

Newsletter



OVER 20 YEARS OF
RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Vol 2 Winter 2021

For over 20 years, CREP has been a successful partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois Soil and Water Districts (SWCD). The program goals are to reduce sediment & nutrient runoff, improve water quality, and create and enhance critical habitat for fish and wildlife populations on private lands within the Illinois and Kaskaskia River Watersheds. Currently, there are more than 1,300 CREP easements protecting over 90,000 acres.

What's New with CREP?

Our Conservation Resource Specialists are out in the field visiting easements and writing new conservation management plans (CMP). Conservation easements contain vibrant and dynamic plant and wildlife communities, this means that the best management practices can change year to year. Updating our "CMPs" allows us to choose the management strategies that work best for both the landowner and the land.

SWCD Shout-Out!

The CREP staff would like to express their gratitude to Brenda McMillan and the Cass County SWCD office for their work field testing the new Survey123 Monitoring report. Brenda's contributions and feedback has helped make improvements to our process. Thanks, Brenda!

Photos of the Season



Photo credit: CRS Anne Hughes



Photo credit: CRS Kristen Ragusa

Landowner Spotlight

Dana McLain has produced grain and raised cattle in Morgan County for 35 years. Participation in CREP has allowed him to make money off formerly marginal land. Since enrolling in 2001, he has noticed more deer and turkey on his property, as well as greater numbers of songbirds and healthier prairie grasses.

"We've been very happy with it; it's a great fit for what we do here."
- Dana McLain, on being part of CREP

Do you have a great photo from a trail cam or hunt on your CREP property? Let's see who has the biggest bucks, tallest turkeys and most photogenic pheasants. Email your pics to dnr.crep@illinois.gov



Critter Corner

In the colder months, snowy owls swoop into Illinois in search for food. They are often found in fields, grasslands, and meadows.



Photo credit: CRS Anne Hughes



Photo credit: CRS Anne Hughes

Snakes are busy finding a cozy place for the winter months. They retreat below the frost line to their hibernaculum.



Conservation Resource Specialists

Did you know CREP has 6 field specialists to support the program? They would be happy to visit with you on your property to address any CREP related question. [Click here to look up the staff for your area](#)

The More You Know...

Did you know that quail chicks need open spaces to move around under grass canopies? You can manage your grassland bunch grasses and stem count to improve quail habitat.



Photo credit: IDNR

Adding a wetland management plan to your conservation easement can create conservation buffers and wildlife habitats that capture runoff and provide waterfowl hunting opportunities. Please contact your Conservation Resource Specialists for more information. [Click here to learn more about CREP goals](#)

Don't forget, you can find a ton of info and answers to frequently asked questions on [the CREP website](https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/CREP).
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/CREP>

If you would like to be added to our email list or have other questions contact DNR.CREP@illinois.gov
217 557-6498

DIY Management

Did you know?... You can manage your own CREP easement.

Landscape scale fire, whether natural or man-made, was instrumental in forming the unique ecology of Illinois prior to European settlement. Today, it still has an important part to play in maintaining the health of our natural areas. When done properly and safely, burning is the most cost-effective and ecologically beneficial management tool available.



Photo credit: CRS Abbey Ward



Photo credit: CRS Jake Lux

Prescribed burns can:

- Remove invasive plants such as bush honeysuckle and autumn olive
- Promote native grasses and forbs
- Recycle nutrients into the soil
- Provide forage for wildlife
- Improve habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Prevent the spread of pests and disease

Consider adding prescribed burning to your management toolbox!

Prescribe fire management may be utilized on CREP acres with applicable permit(s) and burn plan(s).

[Click here for more information](#)

Seasonal Considerations

- ✓ Winter months are a great time for planning! Reach out to your local CRS to discuss possible management projects you can tackle once it starts to thaw.
- ✓ Do you have an approved CREP food plot plan? Now would be a great time to plan ahead for next season's food plots!

Look to the skies for flocks of Canada geese and Snow geese!

Spring migration starts in late January for geese. They live in and around lakes, ponds, and marshes and graze on seeds, grasses, and aquatic plants.



Photo credit: CRS Anne Hughes