

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Agency/Organization: Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Program: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

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Program Description:

CREP aims to improve water quality in streams and lakes by helping agricultural landowners voluntarily establish vegetative buffers which filter runoff by trapping sediment, fertilizers, and pesticides. Landowners are compensated for the loss of productive agricultural land through upfront incentive payments and annual rental payments based on the total acreage dedicated to forested buffers or vegetated filter strips. Buffers must be maintained for the contract length (15 or 30 years).

Assistance Type: Financial; Technical

Financial Assistance: There are three payment types:

Practice Costs: The cost of installing the practice (riparian buffer, fencing etc) will be covered between 90% and 100% depending on the combination of programs used.

Upfront Practices: The participant will receive an upfront Federal payment and a separate State payment. The Federal Payment is a USDA Commodity Credit Corporation payment of \$100 /acre. The State payment varies based on the cropping history for the past 6 years. A contract can be 15 or 30 years, however, the Federal CRP contract that must be signed has a maximum length of 15 years. The additional 15 years is an option with the VAAFM which provides \$10/acre more than the 15 year contract in the upfront incentive payment.

Annual Rental Payments: Annual rental payments are paid each year by the USDA after October 1. The annual payment includes a rental rate for the land taken out of production as well as a maintenance payment for upkeep of the practices. Rental rates are based on the soil type at the county level as a reflection of the land productivity. The maintenance rate depends on the practice installed.

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ELIGIBILITY

Landscape Type: Agriculture

Resource Type: Soil Conservation, Water Quality

Criteria:

Landowners must have owned or operated their land for 12 months prior to enrollment and must have a water quality concern that can be ameliorated through changes in agricultural activities. The main resource concern is a prominent stream or river adjoining your fields with issues such as concentrated nutrient and pollutant runoff, and significant sediment losses due to overland flow. CREP does not cover small channels on cropland caused by rains and erosion, wetlands, man-made ponds, and entire fields. Pasture, hay land, or cropland adjacent to streams that lack adequate buffers to protect water quality are eligible. To ensure that the acreage under enrollment is not substantially reduced by streambank erosion over a 15 or 30 year contract, streambanks must be stable to be considered eligible unless the landowner can offer a considerably wider buffer to capture the gains and losses caused by erosion.