

# Maryland Chesapeake Bay

## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)



### OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Maryland are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 100,000 acres of agricultural land in the State of Maryland. The purpose of the Maryland Chesapeake Bay CREP is to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering waterbodies, improve wildlife habitat and restore wetlands.

### 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 Maryland 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 native grasses, trees and other vegetation or restore wetlands. This will improve water quality by reducing soil runoff, increasing ground water absorption, and reducing stream sedimentation and nutrient loading from crop fields. It will also enhance and restore plant and wildlife habitat and wetlands.

### GOALS

The goals of the Maryland Chesapeake Bay CREP include:

- Reduce nutrient pollution from agricultural lands by approximately 11.5 million pounds of nitrogen and 1.1 million pounds of phosphorus, on an annual basis. To increase surface and groundwater retention.
- Reduce sediment loading into streams from agricultural lands of approximately 200,000 tons of sediment, on an annual basis.
- Increase the survivability, distribution and abundance of targeted fish, wildlife and plant species in the Chesapeake region. Emphasis for Rare and Declining Species Habitat enrollments will be given to high priority species listed under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and state and federally-listed threatened or endangered species such as bald eagles, Delmarva fox squirrel, Eastern bog turtle, dwarf wedge mussel, glassy darter and harparella.

### STAY CONNECTED

CREP is one option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may also enroll land in CRP through the general, continuous, or grassland sign-ups; however, CREP may provide additional benefits not available through those sign-up types such as higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

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[farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator)



## ELIGIBLE CONSERVATION PRACTICES

The following specific CRP conservation practices are available for cropland, unless otherwise indicated:

- ◆ CP1, Establishment of Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- ◆ CP2, Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses
- ◆ CP3, Tree Planting
- ◆ CP3A, Hardwood Tree Planting
- ◆ CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP9, Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- ◆ CP21, Filter Strips
- ◆ CP22, Riparian Buffer (cropland and marginal pastureland)
- ◆ CP23, Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
- ◆ CP25, Rare and Declining Habitat
- ◆ CP29, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer (marginal pastureland only)
- ◆ CP30, Marginal Pastureland Wetland Buffer (marginal pastureland only)

## ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment for the Maryland Chesapeake Bay CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be physically located within the state of Maryland and be either cropland or marginal pastureland. Cropland must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Marginal pastureland along streams may also be eligible for enrollment. Land adjacent to channelized intermittent streams and infield constructed drainage ditches may also be eligible if devoted to a grass filter strip.

## PAYMENTS

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

- ◆ A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) is paid in accordance with FSA National CRP Directives for land as follows: A base soil rental rate, determined by the soils of the land offered
  - ◇ \$100 per acre for CP9, CP21, CP22, CP29 and CP30
  - ◇ \$150 per acre for CP23 and CP23A

- ◆ A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of eligible reimbursable costs incurred for installation of CP9, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A, CP29 and CP30.
- ◆ An annual rental payment consisting of:
  - ◇ A base soil rental rate, determined by the three predominant soils of the land offered
  - ◇ An incentive payment, as a percentage of the based soil rental rate, based on the practice offered except for land enrolled or re-enrolled under infeasible-to-farm provisions.
  - ◇ 80 percent for land established as CP1, CP2, CP3, CP3A, and CP4D (Highly Erodible Land)
  - ◇ 100 percent for land established as CP9, CP29, and CP30
  - ◇ 150 percent for land established to CP4D (Buffer), CP21, and CP25
  - ◇ 200 percent for land established to CP22, CP23, and CP23A
  - ◇ A maintenance incentive payment determined by the practice offered.
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible cost to install the approved practice.



In addition, the State of Maryland provides the following payments to eligible participants:

- ◆ A one-time state incentive program payment of \$100 per acre for every acre enrolled or re-enrolled;
- ◆ A cost-share payment of 37.5 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install practices CP1, CP2, CP3, CP3A, CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A and CP30; and
- ◆ All costs associated with the purchase of voluntary permanent easements.

## 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 Maryland Chesapeake Bay CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Maryland 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 are not allowed during the CRP contract period unless authorized by USDA. Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.