



United States
Department of
Agriculture

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Farm Service Agency

Fact Sheet

**Conservation Reserve Program
Continuous Signup**

**Montana State
Producer Handbook**



Overview

CRP is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource-conserving covers on eligible land.

Continuous CRP Signup

Land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled in CRP at any time under CRP continuous sign-up. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding.

Signup

Producers offering eligible land at their local FSA office for the continuous CRP signup may be eligible for certain incentives.

Key Provisions

Key provisions of the continuous signup incentives include:

- An up-front CRP Signing Incentive Payment (CRP-SIP) of \$100 to \$150 per acre (depending on contract length) will be provided to eligible participants who enroll selected practices. This one-time payment will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met.

- A Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs will be provided to eligible participants enrolling certain practices. This one-time payment will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met. PIP partial payments are not allowed.
- Rental rates have been established for certain marginal pastureland to better reflect the value of such lands to farmers and ranchers.

Eligible Land and Practices

To be eligible under continuous signup, land must first meet the basic CRP eligibility requirements.

Acceptable land is:

1. Cropland (including field margins) that was planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 out of the last 6 crop years from 1996-2001 (including field margins), which is also physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
2. Certain marginal pastureland that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.

The acreage must also be determined by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to be eligible and suitable for any of the following practices:

- Riparian buffers;
- Filter strips;
- Grassed waterways;
- Shelter belts;
- Field windbreaks;
- Shallow water areas for wildlife;
- Establishment of permanent vegetative cover (contour grass strips);
- Establishment of permanent vegetative cover (contour grass strips), on terraces;
- Establishment of permanent vegetation to reduce salinity;
- Establishment of permanent salt tolerant vegetative cover;
- Wetland restoration;
- Cross wind trap strips;
- Farmable wetlands;
- Farmable wetland buffer;
- Marginal pastureland wildlife habitat buffer;
- Marginal pastureland wetland buffer; and
- Living snow fences.

Producers may enroll entire fields as buffers through the continuous sign-up when more than 50% of the field is eligible and farming is infeasible on the remainder of the field. Payments on the remaining acreage are limited to general sign-up rates.

Producer Eligibility Requirement

To be eligible for CRP continuous sign-up enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer except for:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right or redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP. Only the national FSA office can approve such a waiver.

Rental Payments

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. The rental rates are based on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment.

The per acre annual rental rate may not exceed FSA's maximum payment amount and is calculated in advance of enrollment

Cost-Share Payments

In addition FSA will pay up to 50 percent of the participants' cost of establishing approved practices.

Financial Incentives

As a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers financial incentives of up to 20 percent of

the soil rental rate for field windbreaks, grass waterways, filter strips, and riparian buffers. An additional 10 percent may be added to the soil rental rate for land located within an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated wellhead protection area. A per acre payment rate may also be added for maintenance of eligible practices.

Contract Effective Date

The effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to 6 months. If the acreage is currently under CRP contract and is within 1 year of the scheduled expiration date, the effective date is the October 1 following the expiration date.

Length of Contracts

Contracts are for no less than 10 and no more than 15 years in duration.

Cooperating Agencies

CRP is administered by USDA's FSA with assistance from NRCS, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, State agencies, and local soil and water conservation districts. Producers can find out program details and offer acreage for enrollment at their local county FSA or NRCS office, both of which are listed in telephone books under "United States Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

For Additional Information

Additional information may be obtained at local FSA offices or through the Montana FSA Web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt>

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