



Indiana Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program 2020 Annual Report

Submitted by the
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Division of Soil Conservation
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1. Introduction

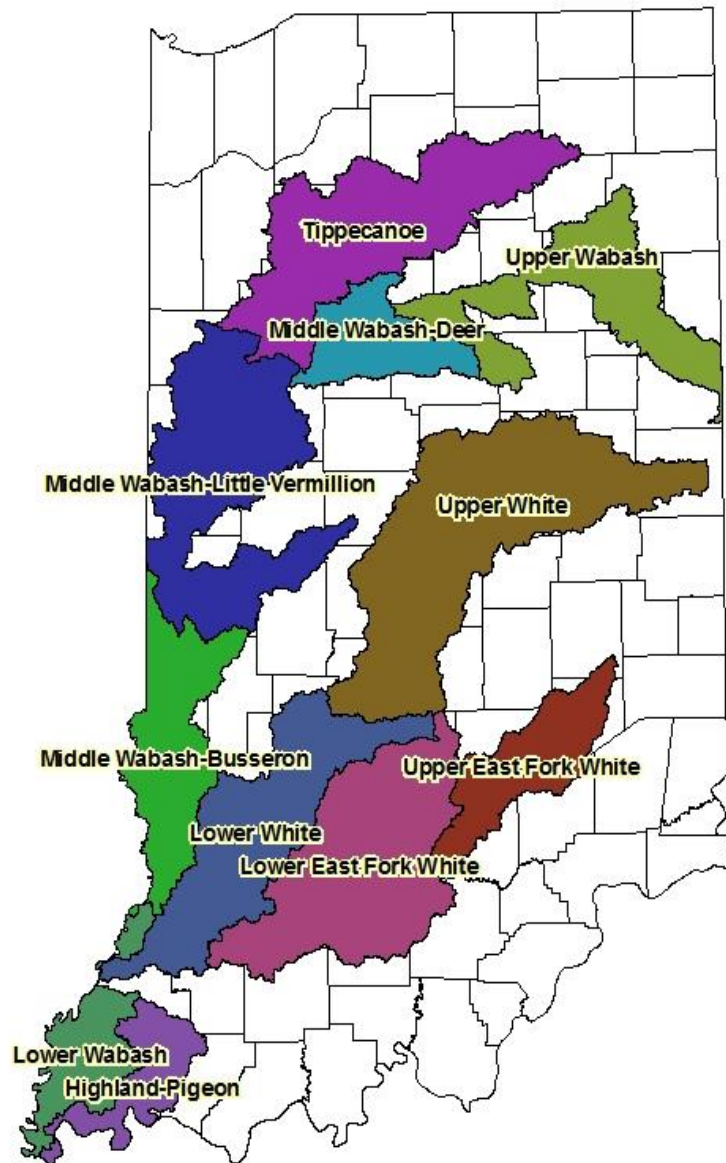
2020 marks the 15th anniversary of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Indiana. The program was first announced in 2005, covering three watersheds in Indiana and had an enrollment goal of 7,000 acres. The program expanded in 2010, to include eleven priority watersheds touching 65 counties (Figure 1) with an acreage enrollment goal of 26,250 acres.

The Indiana CREP aims to improve water quality and address wildlife issues by reducing erosion, sedimentation and nutrients, and enhancing wildlife habitats within specified watersheds in the Wabash River System. This program is designed to help alleviate some of the concerns of high non-point source sediment, nutrient, pesticide, and herbicide losses from agricultural lands by restoring grass and riparian buffers and wetlands to improve water quality, as well as to protect land from frequent flooding and excessive erosion by planting hardwood trees in floodplain areas along rivers and streams. CREP continues to address a major milestone of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), showcasing Indiana's progressive and meaningful implementation of conservation practices to protect Indiana's soil, water and related natural resources, and to help alleviate hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico¹.

