



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program – Virginia Southern Rivers

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Virginia are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 15,000 acres of agricultural land in Appomattox, Bedford, Bland, Botetourt, Brunswick, Buchanan, Campbell, Carroll, Charlotte, Chesapeake, Craig, Dickenson, Dinwiddie, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Greenville, Halifax, Henry, Isle of Wight, Lee, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Northampton, Nottoway, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Prince George, Pulaski, Roanoke, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Southampton, Suffolk, Surry, Sussex, Tazewell, Virginia Beach, Washington, Wise and Wythe counties. The Virginia Southern Rivers CREP is intended to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies, improve wildlife habitat and restore wetlands.

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 agricultural 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 Virginia Southern Rivers 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 and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation or restore wetlands. This will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the area.

GOALS

The goals of the Virginia Southern Rivers CREP are to:

- Reduce sediments, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering waterbodies;
- Reduce soil erosion;
- Improve water quality through wetland restoration; and
- Enhance wildlife habitat, including aquatic wildlife.

ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP21, Filter Strips;
- CP22, Riparian Buffer;
- CP23, Wetland Restoration; and
- CP29, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer.

ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment for the Virginia Southern Rivers CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area and be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal

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manner to an agricultural commodity. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer. Persons who have an existing CRP contract are not eligible for CREP on that land until that contract expires.

PAYMENTS

Under the Virginia Southern Rivers CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre for installing practices CP21, CP22 and CP29. Example: 10 acres enrolled to be devoted to practice CP22 result in a \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100) SIP. This payment is made soon after the contract has been signed and approved.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) for installing practices CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP29. The PIP is equal to 40 percent of eligible cost of installing the practice. Example: Producer's total eligible cost of installing the practice is \$2,000. The PIP would be \$800 ($\$2,000 \times .40$).
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - o A base soil rental rate, determined by (1) for cropland, the three predominant soils of the land offered; or (2) for marginal pastureland, the posted marginal pastureland rate for the county;
 - o An incentive payment, as a percentage of the base soil rental rate, of 120 percent; and
 - o A \$5 maintenance payment.
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.

In addition, the Commonwealth of Virginia provides the following payments to eligible participants:

- A one-time lump-sum incentive payment of \$50 or \$75 per acre, based on the length of the CRP contract; and
- A cost-share payment of up to 25 percent of the eligible cost for installing practices CP21, CP23 and CP29; and 50 percent of the eligible cost for installing practice CP22.

The Commonwealth of Virginia may also provide a tax credit to eligible landowners.

The total annual per acre payment, including the Commonwealth of Virginia incentives, shall not exceed \$90.

EXAMPLES

A Halifax County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of land to be devoted to a riparian buffer (practice CP22) in a 15-year contract. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$35 per acre. The incentive payment is \$42 per acre ($\35×1.20). The annual maintenance payment is \$5 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$82 per acre ($\$35 + \$42 + \5), for a total annual payment of \$820 ($\82×10 acres). The producer will receive \$12,300 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive the following payments:

- A SIP of \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100);
- Cost-share payments from FSA equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice;
- Cost-share payments from the Commonwealth of Virginia equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice;
- A PIP equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice; and
- A one-time incentive payment from the Commonwealth of Virginia of \$750 ($\75×10 acres).

A Lee County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of land to be devoted to marginal pastureland wildlife habitat buffer (practice CP29) in a 15-year contract. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$36 per acre. The incentive payment is \$43 per acre ($\36×1.20). The annual maintenance payment is \$5 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$84 per acre ($\$36 + \$43 + \5), for a total annual payment of \$840 ($\84×10 acres). The producer will receive \$12,600 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive the following payments:

- A SIP of \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100);

- Cost-share payments from FSA equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice;
- Cost-share payments from the Commonwealth of Virginia equal to 25 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice;
- A PIP equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the practice; and
- A one-time incentive payment from the Commonwealth of Virginia of \$750 (\$75 x 10 acres).

Note: The preceding are examples only.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Virginia Southern Rivers CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. Under the Virginia Southern Rivers CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments that increase the total amount of rental payments received. In addition, the Commonwealth of Virginia provides additional cost-share payments to eligible producers.

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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