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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**MN CREP and Continuous Conservation Reserve Program: Two Options for Landowners**

**Month XX, 2018**

Landowners interested in setting aside marginal cropland or protecting sensitive areas once again have two options available to them: the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (MN CREP) and the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). MN CREP’s program adjustments have increased its appeal to landowners, and the CCRP enrollment reopened on June 4 after a brief pause that began last fall.

“Landowners in XX County should be looking at conservation as an option to their farm plan,” said XXXXX Title. “It can meet different land management goals by increasing wildlife habitat, improving water quality, or help address the economics of less productive land. We can help people figure out what works for them.”

MN CREP and CCRP applications must be received by August 17 to be considered for CRP funding this federal fiscal year. Both programs rely on the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as a starting point, with MN CREP adding a state-funded easement administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to the CRP contracted acres.

For landowners seeking long-term solutions, MN CREP is a voluntary state-federal program designed to improve water quality and habitat through permanent conservation easements. The MN CREP program was created to protect and restore up to 60,000 acres of marginal cropland across 54 southern and western Minnesota counties using buffer strips, wetland restoration, and drinking water wellhead protection. Native plantings on those acres will filter surface and ground water, prevent erosion and provide critical habitat for countless grassland dependent species. Private ownership continues and the land is permanently restored and enhanced for water quality and habitat benefits.

“The recent adjustments to MN CREP payment rates and other enrollment criteria have made the program more attractive to landowners,” said John Jaschke, Executive Director for BWSR. “A MN CREP incentive has been added to the payment rate recognizing the value of a long-term easement.”

Landowners who enroll in CCRP enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. In return for enrolling land in CCRP, the USDA provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. CCRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

“Landowners with expiring CRP acres and land not currently enrolled in CRP should seriously consider this opportunity,” said Joe Martin, State Executive Director for USDA FSA. “CRP contracts will expire on over 200,000 acres in Minnesota this year. CCRP is an excellent option for landowners who want to protect environmentally sensitive land, or retire marginal cropland.”

To learn more about the programs stop by XXXX SWCD at XXXXXXXX or call us at XXXXXXX. Our staff can answer questions about CCRP and MN CREP and provide more detailed information about payment rates.

Visit (SWCD website) or [www.bwsr.state.mn/crep](http://www.bwsr.state.mn/crep) for more information about MN CREP.

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