



Fact Sheet



Electronic Edition

March 2012 Conservation Reserve Program West Virginia Enhancement Program

Overview

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and West Virginia are implementing a \$25 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to protect water quality and wildlife habitat in selected watersheds.

CREP is an enhancement of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that uses Federal and State resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through special CRP enrollments. Producers enrolled in CRP convert environmentally sensitive cropland and/or marginal pastureland from agricultural production to the planting of native grasses, trees, and other vegetation to improve water and soil quality, and wildlife habitat. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. CREP provides rental payments and other financial incentives to encourage producers to voluntarily enroll in 10- to 15-year CRP contracts.

Benefits

The West Virginia CREP offers rental payments to farmers who voluntarily convert this environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as riparian buffers, filter strips, and/or wetlands. Additionally, CREP helps reduce agricultural runoff and sediment from entering the Cheat, Kanawha, Little Kanawha, Monongahela, Ohio, and Potomac Rivers.

Goals

The goals of the West Virginia CREP are to:

- Enroll up to 9,160 acres of eligible cropland and/or marginal pastureland located within the project area;
- Reduce agricultural runoff, sediment, and nutrients from entering designated watersheds;
- Promote improved water quality and enhance wildlife habitat in the recognized drainage areas;
- Protect soil, water, and wildlife habitat in the project area.

Program Cost

Based on the projection of the West Virginia CREP, which estimates an enrollment of 9,160 acres, the expected combined financial Federal and State obligation will be approximately \$25 million. Of that amount, \$20 million will come from CCC and \$5 million from the State. This does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers. West Virginia's share is approximately 20 percent of the total program costs and CCC's share is approximately 80 percent.

Eligible Areas

Producers can offer land in any part of the watersheds of the Cheat, Kanawha, Little Kanawha, Monongahela, Ohio, and Potomac Rivers in West Virginia. Contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office for specific information concerning your eligibility for CREP.

Approved Conservation Practices

The following conservation practices may be eligible for land enrolled into the West Virginia CREP:

- CP1 Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- CP2 Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP3A Hardwood Tree Planting
- CP21 Filter Strips
- CP22 Riparian Buffer
- CP23 Wetland Restoration

Signup and Eligibility Requirements

Eligible producers will be able to enroll in 10- to 15 year CREP contracts. Eligible acreage must satisfy basic CRP eligibility criteria for CREP. Cropland must have been cropped 4 out of the 6 years (2002-2007) and must meet basic eligibility criteria. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. In addition, producers must generally have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to enrollment. Persons who have an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires.

CREP Payments

West Virginia CREP participants are eligible for five types of CCC payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment - A one-time payment of \$100 per acre for land enrolled in a riparian buffer or filter strip practice. This payment is made soon after the contract has been signed and approved.
- Practice Incentive Payment - A payment equal to about 40 percent of the eligible cost for establishing the riparian buffer or filter strip. (This one-time incentive payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost share assistance that CCC will provide for installing the selected practices, making an approximate 90% cost coverage)

- Annual Rental Payment for the life of the contract - An annual rate that includes an incentive equal to 100 percent of the calculated annual soil rental rate for the land offered in the contract, with an additional maintenance amount added for riparian buffer and filter strip practices.
- Up to 50 percent cost share assistance for the installation of the eligible conservation practices on land that is enrolled in CREP. (90% cost coverage may be provided when combined with the Practice Incentive Payment)

In addition, the State of West Virginia will offer a one time, lump-sum incentive payment equal to the Federal rental base rate multiplied by the number of acres enrolled and accepted into CREP.

Enrollment in Other Programs

Applicants may still choose to enroll in the general or continuous CRP signup. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. The CREP enrollment process is on a continuous basis and payments are at a higher effective rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing are only allowed during the CRP contract period under certain circumstances and in emergency situations with USDA authorization.

For More Information

For more information on the West Virginia CREP, contact your local USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, or your local Conservation District office. Additional information is also available on FSA's web site:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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