

# Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Montana Upper Clark Fork River Basin

(CREP)



## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Montana are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 66,400 acres in all or portions of Granite, Powell, Deer Lodge, Silver Bow, Lewis and Clark and Missoula counties. The Montana Upper Clark Fork River Basin (UCFRB) CREP is intended to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies, restore wetlands, maintain and enhance grasslands on uplands associated with adjacent riparian areas and create and improve habitat for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

## Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and then federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Montana UCFRB CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for a minimum of 14-year, not to exceed 15-year, contracts. Participants remove cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to filter strips, riparian buffers or permanent grasses and forbs, or restore wetlands. Participants will also maintain and enhance grasslands by limiting future development and cropping uses of the land. This will improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, increase water infiltration, and improve wildlife habitat.

## Goals

The goals of the Montana UCFRB CREP are to:

- Reduce sediments, nutrients and agricultural chemicals entering watercourses;
- Maintain and enhance grasslands on uplands associated with adjacent riparian areas;
- Improve habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife; and
- Restore wetlands.

## Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP1 Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes;
- CP2 Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses;

## For More Info

CREP is one option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may also enroll land in CRP through the general, continuous, or grassland signups; however, CREP may provide additional benefits not available through those signup types such as higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

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For more information, contact For more information on this project, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).



## Eligible Conservation Practices (continued)

- CP21 Filter Strips;
- CP22 Riparian Buffer;
- CP23 Wetland Restoration;
- CP23A Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain;
- CP25 Rare and Declining Habitat - Sagebrush steppe;
- CP29 Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat;
- CP30 Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer; and
- CP88 Permanent Grasses and Legumes.

## Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment for the Montana UCFRB CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area and be either cropland, marginal pastureland or grassland.

Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Marginal pastureland is eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use

as a riparian buffer, wildlife habitat, or wetland buffer. Irrigated cropland must meet minimum irrigation requirements and be physically and legally capable of being planted and irrigated in a normal manner when offered for enrollment.

Grassland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is devoted to practice CP88, and is immediately adjacent to land enrolled as a CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A, CP29 or CP30. Grassland offered for enrollment will be evaluated, scored and ranked to determine eligibility. In addition, the number of grassland acres eligible for enrollment is limited, per contract, to not more than four times the number of acres enrolled as an eligible adjacent practice.

## Payments

Under the Montana UCFRB CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments from USDA:

- A cost-share payment of up to 5 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install certain approved conservation practices.
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
  - ◊ A base soil rental rate, determined by the type of land offered;

- ◊ An incentive payment equal to 20 percent, as a percentage of the base soil rental rate, for practice CP1, CP2, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A, CP29 and CP30; and

- A maintenance payment, determined by the practice offered.

In addition, the State of Montana provides cost-share payments equal to 95 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install certain approved practices.

## Enrollment

CREP is another option under CRP that farmer and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll eligible land in CRP through general or continuous enrollment authority; however, the Montana UCFRB CREP provides additional benefits, such as 95 percent cost-share from the State of Montana, not available through the general and/or continuous enrollment.

## Haying and Grazing

Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.