

## **Have recent heavy rains drowned crops, made day-to-day farming operations difficult?**

With the persistent and heavy rains this spring, many wetlands in southwestern Nebraska are once again full of water.

Wetlands have many functional values such as being significant sources of groundwater recharge and serving as important wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, wetlands can also cause crop damage and make farming operations very difficult.

Fortunately, several federal conservation programs are available to conserve wetlands and provide landowners a source of income on otherwise difficult areas to farm.

One popular method to conserve wetlands is by installing a grass buffer around the wetland through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The grass buffer areas can be shaped to best fit your farming operation.

A competitive annual rental payment is paid for the wetland AND grassland buffer area. Many wetlands qualify for a 20 percent greater rental payment than the standard CRP rental rate.

The grass buffer is cost shared and some wetlands qualify for a \$100/acre one time signing incentive payment. By enrolling your wetland in the CRP, producers can turn difficult farming areas into a profitable part of your farming operation.

Wetlands can also be conserved through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The WRP provides one-time easement payments for retiring wetlands and designated upland areas from crop production for 30 year or perpetual contracts.

Areas enrolled in the WRP can still be hayed or grazed during scheduled intervals to meet conservation objectives.

Costs to restore hydrology or manage the area for wildlife habitat are paid for through the WRP. Easement payments are based on land use and range from about \$500/acre for wetland or grass areas up to about \$1,900/acre for irrigated cropland.