



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program New Jersey State

Overview

The New Jersey Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is designed to help farmers reduce impairment from agricultural water runoff sources in an effort to improve water quality along both impaired and unimpaired New Jersey streams. Retiring highly erodible cropland and planting it to protective vegetation will enhance water quality; reduce water treatment costs for New Jersey's cities; and provide shelter, nesting areas and food for many species of wildlife. Buffers planted along stream banks and rivers will filter phosphorus, nitrogen and sediments from the waterways and reduce biological impairment in the Atlantic Ocean.

CREP is a federal-state natural resource conservation program that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental problems. Under CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10- to 15-years. Participants remove marginal pastureland or cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

Eligible Areas

Producers can offer eligible cropland and marginal pastureland in New Jersey's Delaware and Wallkill watersheds and the Northeast, Raritan and Atlantic regions of the state that drain toward the Atlantic Ocean. Interested producers should contact their local FSA county office for specific information regarding their eligibility for CREP.

Goals

The goals of the New Jersey CREP include:

- Enrolling 30,000 acres of eligible farmland into CREP for the planting of grass waterways, contour grass strips, filter strips and riparian buffers;
- Maintaining and restoring ecological functions of streams by reducing biological impairment and improving water quality;
- Addressing non-point source pollution from agricultural runoff by reducing 26,000 pounds of phosphorous and 7 million pounds of Total Suspended Solids (dirt and other foreign particles) annually;
- Maintaining a high level of water quality in unimpaired streams through the prevention of additional pollutants;
- Enhancing farm viability; and
- Establishing permanent easements to aid in reaching the state's open-space goals.

Approved Conservation Practices

To better serve program goals, the following CRP conservation practices are included in the New Jersey CREP:

- CP8A - Grass Waterways, Noneasement;
- CP15A - Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips), Noneasement;
- CP21 - Filter Strips (Grass Strips); and
- CP22 - Riparian Buffers (Trees Planted Next to Streams).

Sign-up and Eligibility Requirements

Sign-up for the New Jersey CREP begins March 15, 2004, and continues until enrollment goals are attained, or through Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as a buffer practice. Persons who have acreage under an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP on that acreage until that contract expires. Other requirements will also apply. Contract terms will be set out in the CRP contract and regulations.

Fact Sheet

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
New Jersey State

Payments

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, New Jersey CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of USDA payments:

- **Signing Incentive Payment:**
A one-time payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in a CP8A, CP21 or CP22 practice. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved.
- **Practice Incentive Payment:**
A one-time payment equal to about 40 percent of the eligible cost for enrollment under approved conservation practices.
- **Cost-share Assistance:**
Cost-share of up to 50 percent for the installation of approved conservation practices.
- **Infeasible to Farm Acreage Payment:** An annual rental payment at the base soil rental rate for otherwise eligible cropland enrolled as infeasible to farm acreage. Infeasible to farm acreage only applies to practice CP21 or CP22. Incentives do not apply to acres enrolled as infeasible to farm.
- **Annual Rental Payment:**
An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of three components:
 - **Base Soil Rental Rate,** which is determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates.

- **Incentive Payment** of 100 percent for land established as a CP8A, CP15A or CP21 practice; and 150 percent for land established as a CP22 practice.
- **Annual Maintenance Payment** in an amount consistent with applicable CRP procedures.

In addition, the State of New Jersey will:

- Pay 10 percent of the cost to install approved conservation practices.
- Contribute no less than 20 percent of the overall annual in-kind and direct program costs.
- Offer payments to participants for permanent CREP easements through state-funded programs.

Program Cost

The total cost over a ten-year period is estimated at \$100 million, with USDA contributing \$77 million and New Jersey State funding \$23 million. The \$100 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

Enrollment in Other Programs

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll eligible land in the regular general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless USDA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

For More Information

More information on the New Jersey CREP is available from local FSA county offices and on FSA's Web site at:
www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm

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