

Farm Bill 2007: The Looming Crisis In the Prairies



***Steve Adair
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Great Plains Regional Office***

CRP Timeline

Nationwide CRP cap =
45 million acres

Nationwide CRP cap =
38 million acres

Nationwide CRP cap =
36.4 million acres

Nationwide CRP cap =
39.2 million acres

1985

1990

1996

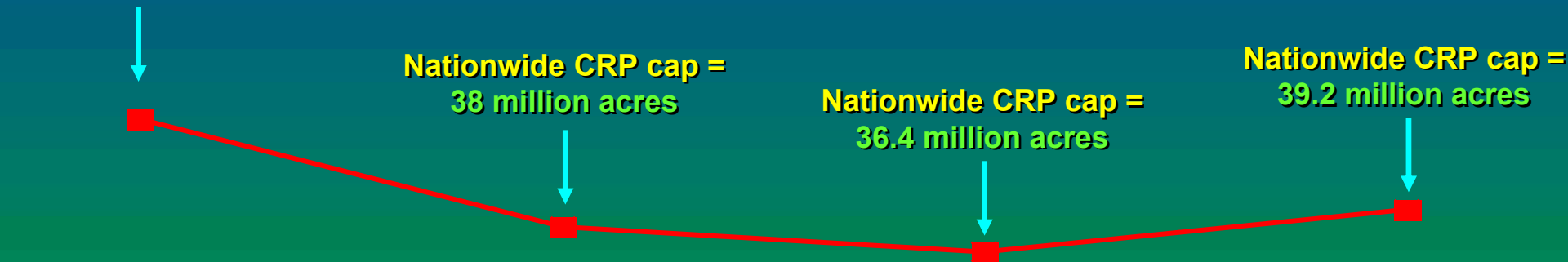
2002

Food Security Act

Food, Agriculture,
Conservation and Trade Act

Federal Agricultural
Improvement and Reform Act

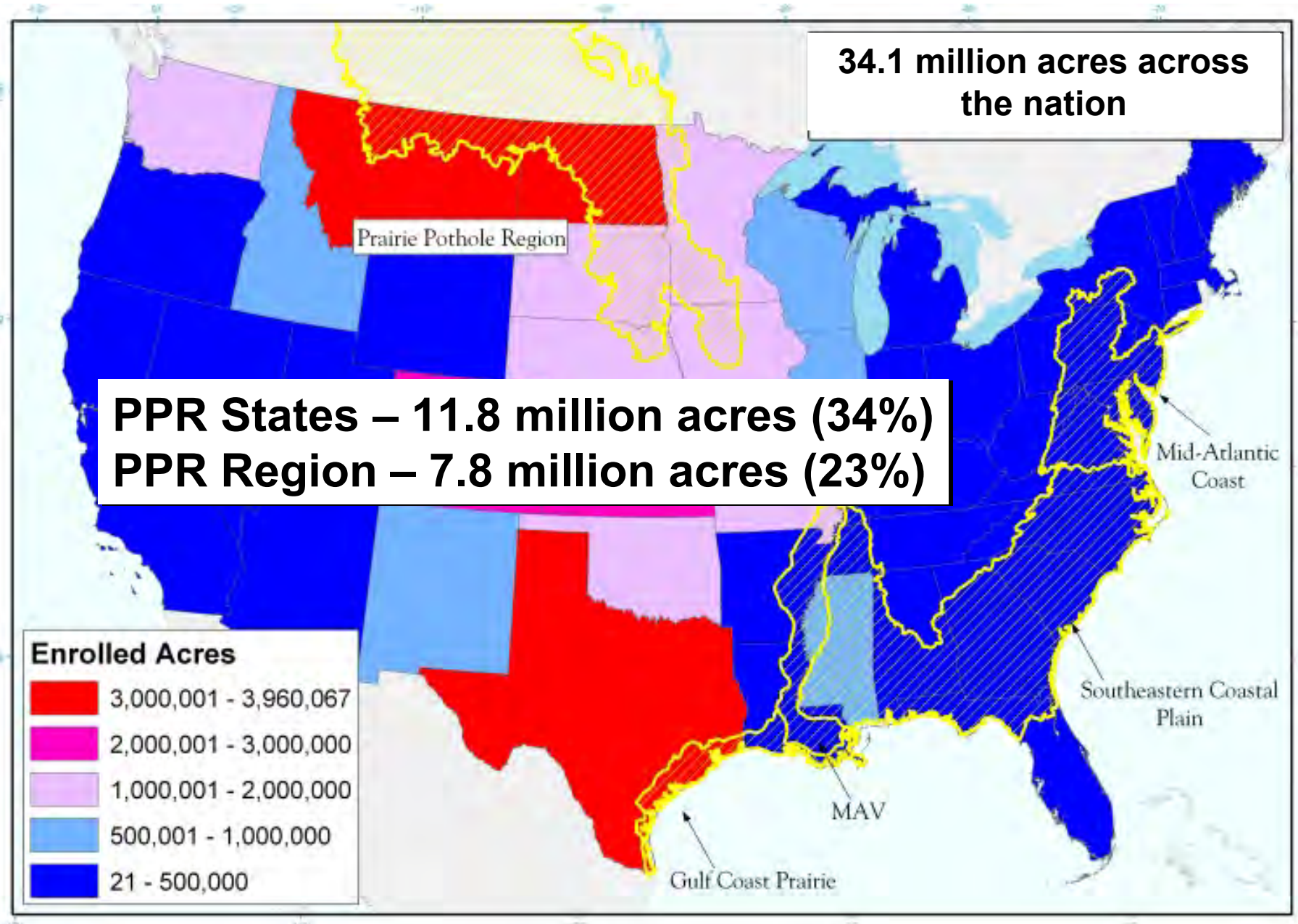
Farm Security and
Rural Investment Act



Conservation Reserve Program

- No USDA program in history has done more for landscape-level conservation of soil, water, and wildlife habitat while providing producers with stable and diversified income.
- General CRP very popular with landowners with demand exceeding availability 2:1.
- **Measurable Benefits:**
 - ✓ Reduced soil erosion
 - ✓ Improved soil quality
 - ✓ Protected and improved water quality
 - ✓ Improved wildlife habitat

CRP Acres Current Status (Oct. 2003)



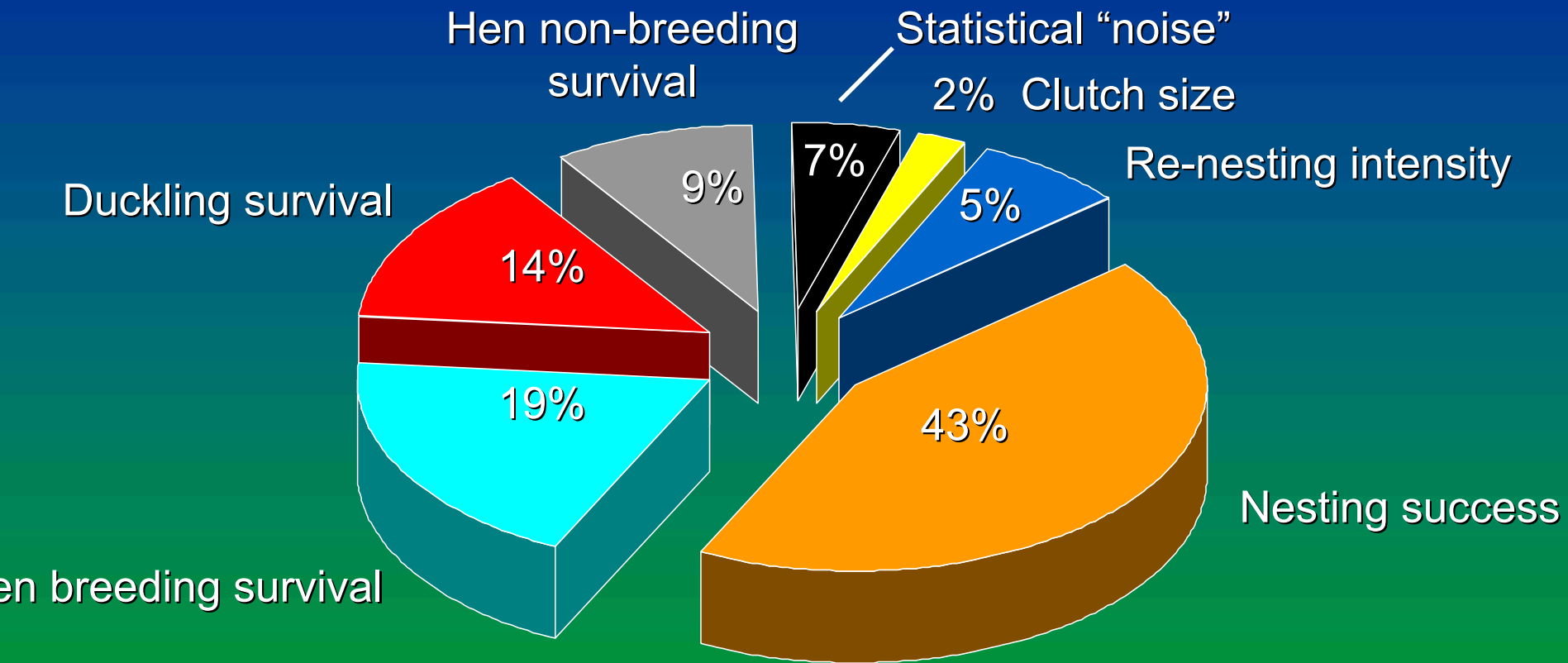
Measurable Benefits

During 1992-1997, nest success of five common duck species was 46% higher in the Prairie Pothole Region (ND, SD, MT) with CRP than if CRP was replaced with cropland.

