



USDA and State of South Dakota Announce Opening of the South Dakota Big Sioux River Watershed Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

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Huron, South Dakota, December 1, 2022- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of South Dakota are expanding their partnership through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to assist South Dakota farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners in improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, enhancing wildlife habitat, and creating public hunting and fishing access. The Big Sioux River Watershed CREP, offered by USDA and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks, (SD GF&P) expands the voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs available to South Dakota agricultural producers and focuses on the Big Sioux River watershed. Enrollment for the South Dakota CREP opened November 1, 2022.

"CREP is one of our most flexible tools when it comes to voluntary, locally led, partner-driven conservation efforts, and we're so glad that we're able to put it to work in South Dakota," said Steve Dick, USDA Farm Service Agency State Director in South Dakota. "This initiative will have a positive impact in South Dakota, and we look forward to broadening the reach of the program to new agricultural producers and landscapes. We are so grateful to have support from South Dakota leaders to make this program possible."

"Landowners and producers in the Big Sioux River watershed are eligible for this program," said Kevin Robling, GFP Secretary. "The difference between CREP and CRP is that public hunting and fishing access is required on CREP enrolled acres and participants receive a higher total payment than if they just enroll in CRP."

Through the South Dakota CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP contracts and public land access agreements with the State of South Dakota for 10-to-15-years. Participants restore cropland and marginal pastureland to grasses, wetlands, or other approved vegetation. This will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen, and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the project area. In return, FSA provides participants with cost-share assistance and annual rental payments, and SD GF&P provides an additional annual rental payment for the enrolled acres open to walk-in public hunting and fishing access.

Eligible practices include permanent wildlife habitat, filter strips, wetland restorations, rare and declining habitat for prairie, duck nesting habitat, prairie strips, marginal pastureland wildlife habitat

buffers, and marginal pastureland buffers.

"We are excited to partner with SD GF&P to offer this great watershed conservation incentive for South Dakota landowners and producers," Dick said. "Working together, we can deliver critical environmental benefits through voluntary conservation efforts, enhance agricultural productivity, and improve water quality in South Dakota, the Big Sioux River watershed, and downstream."

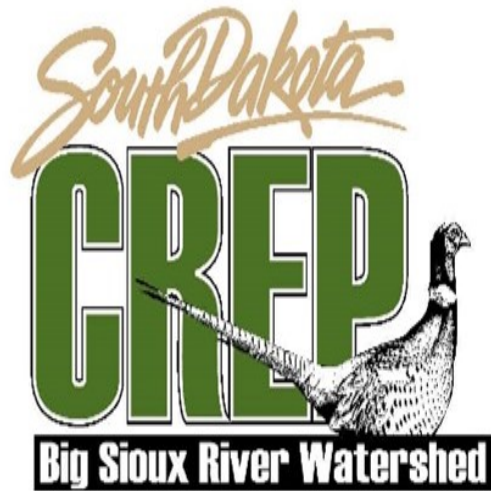
The South Dakota CREP includes all or portions of the following 18 counties in the Big Sioux River Watershed: Brookings, Clark, Clay, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, Marshall, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, Roberts, Turner, and Union counties.

Eligible participants can qualify for annual rental payments, cost share for installing the approved conservation practices, and incentive payments for certain practices. In addition, SD GF&P will provide eligible participants additional annual rental payment.

Interested farmers, ranchers, and agricultural landowners are encouraged to contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at their local USDA Service Center, a Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist, or GFP private lands habitat biologist to learn more or to participate. Find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator or on the map below.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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