

A CREP Proposal for the James River Watershed Basin

Executive Summary

The Department of Game, Fish & Parks (SD GFP) has identified the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) as a powerful tool to meet new goals identified in a broad based initiative aimed at providing additional undisturbed habitat for wildlife and public hunting and fishing access.

Administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), CREP is simply a "state-sponsored" Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The primary goal of CREP is to establish a unique CRP program initiative through which all parties involved can target and address specific high priority conservation and environmental objectives of the state. CREP is a great way to leverage federal dollars to address resource concerns and opportunities identified by state partners.

The James River Watershed Basin contains 8,122,568 acres found within twenty-three South Dakota counties (see attached map). Aside from its importance and potential for wildlife habitat, the James River Watershed Basin may be more recognized for its need for improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and the opportunity to restore its floodplain and associated wetlands to reduce severity of flood related losses on private land and to cities along the river.

This CREP proposal enrolled within the James River Watershed Basin includes the voluntary enrollment of 100,000 acres, with a minimum contiguous size of 40 acres and will be associated with public hunting and fishing access. Existing conservation practices available through CRP will be used to establish permanent vegetative cover to meet the program goals and objectives.

A minimum financial commitment of 20% of the overall project cost is required from the state partners. The State of South Dakota (SD GFP) would agree to:

- Provide additional cost-share to cooperating landowners to cover all installation costs
- Provide a 40% increase of the base average rental rate for establishing habitat and providing unlimited public access
- Pay all costs of acres enrolled in other SD GFP hunting and fishing access programs for adjacent non-CREP acres used to either round out CREP tracts or to improve access to CREP acres
- Cover all costs associated with the annual CREP monitoring report, provide assistance to help market and promote CREP project
- Provide a CREP Coordinator to serve as liaison with USDA and other partners, lead monitoring program, provide annual reports and complete contracts with participating landowners to cover non-federal match.

The USDA Farm Service Agency would agree to:

- Annual rental payments for a 10-15 year period based on the weighted average dryland cash rent.
- Incentive amount equal to 20 percent of the weighted average dryland cash rent for approved practices (state will request for all practices)
- Upfront CRP signing incentive payment of \$100 per acre after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met (should request for all practices).
- Cost-share assistance (up to 50% cost-share for establishing permanent cover)
- Practice Incentive Payment equal to 40% of the eligible costs of installing the practice (state will request for all practices).
- A per-acre maintenance incentive payment
- Administer CRP contracts for lands enrolled under CREP

A fully subscribed CREP Project at 100,000 acres for 15-years would cost the following:

FSA Rental Rates & State Incentives: \$151,000,000

Total Installation Costs: \$7,500,000

Total Cost (excluding non-federal in-kind services): \$158,500,000

Estimated USDA Costs: \$120,000,000 (75.7%) or \$8,000,000 per year

Estimated State (SD GFP) Costs: \$38,500,000 (24.3%) or \$2,570,000 per year (does not include monitoring, marketing or state coordination)

