

# Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



### Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Minnesota are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 75,000 acres in the following counties: Becker, Benton, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Chippewa, Clay, Cottonwood, Dakota, Dodge, Douglas, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Grant, Hennepin, Houston, Isanti, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Lac Qui Parle, Le Sueur, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Mahanomen, Marshall, Martin, Meeker, Morrison, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Norman, Olmsted, Otter Trail, Pennington, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Roseau, Scott, Sherburne, Sibley, Stearns, Steele, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Traverse, Wabasha, Waseca, Watonwan, Wilkin, Winona, Wright, and Yellow Medicine. The Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP is intended to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies and create and improve habitat for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

### 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.

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 Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll eligible land in CRP contracts for 14 to 15-years. Participants remove cropland from agricultural production and establish practices dedicated to native grasses and forbs, filter strips and wetlands.

This will improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies and improve wildlife habitat.

### Goals

The goals of the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP are to:

- Reduce sediments, nutrients and agricultural chemicals entering watercourses;
- Improve habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife; and
- Restore wetlands.

### Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP21, Filter Strips
- CP23, Wetland Restoration
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplains

### 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 service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator). To learn more about FSA conservation programs, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/conservation).

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## Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, at least 51 percent of the cropland must be located within the CREP project area. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

To be eligible for enrollment in the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP, land must also be enrolled in the State of Minnesota’s Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve perpetual conservation easement program. Offers will be evaluated, scored and ranked by the state to determine acceptance for enrollment in the RIM Reserve perpetual conservation easement program. The State of Minnesota will not accept any offer of less than eight total acres for enrollment in the RIM Reserve perpetual conservation easement program unless certain criteria are met.

## Payments

Under the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.

- A one-time sign-up incentive payment (SIP) in accordance with FSA National CRP directives.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 50 percent of the total eligible cost of installing the practice in accordance with FSA National CRP directives.
- An annual rental payment consisting of:
  - ◇ A base soil rental rate, determined by the soils of the eligible land offered; and
  - ◇ An incentive payment, as a percentage of the base soil rental rate, of 60 percent.

In addition, the State of Minnesota provides the following payments:

- A one-time RIM Reserve perpetual conservation easement program payment in an amount equal to the result of subtracting the landowner’s share of the total CRP annual rental payments over the full duration of the CRP contract from the amount of the RIM Reserve perpetual conservation easement program payment the landowner would have received for enrolling the land into a perpetual easement under the RIM Reserve perpetual conservation easement program without regard to this CREP or CRP; and

- A cost-share payment equal to the eligible cost of installing the approved conservation practice, minus the cost-share and PIP paid for such practice by USDA.

## Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that producers may select to enhance their land.

Eligible producers may still enroll eligible land in CRP through general or continuous sign-up; however, the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous sign-up. Under the Minnesota Water Quality and Habitat CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of payments received.

## 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.