



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Idaho are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 50,000 acres in Ada, Bannock, Bingham, Blaine, Bonneville, Butte, Camas, Cassia, Clark, Custer, Elmore, Fremont, Gooding, Jefferson, Jerome, Lemhi, Lincoln, Madison, Minidoka, Owyhee and Twin Falls counties. This will reduce irrigation water use, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat through the establishment native and other grasses, trees, rare and declining habitat and riparian buffers.

BACKGROUND

CREP is a part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and then federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14-year to 15-year contracts. Participants remove irrigated cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. This will reduce irrigation water consumption, improve water quantity and quality in the Snake River and its tributaries and provide wildlife habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species.

GOALS

The goals of the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP are to:

- Reduce irrigation water use on cropland acres;
- Increase the aquifer’s groundwater levels and tributary spring water discharge;
- Improve wildlife habitat and populations within the project area;
- Enhance habitat for fish species by increasing stream flow;
- Reduce the amount of sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous and other pollutants from reaching streams and other waterbodies in the project area; and
- Reduce irrigation water pumping power consumption.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses;
- CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-Easement;
- CP12, Wildlife Food Plot;
- CP22, Riparian Buffer; and
- CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat.

ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment for the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, cropland must be located in the project area, meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity, meet minimum irrigation requirements and be physically and legally capable of being irrigated in a normal manner when offered for enrollment. Applicants must enter into a water use contract with the State of Idaho.

PAYMENTS

Under the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre for installing practice CP22. Example: 10 acres enrolled to be devoted to practice CP22 result in a \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100) SIP. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible cost to install practice CP22. Example: Producer's total eligible cost for installing the practice is \$2,000. The PIP would be \$800 (\$2,000 x .40).
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved conservation practice.
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - o The weighted-average per-acre irrigated cropland rental rate; and
 - o A maintenance payment, determined by the practice offered.

In addition, the State of Idaho provides a one-time incentive payment of \$30 per acre for land enrolled within a specific portion of the project area.

EXAMPLES

A Jefferson County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of irrigated cropland to be devoted to a riparian buffer (practice CP22) in a 15-year contract. The rental rate for the land is \$130 per acre. The annual maintenance payment is \$10 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$140 per acre (\$130 + \$10), for a total annual payment of \$1,400 (\$140 x 10 acres). In addition, the producer will receive a one-time SIP of \$1,000. The State of Idaho will pay the producer \$300. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the riparian buffer, plus a one-time PIP equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the riparian buffer. The producer will receive \$21,000 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract.

A Butte County producer elects to enroll 40 acres of land to be devoted to a permanent native grasses (practice CP2) in a 15-year contract. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$130 per acre. The producer's total annual payment is \$5,200 (\$130 x 40 acres). The State of Idaho will pay the producer \$1,200. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice. The producer will receive \$78,000 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract.

Note: The preceding are examples only.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Idaho Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer CREP, producers receive payments at a higher per-acre rate and have longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing are not allowed during the CRP contract period unless authorized by USDA. Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions and requirements may apply. For more information on CREP, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

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- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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