

AMERICA'S WILDLIFE



Preserving National Treasures For You

(NAPSA)—Thanks to an innovative government program, national treasures from the Florida Everglades to Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park and many others, are more likely to be around for Americans to enjoy for a long time to come.

The program is called the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Managed by the farm service agency, it works with firms and landholders who volunteer to improve and maintain agricultural land and wildlife habitat. The private companies and individuals install buffer strips or native vegetation along waterways to filter runoff and provide wildlife habitat. In return, they receive rent from the agency.

The CREP project in Florida involves the Everglades, one of the largest and most unusual ecosystems in the world. About half the Everglades have been lost to agribusiness and urban development. About 90 to 95 percent of the wading bird population has been



The traditional role of farmers and other landowners as front-line stewards of the nation's land and water is supported by a government agency's ingenious program.

lost and 68 plant and animal species there are threatened or endangered.

In Kentucky, CREP is helping ensure the long-term protection of water quality and a number of the threatened and endangered species in Mammoth Cave National Park.

It's not only the largest and most diverse cave system in the world, the caverns and surrounding Green River watershed also house a unique and fragile ecosystem.

CREP will protect 100,000 acres in South Central Kentucky's Green River Watershed. The swaths of vegetation help keep nutrients and sediment out of the water and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

"CREP allows farmers to farm the best land while taking that which really shouldn't be farmed out of production," explained Farm Service Agency Program Specialist Joyce Hobbs, adding "CREP helps keep the land in the hands of the people who care most about it."

There are 26 active programs around the country, tackling erosion, protecting drinking water supplies, reclaiming fisheries and improving the quality of our rivers, according to each area's specific environmental needs and goals.

You can learn more online at www.fsa.usda.gov.