



Kansas Upper Arkansas River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Overview

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state natural resources conservation program that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental concerns. Through CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10 to 15 years. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland 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. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers CRP and CREP on behalf of CCC.

The Kansas Upper Arkansas River (UAR) CREP is a partnership between USDA and the State of Kansas. The program seeks to enroll 20,000 acres of eligible irrigated or non-irrigated cropland in 14 to 15 year CRP contracts within the UAR project area. The CREP project area includes all or parts of the following Kansas counties: Barton, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Gray, Hamilton, Kearny, Pawnee, Rice and Stafford. The primary goals of the UAR CREP are to conserve irrigation water and improve water quality

by removing land from agricultural production.

Benefits

UAR CREP will conserve water resources and reduce agricultural chemicals and sediment from entering Kansas waters that contribute to poor water quality in rivers and aquifers. The project will reduce the use of irrigation water and reduce non-point source pollution by terminating water rights connected to the land enrolled in CREP and establishing permanent vegetative cover and other conservation practices. These practices are intended to enhance the aquifer and boost water supplies to the Arkansas River. UAR CREP will also enhance habitat for a variety of land and water species, conserve energy and reduce erosion.

Goals

- Enroll up to 20,000 acres into CREP in the project area (up to 17,000 irrigated cropland acres and up to 3,000 cropland acres of dryland center pivot corners and other associated dryland areas). Enroll approximately 18,600 acres of the total acres into native grasses and legumes.
- Reduce the amount of ground water used for irrigation in the target area by 29,750-acre feet annually with the

enrollment of 17,000 irrigated acres.

- Increase the frequency of meeting minimum desirable streamflows in the Arkansas River at Great Bend, Kan., by 3 percent by 2020, and by 2 percent by 2020 at Kinsley, Kan.
- Improve ground water levels by 5 percent in the alluvial aquifer and the High Plains aquifer in the CREP area by 2030.
- Reduce the outward migration of river salinity within the High Plains aquifer by 2020 from the currently projected levels based on 1990s ground water conditions in the Arkansas River valley.
- Improve water quality in the Arkansas River in Finney, Gray, Ford, Edwards, Pawnee and Rice Counties by 2020 (from the 1990 – 2000 levels) by reducing bacteria concentrations. The project is also designed to reduce phosphorous concentrations in the Arkansas River above Great Bend by 50 percent.
- Increase aquifer recharge and wildlife habitat by enrolling 400 acres of otherwise eligible playa lakes and soils, and other suitable locations for shallow water development through the use of approved CRP conservation practices.
- Reduce agricultural use of highly erodible soils by

enrolling approximately 7,000 acres that are unsuitable for dryland farming.

- Reduce the amount of annual soil lost to erosion by approximately 80,000 tons per year.
- Protect the ecological and recreational viability of the Cheyenne Bottoms State Wildlife Area in Barton County, Kansas, with improved Arkansas River streamflow.
- Reduce energy consumption from an average of 59,850 kilowatt hours to less than 5,000 kilowatt hours per center pivot for the first two years on pivots enrolled in the CREP. In subsequent years, the project will reduce energy consumption to zero, as the pivots eligible for limited irrigation are removed from the enrolled parcel. Total energy savings for the term of the CREP contracts will approach 8 million kilowatt hours.

Eligibility Requirements

The following are some of the eligibility requirements producers and their land must meet in order to be enrolled in UAR CREP:

- At least 51 percent of the eligible cropland must be located within the UAR CREP project area;
- For non-irrigated (dryland) cropland to be eligible for enrollment under this program, the land must meet FSA CRP crop history and all other eligibility requirements. It must be either devoted to

dryland center pivot corners or other dryland areas within or adjacent to eligible irrigated fields to be enrolled under UAR CREP;

- For irrigated cropland, the land must have been planted and irrigated at the rate of not less than one-half-acre foot per acre per year for four out of the six years, 1996-2001; and
- Irrigated cropland must be physically and legally capable of being planted and irrigated in a normal manner.

Sign-up and Contract Duration

As soon as sign-up details are available, FSA will announce them. Producers will be able to enroll in UAR CREP at their local FSA service center. UAR CREP participants will sign 14- to 15-year CRP contracts with CCC.