12.4 million additional recruits added to the fall flight as a result of CRP in the PPR from 1992-1997.

Reynolds et al. 2001

For Most Duck Species, Population Levels are Primarily Driven by Events on the Breeding Grounds!



“Nest success, breeding survival, and duckling survival together explained 76% of the variation in mallard population growth rate.”
(Hoekman et al., Journal of Wildlife Management 66(3):883-900.)

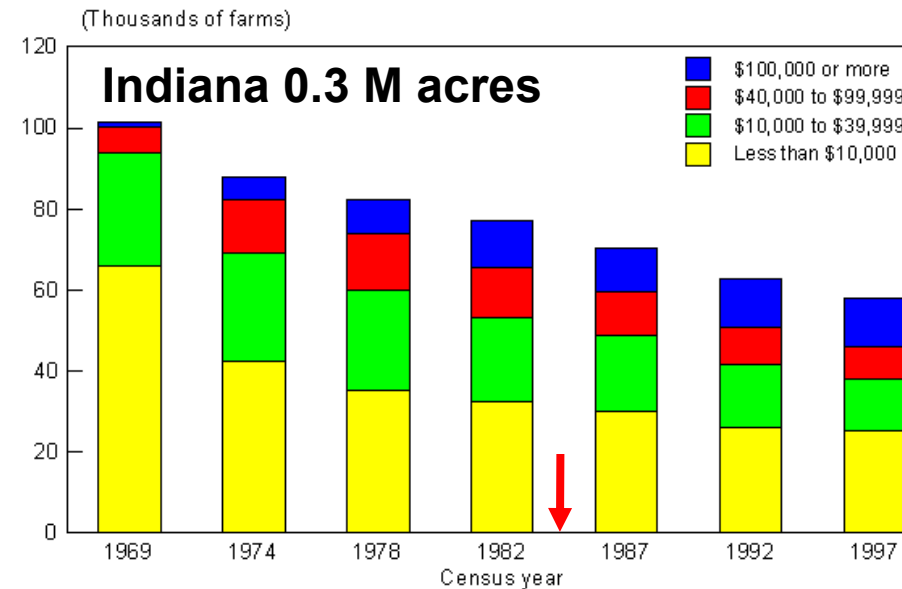
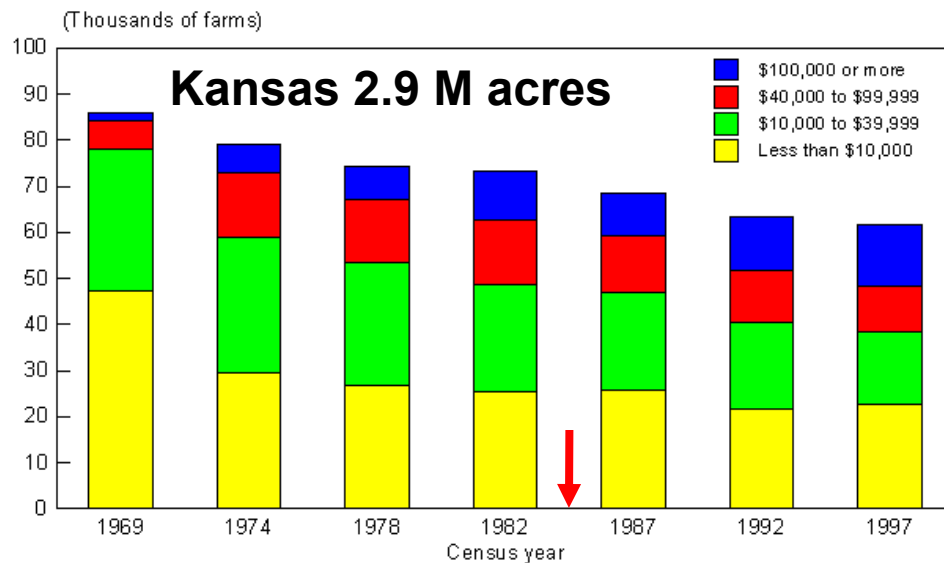
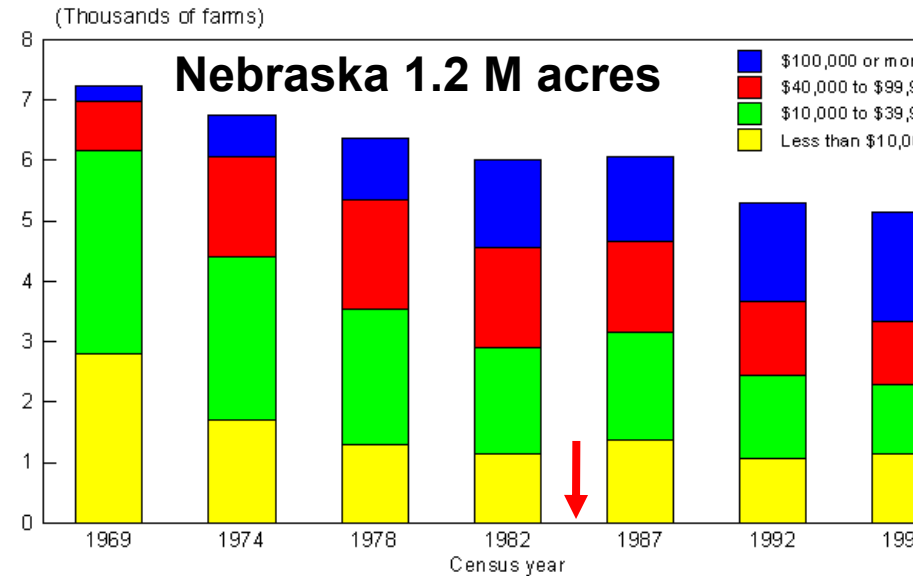
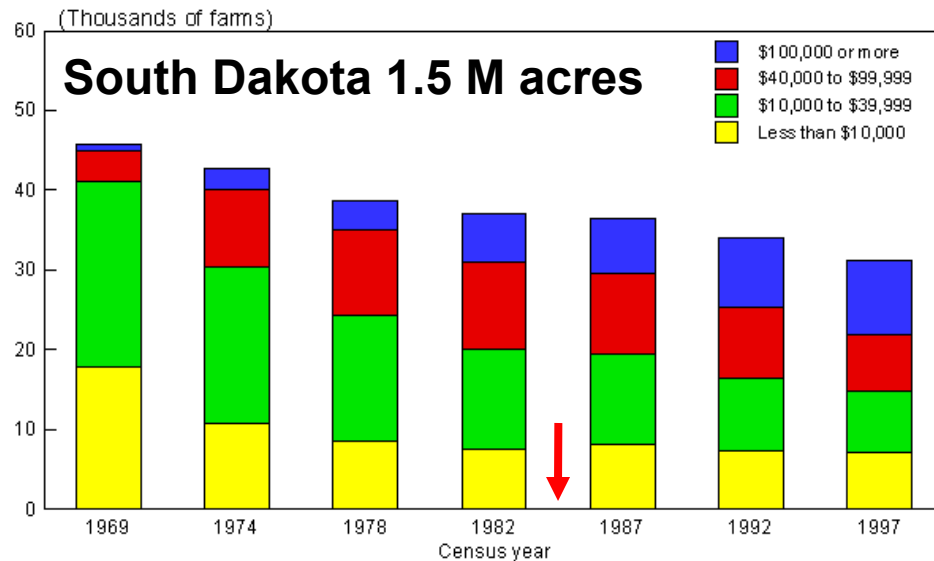
Measurable Benefits

- **Fall pheasant populations in South Dakota have increased from 1.4 million to 6.1 million. (Wildlife Management Institute 2001).**
- **During 1990-1994 pheasant nest success in northcentral Iowa was 40% higher in large blocks of CRP than smaller, fragmented cover types. When CRP was enrolled in large fields, pheasant populations were 53% greater compared to no CRP. (Clark and Bogenschutz 1999, 2001)**

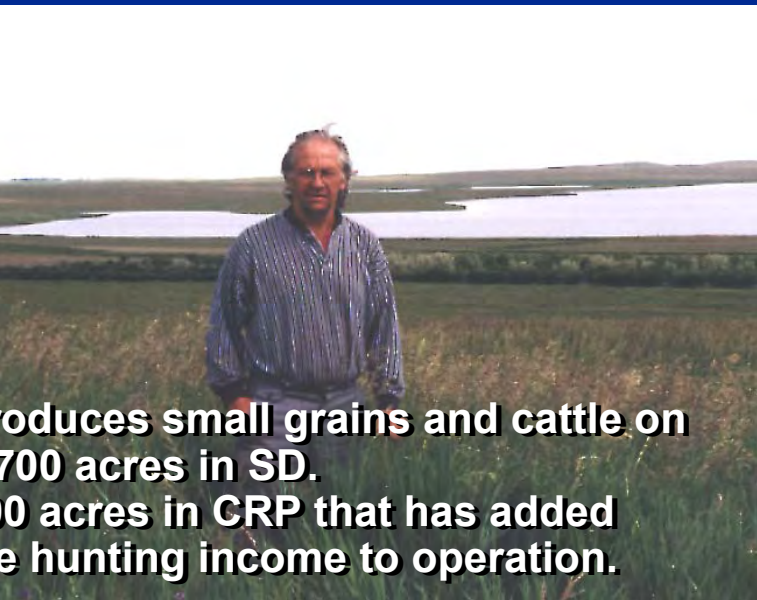
Measurable Benefits

Based on densities of grassland songbirds in CRP fields, Johnson and Igl (1995) predicted that populations of at least 5 of 12 species would decline statewide in North Dakota by 17% or more if CRP was greatly reduced on the state's landscape.

