

For: State Offices

Renewing and Revising State Conservation Priority Areas (CPA's) and Zones

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

National and State CPA's provide basic land eligibility for CRP. In addition, eligible offers for land located in approved water, wildlife, and air quality zones are awarded points within the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). In previous CRP general signups, CPA's were limited to not more than 33 percent of the remaining available cropland in the State.

CRP regulations provide that State CPA's are limited to not more than 25 percent of the available remaining State cropland.

B Purpose

This notice:

- provides procedure for renewing and revising State CPA's and guidance that State Offices **must** revise their State CPA's and associated zones according to all the provisions in this notice
- informs State Offices that the deadline for renewing and revising State CPA's and associated zones and reporting to CEPD is **October 23, 2015**.

2 State CPA's

A Developing State CPA's

STC's shall consult with State Conservationists and State Technical Committees to develop State CPA's. States may want to consult the County Cropland Limit Report to identify Counties that are near the 25% limit of County cropland. The report may be found at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/default.aspx>. State CPA's will be reported to DAFP, through PECD. STC's must certify to DAFP that State Technical Committees concur with CPA and zone establishment.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2016	State Offices; State Offices relay to NRCS State Offices

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2 State CPA's (Continued)

B Establishing State CPA's

The State CPA's **must** be based on only 1 of the following geographic aggregations:

- entire county
- entire 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)
- entire 10-digit HUC
- entire 12-digit HUC
- combination of county and 8-digit HUC
- combination of county and 10-digit HUC
- combination of county and 12-digit HUC.

Exception: States with Wind Erosion Soils List (WESL) soils may request a waiver to this policy through PECD. States that have previously received a waiver **must** renew their waiver request.

Example 1: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality on the eastern side of the State using 10-digit HUC boundaries. That same State wants to use 12-digit HUC boundaries on the western side of the State. This is **not** permissible. The State CPA **must** be based on only 1 of the geographic aggregations included in the list.

Example 2: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality using major land resource areas. This is **not** permissible. The State CPA must be based 1 of the geographic aggregations included in the list.

Example 3: A State seeks to establish a State CPA for water quality using non-NRCS certified 14-digit HUC. This is **not** permissible. Only 8-, 10-, or 12-digit HUC's are permissible. The State CPA **must** be based on 1 of the geographic aggregations included in the list.

State CPA's **must** be identified by primary purpose of CPA (wildlife, water quality, or air quality).

Example: State establishes CPA in a portion of Haynes County. The primary purpose is water quality.

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2 State CPA's (Continued)

C Size Limitations for State CPA's

State CPA's are limited to no more than 25 percent of the available remaining State cropland.

Note: To determine available cropland, State Offices **must** subtract any applicable National CPA acreage.

Example: North Dakota has 25 million acres of cropland as of October 1, 2015. A total of 10 million acres of cropland is within counties that are part of the Prairie Pothole National CPA. Therefore, North Dakota has 15 million acres of cropland available to be included in the State CPA. However, no more than 25 percent (3.75 million acres) may be included in the North Dakota State CPA.

STC's **must** certify to DAFP, through PECD, according to subparagraph 7 B, that not more than 25 percent of the available cropland in the State has been designated as State CPA.

D State CPA's and CREP Project Areas

An approved CREP project area is **not** a State CPA unless the approved CREP agreement specifically identifies the CREP project area as a State CPA.

Any cropland acreage within an approved CREP project area that is **not** within a State or National CPA that is offered for enrollment as a general signup practice, as provided in the CREP agreement, **must** meet either of the following to be eligible:

- have a weighted average erodibility index (EI) for the 3 predominate soils of 8 or greater
- be enrolled in CRP scheduled to expire on September 30 of the fiscal year the acreage is offered, unless the CREP Agreement does **not** allow enrollment of such acreage.

