Since passage of the 1985 farm bill, Iowa farmers have been faced with some tight wetland restrictions. The “swampbuster” provisions of the farm bill require replacement of jurisdictional wetlands that a farmer wants to drain or alter in an effort to improve the productivity of the land. Nationwide, this legislation is consistent with a federal goal and other federal legislation to achieve no net loss of wetlands and, in fact, to ultimately realize a net gain in wetland functions.

Previously, farmers had two choices for mitigating lost jurisdictional farmed wetlands. Mitigate on-site or off-site. On-site mitigation requires restoring lost wetland functions on the same farm where the loss occurred. This is generally not desirable since highly productive land would need to be taken out of production to create a new wetland area. Off-site mitigation is feasible but many farmers are unwilling to locate, develop, and manage a new wetland at a remote site. In both cases the mitigation site must be maintained in perpetuity.

**A New Option**

Now farmers can purchase wetland credits from a “wetland bank.” A farmer who desires to drain or alter a jurisdictional wetland can simply purchase a “credit” at the bank to satisfy mitigation requirements. The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) is sponsoring Iowa’s first wetland mitigation bank. Working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources as a partner, and with significant technical assistance from the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, the IFBF has secured approval from all respective regulatory agencies to operate Iowa Wetland Mitigation Bank, Inc.

**Option for Non-ag Impacts**

The bank can also be used by developers and government entities who may have building, road or bridge projects that impact wetlands under Clean Water Act jurisdiction. Contact the bank for more details.

Inside this brochure you can find answers to questions about the bank’s operation and the necessary information to complete an application for the purchase of credits from the Iowa Wetland Mitigation Bank, Inc.

Application forms and bank service area maps are available at Farm Bureau offices and NRCS offices in each county located in the bank service area (see list inside).

Also, the information can be downloaded from the Farm Bureau website:

www.iowafarmbureau.com/government/environment/

You may also call (515) 225-5432 and request an application packet be mailed to you. A non-refundable processing fee of $100 must accompany each application when returned to Iowa Farm Bureau.
Questions & Answers
About the Farm Bureau Wetland Mitigation Bank

Q. What is a wetland mitigation bank?
A. A bank sponsor (in this case, Farm Bureau) restores a large wetland complex that has been previously drained. Regulatory agencies evaluate the site and determine a number of wetland units or "credits" that the bank (a nonprofit organization organized by Farm Bureau) can sell to customers. The land in Franklin County where the bank is located is owned and managed by the Iowa DNR. The primary objective of the DNR management plan is wildlife habitat.

Q. How does the bank work?
A. The bank sponsor is responsible for coordinating with the regulatory agencies, acquiring land, developing the site, managing the wetland and assuring its success. A farmer who desires to drain or alter a jurisdictional farmed wetland can simply purchase a credit at the bank to satisfy the mitigation requirements, allowing the farmer to perform the drainage project legally.

Q. How many credits will I need to buy if I want to add tile to a farmed wetland in a cropped farm field?
A. On average, about 0.55 wetland credits might be required to mitigate for the draining one acre of farmed wetlands. Farmers will not have to mitigate acre for acre. Actual credits required will depend upon the outcome of an NRCS "functional assessment" of the impacted site on your farm. Farmer-customers will need to ask their NRCS district conservationist for this free assessment to be eligible for purchasing credits.

Q. Why will the bank serve only these areas?
A. These counties are in the same major watershed or one of the adjoining major watersheds to the restored site in Franklin County and that also have the same major land resource ("prairie pothole" soil areas). This will balance water quality and wildlife habitat protection objectives of regulatory agencies with the economic needs of farmers.

Q. What documents do I need to provide along with the application?
A. You must send a copy of your NRCS Certified Wetland Determination and a copy of the NRCS Functional Assessment results. Contact your county NRCS for this information. NRCS can also help you determine if your project is located within the trade service area of the bank.

Q. What is the cost of a wetland credit?
A. The cost for purchasing credits to mitigate one acre of farmed wetland is $8,140. Based on a replacement ratio of 0.55, the estimated cost per credit is $14,800. This estimate is based on the costs for restoring the wetland bank site plus land costs, divided by the number of credits available for sale. These costs may be revised. Check with the bank for current costs.

Q. How many credits are for sale?
A. The number of hydrology credits available for sale at maturity of the site was just over 60 functional units. Based on an estimated demand of one acre of farmed wetland per customer, the bank could serve the need for more than 100 acres of farmed wetlands.

Q. How do I get the farmed wetland status on my land changed once I've been accepted?
A. Farm Bureau will mail to you a wetland bank certificate (similar to a stock certificate) that you can show to NRCS. This is the documentation necessary to have NRCS change your official designation to Mitigated Wetland (MW). NRCS may have to verify that you have completed your tiling work.

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Q. What can I tile on my farm and purchase credits for?
A. The bank will serve primarily agricultural customers with cropped farmed wetlands, also known as upland depressional wetlands. This designation is a result of federal farm program legislation and is determined by NRCS to be "farmed wetlands." Farmed wetlands have been previously drained, but not sufficiently to completely remove all wetland characteristics. NRCS designations of "wetland" will not be accepted.

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Q. What parts of Iowa will the bank serve?
A. The bank will serve primary farmed wetlands in north-central Iowa (Emmet, Kossuth, Winnebago, Worth, Palo Alto, Hancock, Cerro Gordo, Humboldt, Wright, Franklin, Webster, Hamilton, Hardin, Boone, Story, Marshall, Polk and Jasper counties). See maps of service area on the bank web site.

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