



Farm Service Agency

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – NORTH CAROLINA

FACT SHEET
March 2018

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of North Carolina are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 100,000 acres of agricultural land in the Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, Chowan, Lumber, White Oak, Yadkin-PeeDee, Cape Fear (including Jordan Lake), Roanoke and Pasquotank River Basins, which includes all or a portion of the following counties: Alamance, Alexander, Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Brunswick, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Camden, Carteret, Caswell, Chatham, Chowan, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Currituck, Dare, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Franklin, Gates, Granville, Greene, Guilford, Halifax, Harnett, Hertford, Hoke, Hyde, Iredell, Johnston, Jones, Lee, Lenoir, Martin, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, New Hanover, Northampton, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Sampson, Scotland, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Tyrrell, Union, Vance, Wake, Warren, Washington, Watauga, Wayne, Wilkes, Wilson and Yadkin.

The North Carolina CREP is intended to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies, improve wildlife habitat and restore wetlands.

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. 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 North Carolina CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 10-year to 15-year contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation or restore wetlands. This will improve water quality by reducing soil runoff, increasing ground water absorption and reducing stream sedimentation and nutrient loading from crop fields. It will also enhance and restore plant and wildlife habitat and wetlands.



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Goals

The goals of the North Carolina CREP are to:

- Reduce the amount of sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous and other pollutants from reaching streams and waterbodies;
- Restore and protect wetlands; and
- Restore and enhance riparian habitat corridors next to streams, drainage ditches, estuaries, wetlands and other water courses.

Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

CP3	Tree Planting
CP3A	Hardwood Tree Planting
CP21	Filter Strips
CP22	Riparian Buffer
CP23	Wetland Restoration
CP23A	Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
CP31	Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands

Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment for the North Carolina 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 along streams may also be eligible for enrollment.

Producers must enter into a permanent conservation agreement with the state for land to be eligible to be enrolled in the North Carolina CREP as CP23 or CP23A.

Producers must enter into a 15-year or permanent conservation agreement with the state for land enrolled in riparian areas under practices CP3, CP3A, CP21, CP22 and CP31 that are an average width greater than 100 feet and total 10 acres or more per FSA tract. No conservation agreement is required when the land enrolled in the North Carolina CREP is less than 10 acres.



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Payments

Under the North Carolina CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice.
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - A base soil rental rate determined by (1) for cropland, the three predominant soils of the land offered; or (2) for marginal pastureland, the posted marginal pastureland rate for the county;
 - An incentive payment, as a percentage of the base soil rental rate, of 70 percent for practice CP21, and 100 percent for practices CP3, CP3A, CP22, CP23, CP23A and CP31; and

Note: The incentive payment does not apply to re-enrolled land.

- A maintenance payment determined by the practice offered.

Note: A maximum per-acre rental rate cap may be applied.



In addition, the State of North Carolina provides the following payments to eligible participants:

- A cost-share payment of:
 - 25 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice for producers who enroll solely in a 10-year CRP contract;
 - 30 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice for producers who enroll solely in a 14-year to 15-year CRP contract;
 - 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install practice CP3, CP3A, CP21, CP22 or CP31, and enroll in a 30-year conservation agreement with the state; and
 - 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install practice CP3, CP3A, CP22, CP23, CP23A or CP31, and enroll in a permanent conservation agreement with the state.
- A one-time incentive payment of \$250 per acre for land enrolled in a 30-year easement with the state.
- A one-time incentive payment of \$1,000 per acre for land enrolled in a permanent easement with the state.

Note: Not all state payments apply to re-enrolled land.



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Examples

A Gates County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of land to be devoted to a riparian buffer (practice CP22) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a permanent easement with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$70 per acre. The incentive payment is \$70 per acre ($\70×1.0). The annual maintenance payment is \$10 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$150 per acre ($\$70 + \$70 + \10), for a total annual payment of \$1,500 ($\150×10 acres). The producer will receive \$22,500 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive a one-time incentive payment of \$10,000 (10 acres \times \$1,000) from the state. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 100 percent (50 percent from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and 50 percent from North Carolina) of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the riparian buffer. The producer will have no out-of-pocket costs for installing the riparian buffer.

A Franklin County producer elects to enroll 20 acres of land to be devoted to a restored wetland (practice CP23) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a permanent easement with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$59 per acre. The incentive payment is \$59 per acre ($\59×1.0). The producer's annual rental rate will be \$118 per acre ($\$59 + \59), for a total annual payment of \$2,360 ($\118×20 acres). The producer will receive \$35,400 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive a one-time incentive payment of \$20,000 (20 acres \times \$1,000) from the state. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 100 percent (50 percent from CCC and 50 percent from North Carolina) of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the restored wetland. The producer will have no out-of-pocket costs for installing the restored wetland.

Note: The preceding are examples only.

Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select for their land. Eligible producers may still enroll eligible land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the North Carolina CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the North Carolina CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and have flexibility to extend the duration of their CRP contracts that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

Haying and Grazing

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

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.