Dispelling Some Concerns: CRP has caused decline of farms & rural communities



Dispelling Some Concerns: CRP is not a part of “working lands”



- Produces small grains and cattle on 700 acres in SD.
- 10 acres in CRP that has added the hunting income to operation.



- Produces cattle on 3,000 acres in KS
- 1,000 acres in CRP which has helped purify runoff to adjacent drinking water reservoir.

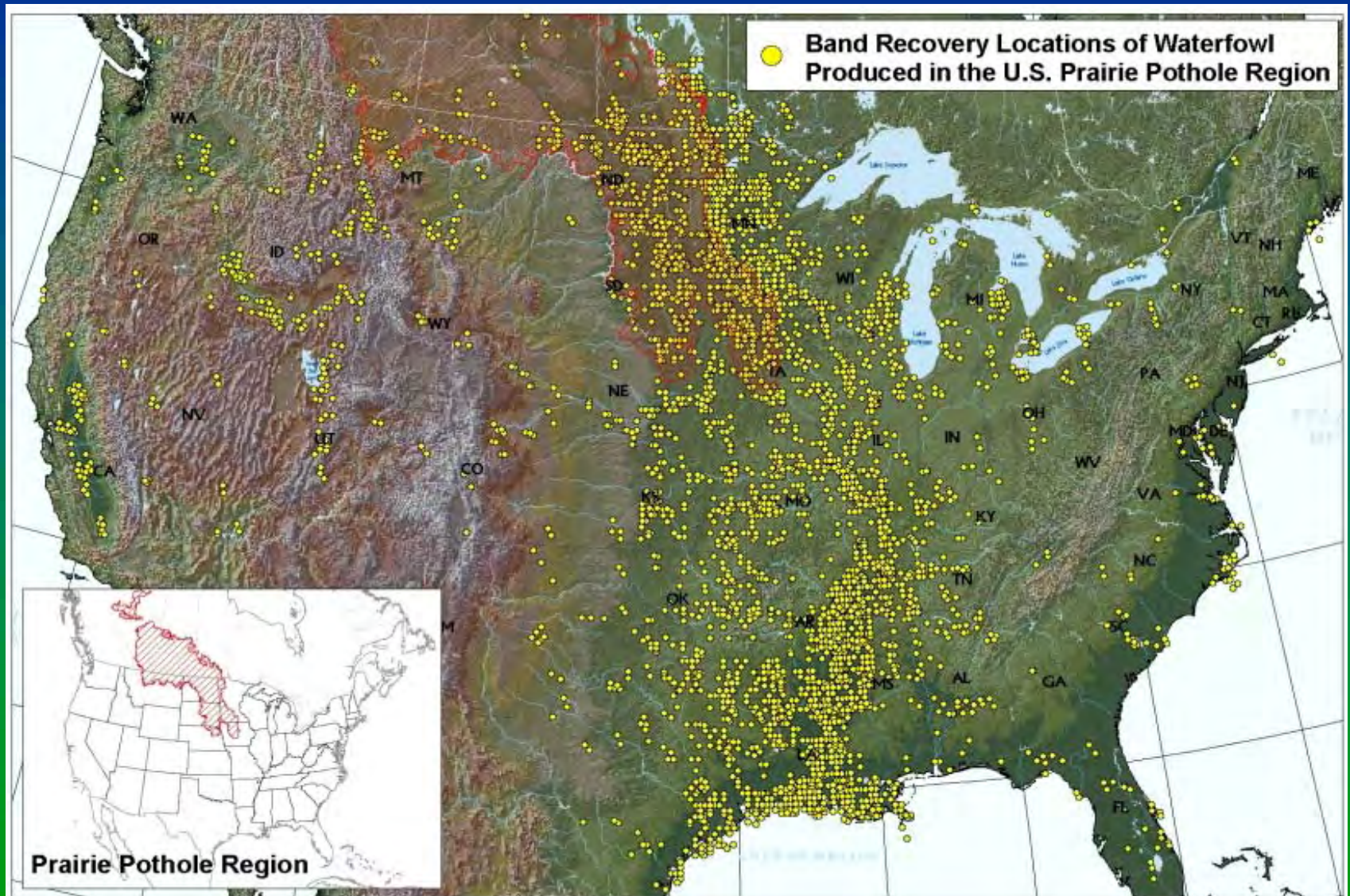


- Produces small grains and cattle on 4,600 acres in NE.
- 170 acres in CRP. CRP has helped local economy by bringing recreational visitors.



- Produces small grains on 4,000 acres in ND
- 387 acres in CRP to remove marginal land from cropping and enhance wildlife habitat.

Dispelling Some Concerns: CRP environmental benefits are local



National Economic Impacts

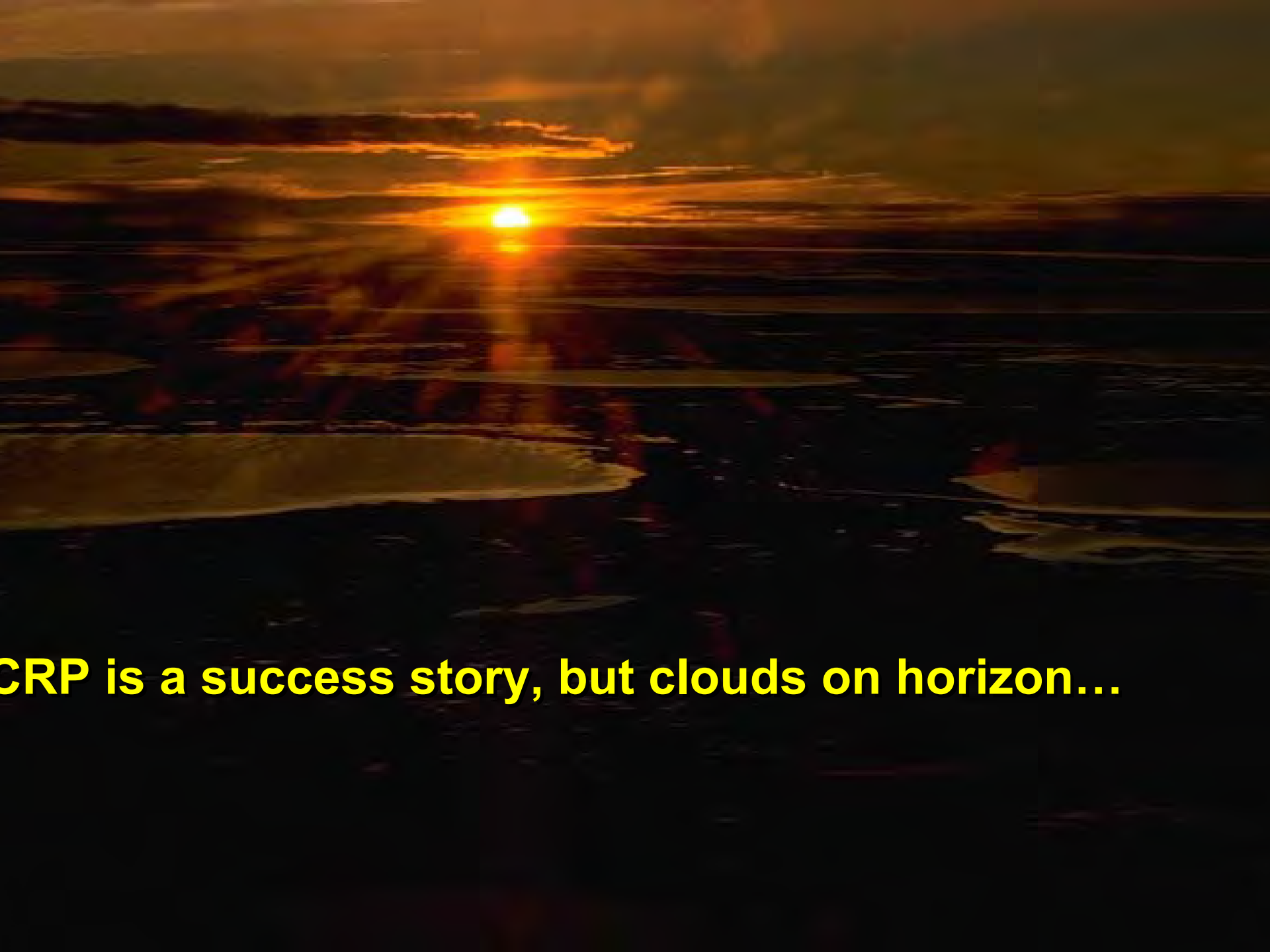
**1.6 million waterfowl hunters in U.S.
\$3.9 billion in total economic effect¹**

Nearly 20 million waterfowl and shorebird viewers in U.S.