Approved Conservation Practices

Eligible practices for the UAR CREP are as follows:

- CP2 (Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses and Legumes) - 18,600 acres;
- CP4D (Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement) - 400 acres;
- CP9 (Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife) - 200 acres;
- CP10 (Vegetative Cover Grass Already Established) - 400 acres;
- CP21 (Filter Strips) - 100 acres;
- CP22 (Riparian Buffer) - 100 acres; and
- CP23/CP23A (Wetland

Restoration, flood-plain & nonflood-plain) - 200 acres.

CCC Payments and Duties

CCC will provide the following payments to UAR CREP participants:

- Cost-share payments to all participants for up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs for establishing approved conservation practices. All cost-sharing payments must not exceed 100 percent of a participant's expenses;
- Annual rental payments based on posted irrigated rental rates for eligible enrolled acreage for which the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Department of Water Resources has indicated that an owner-signed water right termination request has been secured and executed by Kansas. The maximum annual per-acre payment rate for irrigated cropland will be the sum of:
 - The most current weighted-average, posted relevant irrigated cropland rental rate per acre for the enrolled land; and
 - A maintenance incentive payment per acre;
- Annual rental payments based on posted dryland cropland rental rates for eligible enrolled cropland acreage from the dryland center-pivot corners or other dryland areas that are part of an enrolled irrigated field. The per-acre, maximum payment rate for

dryland cropland will be the sum of:

- Posted relevant dryland CRP soil rental rate based on the three predominant soils on the eligible dryland acreage; and
- A maintenance incentive payment per acre;
- A one-time Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) for practices CP21 and CP22. The SIP is considered a rental payment for payment limitation purposes;
- A one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) for practices CP9, CP21 and CP22. The PIP is considered a rental payment for payment limitation purposes; and
- A one-time incentive payment equal to 25 percent of the cost of restoring the hydrology for practices CP23 and CP23A. The hydrology restoration incentive payment is considered a rental payment.

USDA will also develop conservation plans, conduct compliance reviews and provide information to potential participants, among other things, under UAR CREP.

State of Kansas Payments and Duties

The State of Kansas will provide the following payments to UAR CREP participants:

- A one-time State Upfront Payment (SUP) of \$62 per irrigated acre located in Tier 1 and \$35 per irrigated acre located in Tier 2, based on

the dominant tier applicable to the CRP contract area.

To qualify for Tier 1, the offered area must either (1), have a predominant soil type determined unsuitable for dryland farming due to susceptibility to very high levels of wind erosion, (to be considered susceptible to very high levels of wind erosion a soil must have a Wind Erosion Equation I Factor of 134 or greater), or (2), be predominantly located in another Tier 1. All other offers not determined located in Tier 1 shall be assigned to Tier 2.

The State of Kansas will divide SUP payment shares among all participants consistent with the shares on the CRP contract.

The total of all SUP payments must not exceed \$2 million over the life of UAR CREP;

- A one-time State Wetland Bonus of \$350 per acre to UAR CREP participants. The State of Kansas will divide the funds among all participants consistent with the shares on the related CRP contract. The payment will be made to participants who establish a shallow water development (CP9) when it can also serve as an aquifer recharge and is located within an area eligible to receive Water Conservation Projects Funds;
- A \$1,000 cost-share assistance for optional

plugging and proper abandonment of a well at the request of the UAR CREP participant for wells where the water right has been terminated under the UAR CREP enrollment process; and

- State cost-share assistance to eligible UAR CREP participants for control of tamarisk and other invasive, non-native phreatophytes in the UAR CREP project area.

Under UAR CREP, the State of Kansas will also provide staffing and support for annual monitoring and evaluation of changes, provide a program coordinator, establish a program steering committee, seek potential participants and perform other duties.

Cost

The total cost for UAR CREP over a 15-year period is estimated at \$22.7 million. The State of Kansas will contribute at least 20 percent of the overall annual program cost through a combination of payments to program participants, new funding for the CREP project and certain in-kind services. Ten percent (\$2.2709 million) must be in the form of either direct new payments to program participants or new funding for a CREP project. FSA will pay the remaining costs for UAR CREP.

CRP Enrollment

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select for

their land. Applicants 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 CRP contract period unless FSA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

For More Information

Find more information about FSA and its conservation programs on the FSA Web site, <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>, or visit your local FSA service center. FSA program contact: Lana Nesbit (202) 720-8772.

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