



# **Indiana Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program 2023 Annual Report**

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Division of Soil Conservation  
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## 1. Introduction

2023 marks the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Indiana. The program was first announced in 2005, covering three watersheds in Indiana and had an enrollment goal of 7,000 acres. The program expanded in 2010, to include eleven priority watersheds touching 65 counties (Figure 1) with an acreage enrollment goal of 26,250 acres.

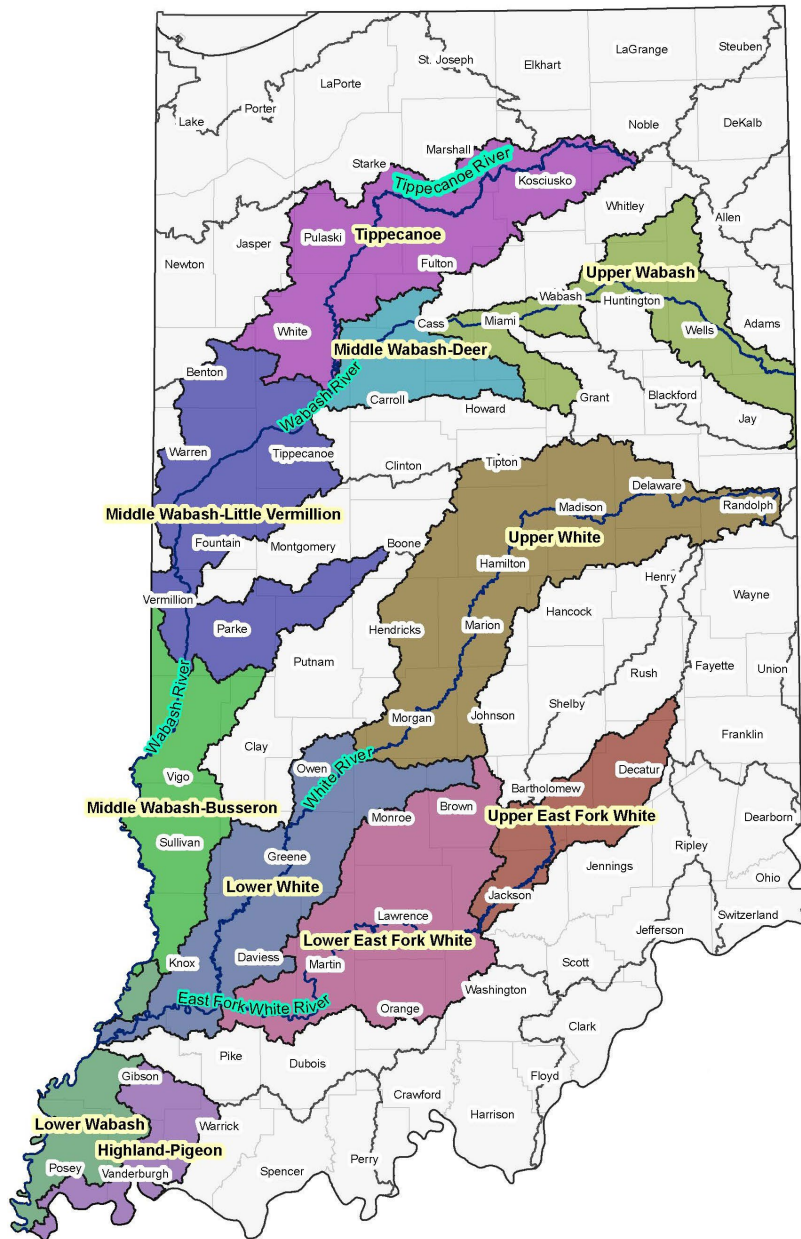
The Indiana CREP aims to improve water quality and address wildlife issues by reducing erosion, sedimentation and nutrients, and enhancing wildlife habitats within specified watersheds in the Wabash River System. This program is designed to help alleviate some of the concerns of high non-point source sediment, nutrient, pesticide, and herbicide losses from agricultural lands by restoring grass and riparian buffers and wetlands to improve water quality, as well as to protect land from frequent flooding and excessive erosion by planting hardwood trees in floodplain areas along rivers and streams. CREP continues to address a major milestone of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), showcasing Indiana's progressive and meaningful implementation of conservation practices to protect Indiana's soil, water and related natural resources, and to help alleviate hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico<sup>1</sup>.