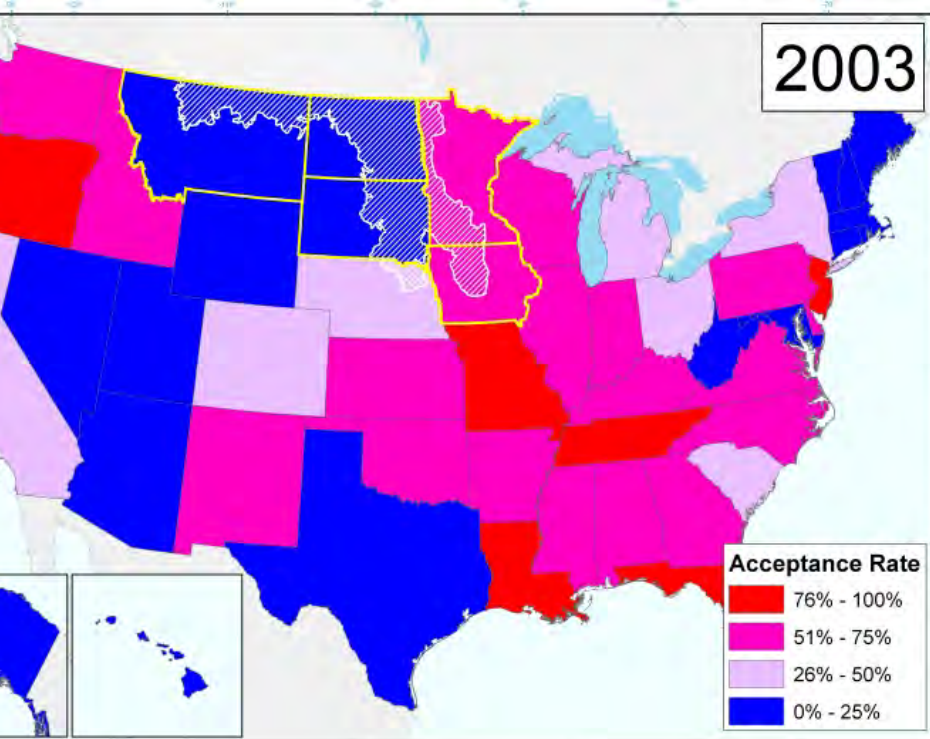
Total economic output of \$9.8 billion

**Hunting and wildlife viewing are big businesses
which migratory birds produced on CRP in the PPR
feed**

¹ from Southwick Associates (1995), adjusted for number of hunters and change in consumer price index 1991-2000 of 29%

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a long, shimmering reflection across the dark water. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of orange and yellow clouds. In the foreground, several white, irregular ice floes are scattered across the dark water. The overall mood is serene yet somber.

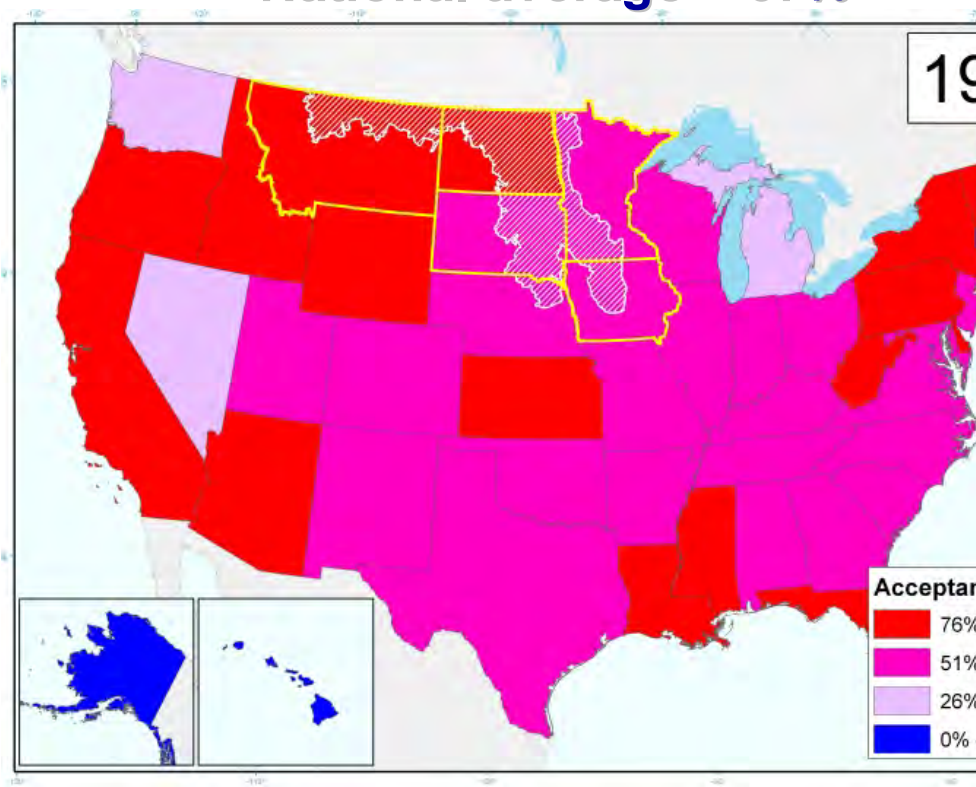
CRP is a success story, but clouds on horizon...



