

Alternatives to Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI)

FSA Conservation Program Options

FSA has changed the way that land is assessed for soil erosion. The latest technology is being used for erosion estimates to ensure that the most environmentally sensitive land is being enrolled in our programs. With the upgrade in technology, producers may find that some offers may not be what they expected. Erodibility Index (EI) scores for some offers, may change and that could affect the EI cutoff of 20 or higher for Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) eligibility to be considered for this non-competitive offer process.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offers that are not eligible for HELI may still have opportunities for participating in other Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP) which include:

- ◆ CRP –General Signup
- ◆ CRP –Continuous Signup including such programs as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Farmable Wetland Program (FWP), and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program (SAFE)

General CRP

CRP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and landowners to remove environmentally sensitive farmland from production and convert it to conservation cover. General signup offers must meet one of three land eligibility criteria—EI of 8 or greater, located in a state

or national conservation priority area, or is expiring CRP. Offers are ranked using the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) to determine acceptance for enrollment in CRP. HELI because it is a non-competitive offer process requires a higher EI of 20 versus a General CRP EI of 8.

The dates for the Fiscal Year 2023 General CRP enrollment period have not yet been announced. Accepted contracts for this enrollment period will become effective October 1, 2023.

Other Continuous CRP Opportunities

If the land does not meet the EI criteria for HELI under continuous signup, there are other continuous signup options available such as CREP, FWP and SAFE. Each program may have specific conservation practices or state requirements. Producers may submit offers at any time for Continuous CRP. Offers for continuous enrollment must meet additional eligibility requirements but are not subject to competition, such as with General CRP.

Offers for Continuous CRP are not subject to competitive ranking during specific periods like General CRP. If the land is not currently enrolled in CRP, the producer may choose to defer the effective start date of the new CRP contract for up to six months after the offer is approved. If the land is currently in CRP in a contract that expires on September 30, then the effective start date of the new Continuous CRP contract is October 1.



For More Information

For more information about these and other FSA conservation programs, visit fsa.usda.gov or contact your local FSA office. Some programs mentioned above may have State-specific guidance and should be discussed with your local office. To find your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.