

Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: CREP deadline approaching; flooded lands good candidates

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Contact:

Donna Gilson, [608-224-5130](tel:608-224-5130), donna.gilson@wi.gov

Bill Cosh, Communications Director, [608-224-5020](tel:608-224-5020), William2.Cosh@wi.gov

MADISON - Landowners whose CREP contracts are expiring this year have until Aug. 31 to re-enroll in the program, an option that might look more and more attractive in light of this summer's floods in Wisconsin. Enrolling for the first time is also an option that non-participating landowners should consider if they have fields or pastures that frequently flood.

That's according to Brian Loeffelholz, who coordinates the CREP program for the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

CREP is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a component of the federal Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP. The CREP program offers both state and federal financial incentives to landowners who install conservation practices along waterways or return continually flooded fields or pastures to wetlands. Adjacent land can remain in agricultural production. There is no minimum acreage, and landowners may enroll land under either a 15-year agreement or a perpetual easement.

Landowners who enrolled acreage in CREP in 2002-03 must complete the re-enrollment process by Sept. 30, or lose annual and incentive payments. They may also add or remove lands. To re-enroll or enroll lands for the first time, they should call or visit their local USDA

Farm Service Agency office.

“If you’re looking at fields that are under water right now, you might want to think about enrolling those lands in CREP,” Loeffelholz said. “If you’re losing crops or replanting frequently, CREP could help you recoup some of those losses this year. In the future, you’d not only not have losses, but have a guaranteed income from that acreage.”

Lands in 50 Wisconsin counties are eligible for CREP. To be eligible, the land must have been in production at least four years between 2008 and 2013. CREP offers at least 3 types of payments:

- Annual payments, typically ranging from \$94 to \$400 an acre with an average of \$256 statewide, and for pasture land, \$45 to \$80, with an average of \$60
- One-time incentive payments, based on the annual rental rate of the enrolled land, and averaging \$2,150 an acre statewide for 15-year contracts and \$2,000 an acre for perpetual easements
- Practice payments that will cover up to 70 percent of the cost of installing conservation practices

Available practices include filter strips that place grasslands between crops and water, riparian buffers planted to trees and shrubs between crops and water, and wetland restorations on sites smaller than 40 acres. All these practices reduce flooding impacts by stopping water and allowing it to seep into the soil and subsoil and filtering it before it enters streams.

For more information, visit datcp.wi.gov, and search for CREP.