Through CREP, program participants receive financial cost-share and incentives from FSA and ISDA to voluntarily enroll in the program and implement conservation practices on environmentally sensitive land. The program operates under an Agreement between FSA and ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation (DSC), dated July 8th 2005 and amended thereafter in August of 2010 and May of 2016. ISDA administers the CREP program on behalf of the State and must submit to FSA information summarizing the status of enrollments, progress and accomplishments of the CREP by January 1st of each year. This report fulfills this obligation.

¹ Drainage from Indiana eventually finds its way to the Gulf via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. A fraction of nitrogen and phosphorus originating from Indiana end ups in the Gulf and contributes to a low dissolved oxygen area (hypoxic zone), threatening aquatic habitats in the Gulf.

FIGURE 1: 11 CREP ELIGIBLE WATERSHEDS



Watersheds include: Highland-Pigeon, Lower Wabash, Lower East Fork White, Lower White, Middle Wabash-Busseron, Middle Wabash-Deer, Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion, Tippecanoe, Upper East Fork White, Upper Wabash and Upper White.

2. Eligible Practices and Incentives

A. ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

The Indiana CREP offers a menu of conservation practices to address nonpoint source pollution runoff issues. Table 1 identifies the various conservation practices offered through CREP and are further discussed below. All these practices must be installed on former cropland, in other words the land must have a farming history as defined by FSA requirements. Only land physically located within the Highland-Pigeon, Lower Wabash, Lower East Fork White, Lower White, Middle Wabash-Busseron, Middle Wabash-Deer, Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion, Tippecanoe, Upper East Fork White, Upper Wabash, and Upper White watersheds may be enrolled in this CREP.

TABLE 1: CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND CODES ELIGIBLE WITHIN CREP

Conservation Practice	Practice Code
Permanent Native Grass	CP2
Hardwood Tree Planting	CP3A
Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement	CP4D
Riparian Buffer	CP22
Filter Strips	CP21
Wetland Restoration	CP23
Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain	CP23A
Bottomland Timber Establishment	CP31

Practices **CP2**, **CP3A**, **CP4D**, **CP22** and **CP21** must be installed on former cropland adjacent to an eligible stream, river or water body and meet additional buffer requirements.

BUFFER REQUIREMENTS:

CP2 – minimum average width of 50 feet and a maximum width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

CP3A, **C4D** and **CP22** – minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum width of 180 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

CP21 – minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

CP23, **CP23A** and **CP31** are not required to be adjacent to a stream, river or waterbody; however, **CP 23** and **CP31** are required to be located in the 100-yr floodplain.

B. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

CREP provides financial incentives to landowners through both state and federal contributions. Through CREP, eligible Indiana participants who establish one of the prescribed conservation

practices receive cost-share and rental payments as outlined below. All Contracts within the CREP program cannot be less than 14 years and no more than 15 years.

FEDERAL INCENTIVES

- **Cost-share Assistance:** Cost-share for practice installation based on 50% of an eligible cost, Not-to-Exceed rate determined by FSA and NRCS; and for wetland restorations, 50% of engineering design estimate.
- **Annual Rental Payment:** An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of the sum of three components:
 - **Base Soil Rental Rate:** Determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates for cropland.
 - **Incentive Payment** of 40% of the base rental rate without regard to other incentive payments for all practices offered and eligible for CREP.
- **Signing Incentive Payment (SIP):** A one-time payment of \$100 per acre for new land enrolled in **CP21**, **CP22**, and **CP 31**, and \$150 per acre for new land enrolled in **CP23** and **CP23A**. This payment may be made after the contract has been signed and is approved. Re-enrolled acres are not eligible for the SIP payment.
- **Practice Incentive Payment (PIP):** A one-time payment equal to 40% of the eligible reimbursable cost to establish **CP21**, **CP22**, **CP23**, **CP23A** and **CP31**.

STATE INCENTIVES

After practice installation, participants receive a one-time payment from the state equal to:

- \$100 per acre for land enrolled or re-enrolled in Native Grasses (**CP2**), Wildlife Habitat (**CP4D**) or Filter Strips (**CP21**).
- \$400 per acre for land enrolled or re-enrolled in Hardwood Tree Planting (**CP3A**), Riparian Buffer (**CP22**), or Bottomland Timber Establishment (**CP31**).
- \$950 per acre for land newly enrolled in Wetland Restorations (**CP23** or **CP23A**).
- \$400 per acre for land re-enrolled in Wetland Restorations (**CP23** or **CP23A**).