Exception: Land within CREP that is specifically for facilitating a net savings in groundwater or surface water, that is offered as a general signup practice as provided in the CREP Agreement, does **not** have to have a weighted average EI of 8 or greater or be expiring CRP acreage to be eligible.

CREP project areas that are State CPA's, as specified in the CREP Agreement, **must** meet the 25 percent cropland limitation. Contact Virgil Ireland, the CREP program manager, at virgil.ireland@wdc.usda.gov if the CREP project area is a State CPA and it exceeds the 25 percent cropland limitation.

3 Zones

A Zone Establishment and Size Within State CPA's

States may establish water, wildlife, and air quality zones within the State CPA's. Eligible acreage offered within the applicable zone will be awarded EBI points. In the case of wildlife zones, points will be awarded if at least 51 percent of the offered acreage is within the zone **and** the weighted average N1a score is greater than or equal to 40 points.

States may submit 1 or more zones. Zones with different purposes may overlap. The water and wildlife zones may include up to 100 percent of the State CPA. The air quality zones may include 100 percent of the State CPA, consistent with the criteria used to establish the air quality zones.

STC's shall consult with State conservationists and State technical committees to develop zones.

B Zone Establishment and Size Within National CPA's

States may establish water, wildlife, and air quality zones within the National CPA's. Eligible acreage offered within the applicable zone will be awarded EBI points. In the case of wildlife zones, points will be awarded if at least 51 percent of the offered acreage is within the zone **and** the weighted average N1a score is greater than or equal to 40 points.

States may submit 1 or more zones. Zones with different purposes may overlap. The water, wildlife, and air quality zones may include up to 100 percent of the National CPA.

C Zone Boundaries

Zone boundaries within State CPA's **must** be based on the same geographic aggregation used to establish the State CPA's according to subparagraph 2 B.

Example: The State CPA's for Iowa are based on the combination of county and 12-digit HUC boundaries. The zones for Iowa **must** also be based on the combination of county and 12-digit boundaries.

Zone boundaries with National CPA's **must** be based on counties.

Example: Certain counties in North Dakota are in the Prairie Pothole National CPA. The State Office may designate up to 100 percent of the counties as a water, wildlife, or air quality zones.

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4 Wildlife Zones

A Establishing Wildlife Zones

Wildlife zones shall be established in locations where proposed land may contribute to restoration of habitat of threatened or endangered species or contribute to the restoration of important and declining species of national, regional, State, or local significance. Restoration of rare and declining native habitat, such as Long Leaf Pine, and Tall Grass Prairie, may also be addressed.

STC's shall consult State technical committees, State fish and game biologists, USFWS officials, NRCS State biologists, State foresters, and other wildlife interests, to determine areas within the State that will be designated as wildlife zones.

B Wildlife Points in EBI

Acreage offered for CRP located in wildlife zones will be awarded applicable points in wildlife subfactor (N1C) **only** if 51 percent of the offered acreage is within the area and the weighted average N1a score is greater than or equal to 40 points.

At least 51 percent of the offered acreage **must** be within the wildlife zone to be awarded points. If less than 51 percent of the offered acreage is within the wildlife zone, zero EBI points shall be awarded.

5 Water Quality Zones

A Establishing Water Quality Zones

Water quality zones shall be established in locations where proposed land may contribute to groundwater or surface water quality impairment. STC shall:

- consult with EPA, The State water quality agency, and State technical committee in developing recommendations
- ensure that areas submitted will assist in compliance of State water quality laws
- prioritize and approve **only** the highest priority water resources of the State.

Note: Areas may include ground water or source water protection areas.

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5 Water Quality Zones (Continued)

A Establishing Water Quality Zones (Continued)

STC, in consultation with the State technical committee, may use the following as tools in developing high priority water resource designations:

- areas where CRP enrollment would assist in the compliance of total maximum daily load standards
- State-identified wellhead and groundwater recharge areas
- areas with Coastal Zone Management Act Reauthorization Amendment coastal nonpoint pollution control programs
- State 303(d) and 305(b) reports.