Through CREP, program participants receive financial cost-share and incentives from FSA and ISDA to voluntarily enroll in the program and implement conservation practices on environmentally sensitive land. The program operates under an Agreement between FSA and ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation (DSC), dated July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and amended thereafter in August of 2010 and May of 2016. ISDA administers the CREP program on behalf of the State of Indiana and submits to FSA information summarizing the status of enrollments, progress and accomplishments of the Indiana CREP each year.

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<sup>1</sup> Drainage from Indiana eventually finds its way to the Gulf via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. A fraction of nitrogen and phosphorus originating from Indiana end up in the Gulf and contributes to a low dissolved oxygen area (hypoxic zone), threatening aquatic habitats in the Gulf.

**FIGURE 1: 11 CREP ELIGIBLE WATERSHEDS**



Watersheds include: Highland-Pigeon, Lower Wabash, Lower East Fork White, Lower White, Middle Wabash-Busseron, Middle Wabash-Deer, Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion, Tippecanoe, Upper East Fork White, Upper Wabash and Upper White.



## 2. Eligible Practices and Incentives

### A. ELIGIBLE PRACTICES

The Indiana CREP offers a menu of conservation practices to address nonpoint source pollution runoff issues. Table 1 identifies the various conservation practices offered through CREP and are further discussed below. All these practices must be installed on former cropland, in other words the land must have a farming history as defined by FSA requirements. Only land physically located within the Highland-Pigeon, Lower Wabash, Lower East Fork White, Lower White, Middle Wabash-Busseron, Middle Wabash-Deer, Middle Wabash-Little Vermillion, Tippecanoe, Upper East Fork White, Upper Wabash, and Upper White watersheds may be enrolled in this CREP.

**TABLE 1: CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND CODES ELIGIBLE WITHIN CREP**

Conservation Practice	Practice Code
Permanent Native Grass	CP2
Hardwood Tree Planting	CP3A
Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement	CP4D
Riparian Buffer	CP22
Filter Strips	CP21
Wetland Restoration	CP23
Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain	CP23A
Bottomland Timber Establishment	CP31

Practices **CP2**, **CP3A**, **CP4D**, **CP22** and **CP21** must be installed on former cropland adjacent to an eligible stream, river or water body and meet additional buffer requirements.

BUFFER REQUIREMENTS:

**CP2** – minimum average width of 50 feet and a maximum width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

**CP3A**, **CP4D** and **CP22** – minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum width of 180 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

**CP21** – minimum average width of 35 feet and a maximum width of 120 feet (up to 300 feet in alluvial soils)

**CP23**, **CP23A** and **CP31** are not required to be adjacent to a stream, river or waterbody; however, **CP 23** and **CP31** are required to be located in the 100-yr floodplain.

### B. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

CREP provides financial incentives to landowners through both state and federal contributions. Through CREP, eligible Indiana participants who establish one of the prescribed conservation

practices receive cost-share and rental payments as outlined below. All Contracts within the CREP program cannot be less than 14 years and no more than 15 years.

#### FEDERAL INCENTIVES

- **Cost-share Assistance:** Cost-share for practice installation based on 50% of an eligible cost, Not-to-Exceed rate determined by FSA and NRCS; and for wetland restorations, 50% of engineering design estimate.
- **Annual Rental Payment:** An annual payment for the life of the contract. The payment consists of:
  - **Base Soil Rental Rate:** Determined by calculating the normal CRP weighted average soil rental rate for the three predominant soil types using the current posted applicable local soil rental rates for cropland.
  - **Incentive Payment** of 40% of the base rental rate without regard to other incentive payments for all practices offered and eligible for CREP.
- **Signing Incentive Payment (SIP):** A one-time payment of \$100 per acre for new land enrolled in CP21, CP22, and CP 31, and \$150 per acre for new land enrolled in CP23 and CP23A. This payment may be made after the contract has been signed and is approved. Re-enrolled acres are not eligible for the SIP payment.
- **Practice Incentive Payment (PIP):** A one-time payment equal to 40% of the eligible installation costs to establish CP21, CP22, CP23, CP23A and CP31.