Bottomland Timber Establishment



Filter Strip



Wetland Restoration

3. CREP Goals and Accomplishments

There are many partners involved with the promotion, administration, technical assistance and funding of CREP in order to meet and work toward the goals and objectives of the program. Our CREP partners include USDA-FSA, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB), all of which are a part of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP). CREP is one of the top priorities of this partnership. The SSCB provides policy and funding direction to the ISDA, DSC on the administration of the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) program, which funds the state incentives for the CREP program. These partners as well as the staff within the DSC help to carry out the CREP program in Indiana.

In addition, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) partnered with the ISDA to provide support dollars for the Indiana CREP. Starting in 2018, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) committed \$300,000 over the next 5 years in support of expanding the Indiana CREP program, and has since committed more. Furthermore, in 2020, the Indiana CREP partnered with the Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) to receive a generous grant of \$500,000 from the American Electric Power (AEP) Mitigation Money Fund, a fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation. Details on the financial support from the different partners is available in Section 5, *Financial Contributions and State Match*.

In the written Agreement between FSA and ISDA the goals and objectives of the program are stated as:

- Protect a minimum of 3,000 linear miles of watercourses through the installation of conservation buffer practices
- Reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen entering rivers and streams in the designated watersheds by 2,450 tons per year of sediment, 2,400 pounds per year of phosphorus, and 4,700 pounds per year of nitrogen.
- Increase the acres of wetlands in the watersheds for erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, and nutrient uptake.
- Enroll 15% of the eligible watersheds' cropland subject to normal CRP acreage limits by county
- Seek enrollment of 26,250 acres of eligible cropland, including frequently flooded agricultural lands, and restorable wetlands.

LINEAR MILES OF PROTECTION ON WATERCOURSES

Through the installation of conservation buffer practices in CREP, approximately **919.8** linear miles of watercourses are currently protected within the CREP watersheds. This is an increase of 435,642 feet and 82.5 miles from last year. Overall, this is 30.7% of the goal to protect 3,000 linear miles of watercourses in the targeted CREP watersheds. Table 2 lists the total length of buffers that have been installed since 2005 when CREP began in Indiana.

TABLE 2: CONSERVATION BUFFER LENGTHS

2005-2010	2010 - current	Total
2,627,367 feet	2,229,204 feet	4,856,571 feet
		919.8 linear miles

Of these 919 miles, the Tippecanoe River and its tributaries are being protected by 472 miles of buffers, and the Upper White River and its tributaries are being protected by 132 miles of buffers. To see a comparison of the rivers and tributaries that are being protected in the CREP watersheds, refer to table 3 below.

TABLE 3: CONSERVATION BUFFER LENGTHS WITHIN THE CREP WATERSHEDS

Buffer Lengths on the rivers and tributaries	
	Length in miles
Highland- Pigeon	34.83
Lower Wabash	4.75
Lower East Fork White	38.07
Lower White	24.09
Middle Wabash-Busseron	12.25
Middle Wabash-Deer	16.03
Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion	29.02
Tippecanoe	472.35
Upper East Fork White	62.86
Upper Wabash	93.28
Upper White	132.27

SEDIMENT AND NUTRIENT LOAD REDUCTIONS THROUGH CREP

The CREP program actively continues to work toward the goal of reducing the amount of sediments and nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, into the rivers and streams within the designated watersheds by applying buffers, planting trees and restoring wetlands. The DSC uses the Region 5 Sediment and Nutrient Load Reduction Model developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to estimate the sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus load reductions from individual best management practices installed on the ground. To date, CREP leaders apply this model to each conservation practice enrolled and installed through the CREP to estimate the positive effects of the practice on water quality. This data continues to be gathered and provides cumulative information on the estimated sediment and nutrient load reductions in the Indiana CREP watersheds.

