



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Programmatic Guidelines

Program Background:

The appropriation is provided solely to help landowners participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by the USDA's Farm Services Agency (FSA) in accordance with the FSA/State [agreement](#) for CREP. CREP in Washington is intended to alleviate some of agriculture-related impacts on water quality and salmon habitat. FSA is the program lead. The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides cost share, maintenance, practice incentive payment loans and technical assistance. These guidelines cover cost share, maintenance, and Technical Assistance (TA)

Program Rules:

- Overall program rules for participants are identified in [FSA's 2-CRP Handbook](#) and amendments. Participants must meet FSA eligibility requirements. Lands offered under CRP must meet FSA requirements for cropping history or marginal pasture. Participants must enter a contract with FSA that includes a riparian plan, approved costs and obligations. SCC will cost share only those costs approved by FSA. Other costs may be approved on a limited case-by-case basis.
- See paragraph 171 of the [2-CRP handbook](#) for an overall description of the CREP sign-up process.
- FSA pays 50% of approved implementation costs following the expenditure. SCC pays 10% of approved incurred costs following the expenditure. FSA pays Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of 40% of approved implementation costs when all practices are installed, completed and inspected. Under some conditions, SCC will provide a loan to cover the PIP costs should the participant qualify financially or an unexpected delay occur. See the [CREP PIP policy](#) for details. SCC pays 100% of maintenance costs for five years subject to a \$2700/acre cap for the entire five years in accordance with the [CREP maintenance policy](#).
- CREP contract information must be entered in the [CPDS](#) using the "Program Type" dropdown on the funding tab of the CPDS.
 - For cultural resources funding requests, the CRP-2 date must be completed.
 - For cost share, all contract information must be filled out.
 - For maintenance, the date of first planting must be filled out under the Primary Practice section.
- CREP is funded from two legislatively approved sources: CREP Cost Share and CREP Contract (TA). The following identifies eligible and ineligible costs for each:
 - CREP Cost Share

- Eligible Costs
 - Project installation cost share, 10% of FSA approved costs
 - Project maintenance, up to \$2700 per acre for up to five years (if needed) from date of first planting in accordance with the [CREP maintenance policy](#)
 - Mid-contract management cost share, 50% of FSA-approved activities at FSA hold-down rates.
 - Re-enrollment cost share, 50% of FSA-approved costs
 - Conditional Costs:
 - Cultural resources, 100% cost share, with documentation from FSA that the service is required and they cannot provide it.
 - Beaver management, 100% at any time during the contract, with an approved beaver management plan as identified in the [CREP maintenance policy](#).
 - Contingency, up to 100% for one-time costs to protect the CREP investment provided the need is due to unforeseen events and not due to a lack of landowner maintenance, conditionally allowed with prior approval from the CREP Coordinator.
 - Ineligible costs:
 - Costs not approved by FSA on form 848B
 - Maintenance costs in excess of those described in the CREP Maintenance Policy
 - Education and outreach
 - Training
 - Equipment
 - Overhead
- CREP TA
- Eligible costs
 - CREP technical staff time to:
 - recruit landowners,
 - conduct outreach,
 - evaluate and document site conditions for program requirements
 - work with participants and FSA to navigate the enrollment process,
 - conduct site assessments for plan preparation,
 - complete conservation plans and NRCS/FSA forms for submission with the FSA contract
 - present plans to NRCS and the FSA County Committees
 - address endangered species issues with FSA and US Fish and Wildlife Service,
 - assist participants with selection of contractors, plant materials and implementation

- prepare and obtain landowner agreements
 - oversee maintenance needs and funding
 - coordinate mid-contract management
 - develop and implement beaver management plans
 - coordinate re-enrollment with landowners and FSA
- Overhead
- Ineligible costs
 - Field crews used for maintenance and cost share implementation
 - Materials/supplies in excess of \$1000
 - Equipment and supplies for implementation and maintenance
 - Travel
- Conditional costs
 - Training – some programs may receive training assistance at the discretion of the CREP Coordinator. Preference will be given to small programs receiving less than \$20,000/year TA. All training must be requested and approved in advance of the training.
- Implementation cost share and maintenance labor may be provided by conservation district crews provided:
 - The conservation district is in compliance with the “Conservation District Staff Working on Projects” and “Competitive Bidding” sections of the SCC Grant and Contract Procedure Manual
 - The conservation district is in compliance with SCC policy “[Engaging in District Activities Which Overlap With Private Sector Activities](#)” and can provide documentation that they have regularly solicited the services they are providing to allow for private competition.
 - All vouchers are provided by landowner and contract as if the crew were a third party providing the service to the landowner.
- For a full overview of the programmatic rules and step by step instructions view the [Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Conservation District Implementation Guide](#).