#### STATE INCENTIVES

After practice installation, participants receive a one-time payment from the state equal to:

- \$100 per acre for land enrolled or re-enrolled in Native Grasses (CP2), Wildlife Habitat (CP4D) or Filter Strips (CP21).
- \$400 per acre for land enrolled or re-enrolled in Hardwood Tree Planting (CP3A), Riparian Buffer (CP22), or Bottomland Timber Establishment (CP31).
- \$950 per acre for land newly enrolled in Wetland Restorations (CP23 or CP23A).
- \$400 per acre for land re-enrolled in Wetland Restorations (CP23 or CP23A).



Bottomland Timber Establishment



Filter Strip



Wetland Restoration

### 3. CREP Goals and Accomplishments

There are many partners involved with the promotion, administration, technical assistance and funding of CREP in order to meet and work toward the goals and objectives of the program. Our CREP partners include USDA-FSA, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and the State Soil Conservation Board (SSCB), all of which are a part of the Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP). CREP is one of the top priorities of this partnership. The SSCB provides policy and funding direction to the ISDA, DSC on the administration of the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) program, which helps to fund the state incentives for the CREP program. These partners as well as the staff within the DSC help to carry out the CREP program in Indiana.

In addition, ISDA partners with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to help promote the program and provide support dollars for the Indiana CREP. Since 2018, the Indiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has provided support dollars in the amount of \$619,340 to help pay for the state incentives available to landowners through the Indiana CREP program. Without this support, the program would not continue to reach its goals and accomplishments each year.

In the written Agreement between FSA and ISDA the goals and objectives of the program are stated as:

- Protect a minimum of 3,000 linear miles of watercourses through the installation of conservation buffer practices
- Reduce the amount of sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen entering rivers and streams in the designated watersheds by 2,450 tons per year of sediment, 2,400 pounds per year of phosphorus, and 4,700 pounds per year of nitrogen.
- Increase the acres of wetlands in the watersheds for erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, and nutrient uptake.
- Enroll 15% of the eligible watersheds’ cropland subject to normal CRP acreage limits by county
- Seek enrollment of 26,250 acres of eligible cropland, including frequently flooded agricultural lands, and restorable wetlands.

#### **A. LINEAR MILES OF PROTECTION ON WATERCOURSES**

Through the installation of conservation buffer practices in CREP, approximately **1,103** linear miles of watercourses have been protected within the Indiana CREP watersheds. This is for all of the practices that have been enrolled into the program, however, there are projects that have expired out of the program and are no longer considered active contracts in CREP. Of the active contracts, there are still approximately 900 miles of buffers protecting waterbodies. Table 2 lists the total length of buffers that have been installed since 2005 when CREP began in Indiana.

**TABLE 2: CONSERVATION BUFFER LENGTHS**

2005-2010	2010 - current	Total	Approximate miles in active contracts
2,627,367 feet	3,198,456 feet	<b>5,825,823 feet</b>	<b>900 linear miles</b>
		<b>1,103.4 linear miles</b>	



## **B. SEDIMENT AND NUTRIENT LOAD REDUCTIONS THROUGH CREP**

The CREP program actively continues to work toward the goal of reducing the amount of sediments and nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, into the rivers and streams within the designated watersheds by applying buffers, planting trees and restoring wetlands. The DSC uses the Region 5 Sediment and Nutrient Load Reduction Model developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to estimate the sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus load reductions from individual best management practices installed on the ground. To date, CREP leaders apply this model to each conservation practice enrolled and installed through the CREP to estimate the positive effects of the practice on water quality. This data continues to be gathered and provides cumulative information on the estimated sediment and nutrient load reductions in the Indiana CREP watersheds.

The annual goal to reduce sediment and nutrients from entering rivers and streams in the designated watersheds is 2,450 tons of sediment, 2,400 pounds of phosphorus, and 4,700 pounds of nitrogen. Table 4 below shows the sediment and nutrient load reductions for the CREP practices that were installed in 2023. The table also shows the overall benefits of the nutrient load reductions since the program's expansion in 2010.

