

WHAT IS THE CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)?

CREP is an opportunity for Wisconsin landowners to voluntarily enroll agricultural lands into conservation practices, such as riparian buffers, filter strips, wetland restorations, waterways and establishment of native grasslands in the grassland project area. There is no waiting period; enrollment and eligibility determinations are made on a first-come, first-served basis.

It is a Federal-State-Local partnership between the United States Department Of Agriculture (USDA), the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and participating county Land Conservation Departments (LCD) throughout much of the state. USDA is providing \$200 million in federal funds to landowners for the implementation of the federal portion of the program. The State of Wisconsin is contributing \$40 million in bond funds to landowners while participating counties are utilizing LCD staff to implement the state portion of the program.

HOW DOES CREP BENEFIT ME?

Annual Payments - On the federal side, USDA makes payments annually for up to 15 years, based on the specific soil types on the lands to be enrolled. There are different rates for cropland and marginal pasture lands in each county. The annual rental rates for cropland range from \$17-\$179 per acre, depending on the soil type. USDA also provides an additional annual federal incentive payment from 35%-60%, of the annual rental rate, depending on the practices to be installed.

Up-front Payments - In addition to these annual payments, the federal government also pays \$100 per acre as an up-front, one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) for filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways and wetland restorations enrolled in CRP for the first time.

The State of Wisconsin offers an additional incentive as an up-front, one-time payment of 1.5 times the annual rental rate for 15-year agreements, and 12 times the annual rental rate for perpetual conservation easements. The state payments are made up-front after the agreement or easement is signed by the landowner.

Practice Payments - The federal government also pays 50% of the cost of installing the eligible practices. An additional 40% of practice installation costs, called a practice incentive payment (PIP) is also paid by the federal government. In addition, the state pays 20% of the cost of installing eligible practices.

Note: You should check with your tax advisor to determine whether or not these payments have any tax consequences for you.

IS MY LAND ELIGIBLE?

If your land falls within the designated towns on the county CREP map, you have a crop history (you must have planted a commodity crop in 4 out of the 6 years from 2002 to 2007, or meet rotation requirements including grass or legumes), or the land meets the qualifications as marginal pastureland, you may be eligible and should fill out an application.

In the riparian project areas, eligible lands are within 150 feet of an eligible stream or water body. In the grassland project area, additional lands are eligible that meet the crop history and are within 1000 feet of an eligible water body. In the southern grassland project area the land must also be highly erodible. In the northern grassland project area the land does not have to be highly erodible. Only 5,000 acres can be enrolled in this northern grassland area.

Lands currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are not eligible for CREP unless the CRP contract is in its last year of the contract period.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Contact your county FSA, NRCS or LCD office and ask them for both the federal and state CREP applications. The federal application may not be directly available in the LCD office. A site visit will be completed and USDA will notify you if your land is eligible for CREP. Make sure you indicate which lands you wish to enroll and what type of practices or project you would like to undertake.

WHAT DOES A 15-YEAR AGREEMENT DO TO MY LAND?

The 15-Year agreement is a contract with the LCD to install and maintain practices for 15 years in exchange for a state incentive payment, and cost-sharing. The landowner enjoys recreational use of the land during the contract period. The restrictions on land use are specified in the agreement and generally state that the land must be maintained in the vegetation type indicated in the conservation plan. If you sell the property, the state may require a transfer of the agreement to a new owner. Repayment of state program funds may be required if the agreement is violated.

WHAT DOES A PERPETUAL EASEMENT DO TO MY LAND?

The perpetual conservation easement is a permanent land use restriction which will be held by the county or the state, with an underlying 15-year federal contract. The landowner enjoys recreational use of the land in perpetuity. The restrictions on land use are specified in the easement and generally state that the land must be maintained in the vegetation type indicated in the conservation plan. No structures may be built on the lands enrolled.

Through a conservation plan the landowner may indicate what types of uses they desire to have after the federal 15-year contract expires. Some of these uses may include: timber harvest, limited pasturing or haying, prescribed burns or other management techniques.

Repayment of state program funds may be required if the easement is violated.

WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED FOR A PERPETUAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT?

If you are planning on enrolling lands into a perpetual conservation easement you must provide some important information. Be prepared to have ALL owners of the property sign the easement. This means if you jointly hold ownership to the land with a relative and their name(s) are listed on the deed, they must sign the easement. Perpetual easements also require a title search and the landowner must contract for this service. The State of Wisconsin will fully reimburse the landowner for the cost of a title search on all perpetual easements after they have been recorded. Landowners seeking perpetual easements must obtain signatures of mortgage holders or lenders; therefore make certain you can obtain these signatures so your application is not delayed. All applicants must supply a copy of the last tax bill. **If these records and signatures are not provided it will delay the process.**

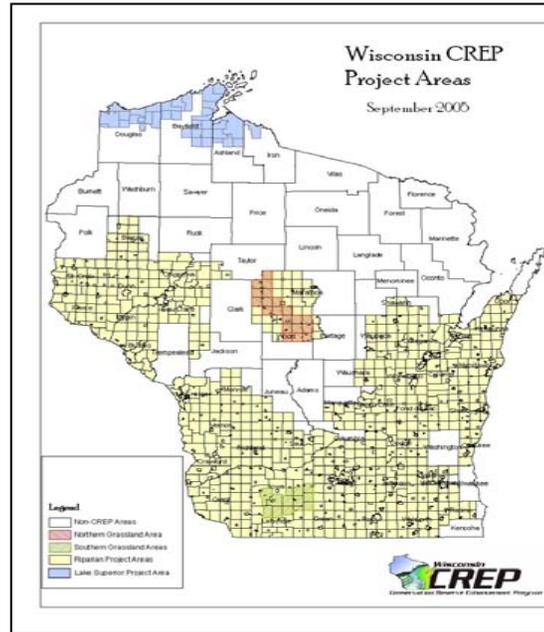
WHAT ABOUT PUBLIC ACCESS?

Public access is not required for CREP.

ELIGIBLE PRACTICES:

- Filter Strips (CP21)
- Riparian Buffers (CP22)
- Grassed Waterways (CP8a), up to 1000 feet into cropland from the enrolled riparian buffer or filter strips may be eligible
- Wetland Restorations (CP23 or CP23a), in conjunction with an enrolled riparian buffer, filter strip
- Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer (CP29)
- Permanent Introduced Grasses (CP1)*
- Permanent Native Grasses (CP2)*
- Established Legumes and Grasses (CP10)*
- Oak Savanna Ecosystem Restoration and Tall Grass Prairie Ecosystem Restoration (CP25)*

* Practices only eligible within the grassland project areas.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program



Fact Sheet