The annual goal to reduce sediment and nutrients from entering rivers and streams in the designated watersheds is 2,450 tons of sediment, 2,400 pounds of phosphorus, and 4,700 pounds of nitrogen. Table 4 below shows the sediment and nutrient load reductions for the CREP practices that were installed in 2020, which again in 2020 has exceeded the reduction goals due to the high interest in the program. The table also shows the overall benefits of the nutrient load reductions since the program’s expansion in 2010.

TABLE 4: ESTIMATED NUTRIENT LOAD REDUCTIONS IN CREP WATERSHEDS

Year	Sediment (Tons)	Phosphorus (lbs.)	Nitrogen (lbs.)
2020	17,025	20,120	39,999
Overall	71,124	82,188	162,219

*‘Overall’ refers to the estimated total sediment and nutrient load reductions since the program’s expansion in 2010 according to the Region 5 model calculations.

WETLANDS

One of the CREP objectives is to increase the acres of wetlands in the watersheds for erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, and nutrient uptake. The first 5 years of the CREP program in Indiana, from 2005-2010, when we had 3 designated watersheds, the amount of enrollment of wetlands acres was 1,061.7 acres. Then, when the expansion of the program



Benefits of wetlands include erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, nutrient uptake, and wildlife habitat creation.

was done in 2010, new design guidelines for wetland restorations were adopted to include very large wetlands areas with specific drainage requirements, which were difficult to find in Indiana due to topography, etc. This caused the amount of wetlands enrolled to decrease to zero from 2010 to 2013. To facilitate more enrollment of this conservation practice, wetland design requirements were changed in 2013. This revision allowed for a greater number of smaller sites to become eligible for wetland restoration in CREP, many of which are in heavily tiled drainage areas, a key distinction of CREP wetland restorations. It also has allowed for already established wetlands to be enrolled in CREP, creating continued improvements in water quality.

Since the changes to the wetland design requirements in 2013, the program has seen a significant increase in the number of wetland acres installed, including 4,145 acres of wetland restorations completed and an enrollment of 5,021 acres.

In 2020, 1,001 acres of wetland restorations were completed or re-enrolled, and 648 new acres were enrolled. In total since the inception of the program in Indiana, CREP has restored or enhanced 5,207 acres of wetlands.

ACREAGE ENROLLMENT

A main goal of the CREP program in Indiana is to enroll 26,250 acres of eligible cropland including frequently flooded agricultural lands, and restorable wetlands. To date, according to the state's tracking system, there are 21,899 acres that have been enrolled, which is 83% of the acreage enrollment goal. In addition, 20,019 acres have been completed or re-enrolled since the program's inception.

Table 5 on the next page provides to date a detailed listing of the practices and acres that have been completed in each CREP watershed since the beginning of the program, as well as the total number of acres of enrollment into the program that have not yet been established. Figure 2 illustrates the overall comparison in percentage of enrolled conservation practices.



