

Income Opportunities – Cost Share Programs

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

- Abbreviation: CREP
- Primary Goal:
 - To improve water quality by establishing vegetative buffers along streams, intermittent streams, other water bodies and around sinkholes.
 - Provide livestock with limited access to streams or alternate watering facilities outside of riparian areas.
 - Increase wildlife habitat in riparian areas and restore wetlands.
- Contact Agency: Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Where Applicable: Entire Chesapeake Bay and certain watersheds in Southern Rivers region of Virginia.
- Other Sources of Information:
 - NRCS offices
 - local Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 - FSA
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Program Description and Requirements

This program is an “enhancement” of the existing USDA Conservation Reserve Program Continuous Sign-up. It has been “enhanced” by increasing the cost share rates from 50% to 75% and 100%, increasing the rental rates and offering a flat rate incentive payment to place a permanent “riparian easement” on the enrolled area.

Pasture and cropland, as defined by USDA, adjacent to streams, intermittent streams, seeps, springs, ponds and sinkholes are eligible to be enrolled. Buffers consisting of native, warm-season grasses on cropland, to mixed hardwood trees on pasture, must be established in widths ranging from the minimum of 30% of the floodplain or 35 feet, whichever is greater, to a maximum average of 300 feet.

Cost-sharing (75% - 100%) is available to help pay for: fencing to exclude livestock from the riparian buffer, watering facilities, hardwood tree planting, filter strip establishment and wetland restoration. These additional funds are from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Ducks Unlimited, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, where eligible.

Additional incentive payments based on sign up and the total cost of the conservation practices are also available from FSA. Note: The State of Virginia will make an additional incentive payment to place a perpetual conservation easement on the enrolled area. The statewide goal is 8,000 acres.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Abbreviation: EQIP
- Primary Goal: Address natural resource needs.
- Contact Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Where Applicable:
 - Statewide to Address Priority Concerns
 - Special Targeted Priority Areas
- Other Sources of Information: NRCS website www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) was established in the 1996 Farm Bill to provide a single voluntary conservation program for farmers and landowners to address significant natural resource needs and objectives. This program replaces the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) and the Water Quality Incentive Program (WQIP).

Approximately 65% of the EQIP funding for the state of Virginia is directed toward “Priority Areas.” These areas are selected by the State Technical Committee based on proposals submitted by the locally led conservation work group. The proposal describes serious and critical environmental needs and concerns of an area or watershed, and the corrective action they desire to take to address these needs and concerns.

The remaining 35% of the funds are directed toward statewide priority concerns of environmental needs.

EQIP offers 5 to 10-year contracts to landowners and farmers to provide cost-share assistance and/or incentive payments to implement conservation practices and address the priority concerns statewide or in the priority area.

Eligibility is limited to persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production. Eligible land includes cropland, pasture, and other agricultural land in a priority areas or if the land has an environmental need that matches one of the statewide concerns.

Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Program

- Abbreviation: PBBPP
- Primary Goal: To provide landowners with financial incentives to conduct pine thinnings and/or longleaf pine restoration on appropriate sites. This will create healthier forests and reduce the occurrence and impact of bark beetle outbreaks.
- Contact Agency: Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF)
- Where Applicable: Statewide.
- Other Sources of Information: Contact your county forester for an application and visit Protect Your Pine Forest - Bark Beetle Cost-share Options for Landowners. (English; PDF format).

The incentive payment to landowners for approved projects is:

- 60% of direct project cost for pre-commercial pine thinning, not to exceed \$175 per acre or \$10,000 in a federal fiscal year (10/01-9/30)
- 60% of direct project cost for longleaf pine site preparation, planting, burning, or herbicide release, not to exceed \$10,000 in a federal fiscal year
- VDOF services or outside consulting fees will not be considered as part of project costs for the purposes of calculating cost share.

Pre-commercial pine thinnings

Requirement for qualification

- Parcel must be at least five (5) acres in size.
- Pine species must be loblolly, shortleaf, longleaf, pond, Virginia, pitch or white pine.
- Trees must be no more than 15 years old and no more than 4 inches average dbh.
- Tree density must be at least 800 stems per acre.
- Post-treatment residual density must be from 300-500 stems per acre.
- Parcel must not be in public or forest industry ownership, or be managed by a Timber Investment Management Organization (TIMO) or Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)

Longleaf pine restoration

Requirement for qualification

- Parcel to be planted must be at least five (5) acres in size.
- Site must be appropriate for successful longleaf pine establishment, growth and survival with proper management.
- Parcel must not be in public or forest industry ownership, or be managed by a Timber Investment Management Organization (TIMO) or Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)

Reforestation of Timberlands

- Abbreviation: RT
- Primary Goal: Provide cost-share assistance to landowners for pine reforestation.
- Contact Agency: Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF)
- Where Applicable: Statewide.
- Other Sources of Information: The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) Web site.

Program Description and Requirements

Effective May 1, 2010, the incentive payments to landowners for approved projects is:

- Practice 1: Planting loblolly or Virginia pine - \$22 per acre.

- Practice 2: Site preparation and planting loblolly or Virginia pine - \$48 per acre. Includes herbicide spraying and planting open or abandoned fields.
- Practice 3: Planting shortleaf, white, pitch-loblolly, or longleaf pine - \$48 per acre.
- Practice 4: Site preparation and planting shortleaf, white, pitch-loblolly, or longleaf pine - \$73 per acre.
- Practice 5: Herbicide site preparation and planting (any species on cutover lands) - \$70 per acre.
- Practice 6: Aerial Herbicide release application for all pines except white - \$20 per acre.
- Practice 7: Herbicide release application for white pine - \$43 per acre.
- Practice 8: Ground release application - \$43/acre.
- Cost share rates shall not exceed 75% of the total cost of the project.

Signup is continuous and starts May 1 for the program year starting July 1. The practices must be maintained for 10 years. This program is funded by the forest industry in Virginia with matching funds from the Virginia General Fund.