

**Fact Sheet****Conservation Reserve Program  
Expanded Illinois Enhancement Program****Overview**

USDA and the State of Illinois have expanded their highly successful Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreement by 32,000 acres, to now total 132,000 acres. The program, begun in March 1998, is helping protect water quality and land along the Illinois River.

CREP uses federal and state resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Producers enrolled in CRP remove lands from agricultural production and plant native grasses, trees, and other vegetation to improve water quality, soil, and wildlife habitat. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. CREP provides rental payments and other financial incentives to encourage producers to voluntarily enroll in 10- to 15-year CRP contracts.

**Benefits**

The Illinois River, a shipping route for over 60 million tons of commodities annually, is crucial to Illinois and the nation both economically and environmentally. The expanded Illinois CREP will protect even more environmentally sensitive land along the river and some of its tributaries by helping agricultural producers plant trees and native vegetation. This will reduce sedimentation,

runoff, dredging, and water treatment costs for communities that rely on the river for drinking water. CREP will also continue to restore the river's flood plains, which will assist in flood control and the enhancement of wildlife habitat and population.

**Goals**

The goals of the Illinois CREP are to:

- Reduce total sediment loading of the Illinois River by 20 percent.
- Reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loading in the river by 10 percent.
- Increase populations of waterfowl, shorebirds, and state and federally listed species by 15 percent within the project area.
- Increase native fish and mussel stocks by 10 percent in lower reaches of the river.

**Program Cost**

Based on the full implementation of the Illinois CREP, which projects an enrollment of 132,000 acres, the expected combined financial federal and state obligation will be approximately \$322 million over 15 years, with \$260 million coming from the federal government and \$62 million coming from the state. This does not include costs that may be borne by producers.

**Eligible Areas**

The project area consists of the Illinois River Basin that includes the subwatersheds along the Middle Illinois and Peoria Lake sections of the Illinois River and the watersheds of the following Illinois River tributaries: Vermillion, Mackinaw, Spoon, Lower Fox, Lower Sangamon, and Kankakee. Producers in these areas that meet the CREP and CRP eligibility requirements may be eligible for enrollment. Contact your local USDA Service Center for specific information concerning your eligibility for CREP.

**Approved Conservation Practices**

The following conservation practices may be eligible for enrollment into the Illinois CREP. Consult with your local USDA Service Center representative to find out what practices are eligible for your CREP area and specific acreage. The potential practices are:

- CP 2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP 3 - Tree Planting
- CP 3A - Hardwood Tree Planting
- CP 4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Noneasement
- CP 12 - Wildlife Food Plot
- CP 25 - Rare and Declining Habitat (for prairie ecosystem restoration and tallgrass prairie/oak savanna ecosystem restoration when it becomes an

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eligible practice authorized by the Commodity Credit Corporation for general use in Illinois)

Also, the following practices are eligible for lands qualifying as riparian buffers:

- CP 9 - Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- CP 12 - Wildlife Food Plot
- CP 21 - Filter Strip
- CP 22 - Riparian Buffer
- CP 23 - Wetland Restoration

#### ***Signup and Eligibility Requirements***

Eligible producers can enroll in 14- to 15-year CRP contracts. Applicants must be able to offer eligible acreage and satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP. Land must be cropland that has been cropped 2 out of the past 5 years and is physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland is also eligible provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. Applicants must generally have owned or operated the land for at least one year prior to enrollment.

#### ***CREP Payments***

Illinois CREP participants are eligible for four types of USDA payments:

1. Signing Incentive Payment - a one-time payment of up to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in a riparian buffer practice, filter strip, or grassed waterway.

USDA makes this payment soon after the contract has been signed.

2. Practice Incentive Payment - payment equal to about 40 percent of the total cost for establishing the practice. This payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost-share assistance that USDA provides.
3. Annual rental payment of about 130 percent of the dryland cash rental rate for the county in which the land is located.
4. Cost-share assistance for installing the conservation practices on retired land.

The State of Illinois will make a bonus payment for all contract extensions beyond 15 years, up to 50 percent of the cost of installing conservation practices, the annual monitoring program, and streambank stabilization.

#### ***Enrollment in Other Programs***

Applicants may still enroll in general or continuous signup CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. For instance, the CREP enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are at a higher effective rate.

#### ***Haying and Grazing***

Haying and grazing is not allowed during the CRP contract period unless USDA permits it for emergency purposes under normal CRP rules.

#### ***For More Information***

For more information on the Illinois CREP, contact your local USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency office, or Soil and Water Conservation District office. Additional information is also available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

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