



*Aerial*

*view of Ness City in Ness County. Acres idled in CRP are shaded.*

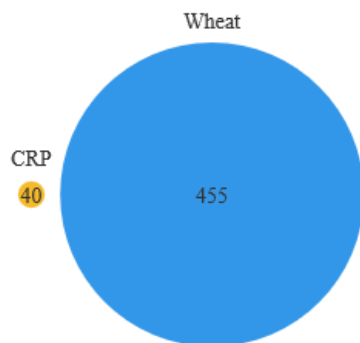
## CRP in Ness County, Kansas

For the 3,000 people in Ness County, Kansas, wheat and sorghum farming is the top economic driver and the backbone of the community. Wheat farming alone contributed more than [\\$57 million](#) to the local economy in 2015. The majority of that economic activity – about \$34 million -- came from the inputs and services that contribute to wheat production, including seed, fertilizer, labor, fuel, repairs and land rent.

The thousands of acres enrolled in the USDA’s Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contributed under [\\$4 million](#) to the county’s economy that year. The government paid \$40 for an acre in CRP in 2015, but an acre planted to wheat had the potential to generate \$455 of economic activity (including expenses and revenue).

Even though CRP acres contribute far less to the local economy, in 2016, [22 percent](#) of the more than 400,000 acres of cropland in Ness County were idled in CRP. So why are huge swaths of Ness’s acres enrolled in the conservation program?

Comparison of Ness County KS Direct Economic Activity for CRP vs. Wheat (\$/Acre)



In short, landowners find that signing a CRP rental contract with the USDA is far more personally profitable than renting that land out to a farmer. The government’s [CRP rental rates](#) consistently trump the local cash rental rates. (In 2010, the county’s local rates per acre were a full \$10 under the CRP rates.) Young and beginning farmers can’t begin to compete with CRP rental rates.



*NGFA has recommended that USDA target less productive soils and smaller tracts for CRP enrollment to help alleviate the perceived need for high CRP rental rates; landowners are more likely to accept lower CRP rental rates on the least productive portions of their farms.*

The economic benefits of CRP are far below the benefits of agricultural production to the county, and to compound the economic harm, not all of the dollars paid for CRP acres stay in Ness County. For example, in 2014 – the year with the most recently available data – three of the top 10 [highest paid owners](#) of Ness County CRP acres were not local residents.

CRP's intended purpose is to pay farmers to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production. When whole farms are enrolled in CRP as in Ness County, the local economy suffers and productive farmland – which could be enhanced with targeted conservation practices – is wasted.

The NGFA advocates for conservation practices that improve the resources needed for an agricultural economy to thrive – principally, soil and water. However, USDA data shows that a majority of the CRP acres in Ness County aren't maintained with practices that directly improve soil and water quality.

In fact, fewer than 2,000 acres of the county's CRP land are being preserved with practices specific to water and soil quality improvement. The vast majority – a whopping [89,585 acres](#) -- are idled primarily for wildlife habitat.

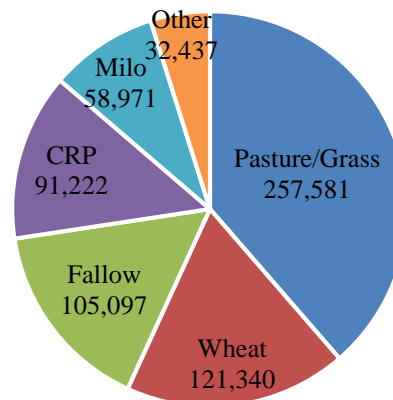
While restoring wildlife habitat is an important aspect of conservation, there are already several USDA programs assisting the practice, including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. Moreover, Ness County already dedicates 257,000 acres to native grassland.

If CRP operated as a program that truly targeted the most environmentally sensitive land, Ness County would be allowed to more fully reap the economic benefits of its productive farmland while also conserving natural resources.

