

# NYS CREP

**New York State  
Conservation Reserve  
Enhancement Program**

## **UPDATE FOR SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

OCTOBER 2003

### **What is CREP?**

The New York State Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is a cooperative program between the State and USDA. Eligible producers enroll in the program for contracts of 10-15 years to implement conservation cover practices on their farms. The goal is to protect surface water by reducing erosion and runoff containing nutrients and pathogens, as well as to protect ground water that supplies public wells.

### **When will the program be active?**

The program will be open for sign-ups as soon as the agreement is signed. A signing ceremony is currently being planned, and it may occur at the end of October. The program is currently scheduled to run for five years but might be extended.

### **Will we receive training on CREP?**

Yes! We are planning to hold training sessions around the state in conjunction with FSA and NRCS. Our target for the sessions is January.

### **Who is responsible for what?**

FSA will take sign-ups and determine eligibility, and they will also take care of contracts and payment arrangements with the producer (similar to CRP). NRCS, the SWCD or a TSP will prepare the CREP conservation plan and work with the producer to implement it. Once the plan is implemented, FSA ensures that the practices are maintained. Another role Districts can take on is program outreach - informing eligible farmers about the program.

### **Will Districts be reimbursed if they take on the technical role?**

Yes. We are working on arrangements with NRCS to reimburse Districts. Most likely, NRCS and Ag & Markets will work out an agreement where Districts apply for reimbursement directly from Ag & Markets.

### **What land is eligible for the program?**

There are 12 major basins that have been targeted for the program. Within the 12 basins, individual 11-digit HUCs have been identified. These watersheds were chosen because segments within them were listed on the 1996 PWL as being impacted by agriculture. To clarify, entire HUCs are eligible if they contain a segment that was listed on the 1996 PWL with ag as a source. A list of all eligible HUCs is available. (We realize that some watersheds that are considered environmentally sensitive are not included; we are investigating the possibility of changing the list of eligible HUCs at a later date.)

In addition, approved wellhead protection areas are also eligible for enrollment in CREP, within the 12 major basins (subject to CRP rules).

### **Are there limitations on total enrollment?**

The goal of New York's CREP program is to enroll 40,000 acres over the course of the program. Enrollment is on a first-come first-served basis, and enrollment will be capped each year.

### Does this program fund buffers only?

- No. There are three categories of land where conservation cover can be established under CREP:
- land qualifying on the basis of erosion, where at least 50% of the land is within 1000 feet of a surface water source and has an erodibility index of 15 or greater
  - wellhead protection areas designated by the NYS Department of Health (subject to CRP rules)
  - riparian buffers

### What practices are eligible?

There are a variety of practices that are eligible for each category of eligible land. More information will be available at the training sessions.

### How is this program different from continuous CRP?

There are some differences in eligible practices, and the eligible areas are limited. The main benefit of CREP is that the incentive payments are greater.

### What payments can the producer expect?

The basic payment structure is as follows. There may be some variations for certain practices or circumstances. There may also be maintenance payments.

BMP cost-share: 50% cost-share assistance for the installation of conservation practices, subject to CRP limits.

Annual rental payment: rental rate based on the soil types of the enrolled land, plus an incentive payment of 145% of the rental rate. (That's right – the 145% payment is a bonus on top of the base rate.)

Signing Incentive Payment: a one-time payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre for land enrolled in a riparian buffer. This payment is made soon after the contract has been signed and approved.

Practice Incentive Payment: a payment equal to 40 percent of the eligible cost for establishing a conservation practice. This payment is in addition to the 50 percent cost-share assistance.

*Example:*

Total BMP cost	\$ 23,000
BMP cost-share	\$ 11,500 (50%)
PIP incentive	\$ 9,200 (40%)
SIP incentive	\$ 1,000 (based on 10 acres, 10 year contract)
Rental payment with incentive	\$ 980 → (\$40 + 145%) x 10 acres
Cumulative rental over 10 years	\$ 9,800

In addition, farms enrolled in CREP are eligible for a school tax credit on their state income tax. Acres enrolled in CREP can be added to the base acreage (250 acres) allowed under New York State's Farmers' School Tax Credit. So, farms with greater than 250 acres could obtain a tax benefit through enrollment in CREP.

### Can CREP farms apply for Ag Nonpoint Source grants?

Yes, CREP farms could be included in an Ag Nonpoint Source grant application to receive cost-sharing on the CREP practices or other complementary practices on their farm. If they are seeking cost-share for the CREP practices, they can apply for up to 45% cost-share, and the federal 50% cost-share can be used as a match. They might also apply for state funds for other practices on their farm that make the system more effective.

### Where can I get more information?

The details of the program are still being worked out and we will get more information to you as soon as it is available. If you have questions in the mean time, please call Emily Svenson at the State Committee office: 518-457-8886.