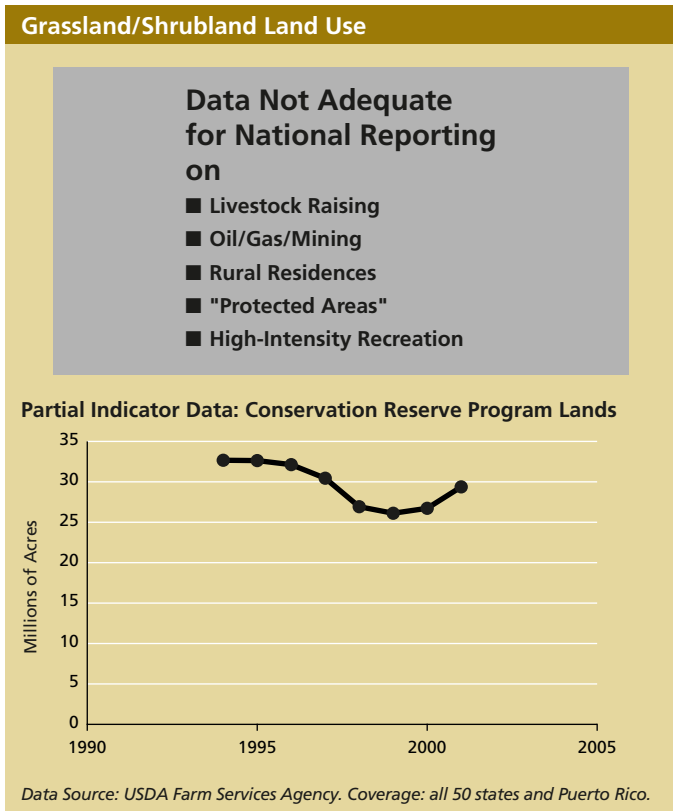




SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

Land Use



What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important? This indicator will describe how much grasslands and shrublands is devoted to six major land uses: livestock raising, rural residences, oil and gas development and mining, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands (see below), “protected areas” (see below), and high-intensity recreation. Because grasslands and shrublands may be used for other purposes as well, the total acreage eventually reported here would not equal the total reported in the extent indicator (p. 161).

Within grasslands and shrublands, differing land uses create very different landscapes. Each of the land uses identified here is associated with specific goods and services and with certain impacts on grasslands and shrublands.

Two land use categories merit brief explanation. The Conservation Reserve Program provides for 10-year lease payments to farmers to remove sensitive lands from production; this indicator includes only acreage on which grass, shrubs, or similar cover (i.e., not trees) are established. “Protected areas” include lands that are primarily managed to maintain biodiversity and natural processes; these are sometimes referred to as “conservation lands.”

Why Can't This Entire Indicator Be Reported at this Time? There is no consistent reporting of the amount of land in the categories shown here, with the exception of CRP lands. For example, while data are available on the number of livestock raised (see p. 173), data on the acreage used for this purpose are not available for either public or private lands.

In addition, reporting on this indicator would require the development of consistent definitions for the land use categories used here. For example, what level of recreational use qualifies an area as “high-intensity”? What housing density, over how large an area, qualifies an area as “rural residences”? Which federal, state, and private lands are to be considered “protected areas”?

What Do the Data Show? Currently, data are available only for CRP acreage since 1994. In 2001, there were approximately 29 million acres of lands under active CRP contracts that include planting of grassland or shrubland cover types. This is about 3 million acres more than 1999 acreage and 3 million less than 1994 and 1995 levels.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 257.