



# Minnesota, USDA sign new CREP Agreement

## February 2017 Snapshots



Almost 180 conservation leaders, media, elected officials and farmers joined Governor Dayton in the Capitol Rotunda on Tuesday, January 17 as he signed a new Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture. The agreement, which came after two years of work and deliberations between the USDA and BWSR, will target 60,000 acres in areas of southern and western Minnesota facing significant water quality challenges, to protect and improve our natural resources for future generations.

The \$500 million agreement will use \$150 million in state funding leverage \$350 million in federal funding. Those federal funds will be used for direct payments to landowners and farmers who enroll in the program. Through the Minnesota CREP, farmers and agricultural landowners in 54 counties can volunteer to place some of their land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) to support buffers, wetland restoration, and wellhead protection.

“Minnesota is at a critical juncture in addressing our state’s serious water quality challenges,” said Governor Mark Dayton. “Through this landmark agreement, Minnesota will be better able to protect and improve our waters for our families, natural habitat, and our future. Clean water is everyone’s challenge, and everyone’s responsibility.”

The new Minnesota CREP will deliver multiple benefits for the state’s water, wildlife, and the Minnesotans for whom both are so very important. Thanks to the CREP’s conservation practices, the state will see reductions in sediment and nutrients in its rivers, lakes, and streams. It will achieve these water quality improvements in a way that also benefits wildlife habitat.



*BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke and several agency commissioners look on while Governor Dayton signs the CREP agreement.*

The 54-county CREP area contains the state’s highest priority areas for nitrogen and phosphorus reduction. It was targeted to include protection of highly vulnerable drinking water supplies. It will also provide habitat in the primary range of pheasants, with additional benefits for ducks, deer, pollinators, meadowlarks and a host of grassland dependent species.

The Minnesota CREP is a five-agency effort, led by BWSR and including the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It also had the support of over 70 organizations and citizen groups from around the state.

January 17 was a big day for conservation in Minnesota. Now the work of implementation begins, and state and federal partners are hard at work finalizing program details with the first sign up on the horizon this spring. As the work moves forward, all Minnesotans will benefit from this CREP through cleaner surface and groundwater, better hunting and fishing, and habitat. Stay tuned and learn more at <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/crep/>.