



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Nebraska – Platte-Republican Resources Area

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Nebraska are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 100,000 acres in portions of Banner, Buffalo, Chase, Cheyenne, Dawson, Deuel, Dundy, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Garden, Gosper, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Kearney, Keith, Kimball, Lincoln, McPherson, Morrill, Nuckolls, Phelps, Red Willow, Scotts Bluff, Sioux and Webster counties. The Nebraska CREP is intended to reduce irrigation water use, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat through the establishment of vegetative cover. The program also will help replenish streams, rivers and reservoirs.

BACKGROUND

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and then federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 10-year to 15-year contracts. Participants remove cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to

native grasses, trees and other vegetation or restore wetlands. This will reduce irrigation water use, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies and improve wildlife habitat.

GOALS

The goals of the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP are to:

- Reduce the application of water for cropland irrigation;
- Increase surface and groundwater retention;
- Establish conservation buffers and restore wetlands;
- Reduce the application of triazine products;
- Reduce leaching of nitrate compounds into area streams and groundwater;
- Reduce the application of phosphate products;
- Reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels from agricultural activities;
- Establish native grassland habitat for wildlife and increase the populations of pheasants and other ground nesting birds; and
- Reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and electricity for irrigation.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses;
- CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-Easement;
- CP12, Wildlife Food Plots;
- CP21, Filter Strips;
- CP22, Riparian Buffer;
- CP23, Wetland Restoration;
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain; and
- CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat.

ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment for the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area and irrigated cropland or a non-irrigated center-pivot corner. Non-irrigated center-pivot corners are only eligible if enrolled with the associated irrigated center-pivot cropland. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

In addition, irrigated cropland must meet irrigation history requirements and must be physically and legally capable of being irrigated in a normal manner when offered for enrollment. Producers must also enter into a Water Use Contract with the State of Nebraska prior to enrollment in the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP.

PAYMENTS

Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - o A base soil rental rate, determined by (1) for irrigated cropland, the irrigated cropland rental rate for the applicable county; or (2) for non-irrigated cropland, the three predominant soils of the eligible land offered; and
 - o A maintenance payment, determined by the practice.
- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre enrolled for installing practices CP21 and CP22; and \$150 per acre for installing practices CP23 and CP23A. Example: 10 acres enrolled to be devoted to practice CP21 result in a \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100) SIP. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) for installing practices CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP23A. The PIP is equal to 40 percent of the total eligible cost of installing the

practice. Example: Producer's total eligible reimbursable cost of installing the practice is \$2,000. The PIP would be \$800 ($\$2,000 \times .40$).

- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice.

In addition, the State of Nebraska provides cost-share payments for 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice.

EXAMPLES

A Morrill County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of irrigated cropland to be devoted to a filter strip (practice CP21) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a Water Use Contract with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$155 per acre. The annual maintenance payment is \$10 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$165 per acre ($\$155 + \10) for a total annual payment of \$1,650 ($\165×10 acres). The producer will receive \$24,750 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive a one-time SIP of \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100). The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip, plus a PIP equal to 40 percent of the cost of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip. In addition, the State of Nebraska will pay the producer cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip.

A Lincoln County producer elects to enroll 160 acres of irrigated cropland to be devoted to native grasses (practice CP2) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a Water Use Contract with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$210 per acre. The producer's total annual payment of \$33,600 ($\210×160 acres). The producer will receive \$504,000 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the native grasses. In addition, the State of Nebraska will pay the producer cost-share

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payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the native grasses.

Note: The preceding are examples only.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, producers receive higher annual rental payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of payments received.

HAYING AND GRAZING

Haying and grazing are not allowed during the CRP contract period unless authorized by USDA. Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. For more information on CREP, contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA county office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>. To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation.

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- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
- 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.*

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