

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

CREP – Illinois



OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Illinois are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 232,000 acres of agricultural land in the Illinois River and Kaskaskia River watersheds within the State of Illinois. The Illinois CREP is intended to reduce the amount of agricultural chemicals and sediment from agricultural lands entering waters within the project area and enhance aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat.

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 Illinois CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14- to 15-year contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to grasses, trees, or other approved vegetation. This will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the area.

GOALS

The goals of the Illinois CREP include:

- ◆ Decreasing sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus loading within the Illinois and Kaskaskia watersheds;
- ◆ Increasing the population of avian species of greatest conservation need in the project area, as defined by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan; and
- ◆ Increasing the number of native fish and environmentally sensitive aquatic insects in stream reaches associated with the project area.



ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- ◆ CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- ◆ CP3A, Hardwood Tree Planting
- ◆ CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- ◆ CP12, Wildlife Food Plot (if in combination with another approved practice)
- ◆ CP21, Filter Strips
- ◆ CP22, Riparian Buffers
- ◆ CP23, Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP23A, Wetland Restoration—Non-Floodplain
- ◆ CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat (for prairie or tall grass prairie/oak savanna ecosystems)

STAY CONNECTED

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 sign-ups; however, CREP may provide additional benefits not available through those sign-up 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 on this project, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office:
farmers.gov/service-locator



ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment in CRP through the Illinois CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in Illinois and at least 5% of the land per contract must be located within the project area. Land must 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. It must currently be enrolled in CRP.

Eligible land must be one of the following:

- A flooded and/or wetland riparian area, defined as:
 - Within the 100-year floodplain of the Illinois or Kaskaskia River or one of their tributary streams, or
 - Outside the 100-year floodplain and is farmed wetland or a prior converted wetland
- A highly erodible riparian area, defined as cropland with a weighted average erodibility index of 8 or greater and located immediately adjacent to a riparian area within the 100-year floodplain of the Illinois or Kaskaskia River or one of their tributary streams

PAYMENTS

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

- ♦ A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives.
- ♦ A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives. The PIP is equal to up to 10 percent of eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of approved practices and is considered a cost-share payment subject to limitations.
- ♦ An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - A base soil rental rate, determined by the soils of the land offered
 - An incentive payment equal to 25 percent, except for land enrolled or re-enrolled under infeasible-to-farm provisions
 - A maintenance incentive payment in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives
- ♦ A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.
- ♦ A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost for the management of a riparian buffer (CP22)

In addition, the State of Illinois will provide a one-time easement payment to landowners for all land entered into an easement.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Illinois CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Illinois CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing is not authorized on land enrolled in CRP though the Illinois CREP.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.