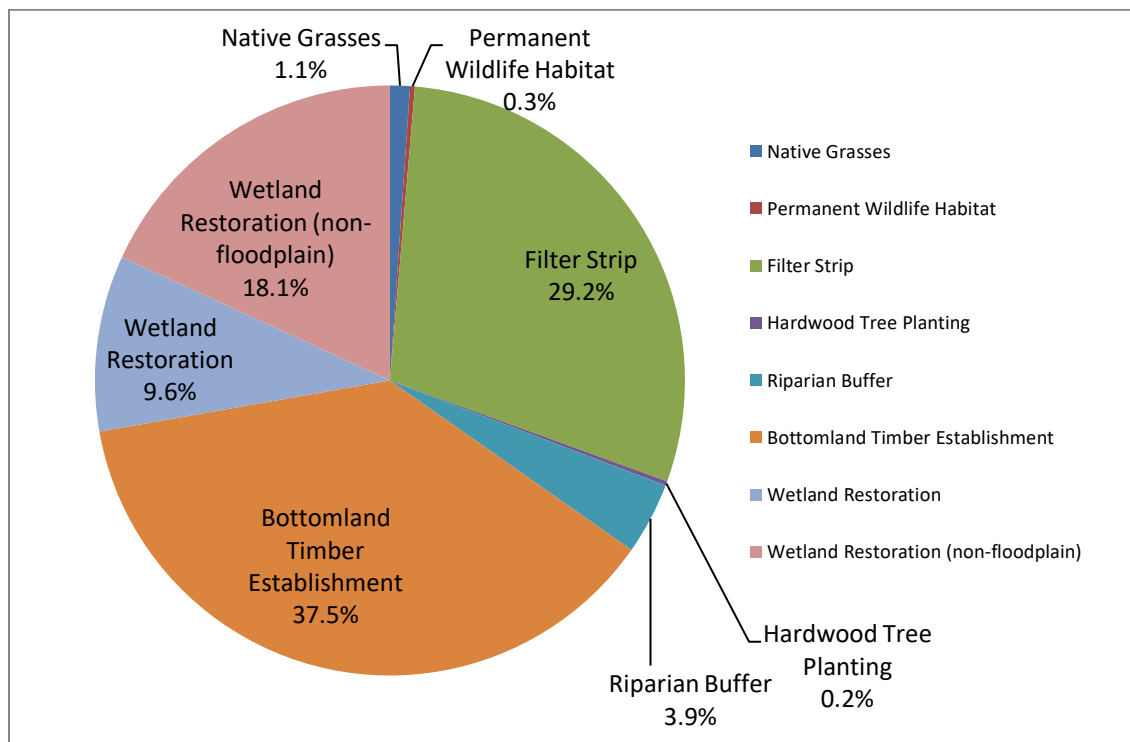
Wildlife Habitat

TABLE 5: TOTAL ACREAGE OF COMPLETION AND ENROLLMENT TO DATE

CREP Watershed	Native Grasses	Permanent Wildlife Habitat	Filter Strip	Hardwood Tree Planting	Riparian Buffer	Bottomland Timber Establishment	Wetland Restoration	Wetland Restoration (non-floodplain)	Total
	CP2	CP4D	CP21	CP3A	CP22	CP31	CP23	CP23A	
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres
Highland-Pigeon	2.50	0.0	226.98	10.80	19.50	223.93	0.0	0.0	483.71
Lower Wabash	0.0	0.0	9.88	0.0	0.0	644.70	0.0	0.0	654.58
Lower East Fork White	53.50	45.20	139.78	30.30	73.60	717.85	287.16	0.0	1,347.39
Lower White	10.70	0.0	44.62	0.0	111.20	2,133.43	123.03	0.0	2,422.98
Middle Wabash-Busseron	0.0	0.0	5.32	0.0	13.50	1,512.60	426.14	29.81	1,987.37
Middle Wabash-Deer	6.60	0.0	100.32	0.0	0.0	73.10	24.60	48.28	252.90
Middle Wabash-Vermillion	4.50	0.0	142.63	6.97	61.80	676.16	514.19	177.70	1,583.95
Tippecanoe	93.84	0.0	3531.56	0.0	11.21	41.80	195.00	3,127.45	7,000.86
Upper East Fork White	0.0	0.0	378.55	0.0	36.50	197.71	0.0	0.0	612.76
Upper Wabash	21.25	7.0	796.81	2.56	64.49	275.85	82.59	84.29	1,334.84
Upper White	36.69	0.0	580.93	1.00	399.30	1,232.74	0.0	87.18	2,337.84
Total CREP Completion	229.58	52.20	5,957.4	51.63	791.10	7,729.87	1,652.71	3,554.71	20,019.18
Total CREP Enrollment	238.17	58.56	6,395.5	51.63	863.95	8,208.72	2,111.36	3,971.50	21,899.37

* CREP Completion refers to those projects where conservation practices have been installed on the ground or re-enrolled into the program.

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES ENROLLED IN CREP



ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

When conservation practices are applied, there are several benefits that come from these practices beyond the benefits listed above in the nutrient load reduction and wetlands sections. These additional benefits include creating wildlife habitat and protecting floodplains through planting of trees, which also can improve air quality. All of the acres applied through the CREP program are considered to be wildlife habitat acres, therefore 20,019 acres of wildlife habitat have been created through the CREP program in Indiana.

