

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

CREP — Fort Belknap Indian Community



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 625,000 acres of grassland, pastureland, and certain other lands owned by either the FBIC or a member of the FBIC within the boundaries of the FBIC Reservation in State of Montana or certain lands nearby. The FBIC CREP is intended to maintain and improve grassland productivity, reduce soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat.

Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This project is modeled after the Grasslands CRP, a working lands program, which protects grassland while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and eligible land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. CRP participants maintain permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or forbs (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 FBIC CREP, federal and tribal resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 10- to 15-year contracts.

Goals

The goals of the FBIC CREP include:

- ◆ Enroll 625,000 acres to maintain, improve and protect grassland productivity through rotational grazing and water development(s).
- ◆ Reduce erosion in riparian areas along water bodies through rotational grazing and cover enhancement.
- ◆ Promote natural resource education through partners and using practical and experimental agriculture methods through an annual agricultural summit and bi-annual educational seminars.

Eligible Conservation Practices

CP88, Permanent Grasses and Legumes, is the only practice authorized for this CREP.



Mourning Cloaks (*Nymphalis antiopa*), in the brush-footed butterfly family Nymphalidae, are large and strikingly-patterned butterflies whose name comes from the dark cloak worn by someone who is bereaved. Mourning Cloaks are the state butterfly of Montana.



Enrollment and Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the FBIC CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be owned by either the FBIC or a member of the FBIC and be located within the boundaries of the FBIC Reservation in Montana or certain adjacent Trust lands. Eligible land must:

- ◆ Contain forbs or pasture upon which grazing is the predominant use
- ◆ Is located in an area historically dominated by grassland
- ◆ Provide habitat for animal and plant populations of significant ecological value
- ◆ Not be forest or woodland, or grassland with more than 5 percent tree canopy.

Participants are required to maintain and complete any maintenance/ enhancements needed on land enrolled in CRP through this CREP. This includes any haying or grazing along with applying applicable fertilizer and chemical applications. All activities are subject to a Conservation Plan.

Payments

Under the FBIC CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- ◆ An annual rental payment calculated using a \$15 per acre rental rate for all enrolled land.
- ◆ A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for establishing permanent internal fencing and livestock watering facilities needed to facilitate livestock distribution.

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.

Haying and Grazing

Participants may hay and graze the existing permanent cover while receiving an annual rental payment. All activities are subject to a Conservation Plan, with certain restrictions for haying during primary nesting season.

For More Information

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.

