

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federally administered voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Unlike the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), CREP is a flexible program that can be targeted to specific state and local issues. To identify potential CREP applications, the federal Farm Services Agency (FSA) that administers CREP partners with state, local, and private entities. In Iowa, CREP provides financial incentives to landowners to establish wetlands for water quality improvement in tile-drained regions of Iowa. The Program includes 37 counties in north central Iowa in an area that has been identified as a contributor to high nitrate loads in the Mississippi River Basin. Since 2000, the General Assembly has made an annual appropriation to leverage federal dollars for CREP activities.

Wetland Sites

Wetland sites are strategically located to maximize nitrate load reduction and benefits to water quality. Through CREP, 72 Iowa wetlands have been restored or are under construction. Over 400 potential sites have been identified. Although wetland establishment is the focus, CREP may also fund the establishment of buffers and structures that support CREP wetlands. To be eligible, potential sites must be located in one of 37 counties, have a drainage area of at least 500 acres, and be between 0.50% and 2.0% of the size of the total drainage area. The CREP wetlands may not negatively impact drainage rights upstream or downstream. Iowa State University has estimated that properly located wetlands can remove 40.0% to 90.0% of nitrates from drainage water. Projects typically take 18 to 24 months to complete and require a long-term commitment from all stakeholders.

Financial Incentives

In Iowa, CREP is supported by state and federal funding. These incentives, listed below, provide landowners support for the construction and maintenance of wetlands. Matching state resources complement the federal component of CREP by providing different options for landowners interested in building wetlands. Below is a list of landowner incentives by source.

Federal Incentives

- Annual rent payments for 15 years for 150.0% of the weighted average rental rate
- 50.0% cost-share for eligible cost of practice establishment
- Practice Incentive Payments for 40.0% of the eligible practice installation costs

State Incentives

- A one-time, up-front incentive payment to enter into either a 30-year or perpetual easement
- Cost-share for 10.0% of construction costs

Related Statutes

Iowa Code chapter [466.5](#)

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More Information

Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship CREP: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/waterresources/CREP.asp>

CREP Eligible Counties: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/waterResources/pdf/MapofEligibleCounties.pdf>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

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