

Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Overview

The Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Hawaii CREP) is a federal-state natural resources conservation project that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental concerns. The Hawaii CREP goals are to meet environmental objectives and to protect environmentally-sensitive land in Hawaii.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), in partnership with the state of Hawaii, together provide additional financial incentives to producers who voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP participants remove marginal pastureland and cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to native trees, grasses, and other vegetation through application of conservation practices. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. FSA administers CRP and CREP on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

This conservation partnership seeks to enroll up to 15,000 acres of eligible marginal pastureland (MPL) and/or cropland. The program will restore riparian forest buffers, wetland buffers, and other native forest restoration areas by planting native vegetation and controlling invasive species. Enrollment on the islands will be phased in over a five-year period. The primary goals of the Hawaii CREP are to improve water quality and quantity, increase groundwater recharge, improve near-shore coral reef health and diversity by filtering agricultural run-off, and enhance wildlife habitat.

General Benefits

The Hawaii CREP provides for restoration of previously forested and degraded agricultural land. In addition to reforestation, planting grasses, legumes, forbs, and shrubs will also be used as components of the specialized conservation practices. The project will improve wildlife habitat through the creation of riparian forest buffer corridors and expansion of critical habitat for many threatened, endangered, and rare species of Hawaii. This project will enhance water quality and quantity by reducing soil run-off, increasing ground

water absorption, and reducing stream sedimentation and nutrient loading to near-shore environments. Additional benefits associated with these activities will accrue through habitat restoration for plant and animal species, native forest restoration, wetland restoration, and preservation of open space.

Specific Goals

When fully enrolled, USDA and the state of Hawaii seek to achieve the following goals for the six main Hawaiian Islands:

- Reduce sediment and nutrient run-off by 10 percent from 2008 levels.
- Increase coral reef cover by 5 percent and substantially increase coral diversity on coral reefs throughout the State.
- Improve wildlife and plant habitats through restoration of native forest ecosystems and riparian buffers. This will provide habitat for at least 10 threatened and endangered species.
- Reforestation in riparian buffer zones as well as rare and declining native habitats.
- Increase groundwater recharge through the planting of trees in up-land pastures.

Eligible Counties

The Hawaii CREP is available for enrollment in the following counties: Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, and Honolulu. Enrollment on the islands, to be conducted on a year-round continuous sign-up basis, will be phased in over a five-year period. Land enrolled in the program will remain under CRP contracts for a minimum of 14 years, but no more than 15 years. Offers for enrollment under the Hawaii CREP will be accepted in the following order with enrollment limited to 3,000 acres per year:

- Crop years 2009-2010: Islands of Hawaii and Maui
- Crop year 2011: Islands of Molokai and Lanai (and above islands)
- Crop year 2012: Island of Kauai (and above islands)
- Crop year 2013: Island of Oahu (and above islands)

Local FSA offices and the state of Hawaii will announce the Hawaii CREP sign-up

dates.

Land Eligibility

To be eligible to enroll in the CRP and Hawaii CREP, land must be either:

- MPL that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes. MPL adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes, and similar up-land areas is eligible for enrollment, if/as determined needed and feasible by Natural Resource and Conservation Service (NRCS) or technical service providers (TSP's) according to FSA CRP national directives and the Hawaii CREP agreement. Eligible buffer widths for MPL may extend up to 1,320 feet if/as determined needed and feasible.
- Cropland planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity four of the previous six crop years from 2002 to 2007 and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Hawaii CREP enrollment, producers must have owned or operated eligible land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure, and the owner exercised a timely right or redemption in accordance with state law; or
- FSA determines that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in the CRP.

CRP contracts must follow the CRP regulations at 7 CFR part 1410, CRP national directives, and the provisions of the Hawaii CREP agreement. Interested producers should contact their local FSA Office for specific information regarding their eligibility for this CREP.

Approved Conservation Practices

For lands that are eligible for Hawaii CREP, the available CRP conservation practices are:

- CP3A, Hardwood Tree Planting, for Cropland
- CP22, Riparian Buffer, for Cropland and MPL
- CP23, Wetland Restoration, Floodplains, for Cropland only
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplains, for Cropland only
- CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat, for Cropland only
- CP29, MPL Wildlife Habitat Buffer, for MPL only
- CP30, MPL Wetland Buffer, for MPL only

USDA Payments

Hawaii CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of USDA payments (subject to contract terms and certain limitations):

- Annual CRP rental payments: In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants according to the Hawaii CREP agreement. The annual rental rate will be calculated as follows:
 1. A per-acre Soil Rental Rate (SRR) for all enrolled eligible cropland based on the weighted local average soil rental rate of the three predominant soils offered;
 2. A per acre rental rate of \$43.00 for MPL enrolled in this CREP, except that eligible MPL located within or immediately adjacent to a federally-designated critical or recovery habitat area is eligible for a rental payment equivalent to the current posted CRP MPL per acre rental rate (currently \$72.00 per acre). Eligible MPL that qualifies for this rate will consist only of lands within or immediately adjacent to federally designated critical or recovery habitat for threatened and endangered species as designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and
 3. A per-acre maintenance incentive payment consistent with Handbook 2-CRP.
- Cost-share payments may be available to all participants who establish approved conservation practice on eligible land. Cost-share payments may not exceed 50 percent of eligible reimbursable costs for all approved and established CRP conservation practices. The Hawaii CREP allows cost-share for exclusionary fencing and alternative livestock watering

facilities for all Hawaii CREP conservation practices as determined in accordance with current CCC policies;

- Signing Incentive Payment (SIP): A one-time additional CRP payment for up to consistent with Handbook 2-CRP for eligible participants who enroll in practices: CP22 (Riparian Buffer), CP23 (Wetland Restoration, Floodplains), CP23A (Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplains), CP29 (Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer), and CP30 (Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer). This one-time SIP will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met;
- Practice Incentive Payment (PIP): A one-time additional CRP payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation and reimbursable costs for eligible participants who enroll in practices: CP22 (Riparian Buffer), CP23 (Wetland Restoration, Floodplains), CP23A (Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplains), CP29 (Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer), and CP30 (Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer). This one-time PIP will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met;
- Mid-contract Management Payment: An additional CRP cost-share payment, if needed, for up to three times, not to exceed \$450.00 per acre for the life of the CRP contract. Payment includes invasive species control measures to be established.

State of Hawaii Payments

The state of Hawaii may provide the following payments to Hawaii CREP participants:

- An annual Hawaii CREP Incentive Payment (HCIP) in the amount of \$17.00 per acre per year for enrollment into all CREP acreage enrolled into CRP contracts.
- Funds may be available to landowners in CREP watersheds for the purchase of permanent Conservation Easements (CE). The purchase of CE's will be in conjunction with the state of Hawaii Legacy Land Conservation Fund. All interested landowners shall have the opportunity to donate a CE in a CREP watershed.
- Funds may also be available for reimbursement of eligible cost-share practices. Eligible practices are to be determined by the State each year

and will be available to enrolled participants.

Under the Hawaii CREP, the state of Hawaii will also provide a program coordinator; staffing and support for technical assistance to implement the CREP; annual monitoring and evaluation of project progress; establish a program steering committee; seek potential participants; and perform other duties according to the Hawaii CREP agreement. The state of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources is the lead state agency and will be partnering with other State agencies to support the goals and obligations of the Hawaii CREP.

For More Information

For more information about FSA and its programs, including CRP continuous sign-up, contact a local FSA office or visit FSA's Conservation Program Web site at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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