

# Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



### Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 40,000 acres in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Warren, Washington, and Westmoreland counties to improve the quality of surface water, groundwater, and wildlife habitat by establishing riparian buffers, native and other grasses, shallow water areas for wildlife, grassed waterways, and the restoration of wetlands. The Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP will also contribute towards decreasing the Gulf of Mexico's hypoxia zone through nutrient loading reduction.

### 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 Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for a minimum of 10-year, not to exceed 15-year, contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to grasses, trees, and other vegetation or restore wetlands. This will improve water quality, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous, nutrients, and other pollutants entering waterbodies, and improve wildlife habitat.

### Goals

The goals of the Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP are to:

- Restore and protect wetlands
- Reduce the amount of sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants entering the Ohio River and other waterbodies
- Establish riparian habitat corridors next to streams, estuaries, and wetlands
- Establish permanent cover on highly erodible land to reduce erosion, enhance water quality, and create wildlife habitat
- Improve water quality to facilitate the health of fish and wildlife populations

### Conservation Practices

Specific CRP conservation practices are available to be enrolled as follows.

On highly erodible land (HEL) which meets minimum erodibility criteria as determined by FSA:

- CP1, Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-Easement
- CP12, Wildlife Food Plot

### For More Info

CREP is one option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may also enroll land in CRP through the general, continuous, or grassland signups; however, CREP may provide additional benefits not available through those signup types such as higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

For more information on this project, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

**Pennsylvania State Office  
Farm Service Agency**  
359 East Park Drive, Ste 1  
Harrisburg, PA 17111  
(717) 237-2113  
(855) 778-8909 fax

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply.

## Conservation Practices *(continued)*

With the goal of protecting/restoring riparian wildlife habitat, wetland habitat, stream habitat, and water quality meeting specific enrollment criteria as determined by FSA:

- CP8A, Grass Waterways
- CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- CP15A, Establishment of Permanent Vegetative Cover (Contour Grass Strips)
- CP21, Filter Strips
- CP22, Riparian Buffer
- CP23, Wetland Restoration
- CP29, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer
- CP30, Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer
- CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

## Who is Eligible?

A producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer, consistent with National CRP policy.

## Enrollment and Eligibility

Enrollment in CRP through the Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in the project area. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria according to current FSA National CRP Directives and be physically and legally capable of being planted (no planting restrictions due to an easement or other legally binding instrument) in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Eligible land being enrolled as CP1, CP2, CP12, and CP4D and located

- within 1,000 feet of a stream, must have a weighted average Erodibility Index (EI) of 8 or greater

- more than 1,000 feet from a stream, must have a weighted average EI of 12 or greater

Eligible land being enrolled as practice CP8A, CP9, CP15A, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP29, CP30, and CP33 must meet practice requirements provided in FSA National CRP Directives and in accordance to the CREP agreement.

Certain marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment provided it is suitable for use as an eligible riparian buffer, wildlife habitat buffer, or wetland buffer conservation practice.



## Payments

Under the Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments.

- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) is paid in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives as follows:
  - ◊ \$100 per acre for CP8A, CP21, CP22, CP29, CP30, and CP33
  - ◊ \$150 per acre for CP23
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to up to 40 percent of eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of CP8A, CP9, CP15A, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP29, CP30, and CP33 practices

- An annual rental payment consisting of:
  - ◊ A base rental rate, determined by the three predominant soils of the eligible land offered
  - ◊ A CREP incentive payment as follows:
    - For HEL practices CP1, CP2, CP4D, and CP12, the incentive payment is based on the EI between 75 and 225 percent, depending on the calculated edibility index
    - For practices CP8A, CP9, CP15A, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP29, CP30, and CP33, the incentive payment is 150 percent
  - ◊ A maintenance payment for practices CP21, CP22, CP29, and CP30 in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice

In addition, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides eligible participants a cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the practice installation cost, subject to limits, for eligible practices.

## Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Pennsylvania Ohio River Basin CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.