

Nebraska Game and Parks program pays for access to private land.

A little extra money is always welcome, and Nebraska landowners can cash in by signing up for the Open Fields and Waters program with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The program pays landowners to allow walk-in access to their property for hunting and fishing.

Gary Frerichs of Beatrice enrolled some pasture and timberland in Open Fields and Waters last year. He said Game and Parks staff made it easy to enroll, and they posted signs to mark access boundaries.

“I was skeptical at first,” Frerichs said, “but it has been a win-win for me and the hunters who now have access to my land. The extra income helped pay for improvements on the property. I recommend Open Fields and Waters to anyone.”

This year the Conservation Reserve Program-Management Access Program merged into Open Fields and Waters to create a single public access program.

“Open Fields and Waters is a great way for landowners to earn extra income and help continue our state’s heritage of hunting and fishing,” said Tim McCoy, ag program manager for Game and Parks.

Open Fields and Waters offers as much as \$10 per acre for CRP land. The program also will pay more for woodland along rivers, up to \$15 per acre.

Property owners who sign contracts for five or more years will receive a one-time signing bonus equal to 25 percent of the regular annual payment.

Landowners also have the option of enrolling their property for just a portion of the year.

Land enrolled for only spring turkey hunting will get 25 percent of the annual rate. Reduced rates are also available for partial-year fishing access, allowing landowners to specify either ice fishing or open water fishing.

Participants in Open Fields and Waters are protected under the Nebraska Recreation Liability Act.

Landowners can enroll by contacting their local Game and Parks office. More information is available at the Game and Parks website, OutdoorNebraska.org, by searching “Open Fields and Waters.”