

Water savings program available for Upper Arkansas

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program affords potential benefits for both farmers and land and water resources in 10 counties along the upper Arkansas River. Landowners who enroll in CREP will receive 14 to 15 years of rental payments, a state sign-up bonus, and state, federal and private cost-share dollars. The water rights associated with the land enrolled will be permanently retired. Enrollment is continuous, but a 5,000-acre cap exists in each county.

What is CREP?

CREP is a targeted Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federal program administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), introduced in the mid-1980s. CRP was designed to prevent soil erosion, but also has provided water quality and wildlife habitat benefits. CREP allows the focus to be on a state resource concern; in this case, water conservation.

What are the water resource benefits?

The program will have multiple water resource benefits. Reducing irrigation demands on the stream-aquifer system will help slow aquifer declines. It will also help reduce the spread of saline river water into the aquifer and help restore stream and riparian health. Among the approved practices eligible for cost share money are native grass seeding, wildlife habitat establishment, shallow water area construction, wetland restoration and filter strip and riparian buffer installation.

Are there targeted areas?

The program places priority on acreage where the retirement of the land and attendant water rights would have the greatest conservation benefit on the ground water and river system and

protect the wind erosion prone soils. Acres in Tier 1 are closest to the river, or are soils that are most prone to wind erosion. Acres in Tier 2 will have a measurable, although lower effect. Sign-up incentives of \$62 /acre, Tier 1; and \$35/acre, Tier 2 are in addition to annual federal rental payments. See map on flip side.

Are there wildlife benefits?

The conservation practices to be implemented open a host of opportunities for wildlife and revenue streams related to hunting, bird watching and other forms of eco-tourism.

Benefits to Farmers

- Federal annual irrigated rental and maintenance payments for 14 to 15 years.
- Rental payment on dryland cropland (i.e., center pivot corners) that's part of a whole field enrollment. Payment based on main soil type.
- State upfront payment of \$62 or \$35 per irrigated acre based on land location or soils.
- 50 percent cost share on seeding.
- Pheasants Forever will provide up to \$500 per producer to offset farmers' seeding costs.
- Well plugging cost share of up to \$1,000/well
- Bonus payment of \$350/acre for shallow water area development to recharge the aquifer in three counties (State).
- Tamarisk treatment cost of \$500/acre (State).
- Land can be leased for hunting.

Eligibility Criteria

Federal and state eligibility criteria must be met to enroll your land in CREP. This partial list of the criteria will help you to screen yourself in advance. Your local FSA office has a data base to use to screen your application on these counts and others.

- At least one-half acre foot of water per acre was applied four out of six years (1996-2001)
- At least 50 percent of the maximum annual quantity authorized to be diverted under the water right has been used in any three years from 2001 through 2005.
- Half or more of the offered land must be located within the CREP boundary.

For more information contact:

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Rod Winkler, USDA-FSA, (785) 539-3534, rod.winkler@ks.usda.gov

Applicants' Water Right Questions:

Kansas Dept. of Ag/ Water Resources Division (785) 296-6081
GMD No. 3, Garden City, (620) 275-7147
GMD No. 5, Stafford, (620) 234-5352

Farm Service Agencies (FSA)

Barton	(620)792-5329
Edwards	(620) 659-3142
Finney	(620) 275-0211
Ford	(620) 227-3731
Gray	(620) 855-3515
Hamilton	(620) 384-6955
Kearny	(620) 355-7911
Pawnee	(620) 285-2821
Rice	(620) 257-5184
Stafford	(620) 549-3321

Upper Arkansas River CREP Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

**A voluntary,
incentive-based program
to reduce groundwater declines
in the Upper Ark River corridor**

SIGN UP TODAY

Sign-up at your local
Farm Service Agency Office



1-2-3 of Sign-up

As you decide whether CREP enrollment fits your business plan, you'll be working with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the State Conservation Commission (SCC) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Here are the steps.

1. First stop is your local FSA office. FSA personnel will use a CREP data base to determine whether at least half of the irrigated land voluntarily offered for enrollment lies within the CREP boundaries and if minimum water use criteria have been met. They also will be able to provide eligible producers with a preliminary estimate of rental and upfront payments.

2. Any questions on water rights will be referred to the KDA-Division of Water Resources (KDA-DWR) or Groundwater Management District No. 3 or 5. Producers whose land is accepted into the voluntary program are expected to permanently retire the associated water right(s). The right, however, is not retired unless the acres are accepted for enrollment in the voluntary CREP contract.

