

Important Information to Remember when Signing Up for CREP

- Per the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs), all type and size of farms are required to have perennial vegetated buffers along waterways in annually cropped fields (these buffers are harvestable). CREP is one option that allows producers to comply with the RAPs while receiving incentive payments and annual rental for *taking the land out of production* to protect water quality.
- CREP contracts are for 15 years
- The minimum width of a Filter strip is 25' wide and the minimum width of a Forested buffer is 35'
- It would take 1,245' linear feet along a stream to create one acre of buffer with at the 35' width.
- CREP payments include the one-time upfront incentive payment and then annual rental and maintenance payments for 15 year contract period.
- The one-time upfront incentive payment is provided by the federal government (USDA) and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. These payments range from \$415/ac for pasture to \$2005/ac for Cropland.
- Annual rental and maintenance payments last for 15 years and can be between \$80 and \$298/acre/yr, depending the land use, soils, and county.

Need to be eligible for USDA programs



Forested buffer, stream crossing, fence

Promoting Stewardship and Accountability

More than 1.2 million acres of Vermont land is devoted to farming, and agriculture is one of our most important industries. As a whole, agriculture preserves open land, provides us healthy local foods, and is an essential part of Vermont's identity.

At the same time, Vermont's waters are critical to our economy and to our quality of life. We do not have to trade one for the other. Vermont's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is a critical tool designed to help farmers implement effective, long-term vegetative buffers and supporting practices (fence, stream crossings, etc) that simultaneously promote the long-term viability of farms and the health of our state waterways.

For information about the Vermont Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, contact:

Ben Gabos, VAAFM CREP Coordinator:
(802) 461-3814 or ben.gabos@vermont.gov

For technical or financial information about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program contact *your local NRCS or FSA office:*

Berlin Field Office
 (802) 828-4493 (NRCS)

St. Albans Field Office
 (802) 527-1296 ext. 106 (FSA)
 (802) 524-6505 (NRCS)

Brattleboro Field Office
 (802) 254-9766 (FSA)
 (802) 254-9766 (NRCS)

St. Johnsbury Field Office
 (802) 748-2641 ext. 2 (FSA)
 (802) 748-2641 ext. 3 (NRCS)

Middlebury Field Office
 (802) 388-6748 ext. 8 (FSA)
 (802) 388-6748 ext. 4 (NRCS)

White River Junction Field Office
 (802) 295-7942 ext. 2 (FSA)
 (802) 295-7942 ext. 3 (NRCS)

Morrisville Field Office
 (802) 888-4935 ext. 111 (FSA)
 (802) 888-4935 ext. 115 (NRCS)

Williston USDA Service Center
 (802) 288-8155 ext. 2 (FSA)
 (802) 288-8155 ext. 3 (NRCS)

Newport Field Office
 (802) 334-6090 ext. 2 (FSA)
 (802) 334-6090 ext. 3 (NRCS)

USDA VT State Office
 (802) 658-2803 (FSA)
 (802) 951-6796 (NRCS)

Rutland Field Office
 (802) 775-8034 ext. 2 (FSA)
 (802) 775-8034 ext. 3 (NRCS)

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CREP

Vermont's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) compensates agricultural landowners for taking land out of production for a contracted period of time and provides cost share to establish vegetative buffers adjacent to perennial streams and rivers.



Program Objectives

Vermont's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary program designed to reduce sediment runoff and improve water quality by removing land from agricultural production and establishing vegetative buffers.

State and federal funds are used to compensate landowners for the loss of productive agricultural land through upfront incentive payments and annual rental payments based on the total acreage dedicated to vegetated filter strips, forested buffers, or grassed waterways.

Program Definitions

Filter Strip: A grassed area that helps reduce sediment, nutrient, and pollutants in runoff.



Filter strip along stream

Forested Buffer: Contains 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.



Forested buffer along river

Grassed Waterway: A shallow vegetated swale designed to convey concentrated runoff to surface waters without causing erosion.



Grassed waterway in field swale

Eligibility

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

To be eligible for the CREP program:

- The applicant must have owned or operated the land for 12 months prior to enrollment.
- The land must be in agricultural use.
- The land must be adjacent to a perennial stream or river that lack vegetative buffers and have agricultural related water quality impacts.

CREP does not cover isolated wetlands, man-made ponds or, typically, entire fields.

Financial Assistance

Federal cost-share and incentive payments are available to cover 90% of the implementation costs associated with fencing, alternative water systems, stream crossings, and vegetative buffer establishment. In most instances the costs may be 100% covered with help from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The payments from CREP come in two forms: an upfront incentive payment from both the State and FSA and annual payments from FSA for the next 15 years. The payments are based on the quality of soils within the buffer area and the type of agricultural use the land has had within the last decade. Contracts run for 15 years, during which time the buffers must be maintained by the contracted individual.



Alternate water sources for livestock



stream crossings and fencing

Benefits of Strips, Buffers, and Grassed Waterways

- Are effective practices to protect and improve water quality by filtering sediment, phosphorus, nitrogen, pesticides and other pollutants from agricultural runoff
- With fence, they exclude livestock out of streams which:
 - i. Prevents streambank erosion and direct deposition of animal waste in stream/near stream;
 - ii. Reduces livestock risk of contact with harmful bacteria and pathogens; and,
 - iii. Reduces livestock risk of leg injuries and foot problems
- Reduces stream temperature/increases oxygen levels by providing shade through a forest canopy. Also, the woody debris and leaves from trees enhance the stream's ability to process and reduce some pollutants and are the basis for aquatic food web.
- Improved buffer soil structure and health promotes infiltration, treatment, and capture of dissolved nutrients in runoff
- Serves as a travel corridors, feeding areas, shelter, and nesting habitat for wildlife
- Increased depth and complexity of streamside plant root systems increases streambank stability
- Reduces nutrient and other chemical concentrations in shallow groundwater



Stream with mature forested buffer