



Playa Lakes Management

PURPOSE:

Playas are temporary, shallow wetlands that occur in the lowest area of a closed basin. These seasonal wetlands are typically found in the western third of Kansas. They provide many benefits to both people and wildlife. Playas help prevent flooding by collecting runoff from heavy rains, while at the same time, providing critical recharge points for the Ogallala Aquifer. They can support a great diversity of plant and animal species. Within days after filling, playas become alive with aquatic invertebrates, wetland plants, toads and frogs, as well as shorebirds and waterfowl (*Figure 1*). Playas provide critical stop over points for fall and spring migrating waterfowl and shorebirds (*Figure 2*).



Figure 1. Playas are used by a variety of wildlife including waterfowl.

CONSERVATION:

Depending on where the playa is located, several conservation practices may benefit the playa. If located in cropland, planting a native grass and forb buffer around the playa can provide many benefits. Grass buffers slow sedimentation, while providing great habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife. If located in rangeland, installing an exclusion fence around the playa will allow native grass and wetland plants to grow, providing wildlife habitat and slowing soil erosion and sedimentation. Other potential conservation practices include restoring playa hydrology, sediment removal, and using no-till farming practices.

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS:

- **General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):**
This program may be a good option for fields that contain multiple playas or a large number of wetland acres. The entire field is required to be planted to a native grass/forb mix. CRP is a 10-15 year program that pays an annual rental payment based on soil types. An applicant is required to enroll during an application period for this program. CRP is administered by The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA).
- **Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP):**
This program is a good option if only the playa and adjacent acres is being considered for a native grass/forb buffer. CCRP is a 10-15 year program that pays an annual rental payment based on soil types, as well as a sign-up incentive and practice incentive payment. The difference from the general CRP program is that the applicant can enroll their acres at any time. CCRP is administered by The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA).

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS:

- **Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE):**

This program is a good option for a landowner that wants to provide long-term protection for their wetland or would like to restore it. WRE offers either a ten year restoration option, a thirty year easement, or a permanent easement on the wetland and adjacent acres. The restoration option provides up to seventy-five percent of the cost to restore the wetland. The conservation easement payment is based off the fair market value of the land and easement the applicant is interested in. WRE is administered by The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

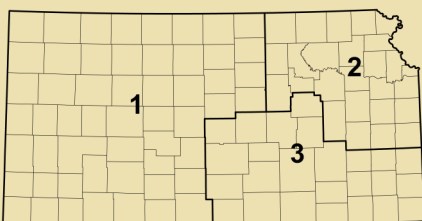
- **Habitat First:**

Habitat First is the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism's Private Lands Assistance Program. Habitat First is a good option if only a small playa is being considered for a native grass/forb buffer or an exclusion fence. Habitat First can cover up to seventy-five percent of the establishment costs. This program makes a one-time payment and the acres are not enrolled in a multi-year contract.



Figure 2. A properly managed playa provides a critical stop over point for migratory birds.

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