

# Water and Soil Conservation in Rattlesnake Creek and the Upper Arkansas River

# Now Available: Increased Federal Rental Payments and State Incentives

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program affords benefits to farmers for land and water conservation in 13 counties along Rattlesnake Creek and the Upper Arkansas River. Landowners who enroll in CREP will receive up to 15 years of federal rental payments and a state sign-up bonus to put irrigated acres into a conservation planting. The irrigation water rights associated with the enrolled land will be permanently retired. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis, and individual county caps apply.

stream and riparian health. Most acres enrolled have highly erodible, sandy soils.

This program provides cash payments for land transition. Temporary irrigation is permitted to establish a suitable land cover. Among the approved practices eligible for cost share money are the establishment of permanent native grasses, permanent wildlife habitats, shallow water areas for wildlife, filter strips, wetland restoration and prairie strips.

## What is CREP?

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

## Why this targeted area?

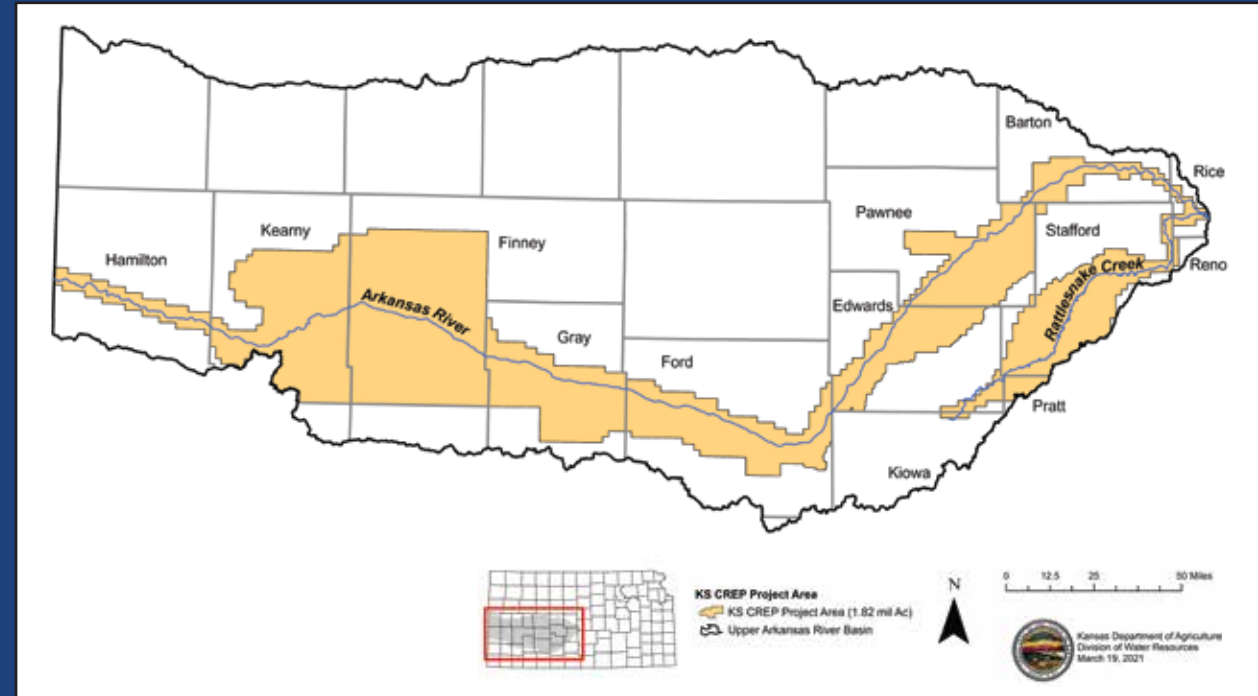
The program places priority on critical management acreage where the retirement of irrigated land and associated water rights will protect highly erodible soils and have the greatest water conservation benefit for landowners and the state of Kansas.

## What are the water and soil benefits?

Reducing irrigation demands on the stream-aquifer system will reduce aquifer declines. It will also reduce the spread of saline river water into the aquifer and help restore

## Are there wildlife benefits?

The conservation practices to be implemented open a host of opportunities for wildlife and landowner revenue related to hunting, recreation and other forms of agritourism.



## Kansas CREP: Areas with Highly Erodible Soils

Highly erodible soils have a wind erodibility index  $\geq 134$ .



A new CRP practice became available in 2023

CP43 (prairie strips) allows dryland farming in between strips of conservation cover on soil types with a wind erodibility index (WEI) of less than 134. These types are represented in the orange and green shaded areas.



