

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Nebraska

### Overview

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the state of Nebraska launched a \$209 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The Nebraska CREP will help improve water quality in the Nebraska Central Basin and enhance wildlife habitat in all or portions of 37 counties in the state.

CREP uses federal and state resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Land enrolled in CRP is planted primarily to grass and trees to improve water and soil quality and wildlife habitat. CRP was 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 Nebraska CREP will help protect lakes and water courses and reduce sediment loading to streams by enrolling 100,000 acres in central and eastern Nebraska. The program will establish vegetative buffers around streams and rivers in the Nebraska Central Basin. These buffers will keep sediment, nutrients, and pollutants from entering water supplies.

Trees, grass, and other appropriate vegetation planted through the program will reduce sediment and atrazine. In addition, native grasses and vegetation will provide vital habitat for a variety of wildlife.

### Goals

The goals of the Nebraska CREP are to:

- Reduce sediment and sediment borne nutrients reaching the state's water by 75 percent from the 1998 levels;
- Increase wildlife populations through the planting of appropriate vegetative covers;
- Reduce the quantity of atrazine and related compounds that reach surface and ground water resources by 90 percent from the 1998 levels; and
- Significantly increase the diversity and juxtaposition of vegetation by adding approximately 3,000 "resource corners" to the CREP area.

### Program Cost

The expected combined federal and state obligation is \$209 million over 15 years, with \$143 million coming from FSA and \$66 million from Nebraska. This does not include any costs that may be borne by producers.

### Eligible Areas and Land Eligibility Requirements

The project area includes portions of 37 counties in central and eastern Nebraska. Producers who are located in the project area and meet the eligibility requirements identified for the Nebraska CREP may be eligible. To find out if your operation is located within the project area, contact your local FSA office.

To be eligible for CREP, the applicant must also satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP. Eligible land is:

- Cropland that has been cropped 4 out of the past 6 years and is physically and legally capable of being cropped;
- Marginal pastureland that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees or suitable to apply to either filter strips, grass waterways, contour grass strips, or shallow water areas for wildlife;
- Owned or operated for at least one year prior to enrollment.

### Approved Conservation Practices

The following conservation practices may be eligible for land enrolled into the Nebraska CREP:

- CP1 - Establishment of Permanently Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- CP2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- CP9 - Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- CP21 - Filter Strips
- CP22 - Riparian Buffer
- CP23 - Wetland Restoration
- CP23A - Wetland Restoration Non-Floodplain

### Sign-up

Eligible producers can enroll in 10- 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.

Applicants must generally have

owned or operated the land for a least 12 months prior to enrollment. Persons with an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP until that contract expires.

### **CREP Payments**

Nebraska 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 certain eligible practices.
- Practice Incentive Payment - payment equal to about 40 percent of the total cost for establishing certain eligible practices. This payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost-share assistance that USDA provides.
- Annual rental payment of about 120 to 130 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 eligible land.

Nebraska participants are also eligible for the following one-time state payments:

- \$100 per “resource corner area” issued as an incentive payment, as defined in the Memorandum of Agreement.
- \$100 as an incentive payment provided all four “resource corner areas” of a field are enrolled.
- Cost-share payments of the eligible costs for establishing approved practices.

### **Enrollment in Other Programs**

CREP is another option that farmers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll in the general CRP or continuous CRP; however, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous CRP. Under CREP, applicants have the flexibility to extend conservation benefits through a state-funded program and thus increase the sum total of rental payments. Also, the enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are generally at a higher rate.

### **For More Information**

For more information on the Nebraska CREP, contact your local FSA office. Additional information is also available on FSA’s web site at: [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).

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