



Earliest CREP Contracts Expiring; Sept. 30 Renewal Deadline

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MADISON – The earliest-signed CREP contracts expire Sept. 30, and landowners holding those contracts signed in 2001-02 must renew them by that date if they want to remain in the program.

CREP is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. CREP is a component of the federal Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, that offers incentives and support from the state and participating counties. Landowners sign either 15-year contracts or perpetual easements to install conservation practices that protect water quality and create wildlife habitat, such as filter and buffer strips, along lakes and streams. They receive initial incentive payments, annual payments, and cost share payments. It is available in areas of the state that are particularly prone to erosion or flooding.

"You can't begin the re-enrollment process with FSA on Sept. 30; you need to have it completed. This is a hard deadline set by federal CRP guidelines," said Brian Loeffelholz, CREP coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The first step is to call or visit the local USDA Farm Service Agency office. An FSA representative will visit the enrolled land to check for compliance, and landowners may want to add or remove lands for the next 15-year contract.

The re-enrollment applies only to 15-year contracts signed in 2001-02, the years CREP first became available. It does not apply to perpetual easement contracts. Contracts signed after 2001 will face the Sept. 30 deadline in future years as they near their expiration dates.

Loeffelholz noted that farmers re-enrolling their land in CREP or adding new lands will likely receive higher payments than they did in 2001, because the payments are based on the cash rent value of the land. That value has risen in the past 15 years. Flooding in Wisconsin this summer should also make them think about the benefit of keeping land in CREP or enrolling it for the first time, rather than dealing with fields that are frequently under water.

To date, about 4,000 contracts covering 48,000 acres have been enrolled in CREP in Wisconsin. Enrollment of eligible lands is always open. Interested landowners can contact their county land and water conservation office, local FSA office, or visit datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/CREP.aspx.

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