

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - Arkansas

Overview

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the state of Arkansas have launched a \$10 million Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve water quality of the Bayou Meto watershed and wildlife habitat in five central Arkansas counties.

CREP uses federal and state resources to safeguard environmentally sensitive land through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Producers enrolled in CRP remove lands from agricultural production and plant native grasses, trees, and other vegetation to improve water quality, soil, and wildlife habitat. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. CREP provides rental payments and other financial incentives to encourage producers to voluntarily enroll in 10- to 15-year CRP contracts.

Benefits

The Arkansas CREP targets 6,650 acres in central Arkansas to protect water quality, including drinking water supplies. The project establishes tree buffers around streams and rivers in the Bayou Meto watershed. These buffers keep sediment, nutrients, and pollutants from entering water supplies. Trees planted under the Arkansas CREP reduce the amount of sediment reaching the water by 10,000 tons per year. The program also provides

vital habitat for a wide array of wildlife, including 17 rare or declining species.

Goals

The goals of the Arkansas CREP are to:

- Reduce sediment loading in the targeted area by as much as 10,000 tons per year.
- Increase wildlife populations through the creation of riparian buffers.
- Establish 200 miles of riparian forest buffers to protect and restore water quality and wildlife habitat.

Program Cost

The expected combined federal and state obligation is \$10.2 million over 15 years, with \$8.5 million from the federal government and \$1.7 million from Arkansas. This does not include any costs that may be borne by producers.

Eligible Areas

Producers within portions of Arkansas, Jefferson, Lonoke, Prairie and Pulaski counties that meet the eligibility requirements identified for the Arkansas CREP may be eligible. To find out if your operation is located within the project area, contact your local USDA service center.

Approved Conservation Practices

The CRP conservation practice approved for this program is CP22, Riparian Buffer.

Signup and Eligibility Requirements

Eligible producers can enroll in 10- to 15-year CRP contracts. Applicants must be able to offer eligible acreage and satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP. Land must be cropland that has been cropped 2 out of the past 5 years and is physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland is also eligible provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. Applicants must generally have owned or operated the land for at least one year prior to enrollment. Persons with an existing CRP contract or an approved offer with a contract pending are not eligible for CREP until that contract expires.

CREP Payments

Arkansas CREP participants are eligible for four types of USDA payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment - a one-time payment consistent with Handbook 2-CRP for land enrolled in a riparian buffer practice. USDA makes this payment soon after the contract has been signed.
- Practice Incentive Payment

- payment equal to about 40 percent of the total cost for establishing the riparian buffer practice. This payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost share assistance that USDA provides.

- Annual rental payment of about 170 percent of the dryland cash rental rate for the county in which the land is located.
- Cost share assistance for installing the conservation practices on retired land.

information is also available on FSA's web site at: www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

Arkansas CREP participants are also eligible for a state supplemental one-time lump sum payment of \$200 per acre on land enrolled in a 10- to 15-year CRP contract.

Enrollment in Other Programs

Applicants may still enroll in general or continuous signup CRP. However, CREP provides additional benefits not available through the general and/or continuous signup. For instance, the CREP enrollment process is on a continuous basis, and payments are at a higher effective rate.

Haying and Grazing

Haying and grazing is not allowed during the CRP contract period unless USDA permits it for emergency purposes under normal CRP rules.

For More Information

For more information on the Arkansas CREP, contact your local USDA service center, Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, Natural Resources Conservation Service office. Additional
Page 2

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all of part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.