



Oregon

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Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Eric Williams, Grant Program Manager
Juniper Davis, Partnerships Coordinator

SUBJECT: Agenda Item D: Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Technical Assistance (CREP TA) – Approval to Receive Program Funding October 27-28, 2015 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report updates the Board on Oregon's investment in Technical Assistance (TA) for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and requests Board approval to accept \$150,000 in additional funding for the program from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

II. Background

CREP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. The unique state and federal partnership allows landowners to receive incentive payments and conservation rental payments from the Farm Services Agency (FSA) for establishing long-term, riparian buffers on eligible land. The Oregon CREP was developed initially to address listed salmon streams; the program was later modified to assist in addressing stream water-quality issues (primarily temperature).

The Oregon CREP Agreement requires Oregon to pay for 20 percent of the overall program costs. CREP uses state funding for partial payment (25 percent) of all conservation activities (e.g., fencing, off-stream watering, site preparation, plant materials, planting). In addition to the direct landowner payments for conservation activities, OWEB provides funding for outreach, technical assistance, and program coordination. In recent years, NRCS has also provided funding through OWEB to support this work.

In federal fiscal year 2014, Oregon CREP was successful in enrolling 2,487 acres in the program resulting in a total of over 42,000 acres enrolled over the lifetime of the program in Oregon.

III. CREP Technical Assistance and Associated Funding

CREP is managed by a multi-agency/organizational partnership. In addition to OWEB and FSA, the CREP partnership in Oregon includes NRCS, Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, and the Oregon Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Resources.

Beginning in the 2011-13 biennium, OWEB has offered TA grants for CREP as a competitive grant offering. This offering was implemented because the partnership recognized the program is most successful in those areas with a dedicated CREP TA provider. Grants have been provided to provide direct technical assistance to landowners interested in signing up for the program, along with critical coordination between landowners, local restoration practitioners, and the federal and state agencies responsible for managing the program.

At the January 2015 OWEB Board meeting, the Board approved receipt of \$100,000 in supplemental funding from the NRCS to improve the local delivery of CREP in Oregon. These funds are being directed toward TA grants for 2016-17, CREP-related trainings, augmenting existing grant agreements to provide additional technical assistance in underserved areas, and the resolution of programmatic barriers in cultural resource review coordination. Subsequently, at the July 2015 OWEB Board meeting, the Board approved a spending plan that set aside \$750,000 in lottery funds for CREP TA grant agreements for 2016-17. In August 2015 NRCS provided an additional \$150,000 to OWEB to assist in the funding of a minimum of ten CREP TA grants.

On September 14, 2015, OWEB received 12 CREP TA applications for a total combined request of \$1,132,601. This fall, OWEB will convene a CREP TA Review Team, staff will make funding recommendations to the OWEB Director, and have grant agreements in place by December 31, 2015.

IV. Recommendation

Staff request the Board approve receipt of \$150,000 in supplemental funding from the NRCS, and delegate authority to the Executive Director to distribute the funds through appropriate grants and agreements.