



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REVISED To Include Stark and Washington Counties USDA and State of Illinois Announce Opening of the CREP

News Release | Illinois | June 17, 2022

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SPRINGFIELD, Illinois, June 15, 2022—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Illinois are resuming a partnership through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to assist Illinois farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners in improving water quality and conserving other natural resources. The Illinois CREP, offered by USDA and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), expands the voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs available to Illinois agricultural producers and focuses on the Illinois and Kaskaskia River watersheds. Enrollment for the Illinois CREP opens June 15, 2022.

“CREP is one of our most flexible tools when it comes to voluntary, locally-led, partner-driven conservation efforts, and we’re so glad that we’re able to put it to work again in Illinois,” said Scott Halpin, USDA Farm Service Agency State Director in Illinois. “This initiative previously had a positive impact in Illinois, and we look forward to broadening the reach of the program to new agricultural producers and landscapes. We are so grateful to have support from Illinois leaders to make this program possible.”

“Programs like CREP provide critical support to private landowners who want to implement sound conservation practices on their property,” said IDNR Director Colleen Callahan. “These efforts help reduce runoff, protect our precious soil and improve wildlife habitat.”

Through the Illinois CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14-to-15-year contracts and a subsequent 15-year or permanent conservation easement with the State of Illinois. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to grasses, trees, or other approved vegetation. This will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the project area. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance and the State of Illinois provides a cost-share match in addition to a one-time payment for all land entered into an easement.

Practices include of permanent native grasses, hardwood tree plantings, permanent wildlife habitats, shallow water areas for wildlife, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restorations, non-floodplain wetland restorations, and rare and declining habitat for prairie and oak savanna ecosystems.

“We are excited to work with IDNR and offer this great watershed conservation incentive for Illinois farmers,” Halpin said. “Working together, we can lead the way through climate-smart solutions that will maintain critical environmental benefits through voluntary conservation efforts, increase climate resilience, sequester more carbon, enhance agricultural productivity, and improve water quality in Illinois and Kaskaskia River watersheds and downstream.”

The Illinois CREP includes all or portions of the following 68 counties in the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Watersheds: Adams, Bond, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clinton, Coles, Cook, DeKalb, DeWitt, Douglas, DuPage, Effingham, Fayette, Ford, Fulton, Greene, Grundy, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Iroquois, Jefferson, Jersey, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Knox, Lake, LaSalle, Lee, Livingston, Logan, McDonough, McHenry, McLean, Macon, Macoupin, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mason, Menard, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Peoria, Perry, Piatt, Pike, Putnam, Randolph, St. Clair, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, Tazewell, Vermilion, Warren, Washington, Will, and Woodford Counties.

Eligible farmers and growers can qualify for annual rental payments, a 50 percent cost share for installing the approved conservation practices, and incentive payments for certain practices. In addition, IDNR will provide eligible participants with 50 percent cost-share payment for practice installation cost and a one-time payment for all land entered into an easement.

Interested farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners are encouraged to contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) at their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to participate. Find contact information at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Currently, CREP has 35 projects in 27 states. In total, more than 860,000 acres are enrolled in CREP. The Illinois CREP is part of USDA’s broader effort to leverage CREP as an important tool to address climate change and other natural resources challenges while expanding opportunities for producers and communities, especially those historically underserved by USDA. Last December, [USDA announced improvements](#) to the program as well as additional staff to support the program.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under 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 safe, 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.
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