

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program –Upper Arkansas River, Kansas

Overview

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state natural resources conservation program that addresses significant state and national agricultural related environmental concerns. Through CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 14 to 15 years. Participants remove cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers CRP and CREP on behalf of CCC.

The Kansas Upper Arkansas River (UAR) CREP is a partnership between USDA and the state of Kansas. The program seeks to enroll 28,950 acres of eligible irrigated or non-irrigated cropland in 14 to 15 year CRP contracts within the UAR project area. The CREP project area includes all or parts of the following Kansas counties: Barton, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Gray, Hamilton, Kearny, Pawnee, Rice and Stafford. The primary goals of the UAR CREP are to conserve irrigation water, improve water quality by removing land from agricultural production, enhance wildlife habitat, conserve energy and reduce erosion.

Benefits

UAR CREP will conserve water resources and reduce agricultural chemicals and sediment that contribute to poor water quality in rivers and aquifers, from entering Kansas waters. The project will

reduce the use of irrigation water and reduce non-point source pollution by terminating water rights connected to the land enrolled in CREP and establishing permanent vegetative cover and other conservation practices. These practices are intended to enhance the aquifer and boost water supplies to the Arkansas River. UAR CREP will also enhance habitat for a variety of land and water species, conserve energy and reduce erosion.

Benefits

UAR CREP will conserve water resources and reduce agricultural chemicals and sediment that contribute to poor water quality in rivers and aquifers, from entering Kansas waters. The project will reduce the use of irrigation water and reduce non-point source pollution by terminating water rights connected to the land enrolled in CREP and establishing permanent vegetative cover and other conservation practices. These practices are intended to enhance the aquifer and boost water supplies to the Arkansas River. UAR CREP will also enhance habitat for a variety of land and water species, conserve energy and reduce erosion.

Goals

- Enroll up to 28,950 acres into CREP in the project area (up to 25,950 irrigated cropland acres and up to 3,000 cropland acres of dryland center pivot corners and other associated dryland areas).
- Enroll approximately 27,550 of the total acres into native grasses and legumes.
- Reduce the amount of ground water used for irrigation in the

target area by 45,125 acre-feet annually with the enrollment of 25,950 irrigated acres.

- Increase the frequency of meeting minimum desirable streamflows in the Arkansas River at Great Bend, Kan., by 3 percent, and by 2 percent at Kinsley, Kan.
- Reduce by 8percent, the streamflow transit losses due to inefficiencies in water delivery, to be accomplished by improving the channel and canal delivery system.
- Improve ground water levels by 5 percent in the alluvial aquifer and in the High Plains aquifer in the CREP area by 2030.
- Reduce the outward migration of river salinity within the High Plains aquifer by 2020 from the currently projected levels based on 1990s ground water conditions in the Arkansas River valley.
- Improve water quality in the Arkansas River in Finney, Gray, Ford, Edwards, Pawnee and Rice Counties by 2020 (from the 1990 – 2000 levels) by reducing bacteria concentrations. The project is also designed to reduce phosphorous concentrations in the Arkansas River above Great Bend by 50 percent.
- Increase aquifer recharge and wildlife habitat by enrolling 400 acres of otherwise eligible playa lakes and soils, and other suitable locations for shallow water development through the use of approved CRP conservation practices.
- Reduce agricultural use of highly erodible soils by enrolling approximately 18,000 acres that are unsuitable for dryland farming.

- Reduce the amount of annual soil lost to erosion by approximately 115,000 tons per year.
- Protect the ecological and recreational viability of the Cheyenne Bottoms State Wildlife Area in Barton County, Kan., with improved Arkansas River streamflow.
- Reduce energy consumption from an average of 59,850 kilowatt hours to less than 5,000 kilowatt hours per center pivot for the first two years pivots are enrolled in the CREP. In subsequent years, the project will reduce energy consumption to zero, as the pivots eligible for limited irrigation are removed from the enrolled parcel. Assuming maximum enrollment under CREP, total energy savings for the term of the CREP contracts are expected to approach 12 million kilowatt hours.

Eligibility Requirements

Significant eligibility requirements land must meet in order to be enrolled in UAR CREP are:

- At least 51 percent of the eligible cropland must be located within the UAR CREP project area.
- Irrigated and Non-irrigated (dryland) cropland must meet FSA CRP crop history and all other eligibility requirements to be eligible for enrollment under this program.
- Land must be either devoted to dryland center pivot corners or other dryland areas within or adjacent to eligible irrigated fields to be enrolled on the same offer under UAR CREP;
- For irrigated cropland, the land must have been planted and irrigated at the rate of not less than one-half-acre foot per acre per year for four out of the six years, 2002-2007 and;
- Irrigated cropland must be

physically and legally capable of being planted and irrigated in a normal manner.

