

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Wisconsin State

### Overview

USDA and the state of Wisconsin have launched a \$243 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to protect the state's water quality and wildlife habitat.

CREP uses federal and state resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Producers enrolled in CRP remove land 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 Wisconsin CREP will protect environmentally sensitive land next to rivers and streams by improving impaired water resources and enhance wildlife habitat in two designated geographic areas known as "grassland areas." The program will reduce water pollution by installing 85,000 acres of riparian buffers and filter strips, 15,000 acres of native grasses, and wetlands. Restoring native grasses will increase the population of many species, primarily grassland birds (including the greater prairie chicken).

### Goals

The goals of the Wisconsin CREP are to:

- Reduce sediment loading in the targeted area by 335,000 tons per year.

- Reduce phosphorus loading to streams and rivers by 610,000 pounds.
- Reduce nitrogen loading by 305,000 pounds.
- Establish 3,700 miles of riparian buffers.
- Establish 15,000 acres of grassland habitat to increase the population of endangered grassland birds and other wildlife species.

### Program Cost

Based on the full implementation of the Wisconsin CREP, which projects an enrollment of 100,000 acres, the expected combined financial federal and state obligation will be approximately \$243 million over 15 years, with \$198 million coming from the federal government and \$45 million coming from the state. This does not include costs that may be borne by producers.

### Eligible Areas

Producers in specified areas throughout Wisconsin 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 in the Wisconsin 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:

- CP1 - Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses

- CP2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP8A - Grassed Waterways
- CP10 - Vegetative Cover - Grass - Already Established
- CP21 - Filter Strips
- CP22 - Riparian Buffer
- CP23 - Wetland Restoration
- CP23A - Wetland Restoration - Non-flood plain
- CP25 - Rare and Declining Habitat
- CP29 - Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer
- CP30 - Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer

### 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 4 out of the past 6 years (2002-2007) 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.

### CREP Payments

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

- Signing Incentive Payment - a one-time payment consistent with Handbook 2-CRP for land enrolled in a riparian buffer practice, filter strip, or grassed waterway. USDA makes this payment soon after the contract has been signed.
- 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.

- Annual rental payment of about 135 to 185 percent of the dryland cash rental rate for the county in which the land is located.
- Cost share assistance for installing the conservation practices on retired land.

Wisconsin will also offer one time lump sum incentive payments.

### **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 Wisconsin CREP, contact your local USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency office, Soil and Water Conservation District, or the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture. Additional information is also available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and at <http://datcp.state.wi.us/>

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