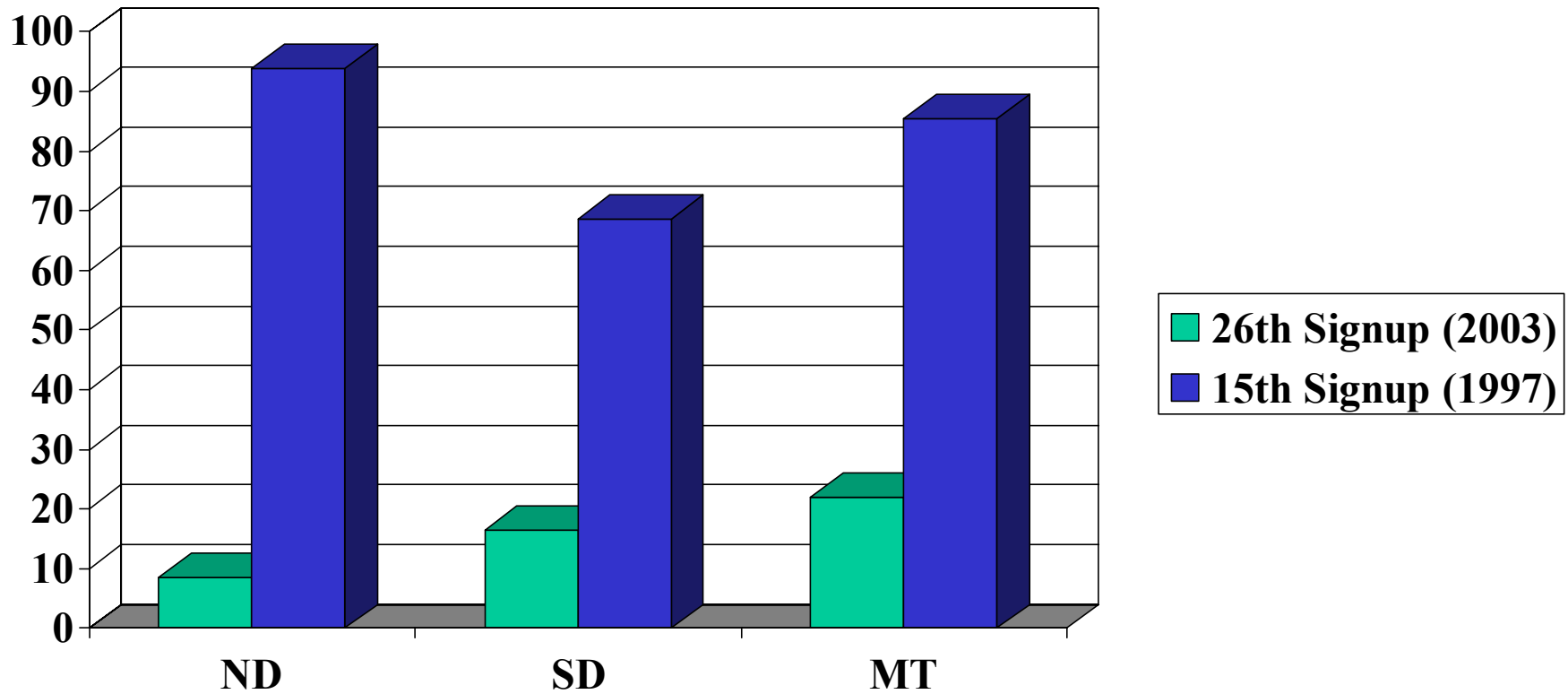
National average = 48%

Acceptance rates of CRP acres offered under recent and past sign-ups

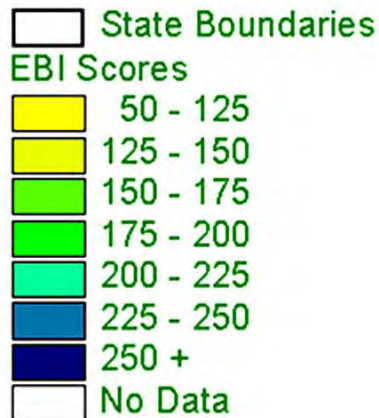
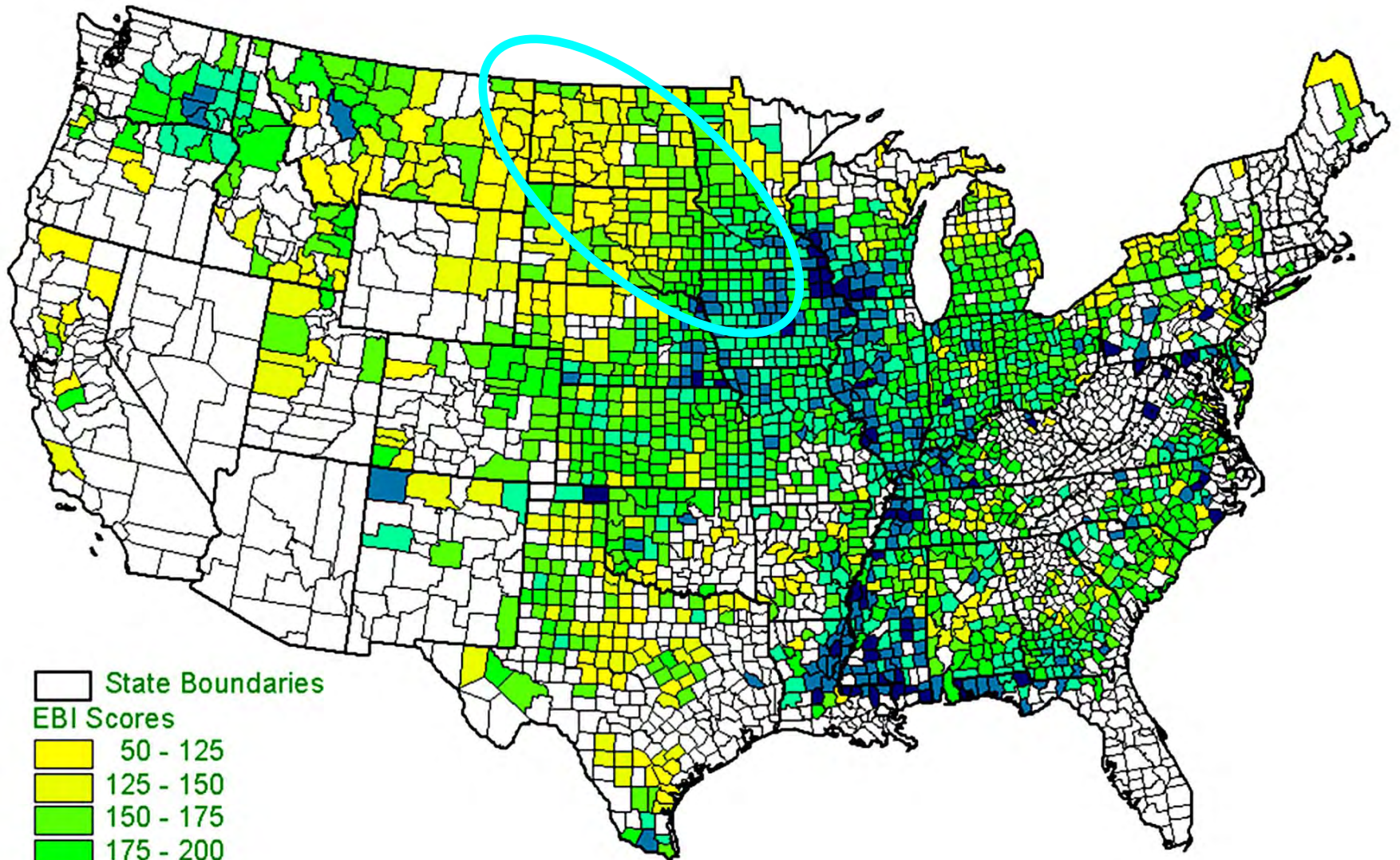
National average = 67%



