

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

How is CREP Administered?

The CREP program is a partnership between the USDA – Farm Service Agency (FSA), WI – Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the WI-Dept of Natural Resources (WIDNR), and participating County Land Conservation Department (LCD).

Landowner's first contact is usually the USDA. The FSA begins determining the land's eligibility, crop history, reviews the soil type, and calculates the annual rental rate. They then turn over the technical determinations to NRCS and the local LCD, which work with the landowner to develop a conservation plan and determine the necessary buffer width. The LCD then handles applications for the state and DATCP administers the states portion of the program.



What is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)?

The Conservation Reserve Program offers Wisconsin landowners an opportunity to receive financial incentive to voluntarily stop farming land abutting streams and wetland and enroll them into conservation practices, such as riparian buffers, filter strips, wetland reserves and native grassland reserves. The programs goal is to reduce runoff pollution along Wisconsin's streams and wetlands by installing vegetative buffers (narrow strips of land) and create wildlife habitat along waterways surrounded by agricultural uses. In return, land owners receive annual rental payments, cost-share assistance, and other financial assistance.

Landowners have the option of enrolling their land in either 15-year agreements or into perpetual conservation easements. The 15 year agreement is a contract to install and maintain conservation practices for 15 years. The perpetual conservation easement is a permanent land use restriction which is held by the county or state. For both contract types the landowner retains recreational use of the property, however, restrictions are placed on the use of the land which generally state that the land must be maintained in the prescribed vegetative type and no structures may be built on lands enrolled in CREP. Also, there is NOT a public access requirement with enrollment in CREP.

What are the Financial Incentives of CREP?

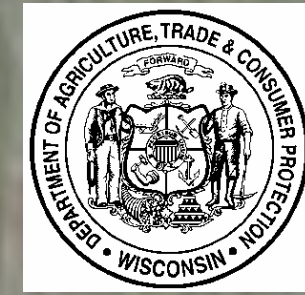
Wisconsin CREP participants are eligible for up-front, annual, and practice payments provided by federal and state sources.

Annual Payments – Rental payments are made annually for up to 15 years with rates that are based on soil types, the county the land is in, and whether it is cropland or marginal pasture land. Annual rental rates for cropland typically range from \$20-\$180 per acre. Also, depending on the conservation practice installed, an annual incentive payment of 35%-60% of the annual rental rate.

Up-front Payments – There are two one-time incentive payments offered. First, a federally provided signing incentive payment of up to \$100 per acre is paid for lands enrolled in riparian buffer, filter strip or grassed waterway conservation practices. Second, a state provided incentive payment of 1.5 times or 12 times the annual rental rate based on whether you sign up for a 15 year agreement or for a perpetual conservation easement. The average total federal payments to landowners over the agreement timeframe are \$1,850 per acre and the average state incentive payment per acre is \$150 for the 15-year contracts and \$1000 for the perpetual conservation easements.

Both of these payments are made soon after the contracts have been signed.

Practice Payments – There are both federal and state cost-share funds available for installing eligible conservation practices. Federal funds provide 50% cost-share assistance for installing all eligible practices and a payment of 20% of the practice installation costs is provided by state funds.



Is My Land Eligible for CREP

Your land must be located in one of the designated CREP regions and have either a cropping history during four out of six recent years or qualifies as marginal pasture land. Also, the land must meet the minimum distance to streams and water body criteria of 150 feet for the riparian project area and 1000 feet for the northern and southern project areas. (See Map Below)

