

Frequently Asked Questions

CREP



MARYLAND'S CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Fact Sheet

What is CREP?

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal-state conservation partnership that pays landowners attractive land rental rates to voluntarily take environmentally sensitive cropland and pastureland out of production for 10 to 15 years and plant streamside buffers, protect highly erodible land or establish wetlands to protect the water quality and wildlife habitat of local streams.

What is the difference between CREP and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)?

CREP is an option under CRP that focuses on placing conservation practices on environmentally-sensitive cropland and pastureland. CREP generally provides landowners with higher annual land rental rates and added incentive payments. The same parcel of land may not be enrolled in CREP and CRP at the same time; however, CRP participants with expiring contracts may be eligible to enroll their existing practices in CREP.

Who is eligible for CREP?

Landowners or producers with cropland that is next to a stream or highly erodible land within 1,000 feet of a stream that has been planted to an agricultural commodity, meets cropping history requirements, and is still physically and legally capable of being planted may be eligible. Marginal pastureland next to a stream may also be eligible for certain practices. Participants must have either owned or operated the farm or ranch for 12 months prior to enrollment.

What conservation practices are eligible for CREP?

Farmers can earn extra farm income by taking environmentally sensitive farmland out of production for 10 to 15 years and planting forested streamside buffers, grassed streamside buffers or conservation cover. Farmers may also earn extra income by protecting highly erodible land, promoting certain wildlife species, or establishing wetlands to safeguard local streams.

What are the enrollment period options?

Highly erodible land and shallow water practices have contract lengths of 10 years. For all other practices, the participant has the option of choosing contract lengths ranging from 10 to 15 years.

When will the contract begin?

Contracts begin the 1st day of the month following the Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee's approval of the contract. Applicants may defer the contract start date for up to six months.

Are CREP contracts transferrable?

Contracts are transferrable if the land is sold or inherited and the new owner agrees to the terms of the contract.

What types of payments will I receive?

Five types of payments may be available depending on the practice installed. These include: signing bonus, annual rental payment, cost-share assistance, practice incentive payment and maintenance payment. See brochure for a full description. All payments, including cost-share, are considered income. Participants should consult their tax adviser on reporting requirements.

Will CREP enrollment adversely affect my Prior Converted Cropland status?

No. When the CREP contract expires, the land retains its Prior Converted Cropland status and may be re-enrolled or returned to agricultural production. Areas reverted or restored to wetlands may become state "regulatory" wetlands if agricultural activities have not resumed within five years of contract expiration.

May I hay or graze my CREP land?

Haying or grazing is not permitted on most CREP land. Managed or emergency haying and grazing may be performed with prior authorization on lands that are enrolled because they are considered highly erodible. Specific restrictions apply and the participant must accept a reduction in the annual rental payment.

Can marginal pastureland practices be used adjacent to ditches or channelized streams?

Marginal pastureland practices must be immediately adjacent and parallel to a perennial stream, non-channelized seasonal stream, or permanent water body, including certain wetlands. Check with the soil conservation district or FSA for specific requirements.

What are the buffer widths along channelized streams and ditches? What conservation practices are cost-shared?

Filter strips along channelized intermittent streams and ditches must be 35 feet wide. Channelized perennial streams are eligible for the full suite of practices and buffer widths.

May I extend my riparian buffer up to the 250 ft. maximum for additional wildlife benefits?

Yes. You may be eligible to extend the buffer by installing practices that meet an approved wildlife establishment and management plan for a specific group of at-risk species approved for CREP (riparian species or shrub land birds and pollinators).

Is it possible to have a CREP contract and a CREP easement at the same time?

Yes. In fact, you must be enrolled in CREP before you can sell or donate a CREP easement. See the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' brochure on CREP easements.

How do I enroll in CREP?

Sign-up for Maryland CREP is ongoing until acreage goals are met. Contact the local soil conservation district or county Farm Service Agency to enroll in the program. Additional information on CREP is available on FSA's website: www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep.

Maryland's 24 Soil Conservation Districts

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3	Harford	410-638-4828
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757	Howard	410-313-0680
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3	Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3	Montgomery	301-590-2855
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3	Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3	Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
Catoctin	301-695-2803, ext. 3	St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3	Somerset	410-621-9310
Charles	301-638-3028	Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 5
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3	Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3	Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Garrett	301-501-5856, ext. 3	Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3



Maryland Department of Agriculture
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Maryland's Soil Conservation Districts
USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service