

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - North Dakota

Overview

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the state of North Dakota have agreed to a plan to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

This voluntary program encourages farmers to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 14- to 15- years duration to remove lands from agricultural production. CRP is a CCC program implemented through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This CREP provides for the creation of critical winter habitat that is essential for maintaining viable wildlife population. It also improves water quality, reduces soil erosion, provides public access to wildlife, and improves rural economies.

Goals

The goals of the project are to create 1,000 20-acre cover locks that will provide essential wildlife habitat and also to provide public access to 160,000 acres. This CREP will improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, and assist the state in meeting water quality objectives.

What Area Does It Cover?

The project is targeted to the following areas:

- Beaver Creek Watershed in Emmons, Logan, and McIntosh Counties;
- Heart River Watershed in portions of Dunn, Grant, Hettinger, Morton, Oliver, and Stark Counties;
- Western Wild Rice Cover Watershed in portions of Dickey and Sargent Counties;

- Upper James River in portions of Dickey, LaMoure, Logan, and Sargent Counties;
- Knife River in portions of Dunn, Mercer, Morton, and Stark Counties; and
- Grand River in portions of Adams County.

Benefits of the Program

This program is expected to have significant water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational benefits in North Dakota.

What Kind of Conservation Practices Are Eligible?

Eligible CRP practices are:

- CP4D (Permanent Wildlife Habitat);
- CP12 (Food Plots);
- CP16A (Shelterbelts).

What are the Eligibility Requirements?

CREP applications must satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for the CRP.

Participants must agree to establish and maintain eligible practices under a 14- to 15-year contract. Land must have been cropped 4 of the previous 6 years and be physically and legally capable of being cropped.

Payments Under CREP

The annual rental payment is based on the soil rental rate as calculated by FSA. It includes a 20 percent incentive payment above the annual per acre rental rate.

In addition, USDA will provide a signing incentive payment consistent with Handbook 2-CRP and

a practice incentive payment that equals about 40 percent of the establishment cost for land enrolled in shelterbelts.

The state of North Dakota will also pay the remaining portion of the eligible out-of-pocket cost to install the practices and the cost to secure an easement.

The federal government will pay up to 50 percent of the cost of installing the shelterbelt and permanent wildlife habitat. For producers who enroll in a 14- to 15-year CREP contract, the state will pay up to 50 percent of the remaining cost for these practices and 100 percent of food plot costs.

Easement Requirements

The state of North Dakota will obtain a 30-year land use easement on the 20-acre cover lock. This will require the participant to maintain the vegetative cover on the 20-acre plot for the easement period. The state will also obtain a public access easement on the 20-acre plot and at least 140 adjacent acres.

How Much Will It Cost?

For an enrollment of 20,000 acres, the expected financial federal and state obligation will be approximately \$43 million over 15 years, with \$20 million coming from the federal government and \$23 million coming from the state.

Can I Still Enroll in General CRP and Continuous Signup CRP?

Yes, CREP is just another option that farmers may select to enhance their land; an applicant may still enroll in the general CRP or continuous signup CRP. However,

CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general or continuous signup. Under CREP, applicants have flexibility to extend the duration of their conservation contract and thus increase the sum total of rental payments. Also, the enrollment process is on a continuous basis, and payments are at a higher rate.

Haying and Grazing

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

Where and When Do I Apply to Participate?

CREP operates on a continuous basis. Interested parties are encouraged to contact their local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center or Soil and Water Conservation District.

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