

For: State and County Offices

Accepting Signup 200 Offers for the First Ranking Period

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



1 Overview

A Background

Over 1 million acres of CRP Grassland were offered during the inaugural ranking period, ending on November 20, 2015, for signup 200. 101,293 acres are deemed acceptable and will be effective on October 1, 2016, or earlier.

Acceptable offers included the following:

- an average ranking score of 73
- 17.7 percent of the acreage include pollinator habitat
- 74.7 percent have a wildlife focused plan
- 97.7 percent of the acreage is in counties under the highest threat of conversion to cropland or development
- 86.8 percent of acreage accepted are in general signup CRP Wildlife Priority Areas protecting additional acres.

Note: See subparagraph 2 B for exceptions.

Disposal Date	Distribution
October 1, 2016	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices, NRCS State Offices, and Forest Service

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1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice provides:

- instructions for accessing a list of acceptable and rejected offers, by county, for each offer submitted for signup 200
- a list of deadlines for completing activities for acreage offered during signup 200
- additional guidance on policies about:
 - acreage revisions
 - withdrawing offers
 - erroneous CRP Grassland rental rates
 - succession-in-interest
 - signature requirements
 - establishing CRP Grassland practices
 - 25 percent cropland limitation
 - CRP and ARC/PLC
- key completion dates (Exhibit 1).

2 Offer Selection Overview

A Selection Process

All eligible signup 200 offers submitted using the Conservation Online System (COLS) by COB November 20, 2015, have been processed.

County Offices must handle **eligible** signup 200 offers **not** successfully submitted using COLS by COB November 20, 2015, as omitted offers.

Omitted offers are timely-filed offers for which **all** eligibility requirements were met but were not submitted using COLS by COB November 20, 2015.

Important: Late-filed offers are **not** omitted offers. Both CRP-1 and CRP-2G must have been completed and signed by an eligible producer and received in the County Office by the end of signup November 20, 2015, to constitute an offer. CRP-1 or CRP-2G alone does **not** constitute an offer.

All offers were ranked using the national ranking plan according to:

- 2-CRP, Exhibit 24
- the national ranking factors using the formula: $\text{Score} = F1 + F2 + F3 + F4 + F5 + F6$.

Notes: The maximum possible ranking score is 120 points.

Scoring parameters for F1 through F6 are in 2-CRP, Exhibit 24.

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2 Offer Selection Overview (Continued)

B National Ranking Factor Cutoff Score

Offers with a ranking factor score greater than or equal to the national ranking factor cutoff level of 73 points were determined acceptable. All other offers were rejected for this ranking period.

3 Accessing and Reviewing Offer Ranking Reports

A Accessing Offer Ranking Reports

Offer ranking reports are on the Conservation and Environmental Programs SharePoint. County Offices shall access the reports according to the following:

- on the Intranet at
<https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/200rp1/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- CLICK “Acceptable/Rejected Reports”
- download the appropriate State Excel workbook
- view the appropriate county sheet within the State Excel workbook.

Notes: The offer ranking reports will include a “Status” column which will indicate whether the offer has been determined acceptable or rejected this ranking period. Offers may be rejected if the offer is less than the ranking factor cutoff score or if the county for which the offered land is physically located has reached or exceeds the total county cropland limit or the general signup limit.

Waivers to exceed the 25 percent county cropland limit were applied to the offer ranking report.

B Reviewing Offer Ranking Reports

Before notifying producers about the results of the offer selection, County Offices must compare the offer data in their offer ranking report for each record with the corresponding CRP-1 and CRP-2G data to ensure that:

- all eligible offers submitted by the County Office are listed in the report
- the data on each offer record listed in the report is correct
- offers with incorrect ranking factors, conservation practices, or other data which could affect ranking scores should be handled as erroneous offers according to paragraph 4.

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4 Errors, Omissions, and Appeals

A Software

COLS software remained available for new CRP Grassland offers after November 20, 2015. At this time, offers determined to be eligible for the first ranking period must have been entered in COLS and the National Office was to be notified to determine if the offer is acceptable. Offers not entered in COLS by November 20, 2015 will be eligible for evaluation during the next ranking period.

B Acreage Revisions

Producers with certain acceptable offers are required to pay for measurement service to determine the actual acreage being enrolled. If TERRA was not used to determine acreage for the submitted offer or an in-field measurement service is requested by the producer measurement service must be performed by the County Office and paid for by the participant according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 401 B and 2-CP.

If acreage adjustments to the offer result from the measurement service, the revised offer must be modified in COLS software according to subparagraph C and handled as an omitted offer.

