

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Colorado High Plains

Overview

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state cooperative conservation program that addresses specific agricultural-related environmental concerns. CREP participants voluntarily enroll in 14- to 15-year Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA). Participants receive financial incentives to remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production. By converting enrolled land into native grasses, trees and other vegetation, CREP improves soil retention as well as water, air and wildlife habitat quality. CRP and CREP are authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

The Colorado High Plains CREP targets the enrollment of 30,000 eastern Colorado acres that will increase upland wildlife populations and public recreational opportunities. The CREP agreement is a partnership between farmers, ranchers, FSA and the State of Colorado. In addition to CREP payments, the State of Colorado is offering an incentive payment geared to enhance upland habitat and recreational access.

Benefits

Enrolling up to 30,000 acres of eligible cropland will increase upland habitat for wildlife, including ring-necked pheasants

and other ground nesting birds. The CREP will increase public access and recreation opportunities, such as hunting. The program will reduce 160,000 tons of soil erosion each year which will improve water quality by decreasing agricultural chemicals and sediments that enter waterways.

Goals

The goals of the Colorado High Plains CREP agreement include:

- Enrolling 30,000 acres into CREP to create habitat for upland wildlife;
- Providing public access and recreational opportunities on that 30,000 acres;
- Reducing 160,000 tons of soil erosion annually;
- Reducing fertilizer and pesticide application from 2004 levels by 750 tons over a 15-year period; and
- Helping farmers and ranchers address wildlife issues in areas where agriculture may have a negative impact on targeted wildlife species.

Eligibility Requirements

Landowners can offer eligible cropland in eastern Colorado's High Plains region in all or portions of Kit Carson, Logan, Phillips, Sedgwick and Yuma Counties.

To enroll in the CREP, landowners must secure:

- An approved CRP contract;
- An approved Colorado Divi-

sion of Wildlife (CDOW) Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program contract; and

- An approved CDOW Walk-in Access Contract, allowing public access under certain criteria on CREP contract acres and applicable adjacent acreage.

Sign-up and Contract Duration

The CREP sign-up began June 12, 2006, and is expected to continue until enrollment goals are attained, or there is no longer statutory authority for CRP, whichever comes first. Enrolled land must be in the program for a 14- to 15-year period.

Approved Conservation Measures

To better serve program goals, FSA has approved the following CRP conservation practices (CP) for the Colorado High Plains CREP:

- CP4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement;
- CP12 - Wildlife Food Plot; and
- CP24 - Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover as Cross Wind Trap Strips.

Cropland practice enrollment goals are:

- CP4D: up to 27,000 acres; and
- CP24: up to 3,000 acres.

FACT SHEET

CREP - Colorado High Plains

March 2011

FSA Payments

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

- Practice Incentive Payment: One-time payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to establish CP24.
- Cost-share Assistance: 50 percent of eligible reimbursable cost-share to install approved conservation practices.
- Annual Rental Payment: Annual payment based on dryland cropland rental rates for each enrolled cropland acre. The per-acre maximum cropland rental rate is The posted per-acre dryland cropland soil rental rate based on the weighted average of the three predominant soils on the eligible dryland acreage offered.

State of Colorado Payments

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, the state of Colorado will provide the following payments and assistance:

- Signing Incentive Payment: One-time payment issued after contract approval at the following rates;
1. \$700 per block for each enrolled Habitat Resource Block (defined as one contiguous block of approximately 40 acres); and
 2. \$100 per corner for each enrolled Corner Resource Area (defined as irrigated pivot corners of approximately 7 to 9 acres in size); or
 3. \$500 if all four Corner Re-
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source Areas are enrolled.

- Cost-share Payment: 100 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install CP12.
- Annual Incentive Payment: Annual payment from the CDOW's Pheasant Habitat Improvement Program for all CREP-enrolled acres. Payments are at the following rates:
 1. \$5 per acre for Habitat Resource Blocks or CP24; and
 2. \$10 per acre for Corner Resource Areas.
- Annual Incentive Payment: Annual payment from the CDOW's Walk-In Access Program for all CREP-enrolled acres.
- Pay all costs associated with the annual CREP water quality monitoring program.
- Provide technical assistance to help participants develop conservation plans.

Cost

The total cost over a 15-year period is estimated at \$25.3 million. FSA will contribute approximately \$19.9 million, or 80 percent, and the state of Colorado will fund approximately \$5.4 million. The \$25.3 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

CRP Enrollment

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select in order to enhance their land. Farmers and ranchers may still enroll eligible land in the general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available

through 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 CREP contract period unless FSA allows it for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

For More Information

For more information on CRP continuous sign-up, contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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