To be eligible for CREP, landowners must own the water rights associated with all the irrigated cropland to be enrolled, and such water rights must be legally dismissible by the state.

Sign-up and Contract Duration

Producers can offer land for enrollment in UAR CREP on a continuous basis at their local FSA service center.

Approved Conservation Practices

Eligible cropland practices for the UAR CREP are as follows:

- CP2 (Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses and Legumes) – 27,550 acres;
- CP4D (Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement) – 400 acres;
- CP9 (Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife) – 200 acres;
- CP21 (Filter Strips) – 100 acres;
- CP22 (Riparian Buffer) – 100 acres and;
- CP23/CP23A (Wetland Restoration, flood-plain & nonflood-plain) – 200 acres.

CCC Payments and Duties

CCC will provide the following payments to UAR CREP participants:

- Cost-share payments to CRP contract participants for up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs for establishing approved conservation practices. All cost-sharing payments must not exceed 100 percent of a participant’s out of pocket expenses;
- Annual rental payments based on posted irrigated rental rates

for eligible enrolled acreage for which the Kansas Department of Agriculture’s Division of Conservation has indicated that an owner-signed water right termination request has been secured and executed by Kansas. The maximum annual per-acre payment rate for irrigated cropland will be computed using the most current weighted-average, posted relevant irrigated cropland rental rate per acre for the irrigated enrolled land.

- Annual rental payments based on posted dryland cropland rental rates for eligible enrolled cropland acreage from the dryland center-pivot corners or other dryland areas that are part of an enrolled irrigated field. The per-acre, maximum payment rate for dryland cropland will be computed using posted relevant dryland CRP soil rental rate based on the three predominant soils on the eligible dryland acreage.
- A one-time Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) for practices CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP23A. The SIP is considered a rental payment for payment limitation purposes;
- A one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) for practices CP9, CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP23A. The PIP is considered a rental payment for payment limitation purposes.

USDA will also develop conservation plans, conduct compliance reviews and provide information to potential participants, among other things, under UAR CREP.

State of Kansas Payments and Duties

The state of Kansas will provide the following payments to UAR CREP participants:

- The dominant tier of the offered acres (51percent or more) will

determine the State Upfront Payment (SUP) rate for all irrigated acres per contract. To qualify for Tier 1, the offered area must either:

1. have a predominant soil type determined unsuitable for dryland farming due to susceptibility to very high levels of wind erosion, (to be considered susceptible to very high levels of wind erosion a soil must have a Wind Erosion Equation's I Factor of 134 or greater, or
2. be predominantly located in another Tier 1. All other offers not determined located in Tier 1 shall be assigned to Tier 2.

- The state of Kansas will divide SUP payment shares among all participants consistent with the shares on the CRP contract. The total of all SUP payments must not exceed \$2 million over the life of UAR CREP.
- A one-time State Wetland Bonus of \$350 per acre for acreage enrolled in practice CP9, Shallow Water Development, or a CP23 or CP23A, playa and wetland restoration located in an area eligible to receive Western Water Conservation project funds, as determined by the State CREP coordinator. The state of Kansas will divide the funds among all participants consistent with the shares on the related CRP contract. The payment will be made to participants who establish practice CP9 when it can also serve as an aquifer recharge and is located within an area eligible to receive Water Conservation Projects Funds;
- A \$1,000 cost-share assistance for optional plugging and proper abandonment of a well at the request of the UAR CREP participant for wells where the water right has been terminated under the UAR CREP enrollment process and;
- Under UAR CREP, the state

of Kansas will also provide staffing and support for annual monitoring and evaluation of changes, provide a program coordinator, establish a program steering committee, seek potential participants and perform other duties.

Cost

The state of Kansas will contribute at least 20 percent of the overall annual program costs through a combination of payments to program participants, new funding for the CREP project and certain in-kind services. FSA will pay the remaining costs for UAR CREP.

CRP Enrollment

CREP is an option under CRP that farmers may select for their land. Applicants may still enroll eligible land in the general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP; however, CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless FSA specifically provides an exemption that allows for emergency or managed haying and grazing, if applicable, during periods of natural disaster.

For More Information

Find more information about FSA and its conservation programs on the FSA website, www.fsa.usda.gov, or visit your FSA service center. FSA program contact: Lana Nesbit (202) 720-8772.

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.