



### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Montana: Missouri and Madison River Systems

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#### 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 26,000 acres in portions of Blaine, Broadwater, Cascade, Chouteau, Gallatin, Fergus, Lewis and Clark, Madison and Phillips counties to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat along the Missouri and Madison Rivers through the establishment of riparian buffers, the planting of native and other grasses and the restoration of wetlands.

#### BACKGROUND

CREP is a 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. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

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 CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in the CRP for a minimum of 14-year, not to exceed 15-year, contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation.

#### GOALS

The goals of the Montana CREP are to:

- Improve water quality of the Missouri and Madison Rivers;
- Enhance wildlife habitat along the Missouri and Madison Rivers; and
- Restore degraded wetlands along the Missouri and Madison Rivers.

#### 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;
- CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-Easement;
- CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife;
- CP21, Filter Strips;
- CP22, Riparian Buffer;
- CP23, Wetland Restoration;
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain;
- CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat;
- CP29, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer; and
- CP30, Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer.

#### ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Signup for the Montana CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area and be either cropland or marginal pastureland. 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 also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as an eligible riparian buffer. Persons who have an existing CRP contract are not eligible for CREP on that land until that contract expires.

#### PAYMENTS

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

- An annual rental payment consisting of:
  - A base soil rental rate, determined by the type, location and vegetation of the land offered;
  - An incentive payment, as a percentage of the base soil rental rate, of 20 percent for dryland cropland and 40 percent for all other eligible land; and
  - A maintenance payment, determined by the practice offered.
- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre for installing practice CP21, CP22, CP29 and CP30; or \$150 per acre for installing practice CP23 and CP23A. Example: 10 acres enrolled to be devoted to practice CP21 results in a \$1,000 (10 acres times \$100) SIP.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) for installing practice CP9, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A, CP29 or CP30. The PIP is equal to 40 percent of the total eligible cost of installing the practice. Example: Producer's total eligible cost of installing the practice is \$2,000. The PIP would be \$800 (\$2,000 times .40).
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved conservation practice.

In addition, the State of Montana provides the following payments:

- A cost-share payment of 50 percent of the eligible cost to install practices CP2, CP4D, CP23 and CP25; and
- A cost-share payment of 10 percent of the eligible cost to install practices CP9, CP21 and CP22.

## EXAMPLES

A Gallatin County producer elects to enroll 20 acres of eligible marginal pastureland to be devoted to a riparian buffer (CP22) practice in a 15-year contract. The marginal pastureland rental rate is \$30 per acre. The incentive payment is \$12 per acre (\$30 times .40). The maintenance rate is \$5 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$47 per acre (\$30 + \$12 + \$5) for a total annual payment of \$940 (\$47 times 20 acres). The producer will receive a total of \$14,100 in annual rental payments over the 15-year life of the contract. In addition, the producer will receive a one-time SIP of \$2,000. The producer will have no out-of-pocket costs for installing the riparian buffer because of the federal cost-share and practice incentive payment, plus the State of Montana

cost-share.

A Broadwater County producer elects to enroll 100 acres of eligible dryland cropland to be devoted to permanent native grasses (CP2) practice in a 15-year contract. The dryland cropland rental rate for the acreage offered is \$47 per acre. The incentive is \$9 per acre (\$47 times .20). The producer's annual rental rate will be \$56 per acre for a total annual payment of \$5,600 (\$56 times 100 acres). The producer will receive a total \$84,000 in annual rental payments over the 15-year life of the contract. The producer will have no out-of-pocket costs for installing the practice because of the federal and state cost-share.

**Note:** The preceding are examples only.

## HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing are not allowed during the CRP contract period unless authorized by USDA. Contact your local FSA office for information about authorized haying and grazing.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. For more information on CREP, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation).

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