Cost Share Policy:

- Maximum cost share **per** land owner **per** fiscal year is \$50,000.
- All BMP practices must meet NRCS standards and specifications.
- All BMPs must be approved by FSA and are subject to state or local FSA cost limitations.

Funding Criteria:

Required:

- All proposed practices must be entered in the CPDS.
- Practices must have a detailed practice description unique to each practice (see example descriptions below).

- All practices must comply with FSA cultural resources policy
- Practices must be completed in the timeframe approved by FSA.
- The funding is granted on a biennium basis (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2021) therefore, all costs must be incurred by June 30, 2021. If not incurred, funds must be returned and re-requested in the new biennium.
- Returning Funds- Please submit an Exhibit D for cost share showing negative amounts as soon as it becomes clear that funds will not be utilized.
 - This will be needed to be completed when individual practices come in under budget, or a practice(s)/maintenance will not be completed.
 - For TA, please submit a Returned Funds form

Recommended:

- Districts are encouraged to communicate with participants and contractors to ensure that implementation is completed in a timely manner. FSA pays 50% of the practice cost share at the time the practice is installed (SCC pays 10%), and an additional 40% when all practices are installed and approved. Delays between the first and final costs mean landowners are carrying 40% the cost without full re-imbursement from FSA.
- Districts are encouraged to discuss maintenance with landowners seasonally to go over the approved maintenance plan and discuss what will be done, the estimated costs and remind participants that costs must be authorized before spending government funds.
- Districts are encouraged to prioritize projects connected to the conservation district's annual or long-range plan.

Funding Process:

- CREP TA
 - TA is awarded at the beginning of the biennium based in part on past usage, anticipated usage, previous level of service and legislative appropriation. TA grants are funded in advance consistent with other SCC programs.
- CREP Cost Share
 - All SCC CREP cost share, maintenance, and cultural resources must be requested in advance using an [Exhibit D](#) and approved by the CREP Coordinator.
 - Once approved, the funds will be amended into the grant and expenses may be incurred. If expenses are incurred prior to the Exhibit D approval date by SCC, the payment request will not be eligible for reimbursement.
 - Failure to submit an Exhibit D in advance may result in lack of approval and become the responsibility of the district to compensate the landowner.
- All proposed practices must be entered into the CPDS and identified in their status as "Ready for Funding"
 - By identifying a practice(s) as "Ready for Funding" the district has worked with the landowner on all rules and responsibility of receiving state cost share and the

landowner is ready to move forward and agrees to complete the practice(s) within the funding timeline.

- o All “Ready for Funding” practices must also be identified under the funding tab as requesting “CREP Cost Share” funding.
- o Additional requests for “CREP Maintenance” should match Exhibit D requests and should have implementation funding completed. No maintenance funding will be provided if cost share hasn’t been funded.
- o CREP contract information must be filled out in the CPDS before cost share or maintenance funding will be approved.

Cost Share with Supervisors, Associate Supervisors and District Employees:

- Supervisors, Associate Supervisors and District Employees are not eligible for CREP unless the contract is managed and state cost share and maintenance funding is administered by a neighboring conservation district.

CPDS and Cost Share Requirements:

- All practices must be entered into the CPDS
 - o Input the cost share amount needed from FSA
 - o Input the **cost share amount needed** from SCC for the practice. Ensure that the total cost share requested from SCC does not exceed 10% of the total cost share (FSA plus SCC).
 - o Input the CREP Maintenance needed for each Exhibit D submitted.
 - o Practices must have a status as “Ready for Funding” for cost share.
 - o Practices must have proposed dollar amounts under the “CREP Cost Share” program category in the funding tab.
- “Before” pictures are required for each practice.
- “Planned” implementation measures are required for each practice.

Vouchering Process:

- Monthly grant vouchers are required.
 - o For cost share, once BMPs are completed, the following fields need to be updated in the CPDS:
 - Date of first planting and acres in the Primary BMP CREP information
 - Supporting BMPs in the CREP information
 - “After” pictures are required for each practice.
 - “Actual” implementation measures are required for each practice after implementation is complete.
 - “Actual” amount of practice is required.
 - Completion date of practice is required at the end of the contract.

- Refer to the [Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#) for vouchering and cost share rules.