

**Fact Sheet****Conservation Reserve Program
West Virginia Enhancement Program****Overview**

USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and West Virginia have launched a \$11.4 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 highly erodible cropland from agricultural production to the planting of native grasses, trees, 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 highly erodible cropland or other 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 Potomac, New, Greenbrier, and Little Kanawha Rivers.

Goals

The goals of the West Virginia CREP are to:

- Enroll up to 4,160 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 initial implementation of the West Virginia CREP, which projects an enrollment of 4,160 acres in the first year, the expected combined financial Federal and State obligation will be approximately \$11.4 million over the next year. Of that amount, \$8.2 million will come from CCC and \$3.2 million from the State. This does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers. West Virginia's share is approximately 28 percent of the total program costs and CCC's share is approximately 72 percent.

Eligible Areas

Producers can offer land in any part of the watersheds of the Potomac, New, Greenbrier, and Little Kanawha 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
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- 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 CRP contracts. Eligible acreage must satisfy basic CRP eligibility criteria for CRP. Cropland must have been cropped 2 out of the past 5 years and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a

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normal manner. 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 to \$150 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.
- 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.

In addition, the State of West Virginia will offer a one time, lump-sum incentive payment equal to the Federal annual rental payment amount 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 not allowed during the CRP contract period unless USDA permits it for emergency purposes under normal CRP rules.

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 Soil and Water Conservation District office. Additional information is also available on FSA's web site: www.fsa.usda.gov

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