

**Fact Sheet****Conservation Reserve Program
Iowa Enhancement Program****Overview**

USDA and the State of Iowa have partnered on a \$38 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to address water quality issues related to excess nitrogen impacting water quality in 37 counties in north central Iowa.

CREP uses federal and state resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Producers enrolled in CRP remove lands from agricultural production and plant native grasses, trees, and other vegetation to improve water quality, soil, and wildlife habitat. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. CREP provides rental payments and other financial incentives to encourage producers to voluntarily enroll in long-term CRP contracts.

Benefits

The Iowa CREP will restore wetlands and install riparian buffer practices on 9,000 acres in north central Iowa. The wetlands will reduce nitrogen loading in streams and rivers by 40 to 90 percent. This will reduce water treatment costs for the city of Des Moines, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce nitrogen loading to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. The program

will also help participants reduce sediment by installing riparian buffers in the Lake Panorama watershed.

Goals

The goals of the Iowa CREP are to:

- Reduce the nitrogen loading to streams by 300 to 600 tons per year.
- Reduce sediment entering surface waters in the Lake Panorama Watershed by 80,000 tons per year.
- Reduce or maintain soil erosion rates at or below 2-5 tons per acre.
- Demonstrate a variety of available wetland technologies and their value for improving water quality.
- Enhance wildlife habitat.
- Increase recreational opportunities.

Program Cost

The expected combined federal and state obligation is \$38 million over 15 years, with \$31 million coming from USDA and \$7 million from Iowa. This does not include any costs that may be borne by producers. Iowa's share is approximately 20 percent of the total program costs and USDA's share is approximately 80 percent.

Eligible Areas

Producers can offer land in 37 counties in the north central tile drained areas of the state. To find out if your operation is located within the project area, contact your local USDA service center.

Approved Conservation Practices

The following conservation practices may be eligible for enrollment into the Iowa CREP:

- CP7 Erosion Control Structure
- CP21 Filter Strips
- CP22 Riparian Buffer
- CP23 Wetland Restoration

Signup and Eligibility Requirements

Eligible producers can enroll in 14- to 15 year CRP contracts. Producers may extend the benefits of the program through separate contracts with the state. Applicants must be able to offer eligible acreage and satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP. Land must be cropland that has been cropped 2 out of the past 5 years and is physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland is also eligible provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees.

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CREP Payments

Iowa CREP participants are eligible for four types of USDA payments:

1. Signing Incentive Payment - a one-time payment of \$140 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in a riparian buffer practice or filter strip. USDA makes this payment soon after the contract has been signed.
2. Practice Incentive Payment - payment equal to about 40 percent of the total cost for establishing the practice. This payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost share assistance that USDA provides.
3. Annual rental payment that is generally 120 or 150 percent of the dryland cash rental rate for the county in which the land is located. The 150 percent rate applies to wetland restoration or erosion control structures.
4. Cost share assistance for installing the conservation practices on retired land.

Iowa will offer one time lump sum incentive payments based on a formula that considers land values, landowner time investment, and the discounted value of the annual base rental payment of the CRP contract. Iowa will also pay the producer 10 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs of the practice.

Enrollment in Other Programs

Applicants may still enroll in general or continuous signup CRP. However, CREP provides additional

benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. For instance, the CREP enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are at a higher effective rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing is not allowed during the CRP contract period unless USDA permits it for emergency purposes under normal CRP rules.

For More Information

For more information on the Iowa CREP, contact your local USDA service center, Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, Soil and Water Conservation District office, or Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. Additional information is also available at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and at <http://www.state.ia.us/agriculture/>

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