



# Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

WASHINGTON'S CREP:  
**WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?**

**1,096**

CREP sites in Washington

**644 miles**

of stream currently enrolled

**1.47 million feet**

of livestock exclusion fence installed

**150 feet**

median width of CREP riparian buffers

**5.3 million**

cumulative trees / shrubs on CREP projects

Washington's CREP is a voluntary incentive program that compensates farmers for growing a different crop in riparian (streamside) areas of their property. That crop is salmon habitat. Farmers plant native trees and shrubs to form a "buffer" between farmland and the stream, and receive rental payments for the acreage they restore. In areas with high participation, these practices have resulted in increased salmon returns, cooler water temperatures, greater stream access for juvenile salmon, and more.

## A WIN-WIN APPROACH

### Benefits for Fish:

CREP riparian buffers function as a natural "water treatment plant" that keeps water clean and provides habitat. Benefits include:

- Buffers absorb nutrients and other pollutants before they reach streams.
- As plants and trees grow, they shade the streams and cool water temperatures, which is essential for salmon.
- Trees that fall into streams provide salmon habitat and rearing pools.
- Vegetation planted in buffers helps stabilize stream banks and reduce erosion.
- Streamside vegetation provides up to 90 percent of the food necessary to support headwater stream communities.

### Benefits for Farmers

Like salmon, Washington farmers benefit from CREP, too. When landowners voluntarily enroll in CREP, they receive:

- A sign-up bonus (number years enrolled x number of acres x \$10).
- Rental payments for enrolled acreage (average \$150-500/acre) for 10-15 years; option for re-enrollment.
- 100% reimbursement for practice installation (Federal = 80%, State=20%).
- Maintenance funds for 5 years.

All those dollars invested in CREP projects translate into local jobs. CREP projects have an estimated economic impact of 100-125 jobs per biennium, plus over \$6 million in labor income.

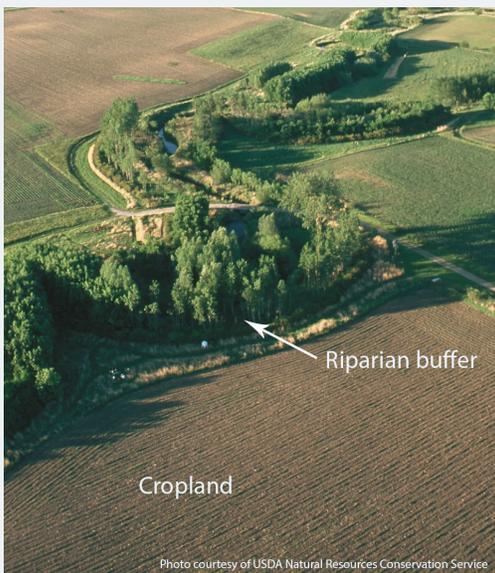


Photo courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

## WHY FOCUS ON FARMS AND FISH?



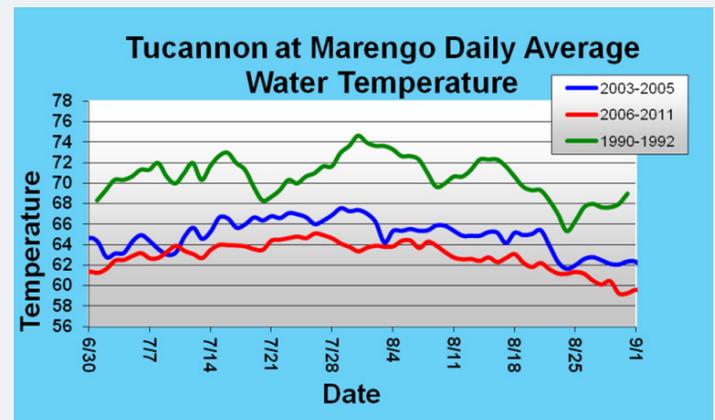
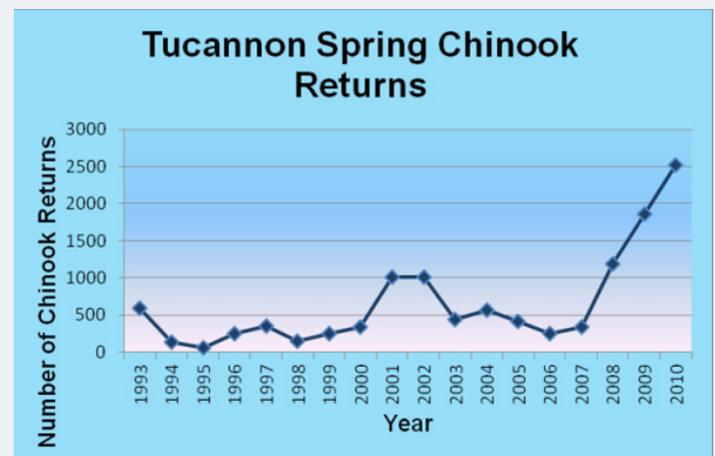
- In Washington State, about 37 percent of salmon streams on private lands pass through agricultural areas.
- Agricultural production is key to the state economy, with a market value of more than \$10 billion. However, some agricultural practices have degraded riparian habitat through channelization, decreased vegetation, increased sedimentation, and polluted runoff.
- Protecting and restoring riparian areas is a key element identified in the salmon habitat conservation strategy for Washington. Through CREP, we help farmers maintain a viable business *and* meet important habitat objectives.

## SUCCESS STORY: LANDOWNER PARTICIPATION KEY TO TUCANNON RIVER RESTORATION

The Tucannon River system in southeast Washington supports federally listed species, including steelhead, bull trout, and Chinook salmon. A watershed assessment in the 1990s revealed several threats to salmon habitat, including high water temperatures (sometimes exceeding 80 degrees F), stream bank instability, lack of cover for rearing pools, and high levels of bacteria.

Several partners collaborated to promote voluntary, local restoration of the Tucannon. As part of this effort, Columbia Conservation District began enrolling landowners in CREP. As a result:

- Landowners restored 1,100 acres of riparian area, meeting 79 percent of the recovery goal.
- Summer water temperatures dropped 10 degrees (F).
- Young spring Chinook returned to the lower 20 miles of river that were previously too warm.
- Adult salmon returns increased from 50 in 1995 to about 2,500 in 2010.



## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Cooperatively administered by USDA Farm Service Agency and Washington State Conservation Commission.
- Conservation Districts provide outreach, secure CREP contracts with landowners, and help with site planning, monitoring, and maintenance.

## MORE INFORMATION:



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