
[Deadline Fast Approaching for Conservation Reserve Program General Signup](#)

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Bangor, ME, July 19, 2021 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Maine is reminding producers and landowners that the signup deadline for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) current general signup is fast approaching. Eligible producers must submit their offers by July 23, 2021.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) made several changes to CRP to make it more appealing to all producers, including those who are historically underserved, beginning, and veterans. FSA added incentives to encourage producers to include climate-smart agricultural practices in their operations to increase natural resource and environmental benefits.

"Agricultural producers and private landowners should take advantage of the opportunities offered by the revamped CRP," FSA Acting State Executive Director Sherry Hamel said. "Explore the increased payment rates and new incentives for climate-smart agricultural practices to see if elements of the revamped CRP fit your operation."

Updates to the Conservation Reserve Program

USDA's goal is to enroll up to 4 million new CRP acres by raising payment rates and expanding the incentives offered under the program. CRP is capped at 25 million acres for fiscal year 2021, and currently 20.7 million acres are enrolled, but the cap will gradually increase to 27 million acres by fiscal year 2023. To help increase producer interest and enrollment, FSA has:

- **Adjusted soil rental rates.** This enables additional flexibility for rate adjustments, including a possible increase in rates where appropriate.
- **Increased payments for Practice Incentives from 20% to 50%.** This incentive for continuous CRP practices is based on the cost of establishment and is in addition to cost share payments.

- **Increased payments for water quality practices.** Incentive increased from 10% to 20% for certain water quality practices available through the CRP continuous signup, such as grassed waterways, riparian buffers and filter strips.

Additionally, to mitigate climate change, FSA introduced a new annual **Climate-Smart Practice Incentive** for the general, grasslands, and continuous signups that aims to increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-Smart CRP practices include establishing trees and permanent grasses, developing wildlife habitat, and restoring wetlands. The Climate-Smart Practice Incentive amount is based on the benefits of each practice type.

More About CRP

CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs with a long track record of preserving topsoil, improving water quality, sequestering carbon, reducing nitrogen runoff and preserving healthy wildlife habitat.

Signed into law in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. It was originally intended to control soil erosion and stabilize commodity prices by taking marginal lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing more conservation and economic benefits. CRP marked its 35-year anniversary in December 2020.

Program successes include:

- Preventing more than 9 billion tons of soil from eroding, which is enough soil to fill 600 million dump trucks.
- Reducing nitrogen and phosphorous runoff relative to annually tilled cropland by 95% and 85% percent, respectively.
- Creating more than 3 million acres of restored wetlands while protecting more than 175,000 stream miles with riparian forest and grass buffers, which is enough to go around the world seven times.
- Benefiting bees and other pollinators and increasing populations of ducks, pheasants, turkey, bobwhite quail, prairie chickens, grasshopper sparrows and many other birds.

More information about the program can be obtained through this [CRP fact](#) sheet.

More Information

Interested producers should contact their local USDA [Service Center](#). In addition to the CRP General signup, FSA is also accepting applications for the CRP Grasslands and CRP Continuous signups.

Learn more at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

To find their local FSA county office, producers can visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator. Service Center staff continue to work with agricultural producers via phone, e-mail, and other digital tools. Because of the pandemic, some USDA Service Centers are open to limited visitors. Producers should contact their service center to set up an in-person appointment. Additionally, more information related to USDA's response and relief for producers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is engaged in a whole-of-government effort to combat the climate crisis and conserve and protect our nation's lands, biodiversity and natural resources including our soil, air and water. Through conservation practices and partnerships, USDA aims to enhance economic growth and create new streams of income for farmers, ranchers, producers and private foresters. Successfully meeting these challenges will require USDA and our agencies to pursue a coordinated approach alongside USDA stakeholders, including State, local and Tribal governments.

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