

Virginia Chesapeake Bay Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Virginia are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 25,000 acres of agricultural land in Chesapeake Bay drainage basin within the Commonwealth of Virginia. The purpose of the Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP is to achieve nutrient reductions from agricultural areas, reduce the amount of sediment entering the water courses, and enhance habitat for the preservation of biological resources of the Commonwealths including threatened and endangered species dependent on riparian areas.

Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. 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 Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP, federal and state resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 10 to 15-year contracts. Participants remove cropland and marginal pastureland 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 Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP include:

- ◆ Helping agricultural producers meet nutrient and sediment reduction goals in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed;
- ◆ Establishing and restoring cropped wetland areas;
- ◆ Establishing, restoring and enhancing riparian areas;
- ◆ Enhancing riparian and wetland habitat for wildlife.

Eligible Conservation Practices

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available:

- ◆ CP21, Filter Strip
- ◆ CP22, Riparian Buffer
- ◆ CP23, Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP29, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer

Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in Virginia and within the Chesapeake Bay Drainage Basin. Land must be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria according to current FSA National CRP Directives and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Payments

Under the Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

For More Information

Contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.

Chesapeake Service Center

310 Shea Drive
Chesapeake, VA
23322-5571

Phone: (757) 547-7172

Fax: (855) 621-7145

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details.



Payments (cont.)

- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) is paid in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives of \$100 per acre for CP21, CP22 and CP29 practices.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP29.
- A one-time Wetland Restoration Incentive (WRI) payment in an amount equal to 25 percent of the cost of restoring the hydrology of the site, for CP23 practice acres.
- A per-acre annual rental payment, not to exceed \$100 per acre, consisting of:
 - A base soil rental rate, determined by the soils of the land offered.
 - An incentive payment equal to 120 percent, except for land enrolled or re-enrolled under infeasible-to-farm.
 - A maintenance incentive payment of \$5 for practices CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP29.
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for the installation of the approved conservation practice.
- A one-time Chesapeake Bay Incentive Payment (CBIP) in an amount equal to \$100 to \$300 per acres, for CP22 practice located within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The one-time CBIP amount is based on the average width of the riparian buffer.

In addition, the Commonwealth of Virginia will provide eligible participants a cost-share payment and offer one-time lump-sum incentive payments of \$50 or \$75 per acre, based on the length of the contract.

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 Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing is not authorized on land enrolled in CRP though the Virginia Chesapeake Bay CREP.