

# Colorado Rio Grande Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Colorado are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 40,000 acres of agricultural land in Alamosa, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties within the State of Colorado. The Colorado Rio Grande CREP is intended to significantly decrease the amount of water consumption and reduce the quantity of agricultural chemicals and sediment that would otherwise enter the waters of Colorado from irrigated agricultural lands.

## Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers to conserve environmentally sensitive agricultural land. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and then federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Colorado Rio Grande CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14 to 15-year contracts. Participants remove irrigated cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to grasses, trees, or other approved vegetation. This will improve

water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, and enhance wildlife habitat in the area.

## Goals

The goals of the Colorado Rio Grande CREP include:

- ◆ To reduce soil erosion by over 500,000 tons per year;
- ◆ To establish up to 40,000 acres of habitat for wildlife species and native vegetation;
- ◆ To reduce energy consumption and fertilizer and pesticide application; and
- ◆ To restore and enhance up to 750 acres of degraded wetlands.

## Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- ◆ CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- ◆ CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- ◆ CP23, Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain

## For More Information

Contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).

**Colorado State Farm Service Agency**  
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## Enrollment And Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the Colorado Rio Grande CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be irrigated cropland located in the project area. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. It must have been irrigated with ground or surface water at a rate of at least one-half acre-foot for the four out of six year period established for CRP's general crop history eligibility and be associated with water rights that are in good standing.

## Payments

Under the Colorado Rio Grande CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- ◆ A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) and practice incentive payment (PIP).
- ◆ An annual rental payment based on the posted county irrigated rental rates for each eligible enrolled acre.
- ◆ A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved conservation practice.

In addition, the State of Colorado provides direct annual payments of up to \$66/acre/year for the life of the contract, as well as a one-time incentive payment of up to \$200/acre.

## Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Colorado Rio Grande CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Colorado Rio Grande CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

## Haying And Grazing

Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.