

Incentives and Compensation Available for Riparian Buffers on Farmlands through Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Stewardship of Land Resources

Hundreds of farmers in Washington State have taken advantage of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). It is a valuable tool for landowners who want to reduce stream erosion, provide wildlife habitat and receive a rental payment. CREP enhances and protects water quality, fish habitat and stream stability by planting riparian buffers. The program provides a certain degree of flexibility to each landowner, is administered through the local conservation district, and designed to compensate landowners for being good land stewards.

Eligible Land

Must be along a salmon or steelhead bearing creek, river or stream. Wetlands and ditches may be eligible for enrollment.

If not currently farmed, must be marginal pastureland suitable for farming

Partially forested lands are eligible if 30% of the present trees are not conifers.

What is a riparian buffer?

A riparian buffer is an area of trees and/or shrubs next to, and uphill from, water bodies. A 100-foot wide strip of forest and grass can reduce sediment by 97 percent, nitrogen by 80 percent and phosphorus by 77 percent. It can protect your land by:

Stabilize river banks and prevent erosion

Slow flooding across the land

Filter pollutants from land before washing into water

Increase wildlife habitat and corridors for migrating birds

Create shade that reduces water temperature

Add a source of woody debris that improves fish rearing habitat

Voluntary Enrollment, Flexible buffers

CREP recognizes that every farm and landowner is different. The program works with each landowner to take their individual land use needs into account. Riparian buffer widths may vary from 50'-180' for different situations. Buffer widths are determined by factors like flood plain width, nearby buildings, existing roads and other practices.

As long as the average width meets the 100' buffer standard, the land may be enrolled. Contract length may range from 10-15 years.

Incentives and compensation

Upon enrollment in the program, you receive cost-share for planting the riparian buffer, installing fences and animal watering stations, removing blackberries or other invasive species, as well as an annual payment.

No-obligation site visit

Even though CREP is a federally-funded program, landowners work with a local conservation district to enroll, plant and maintain the buffer. During the initial site visit, a technician will answer any questions and walk the property with you. Later, they will give you a written estimate of your soil rental rate based on the number of acres enrolled over the time period that you chose. They will give you all the information you need to decide

whether CREP is the right choice for you and your land. They will even take you to other sites that have been enrolled in the program!

For more information, contact Jamie Bails, Snohomish Conservation District, 425/335-5634 ext. 106, or email jamieb@snohomishcd.org

Snohomish County CREP Statistics:

Miles of stream buffer: 13.6

Number of contracts: 14

Average buffer width: 120

Average soil rental rate: \$214.00

Average yearly rental payment: \$3,738.00

State contracts: 585

State stream miles: 535

State acres: 9710

