

## September 19-20, 2006 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #C6: CREP Update

### **Background**

Since 1999, OWEB has been the funding partner with the Farm Services Agency for the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that is intended to provide cost share for the establishment of riparian buffers in agricultural lands. An offspring of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), CREP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. This unique state and federal partnership allows landowners to receive incentive payments from the Farm Services Agency for installing specific conservation practices. Through the CREP, farmers can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, riparian buffers covers on eligible land. The Oregon CREP was initially developed to address listed salmon streams. In an amendment in 2003, the program was modified to assist in addressing stream water quality issues (primarily temperature). The program uses state funding for partial payment (25 percent) of all conservation activities (fencing, off-stream watering, site preparation, plant materials, planting, etc.).

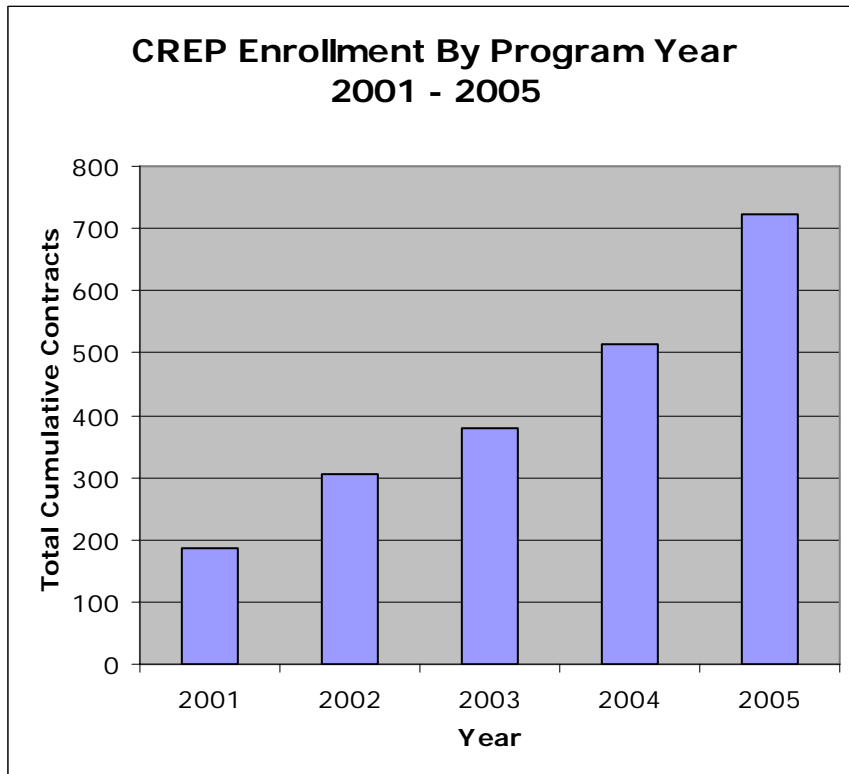
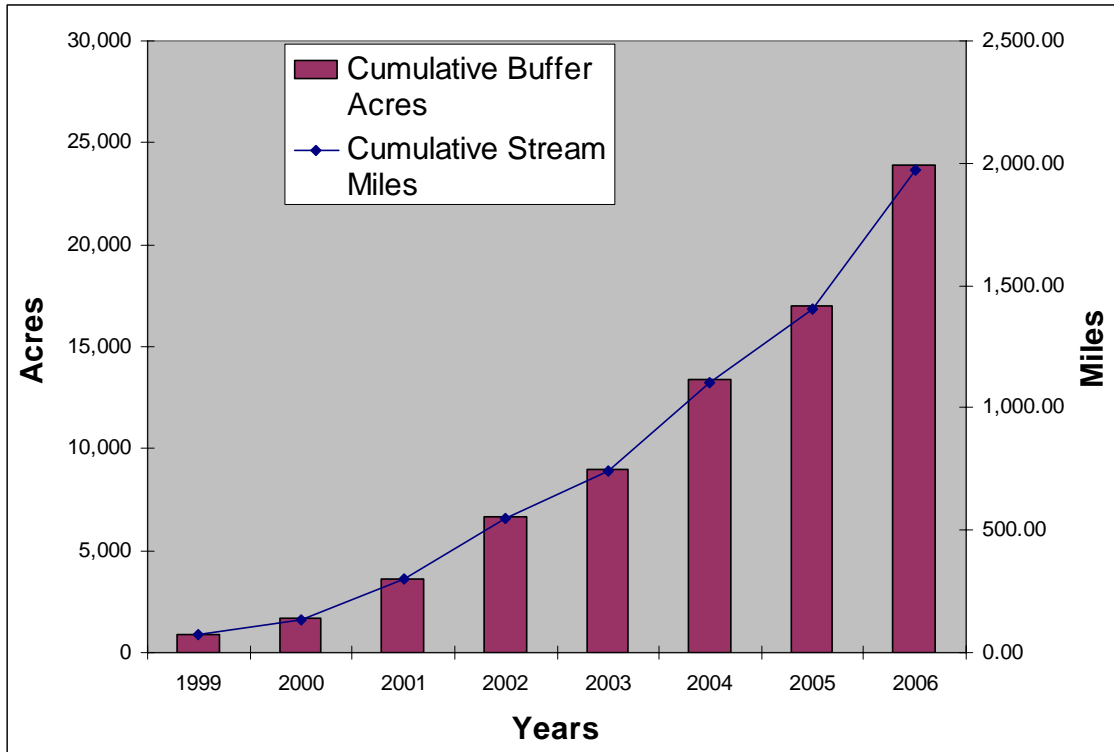
In 1998, Governor Kitzhaber signed a memorandum of agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture to implement the program. The agreement requires Oregon to pay for 20% of the overall program costs. In addition to direct landowner payments for conservation activities, OWEB has participated in providing funding for outreach and technical assistance and program coordination. The Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Department of Forestry have also assisted in CREP implementation and coordination.

The program received a biological opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1999. The biological opinion requires OWEB to monitor the program and report on the effects of the program.

### **Oregon CREP Implementation**

The Oregon CREP was relatively slow to be fully considered in the state. The primary reason for the relatively slow diffusion of the CREP program in Oregon is that Oregon agriculture is quite diverse and few producers are dependent on Farm Services Agency programs. In 2001, OWEB contracted with Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to review the program and evaluate the barriers to broader implementation. The report identified the need for technical assistance as a significant barrier to implementation. Additionally, the review identified opportunities to expand the program by changing the focus from salmon protection to water quality protection. These recommendations were used to negotiate an amendment to the agreement with the USDA. The following graphics show the increasing enrollments in the program. The first graphic shows the cumulative stream miles enrolled in the CREP program. Through this year there have been nearly 2,000 miles of stream enrolled.

The second graphic showing annual enrollment indicates the nature of information dispersal through rural communities. Program growth increases in time as more people become familiar with the program and have the opportunity to talk to their neighbors. The figures also indicate continued rapid growth in riparian restoration in agricultural lands.



**Staff Contact**

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