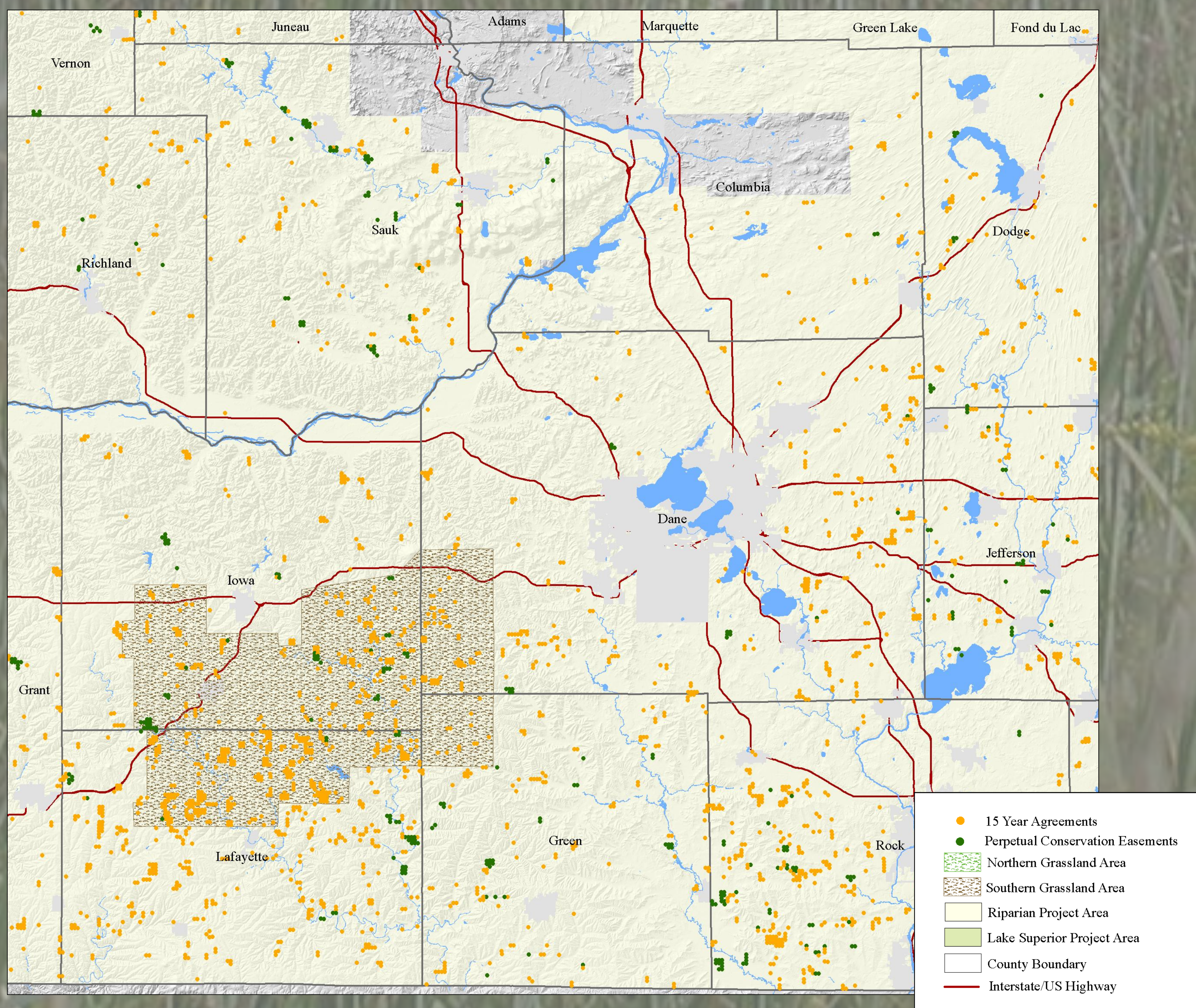
The typical CREP easement site consists of buffers ranging from 20 to 150 feet wide along streams and covers an average area per participant of 10 acres.

Public Access is NOT required for CREP

How Successful is Wisconsin's CREP Program?

Approximately 3,500 landowners have enrolled more than 44,000 acres into the program. Of the lands enrolled in the program, 400+ are perpetual conservation easements that cover about then 7,000 acres.

Currently, the land enrolled in CREP creates buffers along 1,400 miles of shoreline as well as establishing approximately 11,000 acres of grassland habitat. Environmental analysis reports that today CREP buffers annually reduce runoff of 68,700 tons of sediment, 69,000 pounds of nitrogen and 130,000 pounds of phosphorus in Wisconsin.



What are the Eligible Conservation Practices?

There are many different conservation practice options through the CREP program. The practice installed on a property depend on both site factors and desires of the landowner. Conservation practices include:

- Filter Strips
- Wetland Restorations
- Permanent Native Grasses
- Riparian Buffers
- Marginal Pastureland Habitat Buffers
- Grass Prairie Ecosystem Restorations
- Grassed Waterways
- Permanent Introduced Grasses
- Established Legumes and Grasses



Who Do I Contact?

Contact your county USDA Service Center, Farm Service Agency local office, County Land Conservation Department, or Wisconsin State Department of Agriculture.

Additional information is also available on the internet at the following websites:

- www.fsa.usda.gov
- datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Land_and_Water_Conservation/CREP/