

By Heidi Hartman - Natural Resource Specialist**USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Local Work Group Meeting**

Agriculture and natural resource leaders in Umatilla County are asked to participate in the Local Work Group Meeting scheduled on Wednesday, January 25, 2011 from 7:30 - 10 a.m. at The Saddle Restaurant and Lounge, 2220 SE Court Street in Pendleton, Oregon. A no host breakfast is available.

The goal is to bring together individuals with a variety of expertise and knowledge allowing the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and our partners to better focus our efforts for program year 2013 and beyond. This input will assist us to make the greatest impact with our available staff and funding.

The expected outcomes for the January 25, 2011 meeting are:

- Re-evaluate and prioritize local resource concerns and focus areas
- Strategize to improve leveraging of funding and develop partner contributions targeted at solving resource concerns
- Identify challenges and strategize to Achieve Measurable Outcomes, and
- Update the County Long Range Plan to reflect progress and changes.

Questions regarding the Local Work Group may be directed to the following individuals:

Terry Johnson, NRCS District Conservationist – (541) 429-7250

Andrea Mann, NRCS District Conservationist – (541) 278-8049 x105

By Corrie Thorne Hadley - Ag Resource Specialist**CREP Eligibility**

A specific CREP project begins when a state, Indian tribe, local government, or local nongovernment entity identifies an agriculture-related environmental issue of state or national significance. These parties and FSA then develop a project proposal to address particular environmental issues and goals.

Enrollment in a state is limited to specific geographic areas and practices. To determine if your state and county are involved in CREP and if your land qualifies, contact your local county FSA office.

Like CRP, CREP contracts require a 10- to 15-year commitment to keep lands out of agricultural production. CREP provides payments to participants who offer eligible land. A federal annual rental rate, including an FSA state committee-determined maintenance incentive payment, is offered, plus cost-share of up to 50 percent of the eligible costs to install the practice. Further, the program generally offers a sign-up incentive for participants to install specific practices.

FSA uses CRP funding to pay a percentage of the program's cost, while state, tribal governments or other non-federal sources provide the balance of the funds. States and private groups involved in the effort may also provide technical support and other in-kind services.

Benefits

For the landowner, CREP is not just a cost-effective way to address rural environmental problems and meet regulatory requirements; it can provide a viable option to supplement farm income as well.

CREP is convenient for producers because it is based on the familiar, highly successful CRP model. Land must be owned or leased for at least one year prior to enrollment to be eligible, and must be physically and legally capable of being cropped in a normal manner.

Land must also meet cropping history and other eligibility requirements. Enrollment can be on a continuous basis, permitting farmers and ranchers to join the program at any time rather than waiting for specific sign-up periods.

CREP supports increased conservation practices such as filter strips and forested buffers. These conservation practices help protect streams, lakes, and rivers from sedimentation and agricultural runoff.

Sign Up

The process for enrolling in CREP differs from most other USDA conservation programs, in which producers apply and enroll individually. CREP is based on the continuous sign-up CRP model, so producers can sign up anytime provided their operation is located within an area covered by a CREP proposal. As with all USDA conservation programs, participation in CREP is voluntary.

Eligible producers will be able to enroll in 10- to 15-year CRP contracts. The applicant must offer eligible acreage and satisfy the basic eligibility criteria for CRP. Land must be cropland that has been cropped two out of the past 5 years and is physically and legally capable of being cropped. Marginal pastureland is also eligible for enrollment, provided it is suitable for use as a riparian buffer planted to trees. In addition, producers enrolling their land must generally have owned or operated the land for at least one year prior to enrollment.

Please call Corrie at the Umatilla Co. SWCD (541) 276-8131 for more information regarding CREP and program details!