

**Indiana Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
Annual Report 2005**
Submitted by the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation

The Indiana Conservation Reserve Enhancement Agreement was signed on July 8th of 2005. Therefore, this report reflects Indiana CREP activities from July 8, 2005 – September 30, 2005. Sign-up for practices within the three Indiana CREP watersheds did not begin within this time period. The Indiana CREP activities between July and October were mostly logistical and promotional in nature. CREP activities were focused towards finalizing state CREP forms, inter-agency agreements, and implementation procedures between all partners involved. Since sign-up had not begun prior to the end of the fiscal year, this report will not reflect Acreage or Financial Totals. This report will spotlight the efforts and progress that have been made towards fulfilling Indiana’s commitment to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

- New Department Home for the Division of Soil Conservation
 - The Division of Soil Conservation, which was formerly under the Department of Natural Resources, was officially moved to Indiana’s new Department of Agriculture in April of 2005. This move brought forth many changes within the Division of Soil Conservation, most importantly a renewed focus on agricultural conservation. Establishing the proper ISDA-Division of Soil Conservation staff structure was a crucial step towards ensuring that the commitments within the Indiana CREP agreement will be fulfilled.
 - Division staff is now specifically focused on the implementation of conservation practices and have been relieved of prior regulatory duties. Therefore, an increase in efficiency with conservation customer assistance will be realized and that will encourage more landowners to participate in conservation programs.
 - See Exhibit 1

- Stronger Indiana Conservation Partnership
 - The Indiana Conservation Partnership consists of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service, State Soil Conservation Board, and Indiana State Department of Agriculture-Division of Soil Conservation. This partnership has been refreshed with the development of the new partnership strategic plan; 20/20-The Indiana Conservation Partnership’s Vision for the Future.
 - The strategic plan puts forth six strategies to improve the quality of Indiana’s streams, rivers, and lakes; protect our drinking water; and increase soil quality to boost food and fiber production. The six strategies are: Funding, Delivery System, Accountability, Leadership Development, Technology, and Outreach. As the Conservation Partnership focuses on these strategies, the three CREP watersheds will only benefit.
 - See Exhibit 2

- Cooperative Conservation Initiative
 - The long-term success of this CREP agreement will depend on all aspects of the Conservation Partnership's Strategic Plan although the Delivery System Strategy may be the most critical. The Cooperative Conservation Initiative is discussed within the Delivery System Strategy. This initiative reemphasizes the need for the Soil and Water Conservation District to be the central hub for all conservation inquiries and for the partners along with the districts to service those inquiries. As districts strengthen their role within the CCI, they will likely have a larger responsibility assisting with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.
 - *See Exhibit 3(CCI Delivery System -Powerpoint presentation)*

- ISDA – Division of Soil Conservation, CREP Coordinators
 - An Indiana State Department of Agriculture – Division of Soil Conservation field Resource Specialist has been designated to serve as a coordinator for each one of the 3 watersheds within the Indiana CREP Agreement. Each of the Coordinators were chosen based on there geography to the specific watershed and their exemplary conservation assistance skills.
 - These CREP Coordinators serve as a watershed-level contact point for all parties involved with the CREP. Also, each of these coordinators will be responsible for ensuring the completion of needed documentation for each contract and recording in-kind services performed. This watershed-level coordination provides for adequate program quality control.
 - *See Exhibit 4*

- Promotions
 - Since the July 2005 signing of the Indiana CREP agreement there have been innumerable amounts of promotions through local Soil and Water Conservation District Board meetings, newsletter publications, press releases, and one-on-one conversations with interested landowners.
 - *See links(2 CREP promotion examples):*
<http://www.hendricks-swcd.org/crep.html>
http://sullivanswcd.iaswcd.org/clean_water_indiana.htm

The outlook for the success of this program is very positive. The Indiana Farm Service Agency has announced that there will be a significant increase in Soil Rental Rates starting in 2006. It is anticipated that most landowners will choose to wait to sign-up for CREP until after this change has taken place to take advantage of the higher incentives. The Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other non-profit conservation organizations have been very cooperative and eager to assist with the promotion of this program. Conservation plays a key role in all of the strategies within the Indiana State Department of Agriculture's strategic plan, so the Indiana CREP has the full support of ISDA. In closing, based upon the interest that has been generated within the three designated CREP watersheds and the renewed Conservation Partnership commitments, the 2006 Indiana Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Annual Report is anticipated to showcase many excellent examples of conservation implementation through this program.