

# Conservation Reserve Program

## Overview

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, you can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and it provides cost-share assistance for up to 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years.

## Benefits

CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.

## CRP Administration

FSA administers CRP, while technical support functions are provided by:

- USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS);
- USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture;
- State forestry agencies;
- Local soil and water conservation districts;
- Private sector providers of technical assistance.

## CRP General Sign-up

Producers can offer land for CRP general sign-up enrollment only during designated sign-up periods. For information on upcoming sign-ups, contact your local FSA office. To find your local office, visit FSA's Web site at:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=fsa>

## CRP Continuous Sign-up

Environmentally desirable land devoted to certain conservation practices may be enrolled at any time under CRP continuous sign-up. Certain eligibility requirements still apply, but offers are not subject to competitive bidding. Further information on CRP continuous sign-up is available in the FSA fact sheet "[Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up](#)."

## Eligible Producers

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP sign-up period, unless:

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 require the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

## **Eligible Land**

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 2002 to 2007, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.

## **Additional Cropland Requirements**

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

Have a weighted average erosion index of 8 or higher;

- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

## **CRP Payments**

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance:

- Rental Payments - In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dry land cash rent or cash-rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.
- Maintenance Incentive Payments - For certain continuous signup practices, CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount up to \$5 per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.
- Cost-share Assistance - FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be an amount not more than 50 percent of the participants' costs in establishing approved practices.
- Other Incentives - FSA may offer additional financial incentives of up to 20 percent of the annual payment for certain continuous sign-up practices.

## **Ranking CRP Offers**

Offers for CRP contracts are ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). FSA collects data for each of the EBI factors based on the relative environmental benefits for the land offered. Each eligible offer is ranked in comparison to all other offers and selections made from that ranking. FSA uses the following EBI factors to assess the environmental benefits for the land offered:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage;
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching;
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion;
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period;
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion; and
- Cost.

## **For More Information**

For more information on CRP, contact your local FSA office.

---

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.