B Water Quality Points in EBI

Acreage offered for CRP located in water quality zones will be awarded applicable points in water quality subfactor (N2a).

At least 51 percent of the offered acreage must be within the water quality zone to be awarded points. If less than 51 percent of the offered acreage is within the water quality zone, zero EBI points shall be awarded.

6 Air Quality Zones

A Establishing Air Quality Zones

STC, in consultation with the State technical committee, EPA, and State air quality representatives, shall recommend designated agricultural zones that contribute to the nonattainment of air quality standards.

STC, in consultation with the State technical committee, may also recommend zones within 50 miles of a Class 1 air designated area in which agricultural crop production could impact air quality standards.

Note: The State Office shall consult with the State air quality official for the most recent Class 1 designations.

Acreage in air quality zones will be awarded applicable points in the air quality subfactor (N5c) if **both** of the following conditions are met:

- at least 51 percent of the offer must be in the designated areas
- the weighted wind erodibility index must be equal to or greater than 3.0.

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7 Process for Creating and Submitting State CPA and Zone Shapefiles

A Creating State CPA and Zone Shapefiles

The State conservation specialists working with the State GIS specialists shall create a GIS shapefile for CPA that defines the project area boundary as a polygon or set of polygons. A GIS shapefile contains the following component files, “.dbf”, “.prj”, “.sbn”, “.sbx”, “.shp”, “.shp.xml”, and “.shx”.

Name the shapefile, “cpa_a_[code]_[prj].shp” where “code” is the State abbreviation, and “prj” is the type of projection. Submit all shapefiles in GCS projection. The following illustrates the naming convention for a potential Maryland CPA.

- cpa_a_md_gcs.dbf
- cpa_a_md_gcs.prj
- cpa_a_md_gcs.sbn
- cpa_a_md_gcs.sbx
- cpa_a_md_gcs.shp
- cpa_a_md_gcs.shp.xml
- cpa_a_md_gcs.shx

For zone shapefiles, the following attributes should be included within the polygon shapefile provided.

Name	Type	Length	Data Example
FID	Object Id	Default	
Shape	Polygon	Default	
Type	Text	25	CPA
Name	Text	255	Maryland State CPA
Code	Text	10	MD

B Certifying 25 Percent Cropland Limitation

According to:

- subparagraph 2 C, State CPA’s shall include no more than 25 percent of available remaining cropland in the State
- subparagraph 3 B, water, wildlife, and air quality zones may include up to 100 percent of State CPA’s.

Each State Office is **required** to conduct analysis necessary to ensure that provisions in subparagraphs 2 C and 3 B are followed. Certification shall be sent to David Taylor by e-mail to **david.taylor@wdc.usda.gov**.

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7 Process for Creating and Submitting State CPA and Zone Shapefiles (Continued)

C Submitting State CPA's and Zones

The State conservation specialist shall:

- zip the files and send them to David Taylor by e-mail to **david.taylor@wdc.usda.gov** by close of business **October 23, 2015**

- use the following checklist for revising and submitting State CPA and zones.

Step	Action	Reference	Completed
1	Chose polygons to be included in the State CPA.	Subparagraphs 2 B and 7 C.	
2	Chose polygons within State CPA to be included in water, wildlife, and air quality zones.	Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, and 6.	
3	Chose polygons within National CPA to be included in water, wildlife, and air quality zones.	Paragraphs 3, 4, 5, and 6.	

8 Action

A National Office Action

The National Office shall:

- process the submitted shapefiles and create corresponding Tool for Environmental Resource Results Assessment (TERRA) shapefiles

- notify State Offices individually when the shapefiles have been completed and the new CPA's are effective.

B State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- follow the provisions of this notice

- certify that the new CPA and zone maps within TERRA are correct by e-mailing a response to David Taylor by e-mail to **david.taylor@wdc.usda.gov** by **November 30, 2015** .