



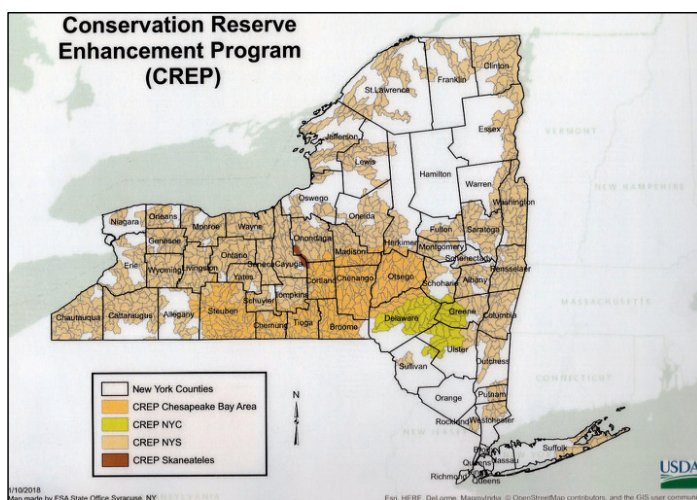
# CREP - A POTENTIAL TOOL IN NY TO PROTECT PUBLIC SUPPLY WELLS

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Our Source Water Protection Program is a joint project between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA), the NRWA (National Rural Water Association), and New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA). Recently I held my annual source water protection workshop and was glad to see that the FSA representative in charge of conservation programs in New York attended. Truthfully, in the past, it was difficult for some to see the connection between FSA and our source water protection since much of FSA's programs centered on providing financial assistance to agricultural producers. However, FSA does have several conservation programs. One in particular has the potential to directly protect drinking water supplies. It is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program or CREP (pronounced "krep"). FSA's NY Program Specialist that oversees CREP is Lorraine Dandignac, and she came to my workshop in large part to explore ways of utilizing CREP to protect areas around public supply wells that are currently in crop production.

## CREP in New York

Here in New York State, CREP is a federal and state conservation partnership between the USDA and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York State



Soil and Water Conservation Committee. The objective of CREP is to reduce the agricultural sources of sediment, nutrients, and waterborne pathogens within twelve major watersheds areas in

New York. Figure 1 is a map from FSA that depicts these twelve major watershed areas. Taken together, the areas that are eligible for participation in CREP represent the vast majority of upstate New York (with the exception of the Adirondacks, areas of southeastern New York, etc.).

CREP participants receive one-time incentive payment(s) for installing various conservation practices, cost-share payments of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost of installing the approved practices, and an annual rental payment for a period of 10 to 15 years. CREP funding in New York State has been used to prevent soil erosion and protect buffers adjacent to streams and surface waters.

## CREP for Groundwater Sources

There has always been a goal in New York's CREP to establish conservation cover on "wellhead protection areas designated by the New York State Department of Health." Such conservation cover could include, for example, the establishment of permanent native grasses that would not require fertilizers and/or manure. This CREP goal has largely not been implemented in NY, in part due to the lack of availability of GIS mapping of such protection areas by the NYSDOH. With a renewed emphasis on source water protection in New York, it is hoped that such mapping will eventually be available to FSA.

In the meantime, Ms. Dandignac has indicated to me that public water suppliers with cropland in the vicinity of their water supply wells that are interested in learning more about CREP should contact her directly. Her email is: [lorraine.dandignac@ny.usda.gov](mailto:lorraine.dandignac@ny.usda.gov). For agricultural producers, the financial incentives of CREP, combined with the desire to improve public perception and reduce potential liability could be persuasive. New York State recently prioritized the local funding of acquisition of property within 1,000 feet of public wells. In the absence of any other protection area delineation, this distance may potentially be used as a default distance for the purpose of CREP.

As always, feel free to contact me as well at 1-888-NYRURAL, ext. 17 or through email: [winkley@nyruralwater.org](mailto:winkley@nyruralwater.org). 💧💧💧