**TABLE 3: ESTIMATED NUTRIENT LOAD REDUCTIONS IN CREP WATERSHEDS**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Sediment (Tons)</b>	<b>Phosphorus (lbs.)</b>	<b>Nitrogen (lbs.)</b>
<b>2023</b>	6,518	8,193	16,290
<b>Overall</b>	92,445	108,446	213,317

\*'Overall' refers to the estimated total sediment and nutrient load reductions since the program's expansion in 2010 according to the Region 5 model calculations.

## **C. WETLANDS**

One of the CREP objectives is to increase the acres of wetlands in the watersheds for erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, and nutrient uptake. During the first 5 years of the CREP program in Indiana, from 2005-2010 when we had 3 designated watersheds, the amount of enrollment of wetland acres was 1,061.7 acres.



*Benefits of wetlands include erosion control, sediment reduction, storm water retention, nutrient uptake, and wildlife habitat creation.*

Since the expansion in 2010, according to ISDA's tracking system, the program has seen a significant increase in the number of wetland acres installed, including approximately 5,482 acres of wetland restorations completed or re-enrolled, and an enrollment of 5,968 acres. In 2023, approximately 701 acres of wetland restorations were completed/installed on the ground or re-enrolled, and 677 acres were newly enrolled.

## D. ACREAGE ENROLLMENT

A main goal of the CREP program in Indiana is to enroll 26,250 acres of eligible cropland including frequently flooded agricultural lands, and restorable wetlands. To date, according to the ISDA’s tracking system, there are approximately 24,080 acres that have been enrolled overall into the Indiana CREP, and approximately 23,026 of those acres have been completed or re-enrolled since the program’s inception. However, many projects have contract that have expired and are not re-enrolled back into the program, and are no longer considered active contracts in CREP, although many of these projects have acreage that is kept in conservation especially the tree practices and the wetland practices. There are currently 21,683 acres enrolled in the program under active contracts. The number of acres that the state shows as enrolled and completed above is the overall total number of acres that have been impacted in order to show overall success of the program.

Table 4 below provides a detailed listing of all the practices and acres that have been completed in each CREP watershed since the beginning of the program, as well as the number of acres of enrollment by practice into the program that have not yet been established. Figure 2 illustrates the overall comparison in percentage of enrolled conservation practices.



