



Q&As

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THE INDIANA CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

July 08, 2005

1. What is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program?

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state natural resources conservation program that addresses state and nationally significant agricultural related environmental concerns. Through CREP, program participants receive financial incentives from USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to voluntarily enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in contracts of 10 to 15 years. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland from agricultural production and convert the land to native grasses, trees and other vegetation. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

2. What is the Indiana CREP?

The Indiana CREP is a partnership between USDA and the state of Indiana. The program targets the enrollment of 7,000 acres of land in the Highland/Pigeon, Tippecanoe, Upper White River watersheds where sediments, nutrients, pesticides and herbicides run off from agricultural land.

3. What are the potential benefits of the Indiana CREP?

The program will improve water quality by creating buffers and wetlands that will reduce agricultural runoff into the targeted watersheds. Installing buffer practices and wetlands will enhance habitat for wildlife, including State and Federally-listed threatened and endangered species. The program will also reduce nonpoint source nutrient losses.

4. What are the specific goals?

The goals of the Indiana CREP are to:

- Enroll 7,000 acres of eligible cropland and marginal pastureland, including frequently flooded lands, into CREP to establish buffer practices and wetlands;
- Protect at least 2,000 linear miles of watercourses by installing buffer practices;
- Reduce by 15 percent the amount of sediment, nutrients and agricultural chemicals entering watercourses within the targeted watersheds;
- Enroll 30 percent of farmed riparian acreage in the watersheds in accordance with statutory and regulatory rules;

- Enroll 8 percent of eligible acres in voluntary State ten-year contract extensions with local Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Tippecanoe watershed; and
- Enroll 10 percent of eligible acres in voluntary State permanent easements in the Tippecanoe and Upper White River watersheds.

5. What are the eligibility requirements?

Landowners can offer eligible cropland and marginal pastureland in all or portions of 28 counties in the Highland/Pigeon, Tippecanoe, Upper White River watersheds:

- **Highland/Pigeon Watershed:** Gibson, Pike, Posey, Vanderburgh and Warrick counties.
- **Tippecanoe Watershed:** Benton, Carroll, Cass, Fulton, Jasper, Kosciusko, Marshall, Miami, Noble, Pulaski, Starke, Tippecanoe, White and Whitley counties.
- **Upper White River Watershed:** Blackford, Boone, Delaware, Hamilton, Hancock, Johnson, Madison, Marion and Tipton counties.

Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner. Marginal pastureland along streams, watercourses and certain upland areas is also eligible for enrollment.

Persons who have acreage under an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are ineligible for CREP on that acreage until that contract expires. Other requirements may also apply. Interested producers should contact their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office for specific information regarding their eligibility for CREP.

6. When is the sign-up and how long does land remain under contract?

Sign-up for the Indiana CREP is scheduled to begin July 18, 2005, and will continue until enrollment goals are attained, or through Dec. 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

Land enrolled in the program remains under contract for a period of 14 to 15 years, as specified in the contract.

7. What conservation measures are approved for the CREP?

The following CRP conservation practices are approved for the Indiana CREP:

- For riparian areas, the following practices are available provided they are adjacent to an eligible stream, river or water body, and meet one of the following:
 - Have a minimum average width of 50 feet and a maximum average width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils):
 - CP2 - Establishment of Permanent Native Grass
 - Have a minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum average width of 180 feet (up to an average width of 300 feet in alluvial soils):
 - CP3A - Hardwood Tree Planting
 - CP4D - Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Noneasement
 - CP22 - Riparian Buffer

- For buffer areas, the following practices are available provided they are adjacent to an eligible stream, river or water body, and meet one of the following:
 - Have a minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum average width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet average width in alluvial soils):
 - CP21 - Filter Strips
- For wetland areas, the following practices are available:
 - CP23 - Wetland Restoration is available within the 100-year floodplain
 - CP23a - Wetland Restoration - Non-floodplain
 - CP31 - Bottom Timber Establishment on Wetland

8. What are the payments CCC is offering?

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, CREP participants will be eligible for the following types of CCC payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment: A one-time payment of \$140 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in CP21, CP22, or CP 31. This payment may be made after the contract has been signed and approved for 14- to 15-year contracts.
- Practice Incentive Payment: A one-time payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to establish CP21, CP22 or CP 31.
- Wetland Restoration Practice Incentive Payment: A one-time incentive payment that is equal to 25 percent of the eligible reimbursable hydrology restoration costs for CP23 and CP23A.
- Cost-share Assistance: Cost-share of up to 50 percent to install approved conservation practices.
- Annual Rental Payment: An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of the sum of three components:
 - Base Soil Rental Rate determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates for cropland offers, or for marginal pastureland offers, the applicable marginal pastureland rental rate.
 - Incentive Payment of 40 percent of the base rental rate without regard to other incentive payments for all practices offered and eligible for CREP.
 - Annual Maintenance Payment according to regular continuous CRP enrollments.

9. What payments and assistance is the State of Indiana offering?

The State of Indiana will:

- Contribute at least 20 percent of the overall costs of implementing the CREP through a combination of annual in-kind services and direct program costs.
- Pay a one-time Clean Water Incentive Payment (CWIP) to participants of \$400 per acre for land enrolled in CP3A, CP22, CP23, CP23A or CP31.
- Pay a one-time CWIP to participants of \$100 per acre for land enrolled in CP2, CP4D or CP21.

- Make direct, one-time payments of \$500 for CP3A, CP22 and CP31 acres voluntarily enrolled in permanent easements in a priority area within the Upper White River Watershed.
- Make direct, one-time payments of:
 - \$500 per acre for CP3A, CP22 and CP31 acres voluntarily enrolled in State permanent easements in a priority area within the Tippecanoe Watershed; or
 - \$250 per acre for CP3A, CP4D, CP22, CP23, CP23a and CP31 acres voluntarily enrolled in 10-year contract extensions in a priority area within the Tippecanoe Watershed.
- Pay all costs associated with monitoring Indiana’s water quality to meet CREP program requirements.
- Provide additional technical assistance to develop conservation plans and implement conservation practices.
- Appoint a state CREP Program Coordinator responsible for administering the state’s obligation under the terms of this Agreement.

10. What is the cost?

The total cost over a 15-year period is estimated at \$20.2 million, with CCC contributing \$14.6 million and the State of Indiana funding \$5.6 million. The \$20.2 million does not include any costs that may be assumed by producers.

11. Can I still enroll in general CRP and continuous sign-up CRP?

Yes. CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select for their land; applicants may still enroll eligible land in the general CRP or continuous sign-up CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous sign-up. For instance, CREP payments are at a higher effective rate.

12. Can I hay or graze my CREP land?

Haying and grazing are not permitted during the CRP contract period unless FSA allows them for emergency or managed haying and grazing purposes, if applicable, under normal CRP rules.

13. Where can I get more information?

More information on the Indiana CREP is available at local FSA offices and on FSA’s Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/default.htm>.

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NOTE: The Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) news releases and media advisories are available on the Web at FSA’s home page: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>