

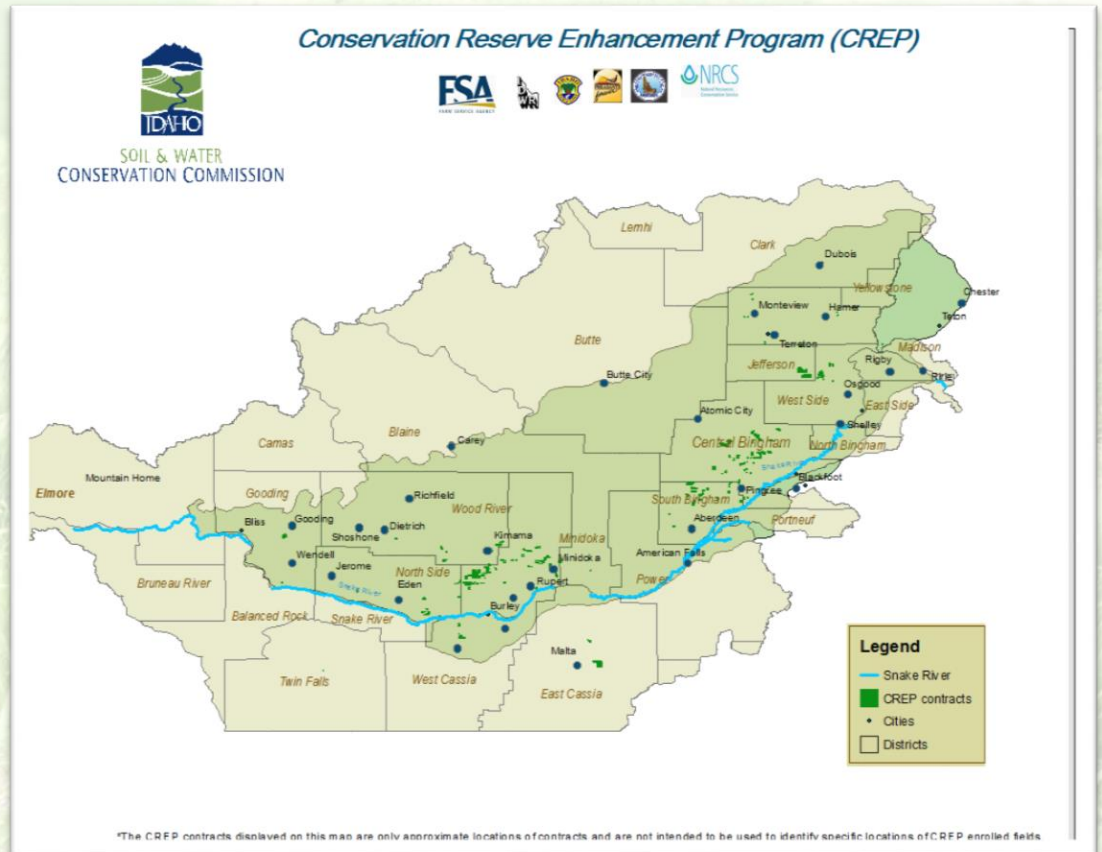
CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)

Continuous Signup for Cropland within the Idaho Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer (ESPA)

What is CREP?

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). Technical service is provided by the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC), with water right reviews conducted by Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR).



The main purpose of the Idaho CREP is to reduce groundwater consumption from irrigated cropland, which helps to reduce the demand on the water supplies in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) in southeastern Idaho.

CREP participants voluntarily enroll in a 15 year program. Participants receive annual rental payments and cost share assistance in exchange for converting the land into permanent vegetative cover. This provides an average of 2 ac-ft. of groundwater savings per enrolled acre and improves soil quality, water retention, air quality, and increased wildlife habitat.

Eligibility Criteria

- The CREP project area includes all or parts of the area shown above, with emphasis and priority of implementation in the darker green ESPA area.
- In this program –
 - Cropland must have been irrigated by groundwater sources at a rate no less than 1/2-acre foot per acre for 4 out of 6 years 2008–2013; 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. In other words, if a curtailment order is issued before the CREP offer, the land will no longer be eligible. IDWR verifies that the water rights are valid with the offer.
 - Land must be owned or leased for at least one year (12 months) prior to enrollment to be eligible.
 - There is no minimal field size requirement. Some land owners are considering removing end guns, and retiring corners or other marginal land as a feasible option for voluntarily reducing groundwater consumption and helping to meet the reduction requirements of the Surface Water Coalition agreement.

Benefits

- Enrolling cropland into CREP will significantly reduce irrigation ground water consumption.
- Establishing permanent vegetative cover on fields improves wildlife habitat.
- Land enrolled in the program voluntarily curtails the water right during the contract period in exchange for the annual rental payment and becomes active again after the contract period has ended.

Signup and Enrollment

Agricultural producers may sign up with their County FSA office at any time during the year.

FSA provides CREP participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance for establishment of wildlife cover. At the end of the contract, the water right returns to active status. If the current Farm Bill at the time allows, the participant may have the option to re-enroll the ground.

- The Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission (ISWCC) staff works with the contract participant 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 buffer
 - CP-25: rare and declining habitat
- Most practices in this desert environment are CP-2 or CP-4D
- All practices listed above are eligible for cost share assistance of approximately 50% of the cost of ground preparation, seed, chemical treatment, and clipping.

Maintenance/Management

Participants who enroll their land 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. The participant agrees to not disturb the acreage during the primary nesting season of April 1—August 1 after stand establishment.

Annual Rental Payments: Are made each October and are have just been approved for increased rates! Contact your local FSA office for rates specific for your area.

Additional Information

For additional information 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 may be also obtained from the following:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

Jenny Peirsol, Conservation Specialist
(208) 378-5675
www.fsa.usda.gov/id

SWCC CREP staff:

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