



IDAHO SOIL & WATER  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **USDA opens 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of CREP enrollments; applications due by May 1**

*Near-record number of Idaho producers signed up for CREP in 1<sup>st</sup> round*

BOISE – (April 14, 2026) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture has opened a second round of enrollment for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) this year, with a quick deadline coming up on May 1 for new applications.

CREP is a partnership program between the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the State of Idaho that provides incentive payments to farmers to idle marginal irrigated cropland and conserve groundwater. Producers enroll in CREP through the FSA. Rob Sharpnack, Idaho CREP Manager for the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission, provides technical assistance for producers.

Southern Idaho farmers showed strong interest in CREP during the previous enrollment period Feb. 12-March 20, with 38 new contracts approved, covering 102 farm fields and 3,243 acres in five counties, according to Sharpnack.

Because of the strong interest, “It is absolutely great to have a second enrollment period for CREP to allow for additional signups that didn’t quite make it during the first enrollment period,” Sharpnack said. “It’s also possible that some producers didn’t hear about it until it was too late to submit an application.”

Farmers who enroll in CREP must make a 10-year commitment in the contracts, idle farmland, voluntarily pause their water right for the contract term (*some irrigation may be used for vegetation establishment*), and convert acreage into permanent vegetative cover.

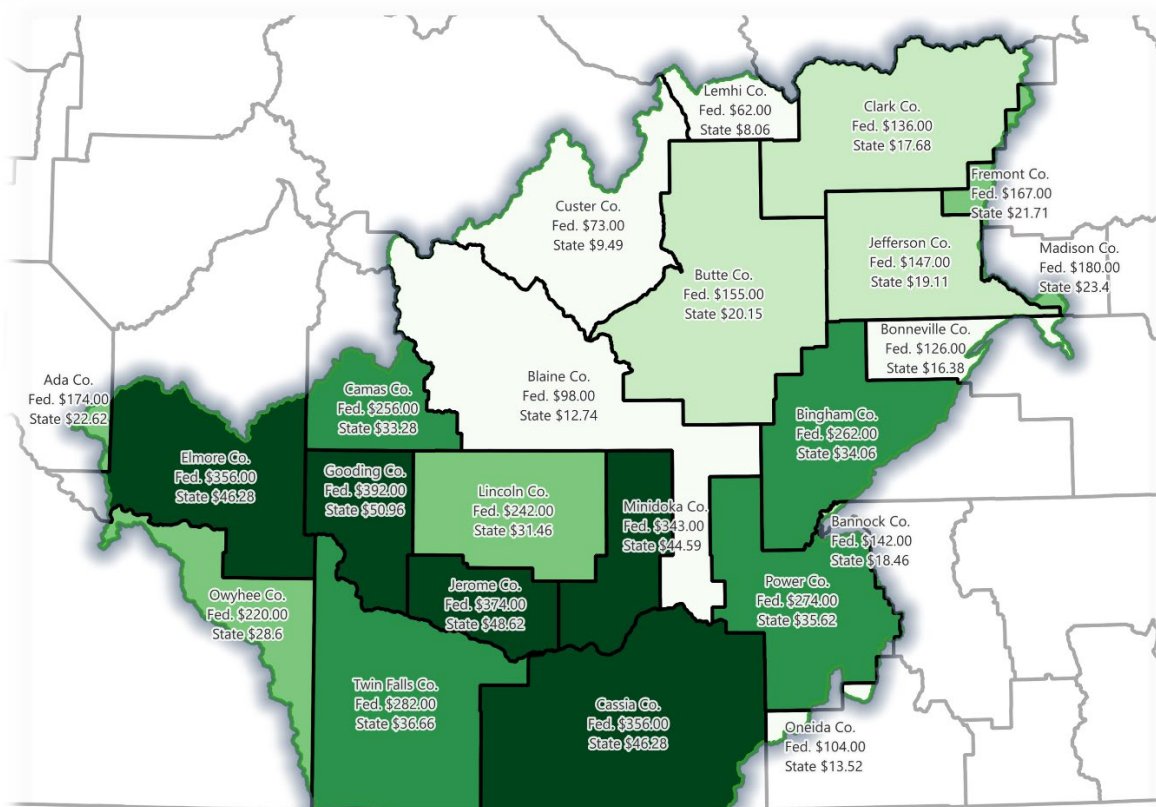
In return, the producers receive federal annual rental payments and state cost-share assistance. The Idaho Water Resource Board has increased the budget for state cost-share assistance for producers who sign up for the CREP program. The Board’s interest mainly is tied to the reduction in groundwater withdrawals from the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA), officials said.

Future groundwater savings as a result of the recent CREP enrollments will amount to about 6,487 acre-feet per year over the 10-year life on the contracts, Sharpnack said.

With many commodity prices below the break-even point for producers, and some farmers facing the possibility that they may be exceeding their water allotments under the 2024 Water Settlement Agreement, enrolling some acres in CREP is considered an attractive option right now, officials said.

In the first round in 2026, “We had one of the largest new enrollments in CREP since the program began 20 years ago,” Sharpnack said.

For more information about signing up for the program, contact Sharpnack at 208-810-0768 or email [rob.sharpnack@swc.idaho.gov](mailto:rob.sharpnack@swc.idaho.gov).



Map shows federal and state crop rental rates by county for CREP enrollees.

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