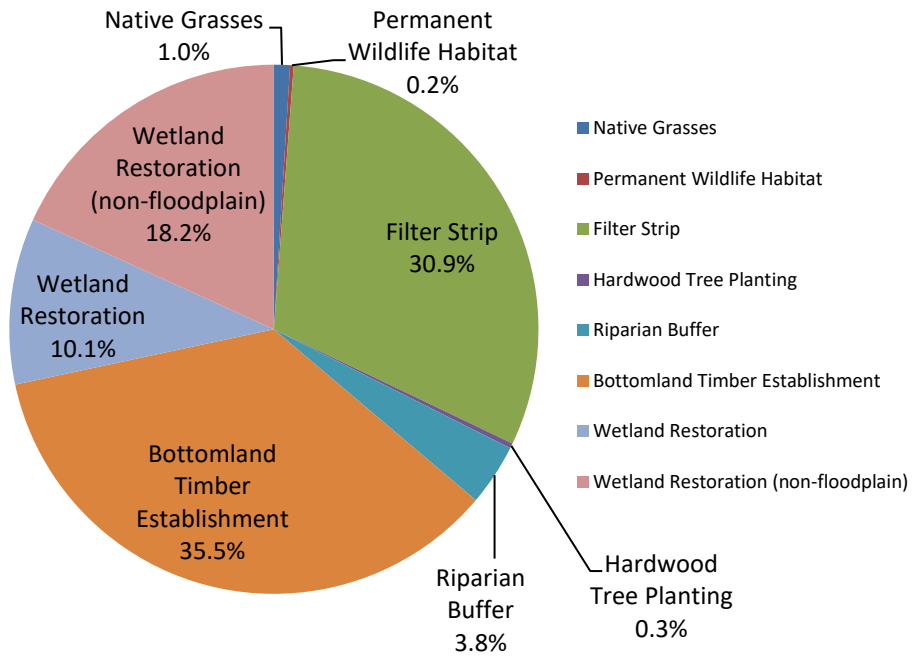
Wildlife Habitat

**TABLE 4: TOTAL ACREAGE OF COMPLETION AND ENROLLMENT TO DATE**

CREP Watershed	Native Grasses	Permanent Wildlife Habitat	Filter Strip	Hardwood Tree Planting	Riparian Buffer	Bottomland Timber Establishment	Wetland Restoration	Wetland Restoration (non-floodplain)	Total
	CP2	CP4D	CP21	CP3A	CP22	CP31	CP23	CP23A	
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres
Highland-Pigeon	2.50	0.0	235.86	10.80	17.52	243.80	0.0	0.0	510.48
Lower Wabash	0.0	0.0	11.63	0.0	0.0	663.30	0.0	0.0	674.93
Lower East Fork White	53.50	45.20	164.61	41.60	85.91	734.85	287.16	0.0	1,412.83
Lower White	10.70	0.0	198.28	8.43	129.29	2,349.07	286.19	0.0	2,981.96
Middle Wabash-Busseron	2.0	0.0	25.66	0.0	17.09	1,580.22	840.81	91.60	2,557.38
Middle Wabash-Deer	6.60	0.0	119.35	0.0	0.0	73.10	50.86	71.77	321.68
Middle Wabash-Vermillion	4.50	0.0	174.94	6.97	92.83	855.91	505.89	177.70	1,818.74
Tippecanoe	93.84	0.0	3813.62	0.0	11.21	41.80	209.00	3,503.16	7,672.63
Upper East Fork White	0.0	0.0	526.30	0.0	48.30	264.58	0.0	0.0	839.18
Upper Wabash	23.15	7.0	1095.17	5.34	73.98	282.43	148.14	89.10	1,724.31
Upper White	38.29	0.0	702.11	1.00	413.60	1,256.40	0.0	100.58	2,511.98
<b>Total CREP Completion</b>	<b>235.08</b>	<b>52.20</b>	<b>7067.53</b>	<b>74.14</b>	<b>889.73</b>	<b>8,345.46</b>	<b>2,328.05</b>	<b>4,033.91</b>	<b>23,026.10</b>
<b>Total CREP Enrollment</b>	<b>235.08</b>	<b>53.20</b>	<b>7444.47</b>	<b>74.14</b>	<b>904.87</b>	<b>8,540.52</b>	<b>2,442.92</b>	<b>4,385.60</b>	<b>24,080.80</b>

\* CREP Completion refers to those projects where conservation practices have been installed on the ground or re-enrolled into the program.

**FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES ENROLLED IN CREP**



### **E. ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

When conservation practices are applied, there are several benefits that come from these practices beyond the benefits listed above in the nutrient load reduction and wetlands sections. These additional benefits include creating wildlife habitat and protecting floodplains through planting of trees, which also can improve air quality. All of the acres applied through the CREP program are considered to be wildlife habitat acres.

Through the CP31 Bottomland Timber Establishment practice, trees are planted in floodplain areas to protect waterbodies. In 2023, 166.5 acres of new trees were planted through CP31, resulting in approximately 99,918 trees being planted. Since the inception of the program in late 2005, 7,433 acres of new trees have been planted or re-enrolled into the program, resulting in the planting of 4.4 million trees.



Bur Oak species in a Bottomland Planting

## 4. 2023 Completed Practices and Acres

In 2023, landowners installed or re-enrolled a variety of conservation practices offered through CREP. According to the state’s tracking system, 1,692 acres were enrolled, which includes approximately 585 acres being re-enrolled from CRP to CREP and 519 acres from CREP to CREP.

In 2023, there were 1,611 practice acres that were completed, with 1,149 acres newly completed on the ground or re-enrolled from CRP to CREP, and 462 acres that were re-enrolled from CREP to CREP. Table 5 below provides a breakdown of the practice acreage completed in 2023. (Note: these numbers are given according to the State’s tracking system.)