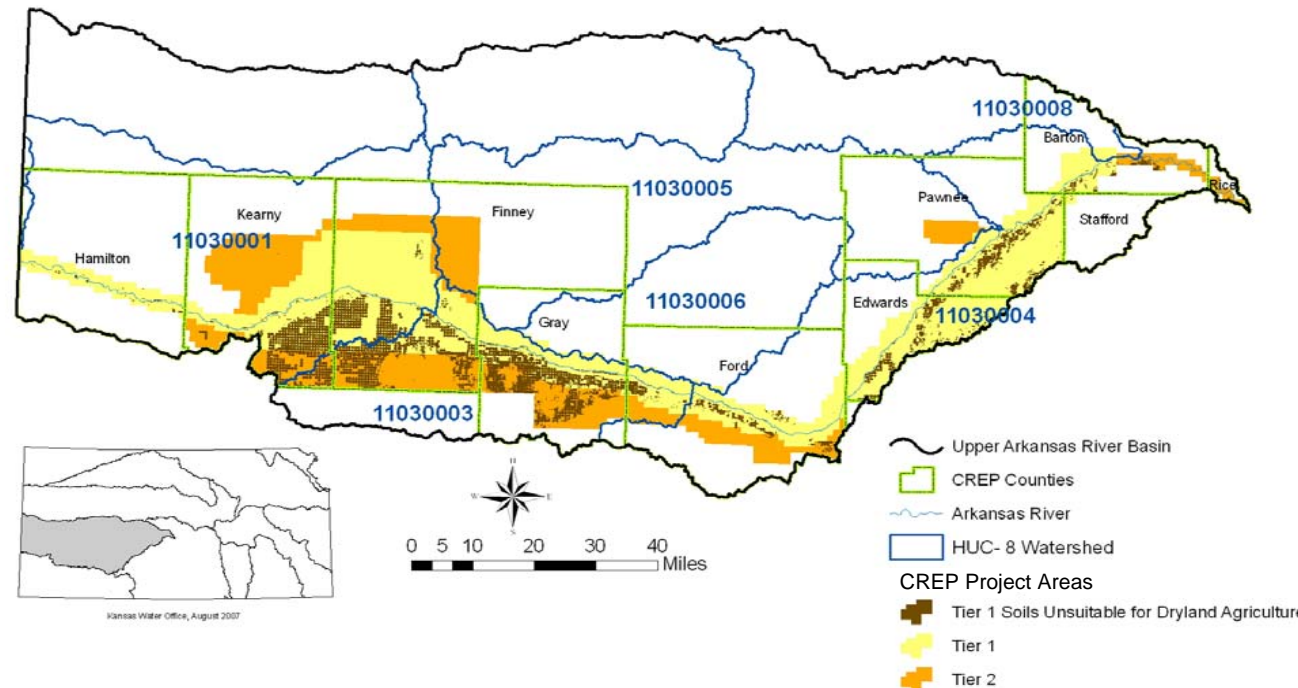
3. The State Conservation Commission will make the state's upfront payments and practice cost share payments on approved CREP contracts.

Ark River CREP Partners

Working partners include: USDA Farm Service Agency, SCC, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3, Big Bend GMD No. 5, KDA-DWR, Pheasants Forever and the Kansas Water Office.

Upper Arkansas River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

(Rental rates for pivot, SDI and flood irrigated land are keyed to the Hydrologic Unit (HUC-8 Watershed))



Irrigated Rental Rate per Acre by HUC-8 Watershed *						
HUC-8 Watershed	11030001	11030003	11030004	11030005	11030006	11030008
Center Pivot and Subsurface Drip	\$110	\$115	\$125	\$120	\$120	\$125
Flood	\$100	\$105	\$115	\$110	\$110	\$115

* An annual federal maintenance payment of \$2 per acre also will be made.

Conservation Cost Share Practices

A 50% cost share is offered for native grass seeding, wildlife habitat establishment, shallow water areas, filter strips, riparian buffers and seeding as part of a wetland restoration program.

A 25% hydrologic payment is made for wetland restoration projects.

Both the filter strip and riparian buffer practices are eligible for a sign-up incentive payment of \$100 and a 40% practice incentive payment.

Reminders

- First come, first served
- Only 5,000 acres/county
- Enrollment through June 30, 2009