



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Mississippi Delta CREP

OVERVIEW

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), and the state of Mississippi are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to increase the bottomland hardwood acres and restore wetlands within targeted watersheds in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley.

The Mississippi Delta CREP project area includes all land within Bolivar, Coahoma, Issaquena, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Washington and Yazoo counties.

BACKGROUND

CREP is a division 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 long-term, 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, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years. In its 30th year, CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014 (the 2014 Farm Bill).

Under CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by local, state, or tribal governments or non-governmental organizations, and federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

The Mississippi Delta CREP project partners include The Nature Conservancy, Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Delta F.A.R.M.,

Delta Wildlife, Entergy, Walton Family Foundation, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Mississippi State University, the Yazoo Water Management District, and Mississippi Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Parks.

PROGRAM GOALS

Mississippi Delta CREP goals are to:

- Increase the native bottomland hardwood forest acreage;
- Reduce nutrient and sediment loadings in impaired streams, and;
- Restore wetlands to serve as a habitat for several migratory waterfowl and shorebird species.

ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

The Mississippi CREP will seek to enroll up to 8,000 acres devoted to the following CRP practices:

- Riparian Buffers (CP22)
- Wetland Restoration (CP23)
- Bottomland Hardwood Establishment on Wetlands (CP31)

PAYMENTS AND INCENTIVES

CCC will pay 50 percent of the reimbursable costs of establishing conservation practices and a practice incentive payment that equals about 40 percent of the establishment cost. Annual rental payments will be based on the soil rental rate as calculated by FSA.

In addition, an increased signing incentive payment of up to \$300 per newly enrolled acre will be available to Mississippi Delta CREP participants.

ELIGIBILITY

CREP applications must satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP.

Participants must agree to establish and maintain eligible practices under a 14 or 15-year contract.

Land located in eligible counties must have been cropped four of the previous six years (2008-2013) and be physically and legally capable of being cropped.

SIGN-UP INFORMATION

CREP enrollment begins April 27, 2015, and operates on a continuous year-round basis. Interested parties are encouraged to contact the nearest USDA Service Center.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the Mississippi Delta CREP, contact your local USDA Service Center, FSA office, or Soil and Water Conservation District office. To find your local FSA county office, click <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

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