**TABLE 5: 2023 COMPLETED PRACTICES\***

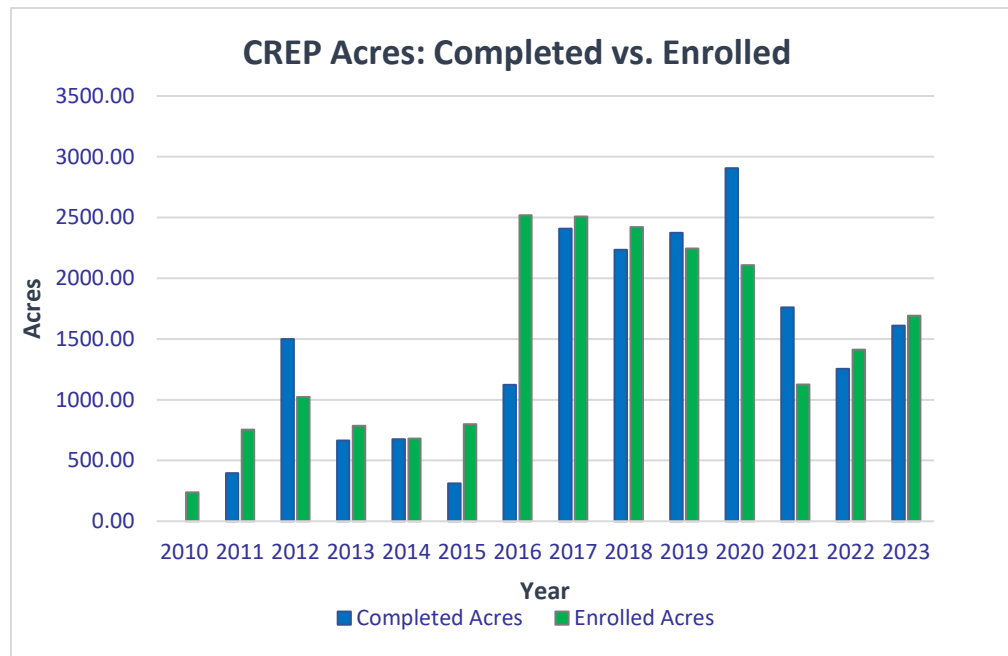
Completed Practices* (in acres)							
2023	CP21	CP3A	CP22	CP31	CP23	CP23A	Total
New Program Acres	397.91	8.43	29.30	180.33	203.24	329.42	1,148.63
CREP to CREP	278.65	0.00	4.50	11.30	0.00	168.20	462.65
							<b>1,611.28</b>

\* Completed practices are those projects where conservation practices have been installed on the ground or have been re-enrolled into the program.

\*\* There were no CP2 or CP4D practices installed in 2023.

Figure 3 below shows a comparison of each year, Completed vs. Enrolled acres, since the expansion in 2010.

**FIGURE 3: COMPLETED ACRES VS. ENROLLED ACRES FROM 2010-2023**



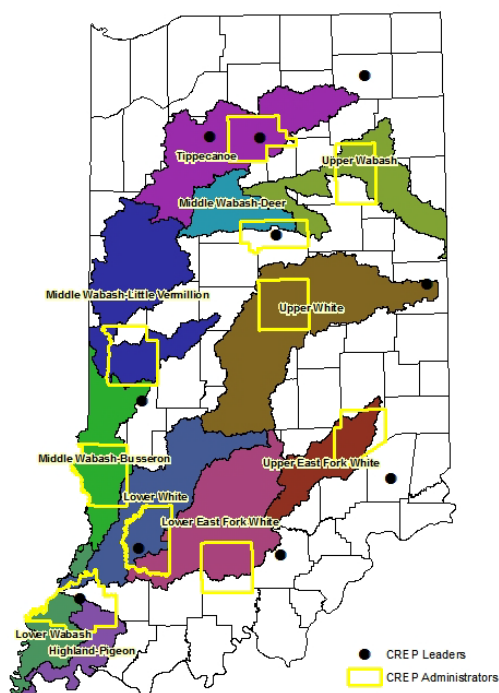
## 5. Financial Contributions

### A. INDIANA'S DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS FOR CREP

The ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation (DSC) maintains 10 CREP Leaders, who are located throughout the state, as shown in Figure 4 below, to provide technical assistance to landowners, create conservation plans and oversee daily CREP activities. These CREP Leaders work with landowners/participants to enroll them in the program which provides state financial incentives to establish one of the eligible and prescribed conservation practices. In 2023, the state paid out \$600,243.50 in direct payments to participants for installation of practices,

In an effort to streamline the payment process, the CREP Leaders and the CREP Program Manager works closely with 10 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to help administer funds to participants. Figure 4 also outlines the 10 counties that are the Administrating SWCDs. The State paid \$60,140.45 in administrative fees to partnering SWCDs in 2023.

