

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

This program is a partnership between the USDA Farm Service Agency, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and participating county land conservation departments throughout the state. This program provides an opportunity for Wisconsin landowners to enroll agricultural lands into various conservation practices including, among others, riparian buffers, wetland restoration, grassed waterways and establishment of native grassland areas.

### **Key Components of CREP:**

The USDA Secretary and Wisconsin's Governor signed the agreement authorizing Wisconsin's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) on October 26, 2001. The agreement has been amended several times to extend CREP into the current farm bill timeframe, added a CREP practice, and revised the project map for CREP. The last amendment added Marquette and Outagamie County as well as the four counties draining to Lake Superior to Wisconsin's CREP.

The program is available in portions or all of 52 counties. Please refer to the map on the back of this page. The goal is to enroll 100,000 acres within the project area. Landowners within the CREP project area may enroll their land into 14-15 year agreements or into an agreement along with a state or county perpetual conservation easement. The goal is to enroll 75,000 acres into agreements and 25,000 acres into perpetual conservation easements.

DATCP estimates that there are about 350,000 acres of farmland that may be eligible for enrolling into the 85,000 acres of conservation practices within the riparian project area. This includes a goal to enroll 5,000 acres within the Lake Superior Project Area. Wisconsin also has a goal of entering 15,000 acres of grassland habitat within the 730,000-acre northern and southern grassland project areas. The goals in the grassland project areas are to improve and enhance grassland habitat for endangered grassland birds within the grassland project area (portions of 9 counties) in addition to improving water quality.

The project area includes an estimated 16,000 miles of streams that drain from farmland. It is estimated that about half of these streams are already adequately buffered. The goal is to provide buffers to 40% to 50% of the streams not adequately buffered, or about 3,800 miles of streams.

### **LCC requirements under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:**

DATCP asks that eligible counties sign a county CREP contract whereby the county agrees to implement the state portion of CREP by assisting landowners to fill out applications and if approved, completing and getting the required signatures for agreements and easements. Payments are made to landowners through two-party checks made out to the landowner and the county. In this way, the county is not required to directly issue payments to landowners. To date, the State of Wisconsin, through counties, has enrolled about 41,000 acres at a cost of about \$11 million. The state funds have leveraged federal payments to participants of over \$68 million to be paid out over the next 15 or so years. The state's payments are up front or cost share payments made when the practices are installed.

Statutory References

Wis. Stats. 93.70