View more information about the NGFA and CRP at <http://www.ngfa.org/farm-bill/>

**\*Information last updated January 25, 2017**

Ness County KS Land Use in 2016 (In Acres)





**Table 1: Ness County Kansas: Population, CRP Acres, CRP Rents, and Cash Rents**

Year	Population 1/	CRP Acres 2/	Avg. Gov't Paid CRP Rental Rate 2/	Avg. Farmer-Paid Cash Rental Rate 3/
1980	4,498	0	NA	NA
1990	4,033	37,715	\$49.71	NA
2000	3,454	38,721	\$38.05	NA
2010	3,107	108,396	\$39.56	\$29.50
2015	3,005	93,346	\$39.79	NA
2016		91,222	NA	\$30.50

1/ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

2/ Source: USDA's Farm Service Agency.

3/ Source: USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. This is the average rate paid by farmers to rent non-irrigated cropland.

**Table 2: Ness County Kansas CRP Practices in 2016**

Primary Focus on Soil Erosion & Water Quality	Acres
CP5A Field Windbreak Nonease	28
CP8 Grass Waterways	1
CP8A Grass Waterway Nonease	508
CP15A Est Contour Grass Strips Nonease	9
CP15B Est Contour Grass Strip on Terrace	5
CP15B Est Contour Grass Strip on Terrace	668
CP16 Shelterbelt Establishment	1
CP16A Shelterbelt Establishment Nonease	42
CP21 Filter Strips	361
CP24 Est Permanent Veg Cover Cross Wind Trap	13
CP40 FWP Aquaculture Wetland Restore	43
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,679</b>
Primary Focus on Wildlife or Other	Acres
CP2 Native Grass, Forb and Legume Establishment	11,810
CP4D Permanent Wildlife Habitat Nonease	9,547
CP10 Veg Cover, Grass Already Est	880
CP12 Wildlife Food Plot	52
CP25 Rare and Declining Habitat	57,725
CP33 Habitat Buffers Upland Birds	724
CP38E State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Grass	8,805
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>89,543</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,222</b>

Source: USDA's Farm Service Agency.



**Table 3: Ness County Kansas Top CRP Payment Recipients in 2014**

Rank	Residence of CRP Payment Recipient	CRP Payment
1	Local	\$47,285
2	Local	\$45,342
3	Local	\$43,323
4	Local	\$42,917
5	Local	\$42,687
6	Local	\$39,156
7	Non-local	\$36,607
8	Local	\$35,392
9	Non-local	\$34,799
10	Non-local	\$33,915

**Table 4: Ness County Kansas Direct Economic Activity for Wheat in 2015**

Item	Per Acre of Wheat 1/	Wheat Acres in Ness County 2/	Direct Economic Activity for Wheat
Wheat grain	\$167.06		
Silage/straw/grazing	\$15.18		
Total Value of Production	\$182.24	125,650	\$22,898,330
Seed	\$11.82		
Fertilizer	\$33.89		
Chemicals	\$8.66		
Custom operations	\$11.84		
Fuel, lube, and electricity	\$13.57		
Repairs	\$20.96		
Other variable expenses	\$0.07		
Interest on operating inputs	\$0.09		
Hired labor	\$1.79		
Opportunity cost of unpaid labor	\$19.19		
Capital recovery of machinery and equipment	\$81.07		
Opportunity cost of land (rental rate)	\$52.93		
Taxes and insurance	\$6.73		
General farm overhead	\$10.24		
Total Cost	\$272.85	125,650	\$34,283,603
<b>Total Value of Production and Cost</b>	<b>\$455.09</b>	<b>125,650</b>	<b>\$57,181,933</b>

1/ Source: USDA's Economic Research Service.

2/ Source: USDA's Farm Service Agency.



**Table 5: Ness County Kansas Direct Economic Activity for CRP in 2015**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Per Acre 1/</b>	<b>CRP Acres 1/</b>	<b>Direct Economic Activity</b>
CRP Payments	\$39.79	98,462	\$3,917,495

Source: USDA's Farm Service Agency.