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Conservation in the real world: How CREP partnerships allow us to achieve our goals.

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The landscape of conservation has changed over the last few decades. Decreased funding and manpower has hindered natural resource agencies abilities to handle conservation opportunities. These uncertainties have necessitated alliances to accomplish natural resources goals and missions. Through partnerships with non-governmental organizations and sister conservation agencies, resource gaps are being bridged.

CREP is no exception. Partnerships between the IDNR, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), NGRREC and the AISWCD's have placed qualified foresters, wildlife biologist, and natural resources specialists on the ground to connect private landowners with various conservation opportunities and

programs through the USDA Farm Bill such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

These additional efforts have aimed to enhance the conservation delivery system to private landowners in CREP targeted areas by initiating outreach programs across the CREP landscape, assisting with setting up conservation easements and promoting local efforts to establish and reinvigorate CREP and CRP. With the goal of making a wider range of programs more easily accessible to landowners to restore, establish, and protect wildlife habitat while improving water quality along the way.



Native Grasses

Next Week: Division of Forestry

@ORC is a weekly publication by the IL Department of Natural Resources Office of Resource Conservation about exciting and wonderful things ORC staff are doing throughout Illinois.

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**National Great Rivers Research and Education
Center (NGRREC)**

NGRREC's CREP efforts are funded by the IDNR and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Focused on the Kaskaskia River basin, specialists located in Fayette, Madison, and DeWitt Counties provide technical assistance and promote CREP, CRP and other BMP's across the Kaskaskia River watershed. The Kaskaskia watershed, home to 186,130 acres of bottomland timber and associated wetlands, became part of the CREP initiative in 2010. Through CREP and other partners in conservation programs there is tremendous potential to restore, protect, and manage tens of thousands of frequently flooded riparian habitats and adjacent highly erodible acres.

NGRREC Specialists have focused their initial efforts towards educating and leading landowners through the complex conservation easement process, by developing an initial round of CREP promotion and outreach initiatives designed to help make landowners further aware of CREP-related opportunities.



Rare Declining Habitat

With more than 4,000 acres now under conservation easement or progressing toward protection within the Kaskaskia Watershed, a growing focus will be working with agency partners to ensure protected conservation acres are well-managed through plan development and landowner assistance.



Wetland

Looking to the Future

The success of CREP has been dependent on strong partnerships and everyone's willingness to work together to achieve conservation goals. As these partnerships mature, we envision a role where conservation specialists rally private lands conservation efforts by facilitating access to IDNR and our many partners in conservation through effective outreach and education programs. There are a lot of willing, conservation-minded private landowners on the landscape unaware of the various conservation opportunities out there, and unfortunately, they often do not know where to turn for help. Effective specialists dedicated to the establishment, restoration, enhancement, management, and protection of private conservation lands through Farm Bill-related opportunities are an effective avenue to convert more private landowners into local champions of conservation.