

# Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

## CREP – Harney Valley Groundwater



### Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Oregon are partners in implementing a voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to enroll up to 20,000 acres of irrigated cropland within the boundaries of Harney County, Oregon. The Harney Valley Groundwater CREP is intended to reduce the amount of irrigation water consumptive use, reduce soil erosion and the amount of agricultural chemical and sediment entering waters of the State, and enhance aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat.

### Background

CREP is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants maintain permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses, forbs, or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

With CREP, high-priority conservation goals are identified by the state, and federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to achieve those goals.

Through the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP, federal resources are made available to program participants to voluntarily enroll in CRP for 14-to-15-year contracts. Participants remove irrigated cropland from agricultural production and convert the land to grasses, trees, or other approved vegetation. This in turn will improve water quality by reducing sediment, nutrients, nitrogen, and other pollutants from entering streams and rivers, as well as enhance wildlife habitat in the area.

### Goals

The goals of the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP include:

- Establish up to 20,000 acres of permanent, native and introduced vegetation and wildlife habitat
- Reduce annual fertilizer application by approximately 780 tons of phosphorous and 165 tons of nitrogen per year
- Reduce irrigation water consumption for agricultural purposes by approximately 40,000 to 50,000 acre-feet per year and;
- Reduce annual use of electricity by 3.44 million kilowatt hours through reductions in groundwater pumping

### Eligible Conservation Practices

- CP1, Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- CP2, Establishment of Native Grasses
- CP4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- CP23, Wetland Restoration
- CP23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain.

### For More Info

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](http://farmers.gov/service-locator).

#### Harney County

#### Farm Service Agency

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## Enrollment And Eligibility Requirements

Enrollment in CRP through the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP is on a continuous basis. To be eligible, land must be located in Harney County, Oregon. Only cropland is eligible, and it must meet cropping history criteria and be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity. Eligible irrigated cropland must have been irrigated at a rate of not less than 2 acre-feet per year for 4 out of 5 years (between 2016 and 2020), as well as 24 months prior to the date the land is offered for enrollment. The cropland must be physically and legally capable of being irrigated, consistent with local practices. Non-irrigated land, including center-pivot corner land, is ineligible for enrollment in the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP.

## Payments

Under the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- A one-time Signup Incentive Payment (SIP) in accordance with FSA National CRP directives
- A one-time Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) in accordance with FSA National CRP directives. The PIP will be an amount equal to not more than 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for the installation of the approved conservation practice
- An annual rental payment comprised of:
  - The county per-acre irrigated rental rate as determined by CCC.
  - An incentive payment equal to 60 percent
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs incurred for the installation of approved conservation practice

In addition, the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) will provide a per-acre payment, on a schedule agreed to by OWRD and the CRP participants, and a one time incentive payment.

## Enrollment Options

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers and ranchers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll land in CRP through general or continuous signup; however, the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous signup. Under the Harney Valley Groundwater CREP, producers receive higher incentive payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of rental payments received.

## Haying And Grazing

Participants may hay and graze the existing permanent cover while receiving an annual rental payment. All activities are subject to a Conservation Plan, with certain restrictions for haying during primary nesting season.