

Iowa Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Iowa are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 9,000 acres of agricultural land in Boone, Buena Vista, Butler, Calhoun, Carroll, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Clay, Dallas, Dickinson, Emmet, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Grundy, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Humboldt, Jasper, Kossuth, Madison, Marshall, Mitchell, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Polk, Sac, Story, Warren, Webster, Winnebago, Worth, and Wright counties. The purpose of the Iowa CREP is to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous, and other pollutants entering waterbodies, improve wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands.

Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land

is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as "covers") to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and then federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Iowa CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14 to 15-year contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses and restore wetlands. This will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the area. A unique aspect of the Iowa CREP wetland is that nitrate reduction is not simply assumed based on wetland acres enrolled, but is calculated based on the measured performance of CREP wetlands by Iowa State University. As an integral part of the Iowa CREP, a representative subset of wetlands is monitored and mass balance analyses performed to document nitrate reduction. **Research at Iowa State University** has demonstrated that strategically sited and designed wetlands can remove 40-90% of nitrates and over 90% of herbicides from cropland drainage waters.



For More Information

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.

Iowa State Farm Service Agency
10500 Buena Vista Ct.
Des Moines, IA 50322
(515) 254-1540





Goals

The goals of the Iowa CREP include:

- Annually, add the capacity to remove 300 to 600 tons of nitrate-nitrogen from agricultural tile drainage. Over the next 10 years, this would add wetland capacity to annually remove 3,000 to 6,000 tons of nitrate-nitrogen from agricultural tile drainage. Over a 60-year life, each wetland acre would remove approximately 20 to 40 tons of nitrate-nitrogen.
- Reduce or maintain soil erosion on the agricultural land enrolled in the CREP to below the soil loss tolerance level for the soils present (2-5 tons per acre).
- Demonstrate a variety of available wetlands technologies and their value for improving water quality.

Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP23, Wetland Restoration

Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the Iowa CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria according to current FSA National CRP Directives

and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable to be devoted to a wetland riparian buffer.

Payments

Under the Iowa CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of CP23.
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - A base soil rental rate, determined by the soils of the land offered
 - A 50 percent incentive payment, except for land enrolled or re-enrolled under infeasible-to-farm provisions:
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.

In addition, the State of Iowa will provide the following payments to eligible participants installing practice CP23:

- A one-time lump sum incentive payment 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.

- A cost-share payment of up to 10 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.

Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Iowa CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Iowa CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

Haying and Grazing

Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.