Acceptance Rates in 3 Key Prairie Pothole Region States

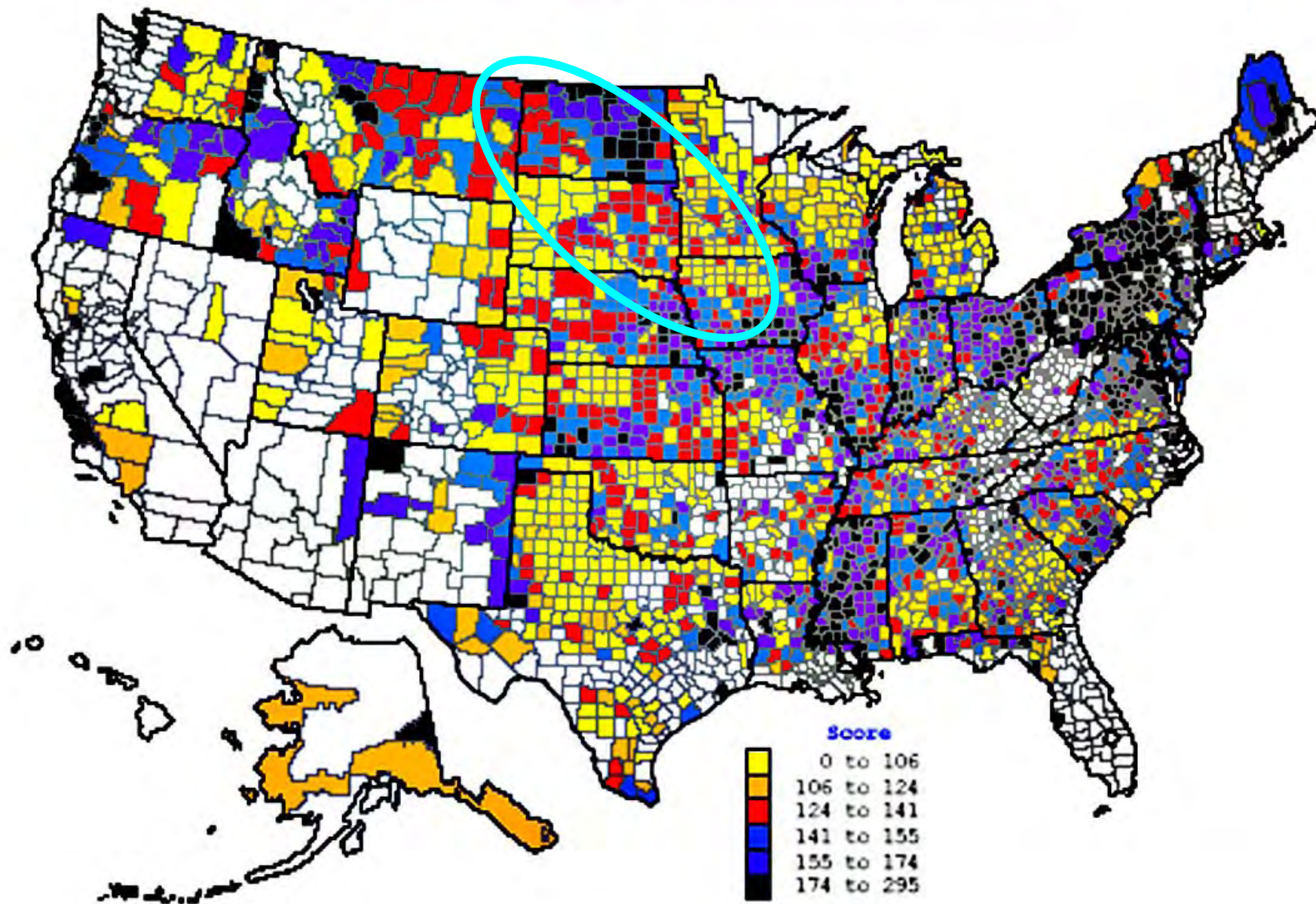


County Average EBI for 26th sign-up

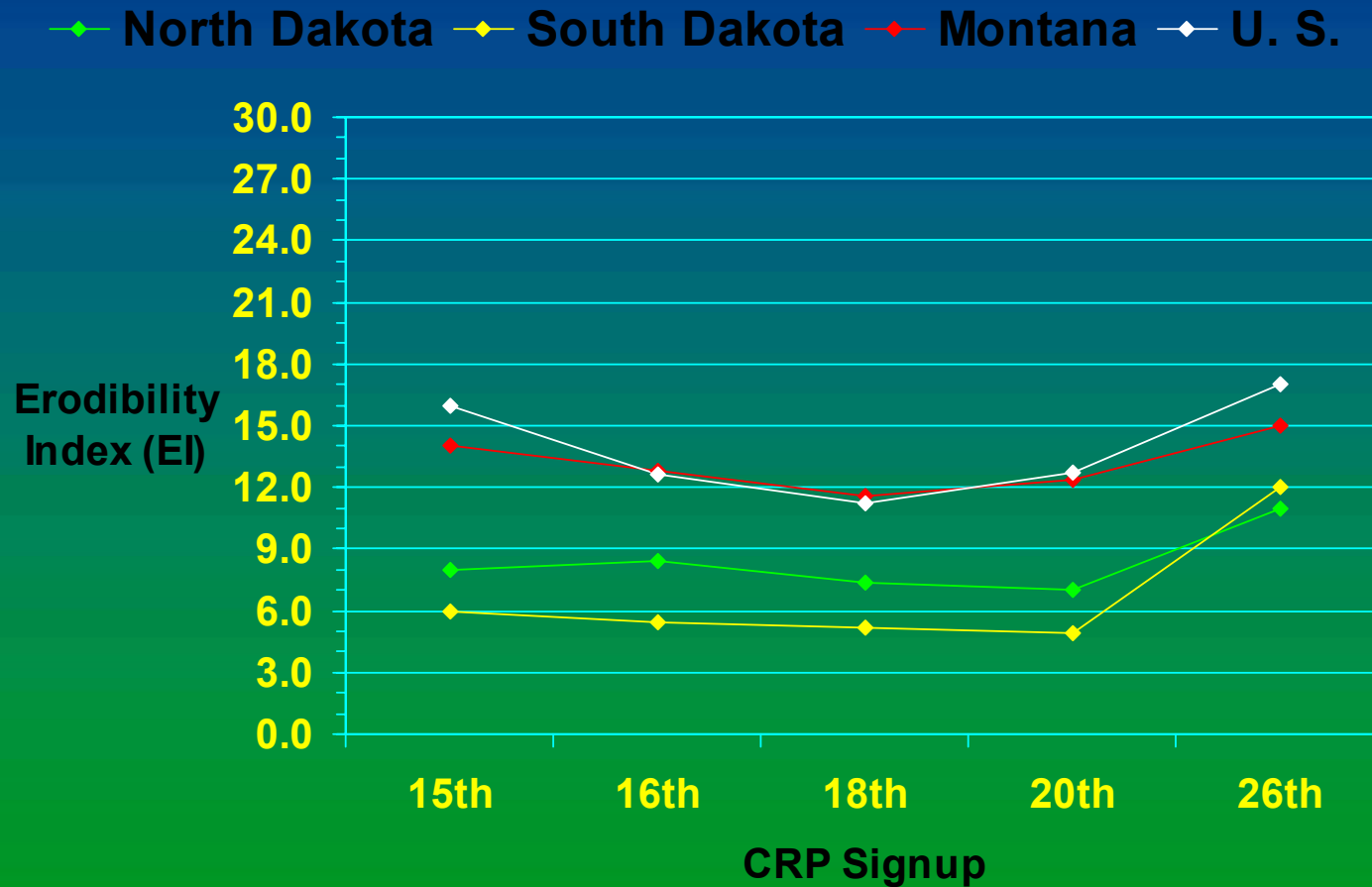


*** Only offers with a minimum score of 269 were considered acceptable for enrollment**

15th Signup: Unadjusted Environmental Benefits Index



A comparison of average Erodibility Index (EI) scores on accepted CRP acres during general signups 15-26 in ND, SD, MT and the U. S.



Why are the prairies of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana no longer a focal point for new CRP acres?

MAIN REASON: Changes to the EBI since the 15th and 16th sign-ups (1997)

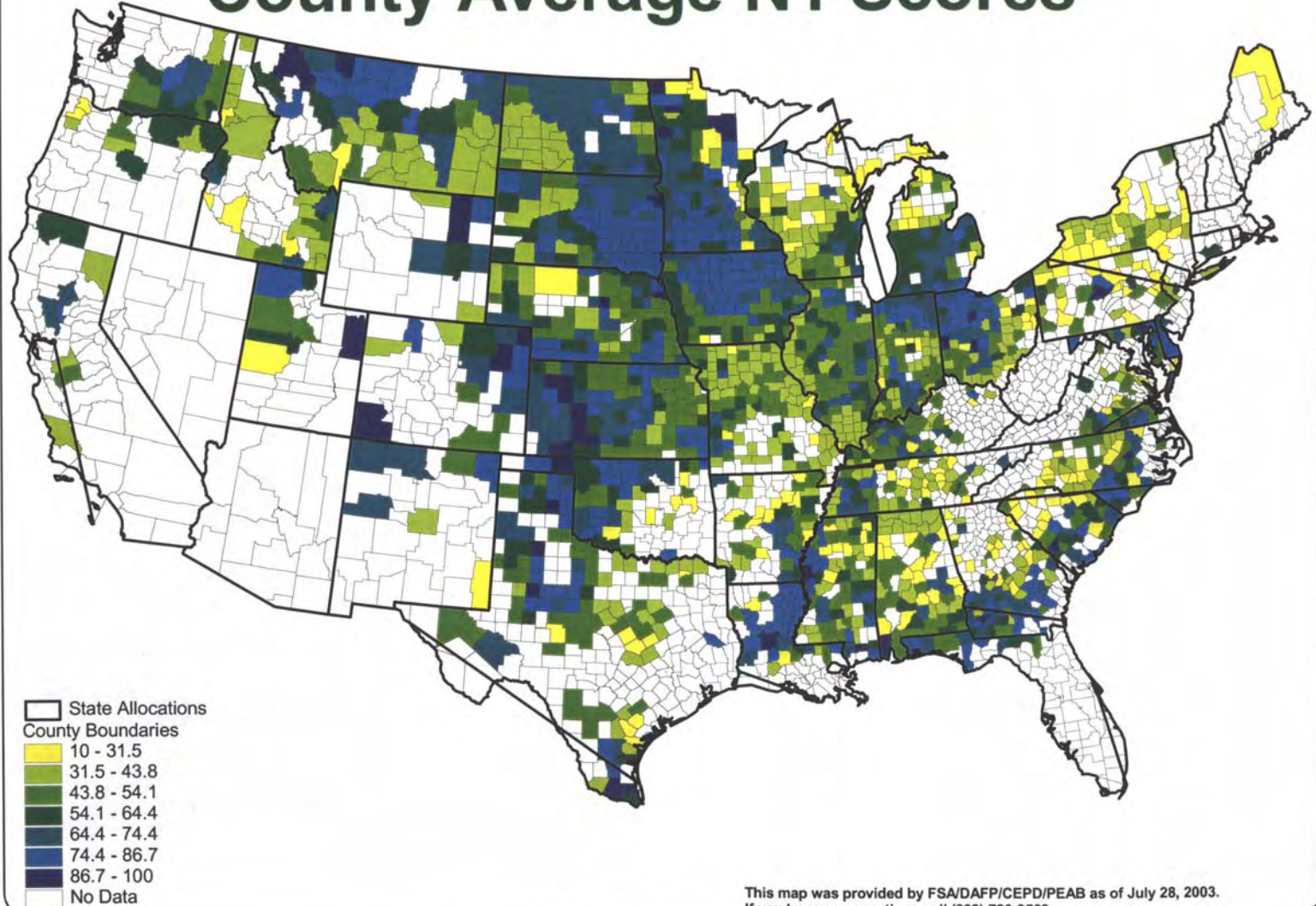
Changes:

- 1) Loss of National Priority Area (NPA's) points in EBI. – **25 pts.**
- 2) Loss of CP23, Wetlands Restoration under environmental factor N1a: Cover Practices (CP) – nearly 1/3 of ND's current CRP acres fall under this CP - **30 – 50 pts.** Currently, CP23 is now only available for continuous sign-up
- 3) Loss of Wildlife Factor N1d: Adjacent to Protected Areas – evaluated the proximity of the offer to wildlife habitat protected by Federal, State, Local or other interests -**10 pts.**
- 4) Loss of Wildlife Factor N1f: Restored Wetland to Upland Percentage – based on optimizing nesting habitat for waterfowl - **10 pts.**
- 5) Loss of Water Quality Factor N2d: Wetland Benefit points – if 10% or more of an offer was cropped wetlands - **10 pts.**
- 6) Loss of New Cropped Wetland Restoration (CP23) from the list of Enduring Benefits Factors (N4) – **25 pts.**

Amounts to potential loss of 130 pts!

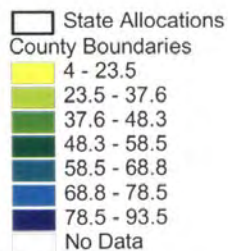
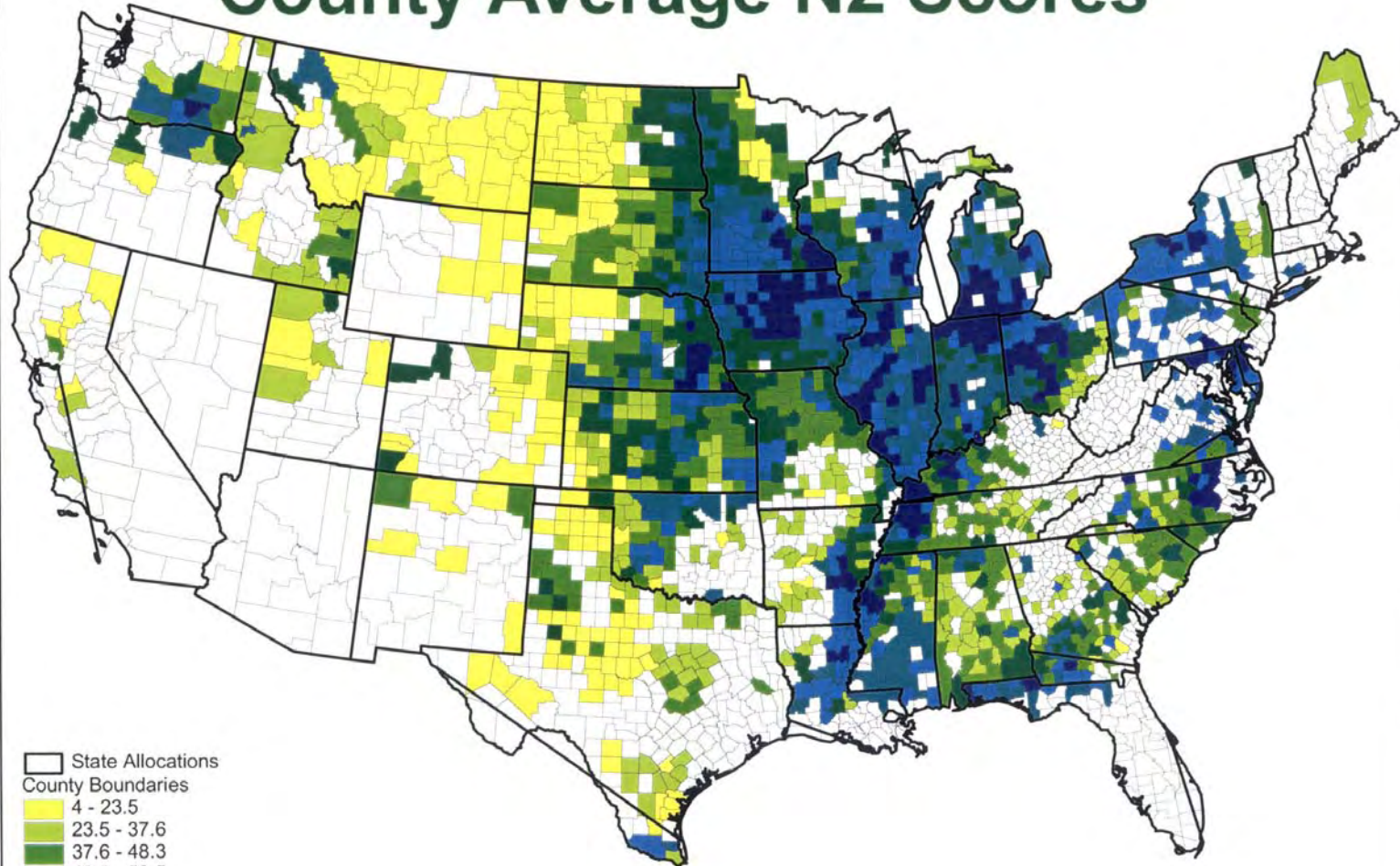
Wildlife Factors (100 pts.)