County	CREP Irrigated Rental Rates (\$/AC)
Barton	162
Edwards	182
Finney	167
Ford	148
Gray	154
Hamilton	167
Kearny	182
Kiowa	178
Pawnee	179
Pratt	184
Reno	169
Rice	167
Stafford	178

## Eligibility Criteria

Both federal and state eligibility criteria must be met to enroll your land in CREP. This partial list of criteria will help to screen your eligibility in advance. Your local FSA office has a database to help screen your preliminary eligibility on these criteria.

1. At least one-half acre foot of water per acre was applied three of the most recent five years.
2. At least 50 percent of the maximum annual quantity authorized to be diverted under the water right has been used in any three years within the most recent five years.
3. Water rights must be in good standing with the State of Kansas.
4. Wells must have a tested flow rate of 1.8 gallons per minute for each irrigated acre proposed for enrollment on soils with a wind erodibility index  $\geq 134$ .

## Benefits to Farmers

- Federal annual irrigated rental and maintenance payments for 14 to 15 years.
- Federal annual rental payment on dryland pivot corners that are part of a whole field enrollment.
- State upfront payment equal to the USDA per-acre annual rental payment x 2.025.
- Up to 50 percent cost share on seeding.
- Land can be leased for hunting.
- With site-specific approval, CRP contracts for haying and grazing — and emergency haying and grazing — can be facilitated in CREP enrollments.



A pheasant calls this CREP area his home.

As you decide whether CREP enrollment fits your business plan, you'll be working with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).

**1.** First step is to determine your water right eligibility. Producers whose land is accepted into the voluntary program for enhanced CRP irrigated rental rates will permanently retire the associated irrigation water rights. Call or email Steve Frost with KDA's Division of Conservation to receive a preliminary determination on applicable water rights and an estimate on the state up-front signing incentive payment : 785-564-6622 or Steve.Frost@ks.gov.

**2.** Next step is to contact your local FSA office. Eligible producers will receive information about available CRP practices and a preliminary estimate of total federal rental and cost-share payments. Producers can initiate a CRP offer for processing to enrollment. NRCS will later meet with an applicant to provide a conservation plan of operations on water rights that meet a physical suitability assessment.

**3.** When a CREP offer has been initiated with FSA, producers will be contacted to complete the state incentive payment application and related water right forms. Approved CREP offers will receive the state up-front incentive payment immediately upon actual CRP enrollment and irrigation water right retirement. Federal payments will be made every October for the 14-15 year life of the CRP contract.

### Contact

**Steve Frost, CREP Coordinator, KDA**  
785-564-6622, Steve.Frost@ks.gov

**Carla Wikoff, USDA-FSA**  
785-539-3531, Carla.Wikoff@usda.gov

### Applicant Water Right Questions

KDA-DWR, Garden City	620-276-2901
KDA-DWR, Stafford	620-234-5311
GMD No. 3, Garden City	620-275-7147
GMD No. 5, Stafford	620-234-5352

## Arkansas River CREP Partners:

Working partners include FSA, KDA, NRCS, Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3, Big Bend GMD No. 5, Pheasants Forever, KGS, KDHE, KWO, KDWP, Kansas State University, Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy and the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams.



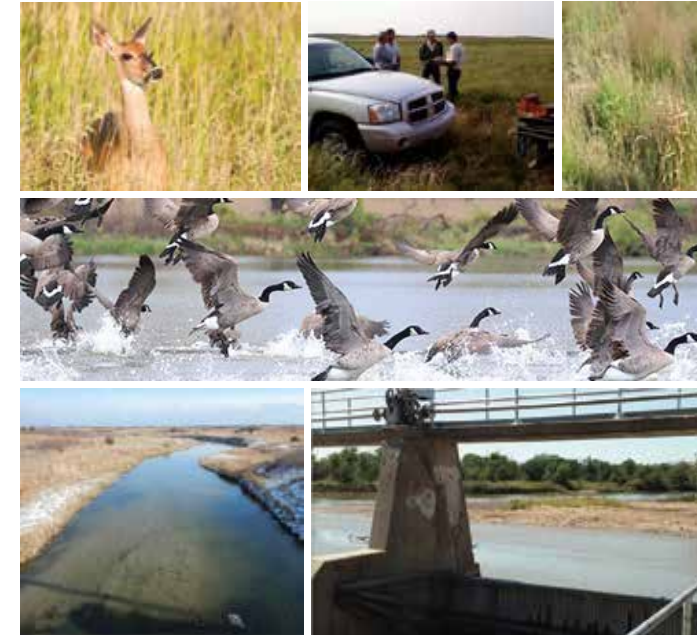
## Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Offices

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
Kiowa	620-723-2311
Pawnee	620-285-2821
Pratt	620-672-7449
Stafford	620-549-3321
Reno	620-669-8161
Rice	620-257-5184

# Upper Arkansas River CREP

(Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program)

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**Sign Up Today**  
at your local USDA  
Farm Service Agency office

