



*Fact Sheet*

# Conservation Reserve Program

## Ohio Enhancement Program

### Overview

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Ohio have agreed on a plan to implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve the water quality of Lake Erie and 5,000 miles of Ohio streams. This voluntary program will improve the water quality of Lake Erie and many of the streams and rivers that feed into it.

CREP combines an existing Federal program, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), with State programs to provide a framework for USDA to work in partnership with State and local interests to meet state-specific environmental objectives. CRP is a CCC program implemented through the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Under CREP, the Lake Erie landowners and operators enter into 14- to 15-year contracts with CCC to convert cropland to native grasses, trees, and other conservation practices. In return, they receive annual rental payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost-share assistance to establish the conservation practices.

### Goals

The Ohio Lake Erie CREP has been designed to:

- reduce the amount of sediment from entering Western Lake Erie by over 2,325,000 metric tons over the next 20 years;
- significantly reduce the amount of nutrients and pesticides that enter the Western Lake Erie and its tributaries;
- protect over 5,000 linear miles of streams from sedimentation;
- improve wildlife habitat in the project.

### Areas Included

The program area is comprised of the Western Lake Watershed Area.

### Program Benefits

CREP will provide several significant environmental benefits to Ohio's water bodies. Filter strips and riparian buffers will be planted next to streams, rivers, and drainage ditches in order to stop sediment and pollutants from entering the water bodies. An estimated 5,000 linear miles of streams will be protected. Improved water quality will result from reduced nutrient loading, sediment

loading, and pesticide runoff. Forested buffers will also help lower water temperatures and enhance wildlife habitat.

### Eligible Conservation Practices

The following practices are eligible for the program:

- wetland restoration;
- filter strips;
- riparian buffers;
- hardwood tree planting;
- wildlife habitat improvement;
- field windbreaks.

### Eligibility Requirements and Signup Date

Enrollment for the Ohio CREP will be on a continuous basis beginning May 1, 2000. Eligible land must be within the project area and meet the basic eligibility criteria for CRP and be suitable to be devoted to an eligible practice. Land must be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must have been planted to crops 2 of the past 5 years and be physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland can be enrolled provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to

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trees. Lands that have an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires.

#### **Payments under CREP**

CREP participants are eligible for five types of payments: annual rental payments, incentive payments, maintenance payments, cost-share assistance payments, and State one-time payments. Annual rental payments will be based on the soil rental rate. The first three of these will be combined into a consolidated annual CRP rental payment.

In addition to the normal rental payment, CCC will make a special incentive payment:

- for land devoted to filter strips—55 percent;
- for land devoted to wetland restoration, riparian buffer, field windbreak, wildlife habitat, or hardwood trees—75 percent.

Producers would also receive an annual maintenance payment of \$5 per acre.

For example: If the normal rental rate is \$100 per acre, the incentive rate for a riparian buffer would be \$75 per acre. In addition, the maintenance rate would be \$5 per acre, and the total annual payment would be \$180 per acre.

The CCC pays up to 50 percent of the establishment cost of conservation practices. The State may also provide up to \$40 per acre for the planting of warm season grasses.

The State also provides a one-time lump-sum payment of \$200 per acre for land devoted to filter strips and a \$500 per acre lump-sum payment for land devoted to hardwood tree planting, wildlife habitat improvement, field windbreaks, wetland restoration, and riparian buffers.

#### **Program Cost**

The estimated cost of the program is \$201 million. The Federal share is \$167 million, and the State share is \$34 million.

#### **Enrollment Option**

CREP is another option that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land; applicants may still enroll in general CRP or continuous signup CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. Under CREP, applicants have flexibility to extend the duration of their conservation contracts and thus increase the sum total of rental payments. The enrollment process is on a continuous basis, and payments are at a higher rate.

#### **Haying and Grazing**

Haying and grazing is not permitted during the CRP contract period unless the Secretary of Agriculture permits it for emergency purposes.

#### **Additional Information**

For further information, contact FSA or the Natural Resources Conservation Service within the local USDA Service Center, or the local Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Information may also be obtained from the FSA website at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

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