County Average N1 Scores



Water Quality Benefits (100 pts.)

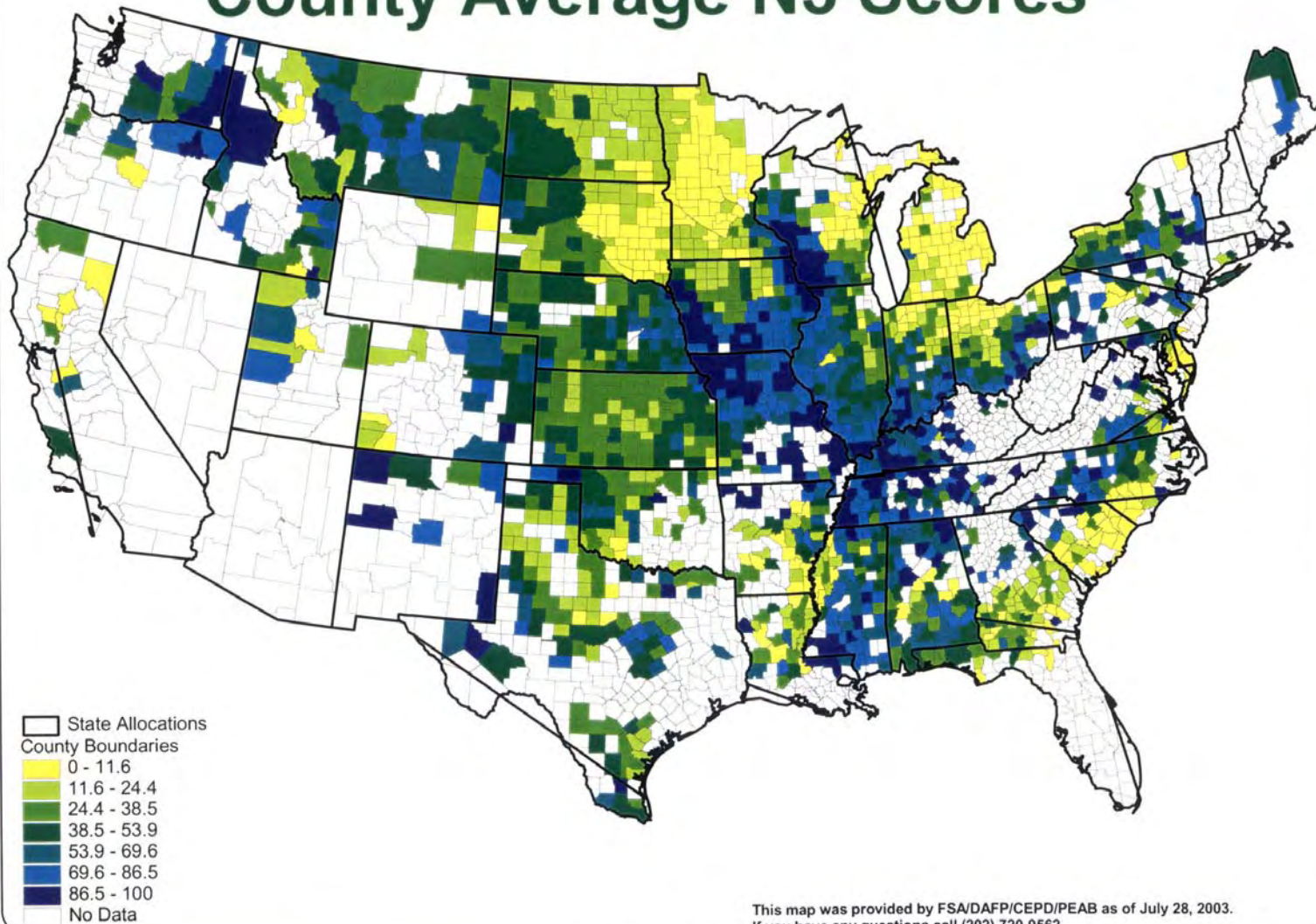
County Average N2 Scores



This map was provided by FSA/DAFP/CEPD/PEAB as of July 28, 2003.
If you have any questions call (202) 720-9562.

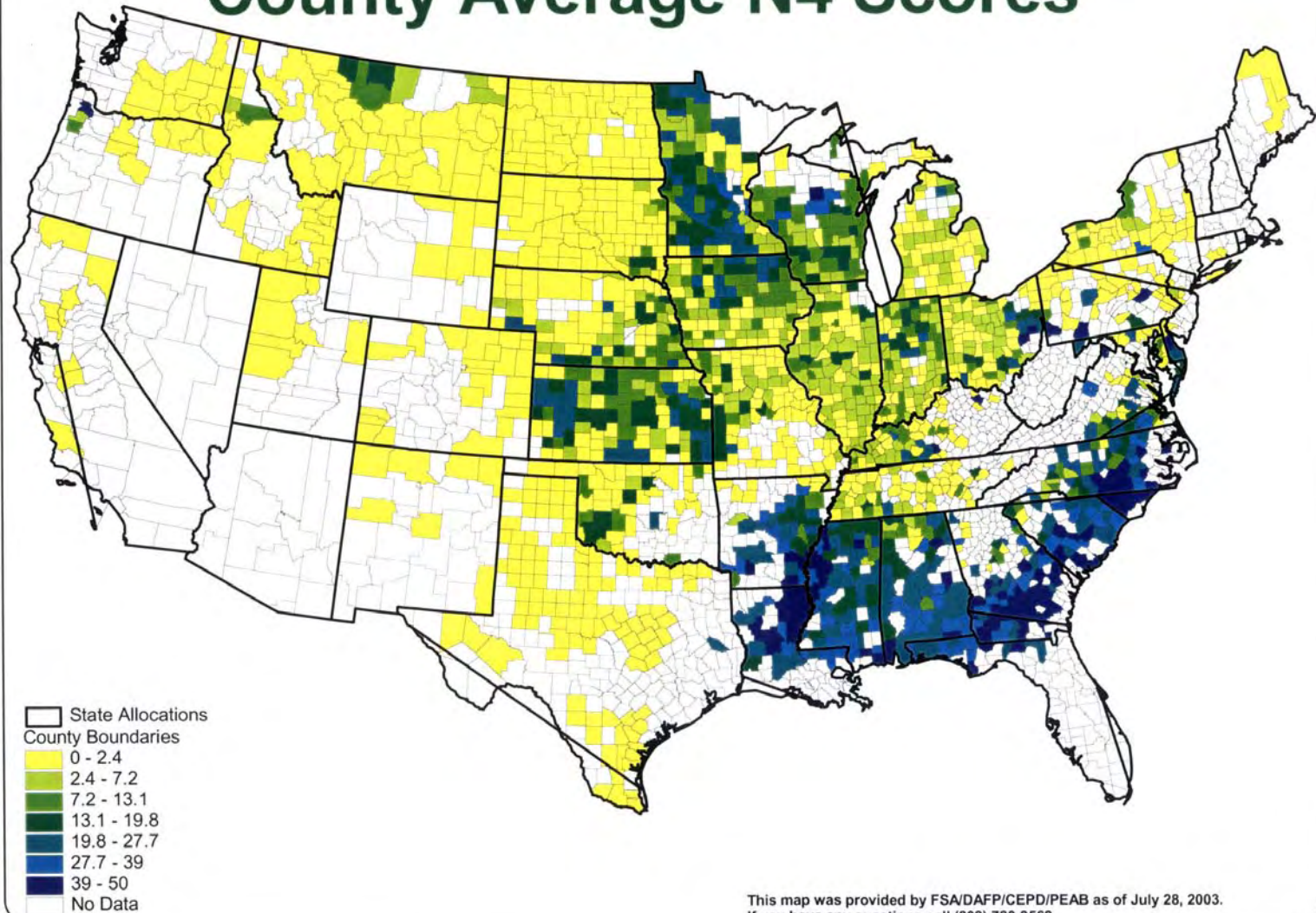
Erosion Factor (100 pts.)

