

USDA's CLEAR30 Offers Producers with Expiring Voluntary Conservation Contracts Longer Term Options

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DES MOINES, Iowa, April 26, 2023 – Agricultural producers and landowners with certain expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts can receive additional rental incentives and extend that land's role in conservation for another 30 years. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has opened the signup period for its Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers enrollment (CLEAR30) **now through July 31, 2023**. CLEAR30 is a part of the CLEAR initiative, which prioritizes water quality practices as a part of Continuous CRP enrollment, and is one of several CRP enrollment opportunities. CLEAR30 allows producers and landowners enrolling certain water quality practices to enroll in 30-year contracts, extending the lifespan and strengthening the benefits of important water quality practices on their land. Like other CRP enrollments, CLEAR30 is a voluntary, incentive-based conservation opportunity offered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

"The foundational value of CLEAR30 enrollment is right there in its name: Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers—there is nothing more essential to all things on the planet, including agriculture, than clean water," said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. "CRP is one of the world's largest voluntary conservation programs, and our CLEAR initiative and CLEAR30 enrollment gives our producers and landowners a great option to continue their conservation practices well into the future."

Cropland and certain pastureland that is currently enrolled in Continuous CRP or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and is also dedicated to an eligible water quality practice, such as the establishment of riparian buffers, contour strips, or grass waterways, may be eligible for CLEAR30 if their contracts are expiring by September 30, 2023.

CLEAR30 contracts will be effective beginning October 1, 2023. These long-term contracts ensure that conservation practices remain in place for 30 years, which improves water quality by reducing sediment and nutrient runoff and helping prevent algal blooms. Conservation in riparian areas also provides important carbon sequestration benefits. Traditional CRP contracts run from 10 to 15 years.

About CLEAR30

CLEAR30 enrollment was established in the 2018 Farm Bill to better address water quality concerns. Originally, CLEAR30 was only available in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watersheds; in 2021, FSA made CLEAR30 available to agricultural producers and landowners nationwide, and participation grew nearly seven-fold from 2020 to 2021.

Annual rental payments for landowners who enroll in CLEAR30 will be equal to the current Continuous CRP annual payment rate plus a **20** percent water quality incentive payment and an annual rental rate adjustment of **27.5** percent.

How to Sign Up

To sign up for CLEAR30, landowners and producers should contact their local USDA Service Center by **July 31, 2023**. Contact information can be found at farmers.gov/service-locator. Additionally, fact sheets and other resources are available at fsa.usda.gov/crp.

About Continuous CRP

CLEAR30 is one of several enrollment opportunities with Continuous CRP, giving producers and landowners the opportunity to enroll in CRP throughout the year without specific signup periods. Through the overall CLEAR initiative in Continuous CRP, USDA prioritizes water quality practices to reduce sediment and nutrient loadings and to foster clean lakes, estuaries, and rivers.

Offers are automatically accepted provided the producer and land meet the eligibility requirements and the enrollment levels do not exceed the statutory cap.

Continuous CRP offers conservation benefits similar to others, like General and Grassland CRP, but also offers unique flexibility and several program choices, which in addition to CLEAR30, include:

- **State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE):** The initiative restores vital habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife conservation goals.
- **Highly Erodible Lands Initiative (HELI):** Producers and landowners can enroll in CRP to establish long-term cover on highly erodible cropland.
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP):** Working with conservation partners, CREP leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific State, regional, or nationally significant conservation concerns.
- **Farmable Wetlands Program:** Producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, improving both vegetation and water flow.
- **Clean Lakes, Estuaries And Rivers (CLEAR):** Prioritizes water quality practices to reduce sediment, nutrient loadings, and help prevent algal blooms to foster Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and

More Information

CLEAR30 is an enrollment option available through CRP, one of the largest voluntary private-lands conservation programs in the United States. CRP was originally intended to primarily control soil erosion and stabilize commodity prices by taking environmentally sensitive lands out of production. The program has evolved over the years, providing numerous conservation and economic benefits. In addition to CLEAR30, signups are also open for Continuous CRP and Grassland CRP. The Grassland CRP signup opened April 17 and runs through May 26.

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. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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