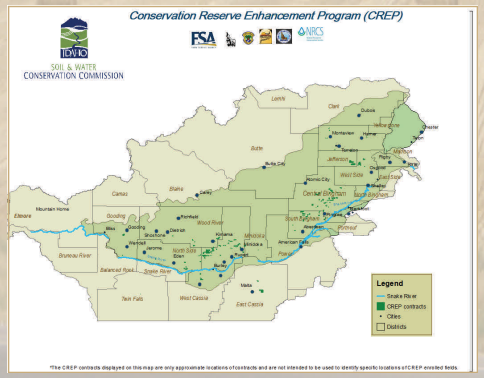
Protecting the Environment and Your Land Through Voluntary Conservation Practices

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state cooperative conservation program that addresses targeted agricultural-related environmental concerns. CREP is an offshoot of the country's largest private-lands environmental improvement program—the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Like CRP, CREP is administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA).

CREP participants voluntarily enroll in a land retirement program that helps producers reduce groundwater consumption from cropland within the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. This also helps decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. Participants receive financial incentives, cost-share assistance and rental payments in exchange for removing cropland from agricultural production. Converting enrolled land into native grasses, trees and other vegetation improves soil retention and water, air and wildlife habitat quality.

CREP addresses high-priority conservation issues of both local and national significance, such as impacts to water supplies, loss of critical habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species, soil erosion, and reduced habitat for fish populations such as salmon.

The purpose of the Idaho CREP is to reduce groundwater consumption from cropland, improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and enhance and restore wildlife habitat. This helps to reduce demand on the scarce water supplies of southeastern Idaho, thereby preserving the agricultural economy and protecting important surface and groundwater resources in the Snake River Basin, including the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer (ESPA).



Additional Information

For additional information on FSA conservation programs that can help protect water resources, contact your local conservation district and the Farm Service Agency. The office nearest you can be located on the web at: www.fsa.usda.gov. Information on wellhead protection may be also obtained from the following:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency
9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite B
Boise, ID 83709
(208) 378-5669 * Fax: (208) 378-5678
www.fsa.usda.gov/id

Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Chuck Pentzer, State CREP Coordinator
310 West Nezperce
Jerome, ID 83338
(208) 324-2501 ext.114 * Fax: (208) 324-6483
www.swc.idaho.gov

Idaho Rural Water Association
6065 West Corporal Lane
Boise, ID 83704
(208) 343-7001 * Fax: (208) 343-1866
www.idahoruralwater.com

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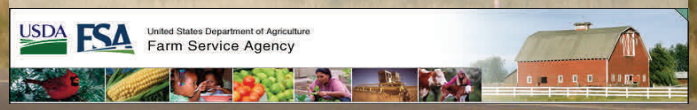

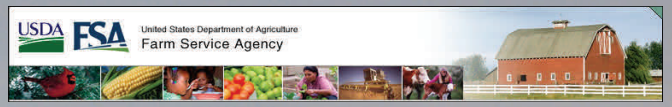

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

Continuous Sign-up For Cropland Within Idaho Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer

What is CREP?

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land.

The Idaho Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer CREP targets the enrollment of up to 100,000 acres of eligible irrigated cropland to reduce irrigation water use, increase water quality, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and increase wildlife populations. In addition to CREP payments, the state of Idaho thru the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) will enter into state water use contracts with participants on CREP enrolled land to ensure irrigation water is conserved during the 15-year CREP contract period.

Eligibility Criteria

The Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer CREP project area of Idaho includes all or parts of the following 13 counties: Bingham, Blaine, Bonneville, Butte, Cassia, Fremont, Gooding, Jefferson, Jerome, Lincoln, Madison, Minidoka, and Twin Falls.

In the Idaho CREP irrigated cropland must be located within the CREP Project area. Cropland must have been irrigated by groundwater sources other than the main stem of the Snake River, at a rate no less than 1/2-acre foot per acre for 4 out of 6 years 2002—2007; cropland must have been irrigated or included in an IDWR mitigation plan within 24 months prior to offer submission; and cropland must be physically and legally capable of being irrigated in a normal manner at the time of offer.

Potential Benefits

Enrolling up to 100,000 acres of eligible cropland will significantly reduce irrigation water consumption. CREP helps to improve water quality and quantity in the Snake River and its tributaries by reducing agricultural chemicals and sediment. Establishing permanent vegetative cover will provide wildlife habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species.

How It Works

To be eligible for enrollment in CREP, participants and acreage must meet certain eligibility requirements. Provided the eligibility requirements are met, FSA accepts acreage into the CREP. Enrollment can be on a continuous basis, permitting farmers and ranchers to join the program at any time rather than waiting for a specific sign-up period. The eligibility requirements include, but are not limited to the following:

- Land must be owned or leased for at least one year (12 months) prior to enrollment to be eligible.
- Acreage must be considered cropland by FSA and be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner.

The Soil and Water Conservation Commission (SWC) staff works with the landowner to develop conservation and seeding plans to install the following types of practices thru the contract period.

CP-2: Establishment of permanent native grasses
CP-4D: Permanent wildlife habitat
CP-12: Wildlife food plots
CP-22: Riparian buffers (cropland only)
CP-25: Rare and declining habitat

All practices listed above are eligible for cost share assistance of approximately 50% of the cost to install the practice.

Idaho's CREP incorporates best management practices designed to enhance wildlife habitat. After enrolling in CREP, this landowner saw an increase in the quail population on his property, one of the many benefits gained by participating in Idaho's CREP.

Sign-up and Enrollment

Agricultural producers may signup with their County FSA office at any time during the year. Eligible landowners may enter into a 15-year contract. Once approved, FSA provides CREP participants with annual rental payments including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance.

Rental Payments: FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each eligible county by the Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) and the average dryland cash rent.

Cost-share Assistance: FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be an amount of up to 50% of the participant's costs in establishing the approved practice.

Signing Incentive Payment (SIP): Only CP-22 practices will receive the SIP payment which is equal to $10 an acre times 10 years. This is equal to $100 an acre for signing into the program under CP-22.

Practice Incentive Payment (PIP): PIP also applies to CP-22 and is equal to 40% of the total producers out-of-pocket cost. This payment is paid after all work has been completed.

Maintenance/Management

An agricultural producer who enrolls into the CREP must agree to maintain and manage the practice according to an approved conservation plan for the duration of the CREP contract length. Maintenance includes managing for noxious weeds, pests, or other species. Management includes implementing a disturbance activity to promote dormant species succession. In addition, the participant agrees to not disturb the acreage during the primary nesting season of April 1—August 1.