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Millions of Acres Released from Federal Conservation Program  
TRIBUNE, Kan. (AP) - Millions of acres of farmland are being released from a federal conservation program and could soon be tilled. That's raising concerns about loss of wildlife habitat, soil erosion and water quality.

The federal Conservation Reserve Program once protected more than 39 million acres of farmland, but 3.4 million acres were taken out of the program in September when the owners' contracts expired. Most of them are in Texas, Colorado and Kansas, but hundreds of thousands of acres also are coming out in Montana and the Dakotas. That's because the 2008 Farm Bill capped the program at 32 million acres.

The program pays landowners not to farm easily eroded land and helps cover the cost of establishing ground cover to reduce soil erosion and establish wildlife habitat.

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