

Washington State Fact Sheet

January 2004

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Overview

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is part of FSA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The Washington CREP provides incentives to restore and improve salmon and steelhead habitat on private land. It is a Federal-State partnership, based on an Agreement signed by Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Washington Governor Gary Locke on October 19, 1998.

CREP is a voluntary program to establish forested buffers along streams where riparian habitat is a significant limiting factor for salmonids. In addition to providing habitat, the buffers improve water quality and increase stream stability.

Land enrolled in CREP is removed from production and grazing, under 10-15 year contracts. In return landowners receive annual rental, incentive,

maintenance and cost share payments.

Program Flexibility

CREP recognizes site variability. Buffer widths vary based on local site conditions. The buffer boundary can be moved toward or away from the stream at different locations to meet landowner needs, as long as the buffer standard's requirements are met. Producers can enroll all or a portion of the eligible streams on their land. They can enroll one or both sides of the stream.

Recent Improvements

Improvements to CREP approved in the fall of 2003 provided more flexibility in buffer designs and reduced the minimum width in some cases.

Eligible Land

Eligible land must (1) have the required cropping history, (2) be able to support trees and shrubs, and (3) be parallel and adjacent to an eligible stream.

For the cropping history requirement, the land must meet one of the following:

- planted to annual crops, perennial grasses or legumes, or used as summer fallow, 4 of the 6 years 1996-2001. Perennial grasses or legumes must have been planted during 1996-2001.
- capable of functioning as pasture.

There is no minimum or maximum acreage to enroll. However, the minimum buffer width is 35 feet, and the maximum width is 180 feet.

Eligible Streams

There are 10,000 miles of streams designated as eligible for CREP enrollment in the state. These streams were designated using several criteria, and target streams where riparian habitat is a significant limiting factor for salmon and/or steelhead species.

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Eligible Participants

The operator of record and landowner(s) are eligible to participate on the contract. The land must have been owned or operated for at least 12 months prior to offering it for CREP.

Contract Length and Start Date

The applicant can choose a 10 to 15 year contract.

CREP contracts begin the first of the month following FSA approval of the contract. For example, if a contract is approved March 15, it will become effective, and annual rental payments will begin to accrue, on April 1. The participant may delay the effective date up to 6 months.

The CREP contract can not be approved until all required documents are completed and signed, including:

- CRP worksheet
- CRP contract
- conservation plan
- landlord/tenant certification
- payment limitation forms
- conservation compliance form

- DCP contract acreage reduction, if applicable
- an FSA acreage measurement (a small fee applies).

Continuous SignUp

CREP signups are accepted year round. Producers can initiate an offer at any time, and once eligibility has been determined, can proceed with contract development immediately, or delay the contract start date for up to 6 months. CREP offers do not go through a competitive bid process, as regular CRP offers do.

Riparian Buffers

Riparian buffers must be planted to native trees and shrubs suitable to the site. Grasses will also be included if necessary. Native grasses will be used if available, or comparable introduced grasses if natives are not available. Only native trees and shrubs will be used.

The minimum buffer width is based on the larger of 35 feet or 30 percent of the active floodplain. However, the minimum width will never be greater than 100 feet. This means that the minimum required

width will always be somewhere between 35 and 100 feet.

The maximum average buffer width is 180 feet. With a specified minimum width of 35-100 feet, the landowner can still enroll up to a 180-foot wide buffer.

The buffers must be done according to Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications. Technical assistance to design and install the buffer is provided by NRCS and local Conservation Districts.

Annual Rental Payments

Annual rental payments are based on the FSA established rental rate for the soils in the offered acreage. The rental rate equals the sum of:

- 200% of the weighted average soil rental rate (SRR) for the offered land. Average SRR's vary from \$30-\$290.
- An incentive equal to 10% of the average SRR for land designated as

“agricultural land of state significance” under Washington’s Growth Management Act.

- a \$7-\$10 per acre annual maintenance payment, depending on the components.

Annual rental payments are divided among the participants based on their share on the CRP contract. They are issued shortly after October 1 each year.

Signing Incentive Payments (SIP)

SIP’s equal \$10/acre/full contract year. A 10-year contract could earn \$100/acre and a full 15-year contract could earn \$150/acre. The payment is divided based on the participant’s shares on the CRP contract. It can be issued shortly after the contract is approved.

Cost Share Payments

CREP provides three types of payments, that add up to cover 100% of the eligible costs for establishing the riparian buffer cover, as well as fencing, livestock water, and in the case of small streams, livestock crossings. These payments consist of:

- FSA cost share payments equal to 50% of the eligible costs for establishing the required cover. The payments are issued after each phase of cover establishment is completed and certified as meeting the required specifications. The payment goes to the participants who bear the cost of cover establishment.
- State cost share payments equal to 10% of the eligible costs for establishing the required cover. These payments are also issued after each phase of cover establishment is completed and certified as meeting the required specifications. They go to the participants who bear the cost of cover establishment.
- **A Practice Incentive Payment (PIP)**, equal to 40% of the eligible costs for establishing the required cover. Unlike cost shares, the PIP is not issued until the cover establishment is completed. The payments are divided based on the participant’s shares on the CREP contract.

The sum of the 50% FSA cost share, 10% State cost share, and 40% PIP, provide reimbursement for 100% of the eligible establishment costs.

Maintenance Payments

After the riparian buffer cover is established, Washington State will pay maintenance payments equal to 100% of the eligible costs of maintaining the cover to specifications, for up to 5 years. To request this payment, participants must submit receipts of other cost documents to support their claim. These payments will be issued by the local Conservation District.

Payment Limitation

Annual rental payments, including the incentives, SIP’s and PIP’s, are subject to a payment limitation of \$50,000/person/year. Any payments in excess of this amount will not be issued. The limit applies collectively to all CRP and CREP contracts the producer has throughout the U.S.

There is no limitation on cost share payments or

the State maintenance payments.

Payment Example

A participant offers 10 acres for CREP. The average soil rental rate (SRR) for the offered land is \$70/acre. A fence will also be needed to exclude livestock. The contract will cover a full 15 years. Total estimated establishment costs, including the fence, are \$1,000/acre. Annual maintenance will average \$50/acre/year for the first 5 years. The payments will be:

SIP:

10 acres X \$10/acre X 15 years = \$1,500 one-time payment

Annual rental payments:

10 acres X (\$70 SRR X 200% + \$9 maintenance) = \$1490 annually for 15 years

FSA cost share:

10 acres X \$1,000/acre X 50% = \$5,000

State cost share:

10 acres X \$1,000/acre X 10% = \$1,000

PIP:

10 acres X \$1,000/acre X 40% = \$4,000

Maintenance:

10 acres X \$50/acre = \$500 annually for up to 5 years

For More Information

For more information about CREP, contact your local USDA Service Center or Conservation District. After an application is submitted, a no-obligation eligibility review will be conducted, and you will be provided a final opportunity to decide if you want to enroll the land.

Also visit our website at **<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa/CREP53b.htm>**

This Fact Sheet is a summary of CREP, and is not intended to cover all situations or program provisions. Contact your local USDA Service Center or Conservation District office for specific questions about your land.

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