

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Michigan State

Overview

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the state of Michigan have agreed on a plan to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve the water quality of Western Lake Erie, Macatawa, River Raisin, and Saginaw Bay Watershed and many of the streams and rivers that feed into these bodies of water. The Michigan CREP is a special conservation program tailored to meet the needs of the state.

CREP is a federal-state conservation partnership program that targets significant environmental effects related to agriculture. It is a voluntary program that uses financial incentives to encourage farmers and ranchers to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 15 years in duration to remove land from agricultural production. CRP is the nation's largest private lands conservation program and is implemented through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Goals

The Michigan CREP has been designed to:

- Reduce the amount of sediment entering the Michigan River by over 784,000 metric tons over the next 20 years;
- Reduce the amounts of

nitrogen and phosphorus from entering the river and streams by 1.6 and 0.8 million pounds, respectively;

- Protect water supplies used by over one million people;
- Protect over 5,000 linear miles of streams from sedimentation; and
- Improve wildlife habitat in the project area.

Benefits

CREP will provide a number of significant environmental benefits to Michigan's water bodies:

- Filter strips and riparian buffers will be planted next to streams, rivers, and drainage ditches to prevent sediment and pollutants from entering the water bodies. Filter strips and riparian buffers significantly reduce the amount of pollutants entering surface water supplies. This will reduce treatment cost and provide long term-protection of water resources used by over one million people.
- An estimated 5,000 linear miles of streams will be protected.
- Improved water quality will result from reduced nutrient loading, sediment loading, and pesticide runoff.
- Forested buffers will also help lower water temperatures and enhance wildlife habitat.

Approved Conservation Practices

To achieve program goals, these specific conservation practices have been identified:

- CP1, Planting of Introduced Grasses
- CP2, Planting of Native Grasses
- CP5A, Field Windbreaks
- CP21, Filter Strips
- CP22, Riparian Buffers
- CP23, Wetland Restoration
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
- CP26, Sediment Retentions Control Structure

Sign up and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment for the Michigan CREP will be on a continuous basis. Eligible land must be within the project area and meet the basic eligibility criteria for the CRP. Land must be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must have been planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the past 6 years (2002-2007) and be physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland can be enrolled provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. Lands that have an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires.

Michigan CREP Payments

CREP participants are eligible for three types of payments: base annual rental payments; incentive payments; and state cost-share assistance payments. Annual rental payments are based on the soil rental rate.

In addition to the normal cropland rental payment, CCC will make a special incentive payment.

Forty percent of the normal cropland rental rate will be combined with a base annual rental payment as applicable in accordance with the provisions of Handbook 2-CRP.

For example: If the normal cropland rental rate is \$100 per acre, the incentive rate would be 40 percent of \$100 or \$40 per acre. The total annual payment would be \$140 per acre.

In addition, CCC will pay a one-time lump sum payment of \$100 per acre for land devoted to filter strips, riparian buffers, and field windbreaks is provided to the producer after the contract is signed.

CCC pays up to 50 percent of the establishment cost of conservation practices. Michigan will provide the producers the remaining 50 percent of the cost. Thus, producers should have no out-of-pocket cost to install the conservation practices.

Program Cost

The estimated cost of the program is \$177 million. The federal share is \$142 million, and

the state share is \$35 million.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing is not permitted during the CRP contract period unless the Secretary of Agriculture permits it for emergency purposes.

For More Information

For further information, producers should contact FSA or the Natural Resources Conservation Service within their local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center, or the local Soil and Water Conservation District Office. Information may also be obtained from the FSA web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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