Through the CP31 Bottomland Timber Establishment practice, trees are planted in floodplain areas to protect waterbodies. In 2020, 549.6 acres of new trees were planted through CP31, resulting in approximately 329,760 trees being planted. Since the inception of the program in late 2005, 7,755 acres of new trees have been planted or re-enrolled into the program, resulting in the planting of approximately 4,123,746 trees.



Bur Oak species in a Bottomland Planting

4. 2020 Completed Practices and Acres

In 2020, landowners installed or re-enrolled a variety of conservation practices offered through CREP. It was another good year for growth in enrollment in the Indiana CREP by interested landowners with 2,348.8 acres enrolled, which includes approximately 911 acres being re-enrolled from CRP to CREP and 369 acres from CREP to CREP. This is the first year that acres within the program were able to be re-enrolled back into CREP within the original three watersheds.

In addition, 2020 saw another high number of practice acres completed on the ground or re-enrolled since the expansion at 2,459.6 acres. These completed acres do not include the 369 acres that were re-enrolled from CREP to CREP so that these acres are not duplicated in the total acres within the program. Table 6 below provides a breakdown of the practice acreage in 2020. (Note: these numbers are given according to the State’s tracking system.)

TABLE 6: 2020 COMPLETED PRACTICES*

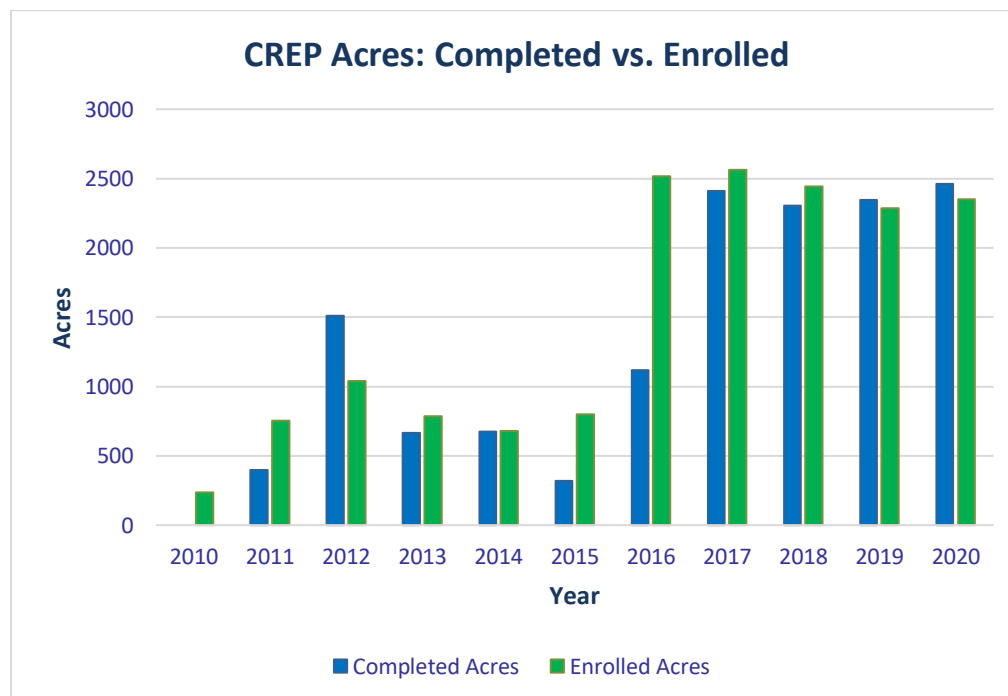
Completed Practices* (in acres)		CP4D	CP21	CP3A	CP22	CP31	CP23	CP23A	Total
2020									
New Acres	38.20	606.19	17.20	95.49	701.19	438.07	563.26		2,459.60

* Completed practices are those projects where conservation practices have been installed on the ground or have been re-enrolled into the program.

