

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Washington's CREP is a voluntary program designed to benefit both farms and fish. The program compensates farmers for growing a different crop in streamside areas of their property — that crop is salmon habitat.

Eligible CREP Activities:

- **Forest Buffers:** Plantings of native trees and vegetation bordering a river or stream. Eligible reaches must provide habitat for salmonid fish that migrate to the ocean.
- **Hedgerows:** Narrow strips of native shrubs planted on eligible streams and drainage channels.
- **Grass Filter Strips:** Strips of grassy vegetation planted along stream segments that are upstream of salmon habitat.
- **Wetland Restoration:** Planting native wetland vegetation, including establishment of an upland buffer. Criteria for eligible restoration practices varies depending on whether the site is within or outside of the 100-year floodplain area. This practice is eligible on cropland.
- **Pastureland Wetland Buffers:** Bands of vegetation planted on marginal pastureland that is adjacent to wetlands.

How it Works

Landowners voluntarily sign up with the USDA Farm Service Agency to plant native trees and shrubs that form a "buffer" between farmland and eligible waterways.

A local CREP technician will work with you to design a plan for the buffer and plant the vegetation. Once the planting is complete, landowners receive annual rental payments for the acreage they restore for the duration of their CREP contract (10-15 years). After five years, most projects are well-established and further maintenance is usually minimal.

Benefits for Fish

- Streamside buffers function as a "water treatment plant," absorbing nutrients and other pollutants before they reach streams.
- Trees and plants shade the stream, cooling water temperatures for salmon.
- Trees fall into streams providing habitat and rearing pools.
- Vegetation stabilizes stream banks and reduces erosion.

Benefits for Farmers

- Steady rental income for 10-15 years. The amount is determined by your soil type and enrolled activities.
- One-time signing bonus.
- Entire cost of project installation is covered.
- Project maintenance cost is reimbursed for the first five years.
- Livestock operators are reimbursed for fencing that excludes cattle from the buffer and for new water facilities.
- Option to re-enroll.



Photo courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Eligibility

A local CREP technician will help you determine if you and your property meet eligibility criteria for the program. General requirements include:

- You must have owned and/or operated your land for at least 12 months before enrollment.
- Land must be either cropland or marginal pastureland; be able to support the required vegetation; and have required cropping history.
- Property must border eligible stream segments. A map of eligible segments is available from the Washington State Conservation Commission CREP web page (www.scc.wa.gov/crep). Generally, stream segments must have at least one species of Pacific salmon or steelhead present.



Program Flexibility

CREP recognizes that no two properties are alike.

A CREP technician will work with you to develop a project plan that meets eligibility requirements and your goals for your property. The boundary of streamside buffers can be moved toward or away from streams based on site conditions, structures, and landowner needs. You may enroll all or a portion of your eligible streamside property.

Participating Partners:

- CREP is a federal program authorized by the USDA Farm Bill and administered by the Farm Service Agency.
- State funding and coordination is provided by the Washington State Conservation Commission.
- Conservation district and NRCS staff provide local technical assistance, working one-on-one with landowners throughout project planning, installation, and maintenance.



How to Enroll

CREP enrollment is open until habitat goals for Washington are met. Your local conservation district and FSA office will help you through the enrollment process. Contact information for your local conservation district is provided below. Or, visit the Washington State Conservation Commission website (www.scc.wa.gov) for a conservation district directory.



To learn more about CREP, contact your local conservation district:



Pierce Conservation District
308 W Stewart Ave.
Puyallup, WA 98371
Attn: Paul Borne
253-845-9770 x 105
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Partners:

