

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Vermont's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) compensates agricultural landowners for taking land out of production for 15 years and provides upfront incentive payments and annual rental payments to establish forested buffers, vegetated filter strips, wetland restoration, and/or grassed waterways.

Financial Assistance

- Enrolled farms receive a lump sum payment once the state and federal contracts are signed, and then rental payments annually for the next 15 years.
- Upfront (lump sum) payment for pasture and hayland are \$415 per acre. Upfront payment for annual cropland ranges from \$795 to \$1,905 per acre, based on the quality of soil within the buffer area.
- Annual rental payments for pasture and hayland range from \$80 to \$120 per acre per year. Annual rental payments for cropland range from \$150-300 per acre per year.
- Federal cost-share and incentive payments are also typically available to cover 90% of the implementation costs for fence, pipeline, water tubs, stream crossings, water source development, riparian forest buffers and filter strips where livestock are grazing adjacent to a buffer.

In most instances these costs can be 100% covered with help from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Eligibility

CREP is an enhanced version of the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), making eligibility requirements largely the same for both programs.

- The applicant must be eligible for USDA programs.
- The land must be in agricultural use.
- The land must be adjacent to a stream, river, lake, or pond.
- The buffer may not be already established – it must be planted through this program.
- CREP does not cover entire fields or isolated wetlands in pastures or hayfields.



Alternate water source for livestock

Eligible Practices

- **Forested buffer:** The planting of trees and/or shrubs in a filter strip to reduce runoff losses, provide enhanced wildlife habitat, stabilize streambanks and create shade to lower water temperatures. Only eligible for CREP if near a body of water.
- **Wetland restoration:** The manipulation of a former or degraded wetland's physical, chemical, or biological characteristics to return its natural functions. Only eligible for CREP on cropland.
- **Livestock exclusion and alternate watering:** Fences exclude livestock from streams to prevent streambank erosion, reduce livestock risk of contact with harmful bacteria, and risk of leg injuries and food problems. Watering tubs and pipes provide alternate water sources for livestock.
- **Filter strips:** A grassed area that helps reduce sediment, nutrient, and pollutants in runoff. Filter strips are only eligible for CREP if situated on cropland and near a body of water.
- **Grassed waterway:** The grading and planting of shallow vegetated swale designed to convey concentrated runoff to surface waters without causing erosion. Only eligible for CREP on cropland.

Additional Program Details

- No designated sign-up period, contact CREP Coordinators or your local FSA anytime to apply.
- Grantees are required to maintain practices for the 15-year contract.
- Program staff will visit approximately four times throughout the length of the contract.

To learn more, contact your local Farm Service Agency (<https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator>), or contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture CREP Coordinators:

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