 trees and shrubs.
- 50% of cost of land clearing up to maximum amount.
- 50% of cost of fencing materials up to maximum amount.
- 50% of cost of cultivation.

Cost-sharing limited to 1,000 trees per acre but no limitation as to number of trees that may be planted.

## Annual Payments

**Conservation Reserve**
Payment varying between counties, averaging $12 per acre, paid annually after signing contract and expiring five to 10 years after planting, depending upon contract duration.

**Agricultural Conservation Program**
None.

## Harvesting Restrictions

- No harvesting of any kind during contract period.
- No limitations.

## Quantity Limitations

- Annual payments shall not exceed $5,000 to any one person.
- Total of all cost-sharing to any one person shall not exceed $1,500 per year, varying by county.

*Changes may be made in certain details of these programs. This page gives conditions as of late 1957.*
Eligible Conservation Practices

A complete list of conservation practices that may be carried out in the Conservation Reserve are listed below. Contract periods for them vary. They may be 3, 5, or 10 years.

✓ Initial establishment of a permanent vegetative cover for soil protection or as needed land-use adjustment.

✓ Initial treatment of farmland to permit the use of legumes and grasses for soil improvement and protection.

✓ Initial establishment of a stand of trees or shrubs on farmland for purposes other than the prevention of wind or water erosion.

✓ Initial establishment of a stand of trees or shrubs on farmland to prevent wind or water erosion.

✓ Constructing dams, pits, or ponds as a means of protecting vegetative cover.

✓ Constructing dams, pits, or ponds for irrigation water.

✓ Establishment of vegetative cover for winter protection from erosion.

✓ Establishment of vegetative cover for summer protection from erosion.

✓ Establishment and management of cover specifically beneficial to wildlife.

✓ Water and marsh management to benefit fish and wildlife.

✓ Constructing dams or ponds for fish. This practice does not include dams or ponds which are primarily for the commercial production of fish for food.