** There were no CP2 practices installed in 2020.

Figure 3 below shows a comparison of each year, Completed vs. Enrolled acres, since the expansion in 2010.

FIGURE 3: COMPLETED ACRES VS. ENROLLED ACRES FROM 2010-2020



5. Financial Contributions and State Match

The CREP Agreement states that Indiana shall contribute at least 20% of the overall annual in-kind services and direct program costs. This section will provide information on how Indiana is meeting this obligation.

INDIANA'S DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS FOR CREP

The ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) maintains 10 CREP Leaders, who are located throughout the state, as shown in Figure 4 below, to provide technical assistance to landowners, create conservation plans and oversee daily CREP activities. These CREP Leaders work with landowners/participants to enroll them in the program which provides state financial incentives to establish one of the eligible and prescribed conservation practices. In 2020, the state paid out \$1,289,429.50 in direct payments to participants for installation of practices, as shown in Table 7 on the next page.

In an effort to streamline the payment process, the CREP Leaders and the CREP Program Manager works closely with 10 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to help administer funds to participants. Figure 4 also outlines the 10 counties that are the Administrating SWCDs. The State paid \$128,306.95 in administrative fees to partnering SWCDs in 2020, which is considered to be a part of the overall 20% contribution (Table 7).

FIGURE 4: ISDA CREP LEADERS AND SWCD ADMINISTRATORS

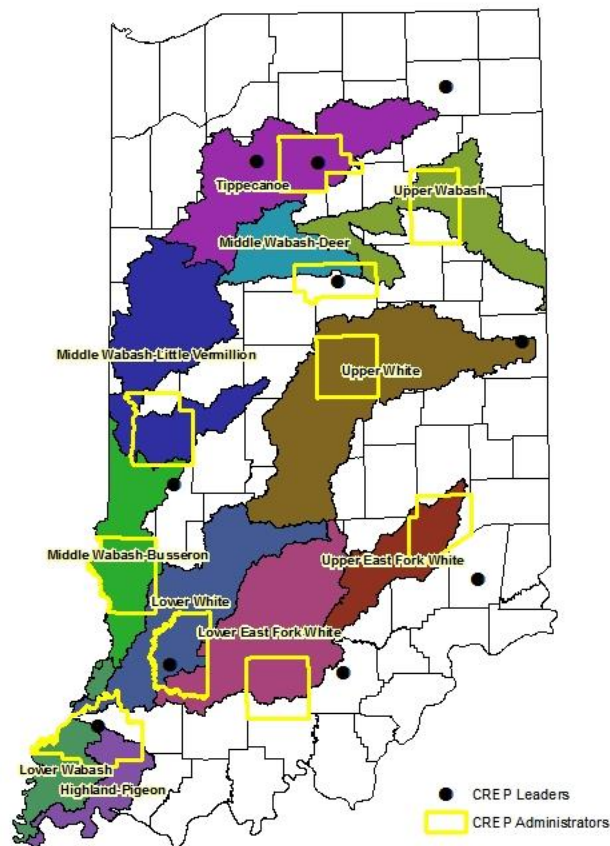


TABLE 7: SUMMARY OF STATE FUNDS FOR COMPLETED PRACTICES PAID IN 2020

State Dollars for Practices Paid in 2020								
CP2	CP4D	CP21	CP3A	CP22	CP31	CP23	CP23A	Practices Total
\$1,500.00	\$ 3,820.00	\$ 56,579.00	\$ 6,880.00	\$ 38,872.00	\$ 369,396.00	\$ 395,514.00	\$ 416,868.50	\$ 1,289,429.50
							Admin fees	\$ 128,306.95
							Total	\$ 1,417,736.45

Each year the SSCB appropriates \$660,000 from Clean Water Indiana to go toward supporting practice installations and incentive fees to participating landowners, and administrative fees to the SWCD CREP Administrating counties.

In 2020, The Nature Conservancy and the ISDA signed an agreement for the TNC to provide funds for the state’s Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to support bottomland timber plantings for floodplain restoration projects. Through these agreements, \$83,333 in funds were provided through Nestle Purina to establish bottomland tree plantings in the floodplain within the Lower Wabash and the Middle Wabash-Busseron (south of Terre Haute) watersheds.

