

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Ohio - Lake Erie and Streams

Overview

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the state of Ohio have agreed on a plan to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve the water quality of Lake Erie and 5,000 miles of Ohio streams. This voluntary program will improve the water quality of Lake Erie and many of the streams and rivers that feed into it.

CREP combines an existing federal program, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), with state programs to provide a framework for USDA to work in partnership with state and local interests to meet state-specific environmental objectives. CRP is a CCC program implemented through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Under CREP, the Lake Erie landowners and operators enter into 14- to 15-year contracts with CCC to convert cropland to native grasses, trees, and other conservation practices. In return, they receive annual rental payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost-share assistance to establish the conservation practices.

Goals

The Ohio Lake Erie CREP has been designed to:

- Reduce the amount of sediment from entering Western Lake Erie by over 1,650,000 metric tons over the next 20 years;
- Significantly reduce the amount of nutrients and pesticides that enter the Western Lake Erie and its tributaries;
- Protect over 5,000 linear miles of streams from sedimentation;

- Improve wildlife habitat in the project.

Areas Included

The program area is comprised of the Western Lake Watershed Area and a portion of the Rocky River Watershed.

Program Benefits

CREP will provide several significant environmental benefits to Ohio's water bodies. Filter strips and riparian buffers will be planted next to streams, rivers, and drainage ditches in order to stop sediment and pollutants from entering the water bodies. An estimated 5,000 linear miles of streams will be protected. Improved water quality will result from reduced nutrient loading, sediment loading, and pesticide runoff. Forested buffers will also help lower water temperatures and enhance wildlife habitat.

Eligible Conservation Practices

The following practices are eligible for the program:

- CP1 Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes (Escarpment and Filter & Recharge Areas only) (1,500 acre goal)
- CP2 Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses (Escarpment and Filter & Recharge Areas only) (510 acre goal)
- CP3A Hardwood Tree Planting (Escarpment and Riparian Zones only) (1,175 acre goal)
- CP4D Permanent Wildlife Habitat (1,113 acre goal)
- CP5A Field windbreak Establishment (4,293 acre goal)
- CP21 Filter Strips (12,200 acre warm season grass (WSG)

goal)

- CP21 Filter Strips (32,298 acre cool season grass (CSG) goal)
- CP22 Riparian Buffer (5,700 acre goal) (Cropland and Marginal Pastureland)
- CP23 Wetland Restoration (4,361 acre goal)
- CP23A Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain (1,500 acre goal)
- CP25 Rare and Declining Habitat (1,500 acre goal)
- CP29 Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer (500 acres)
- CP30 Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer (250 acres)

Eligibility Requirements and Signup Date

Enrollment for the Ohio CREP will be on a continuous basis beginning May 1, 2000. Eligible land must be within the project area and meet the basic eligibility criteria for CRP and be suitable to be devoted to an eligible practice. Land must be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must have been planted to crops 4 of the past 6 years (2002-2007) and be physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland can be enrolled provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. Lands that have an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires.

Payments under CREP

CREP participants are eligible for five types of payments: annual rental payments, incentive payments, maintenance payments if applicable, cost-share assistance payments, and state one-time payments. Annual rental payments will

FACT SHEET

CREP - Ohio - Lake Erie and Streams

February 2011

be based on the soil rental rate. The first three of these will be combined into a consolidated annual CRP rental payment.

In addition to the normal rental payment, CCC will make a special incentive payment for:

- Land devoted to CP1, CP4 (cool season grasses), CP21 - 55 percent;
- Land devoted to CP2, CP4D (warm season grasses), CP21 - 75 percent
- Land devoted to CP29 - 75 percent
- Land devoted to CP23, CP23A, CP30 - 100 percent
- Land devoted to CP3A, CP5A, CP22, CP25 - 125 percent
- Marginal pastureland devoted to CP22 - 125 percent

Producers would also receive an annual maintenance payment of \$5 per acre.

The CCC pays up to 50 percent of the establishment cost of conservation practices. The state may also provide up to \$40 per acre for the planting of warm season grasses.

The state also provides one-time lump-sum payments per acre for land devoted to filter strips and hardwood tree planting, wildlife habitat improvement, field windbreaks, wetland restoration, and riparian buffers.

Program Cost

The estimated cost of the program is \$201 million. The federal share is \$167 million, and the state share is \$34 million.

Enrollment Option

CREP is another option that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll in general CRP or continuous signup CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available
Page 2

through the general and/or continuous signup. Under CREP, applicants have flexibility to extend the duration of their conservation contracts and thus increase the sum total of rental payments. The enrollment process is on a continuous basis, and payments are at a higher rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing is not permitted during the CRP contract period unless the Secretary of Agriculture permits it for emergency purposes.

Additional Information

For further information, contact FSA or the Natural Resources Conservation Service within the local USDA Service Center, or the local Soil and Water Conservation District office. Information may also be obtained from the FSA website at: www.fsa.usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all of part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.