County Average N3 Scores

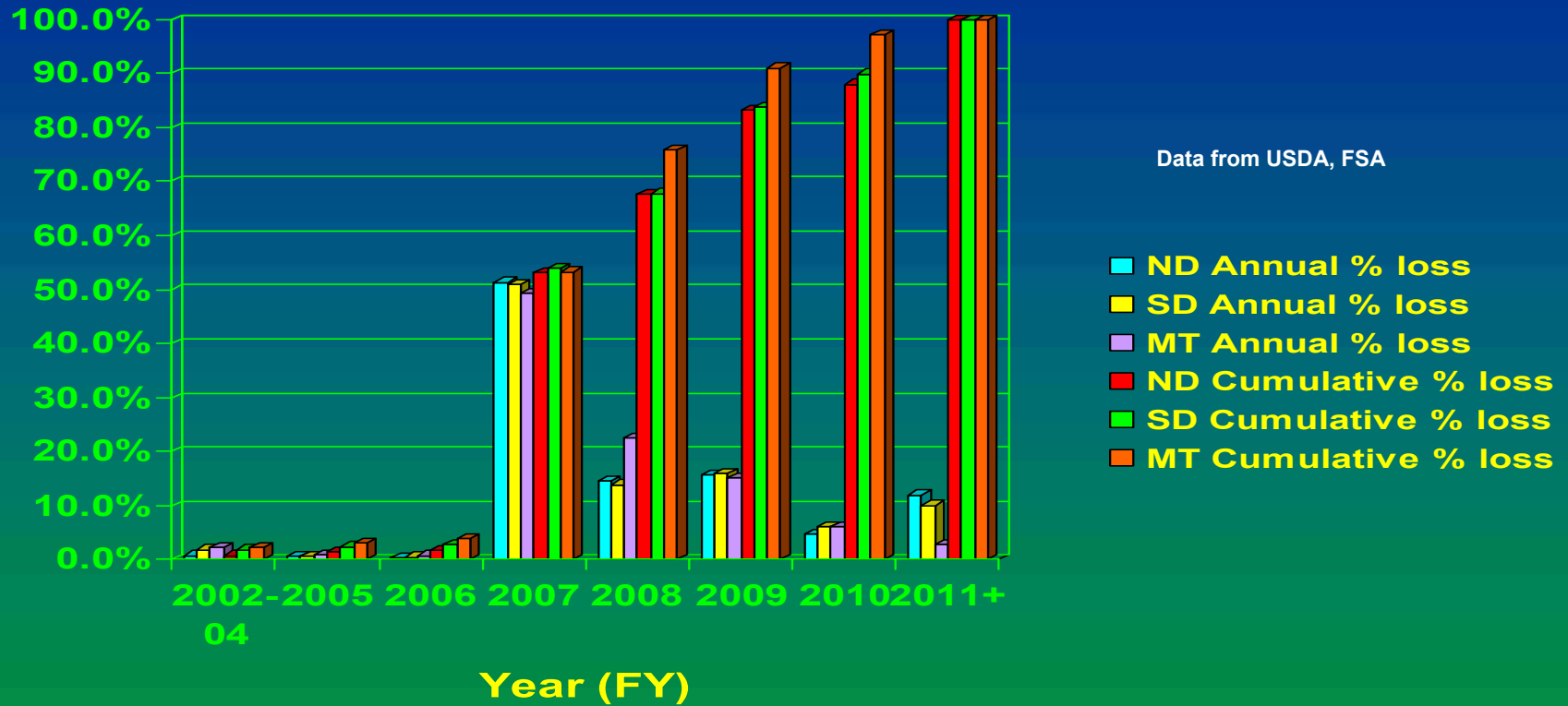


Enduring Benefits (50 pts.)

County Average N4 Scores



Projection of Expiring CRP Acres in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana

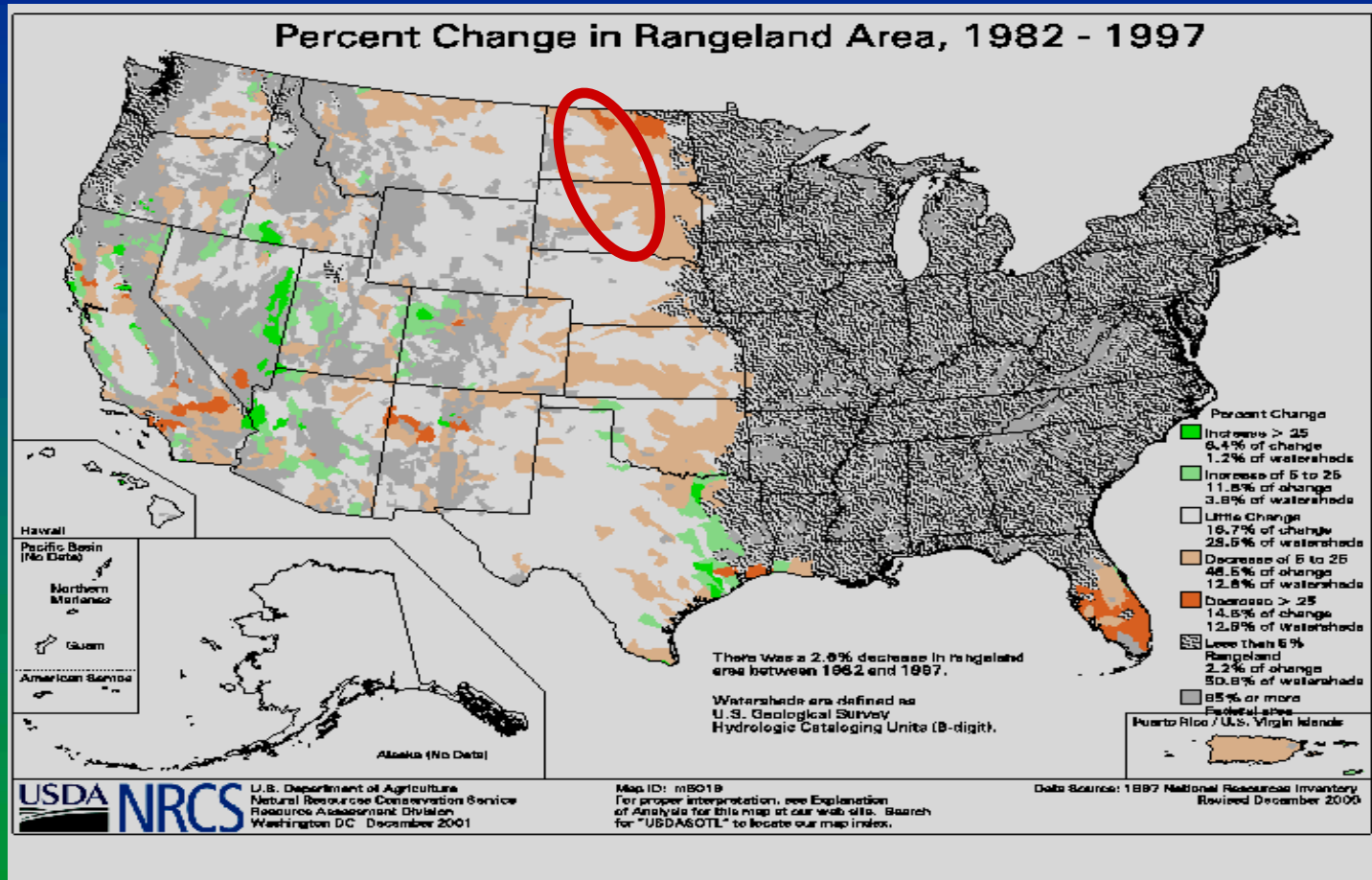


At Current Acceptance Rates:

84% of 4.1 million acres expiring in 2007 would be lost.

To retain current acres, 57 million acres or 54% of the cropland in these 3 states would have to be offered. Only 12.4 million acres have been offered since 1997.

Continuing Loss of Grasslands in the Prairie Pothole Region



62% (56 million acres) of grasslands converted to cropland in the Prairie Pothole Region since settlement. CRP offsets a portion of this loss

Take Home Messages

CRP is approaching critical mass in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR) with well documented wildlife, environmental, and economic benefits. These benefits are the result of large blocks of restored grasslands and wetlands.

As we look to address conservation concerns in other parts of the country, we should not sacrifice the gains that have been made in the PPR. The EBI and eligible practices need to be reevaluated to prevent CRP loss from this region.

The demand remains strong from producers for CRP, but declining grain stocks, growing deficit, misconceptions, competing interests threaten the program. Need to push for reauthorization in 2007 and be strategic about where we can get greatest wildlife benefits for all of Farm Bill conservation programs.

Conservation Reserve Program

❑ Nationwide Cap of 39.2 million acres

- 36.7 million acre cap on General Sign-Ups
 - Enrollment is competitive and based on EBI score
- 2.5 million acre cap on Continuous Sign-Ups
 - Enrollment is first come, first serve – no EBI
 - Special Initiatives;
 - Bottomland hardwoods (500,000 acre cap);
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP);
 - Farmable Wetlands Program;
 - CP23 Wetland Restorations (500,000 acre cap);
 - riparian buffers, wildlife habitat buffers, wetland buffers, filter strips, grass waterways, shelterbelts, contour grass strips, shallow water areas for wildlife, salt tolerant vegetation