**FIGURE 4: ISDA CREP LEADERS AND SWCD ADMINISTRATORS**



#### NON-FEDERAL SUPPORT

In 2023, there was a substantial increase made by the Indiana legislature to the Clean Water Indiana program, so the SSCB appropriated \$1,875,000 from Clean Water Indiana to go toward supporting practice installations and incentive fees to participating landowners in CREP, and administrative fees to the SWCD CREP Administrating counties.



In addition, in 2023, The Nature Conservancy and the ISDA signed an agreement for the TNC to provide funds to be used toward the incentive payments to landowners for the installation of eligible CREP practices, in the amount of \$62,500. These dollars were provided to establish wetland restorations and bottomland tree plantings within any of the CREP watersheds. TNC also committed \$325,000 that was provided by the Caterpillar Foundation to be used toward providing incentive payments to landowners in CREP. There was also an MOU signed between TNC and ISDA for how these dollars would be paid to the landowners.

## **B. INDIANA’S IN-KIND SERVICES TO CREP**

As mentioned above DSC maintains 10 CREP Leaders to provide technical assistance to landowners, create conservation plans and oversee daily CREP activities in their specified watersheds. Also, the CREP & Water Quality Initiatives Program Manager handles all aspects of the program and provides technical expertise and critical decision-making, and the DSC Director provides overall supervision and assistance in decision-making. DSC Resource Specialists, located throughout the state, also accommodate seasonal workload and marketing opportunities within CREP as needed. The DSC’s staff time contributes to the overall in-kind services.

State partners, such as the SSCB, IDNR and TNC also contribute to the state’s overall contribution through administration, conservation plan development, program costs on easements, and staff time.

Table 6 shows a detailed summary of the direct program costs and the in-kind services provided by the state and its partners. The table also shows the amount of federal dollars that were paid out to landowners during federal fiscal year 2023.

**TABLE 6: INDIANA’S OVERALL ANNUAL DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS AND IN-KIND MATCH**

<b>Direct Program Costs from CWI</b>	<b>2023 Total</b>
State Funds for Practice Costs to Participants	\$600,243.50
SWCD Administrative Fees	\$60,140.45
<b>State In-Kind Match</b>	
CREP Program Manager and 4 State office staff	\$89,523.18
10 CREP Leaders	\$145,342.10
Resource Specialist Time	\$6,204.77
SWCD County Administrators Time	\$14,400
SSCB	\$1,050
CREP Steering Committee	\$1,380
DNR (conservation plan development and easement processing time)	\$10,000
TNC In-kind and Admin Time	\$18,000
Financial Commitments from CWI and partners	\$2,262,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,208,784.00</b>
<b>Federal Total</b>	<b>\$6,226,191.00</b>

## 6. The Future of CREP in Indiana

The CREP program in Indiana continued to see high interest from landowners and this can be seen by the continued enrollment of acres in 2023. We anticipate that high interest by landowners and farmers will continue in 2024.

The Nature Conservancy has signaled that it will continue to support the CREP in Indiana by providing support dollars to be used toward direct payments to the landowners and participants in the program. These additional funds beyond what is given through the Clean Water Indiana (CWI) program, will allow landowners to enroll in the program and allow more practices to be installed on the ground. The ISDA, CREP Program Manager will continue to partner with organizations to cover demand.

Goals for 2024 include expanding the program in the state to make the program last longer and continue to get conservation on the ground and improve water quality by:

- 1) increasing the acreage enrollment goal;
- 2) expanding CREP coverage statewide; and
- 3) adding a new practice to the list of eligible CREP practices.

This is an exciting time to be involved in conservation in Indiana. ISDA is proud to be playing a key role in expanding CREP, and expanding opportunities for landowners while improving the environment.

ISDA would like to thank the efforts of our many partners in conservation who have supported CREP in Indiana over the years. We realize that without the support of the SSCB, the CWI program, the Indiana DNR, the FSA, NRCS, TNC and all of our conservation partners, the success of this program would not be possible.