Also, in 2020, the Indiana CREP partnered with the Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF) to receive a generous grant of \$500,000 from the American Electric Power (AEP) Mitigation Money Fund, a fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation. This grant money can be used for all practices eligible under CREP and within any of the eligible CREP watersheds in the state. Furthermore, in 2020, there was \$98,662.00 provided from the ISDA budget to support CREP.

INDIANA’S IN-KIND SERVICES TO CREP

As mentioned above DSC maintains 10 CREP Leaders to provide technical assistance to landowners, create conservation plans and oversee daily CREP activities in their specified watersheds. Also, the CREP & Water Quality Initiatives Program Manager handles all aspects of the program and provides technical expertise and critical decision-making, and the DSC Director provides overall supervision and assistance in decision-making. DSC Resource Specialists, located throughout the state, also accommodate seasonal workload and marketing opportunities within CREP as needed. The DSC’s staff time contributes to the overall in-kind services.



State partners, such as the SSCB, IDNR and TNC also contribute to the state’s overall 20% contribution through administration, plan development, program costs on easements, and staff time.

Table 8 shows a detailed summary of the direct program costs and the in-kind services provided by the state and its partners. According to the federal total given by the Indiana FSA, the state’s contribution for 2020 figures out to be 29.23%.

TABLE 8: INDIANA’S OVERALL ANNUAL DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS AND IN-KIND MATCH

Direct Program Costs from CWI	2020 Total
State Funds for Practice Costs to Participants	\$1,289,429.50
SWCD Administrative Fees	\$128,306.95
State In-Kind Match	
CREP Program Manager and 3 State office staff	\$62,034.52
10 CREP Leaders	\$133,096.68
Resource Specialist Time	\$355.29
SWCD County Administrators Time	\$11,965
SSCB	\$1,050
Steering Committee	\$160
DNR (plan development and easement processing time)	\$2,500
TNC In-kind and Admin Time	\$1,500
Total	\$1,630,397.94
Federal Total	\$5,577,525.00
State In-Kind Match (%)	29.23%

6. Successes, Challenges, and The Future of CREP in Indiana

The CREP program in Indiana continues to see high interest and demand from landowners, and this is seen once again by the large number of acres that were enrolled in 2020. This is a good thing because we are getting conservation on the ground and helping to improve water quality, however, it creates a challenge at the same time. ISDA only has so many dollars appropriated to the program to pay the state incentives. As a result, the CREP Program Manager worked with partners in the state, including The Nature Conservancy and the Indiana Wildlife Federation, to provide more dollars to financially support CREP.

The Nature Conservancy will continue to support the CREP in Indiana over the next several years by providing support dollars that will be used toward direct payments to the landowners and participants in the program. In addition, as mentioned before, the grant stewarded by the Indiana Wildlife Federation and awarded from the AEP Mitigation Money Fund will support the CREP throughout the next year. These additional funds beyond what is given through the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) program, will allow landowners to enroll in the program and allow more practices to be installed on the ground, as well as help with the demand and shortage of dollars.

There are also some support dollars that will be coming from the ISDA budget to help with the shortage in incentive dollars. The ISDA, CREP Program Manager will continue to partner with organizations to cover demand.

In the future, ISDA is wanting to expand the current CREP in the existing watersheds to increase the acreage enrollment goal. ISDA, TNC and the CREP Steering Committee have also discussed the possibility of added a new CREP Agreement within Indiana to include the Kankakee River Watershed that drains to the Illinois River. More discussions will take place on this topic in the next year.

This is an exciting time to be involved in conservation in Indiana. ISDA is proud to be playing a key role in expanding CREP, and expanding opportunities for landowners while improving the environment.

ISDA would like to thank the efforts of our many partners in conservation who supported CREP in Indiana during its inception and who continue to support this program. We realize that without the support of the SSCB, CWI, FSA, TNC and all of our conservation partners, the success of this program would not be possible.