C Procedure

Erroneous and omitted offers must be processed according to 2-CRP, paragraph 339. Offers not successfully submitted using COLS by COB November 20, 2015, or offers with acreage revisions are considered omitted offers. See 1-APP for handling appeals.

Important: Late-filed offers are **not** omitted offers. Producers listed on any signup 200 register are not considered late-filed offers. Both CRP-1 and CRP-2G must be completed and signed by an eligible producer and received in the County Office by the end of signup to constitute an offer. CRP-1 or CRP-2G alone does **not** constitute an offer.

5 Acceptable and Rejected Offers

A Withdrawing Acceptable Offers

Producers have 30 calendar days from the date of CRP-27 to notify the County Office about whether to continue with the offer to participate. Producers with offers for CRP Grassland and general CRP on the same acreage can withdraw their offers without liquidated damages. Partial withdrawals are **not authorized**.

Note: Producers are not required to notify the County Office in writing. The County Office shall note producer's response in the CRP folder. See 2-CRP, paragraph 341.

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5 Acceptable and Rejected Offers (Continued)

B Succession-in-Interest Policy

See 2-CRP, paragraph 338 for succession-in-interest policy.

C Signature Requirements

See 2-CRP, paragraph 335 for requirements on obtaining signatures.

D Changing CRP-2G Data on Rejected Offers

Producers **cannot** change any CRP-2G data or the practice offered, after the offer is determined rejected.

Rejected offers may be used to submit a new CRP-2G offer in COLS. The copy functionality will allow the original rejected offer to be generated and the user can edit, if necessary, to submit for the next available ranking period.

6 Establishing or Modifying CRP Practices and Other Conservation Measures

A Policy

For provisional offers or pollinator practices, planting time spans for each practice are included in 2-CRP, Exhibit 11.

Certain producers agreed to conservation measures that maximized ranking points. All conservation plans must provide for practices and management measures consistent with:

- the offer
- standards and specifications for the practice.

Note: This would apply to provisional offers.

B Timing for New Acreage

2-CRP, subparagraph 426 B provides that producers may begin establishing approved practices:

- after submitting the offer to the County Office
- when notified that CRP-1 has been approved.

Producers must be notified that starting a practice before final approval of CRP-1 is at the producer's own risk.

Important: Cost shares must **not** be paid unless CRP-1 is approved and the cover meets the standards and specifications of the practice.

Producers with accepted provisional offers must establish the grass cover as offered before the contract has been approved. CRP grassland contracts cannot be approved until the practices are established and the producer notifies the County Office.

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6 Establishing or Modifying CRP Practices and Other Conservation Measures (Continued)

C Timing for Reoffered CRP Acreage

After the new CRP-1 is approved, producers who offered existing CRP acreage may immediately begin establishing approved practices without being in violation of the existing CRP-1. Participants may remove the existing cover only if required in the conservation plan.

Important: Producers must be notified that starting a practice before final approval of CRP-1 is at the producer’s own risk.

D Other Information About Conservation Plans

NRCS or TSP has the technical responsibility to develop conservation plans. All conservation plans must be developed according to 2-CRP, Part 11 and Exhibit 11.

7 County Cropland Limitation

A Applying County Cropland Limit

The National Office has applied the county cropland limitation based on the physical location of the acreage offered. The ranking reports in paragraph 3 will reflect which offers have been rejected because of the county cropland limitation or the general signup limitation.

The county cropland limitation is applied to each applicable separate sub-County Office based on the cropland in the sub county area. The following counties are divided into 2 or more sub county areas.

State	Sub county	State	Sub county
Iowa	East Pottawattamie	Minnesota	East Otter Tail
	West Pottawattamie		West Otter Tail
			East Polk
			West Polk
Maine	Houlton		North Saint Louis
	Aroostook		South Saint Louis
	Fort Kent	Ohio	East Lucas
			West Lucas

B Local Preference

For tie breaking, the National Office will rank offers with identical scores in the following order:

- local preference
- ascending rent
- ascending offer acreage.

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8 Total CRP and DCP Cropland

A Sufficient DCP Cropland

Before notifying any producer that an offer was determined acceptable, the County Office must ensure that the offered CRP acreage, excluding marginal pastureland, does not exceed the farm's effective DCP cropland minus base acres (including generic base acres). See 1-ARCPLC for cases where base acres may need to be reduced because of participation in CRP.

B Restoration of Base Acres

When base acres are restored from CRP (expired, voluntarily terminated, or early released), a farm must have sufficient effective DCP cropland to accommodate the restoration of those base acres. Enrollment in ARC/PLC is not allowed when the sum of the base acres (including generic base acres) exceeds the effective DCP cropland.

C ARC/PLC Election of Restored Base Acres

If the restoration of base acres results in the addition of a covered commodity's base acres where base acres did not exist before the election, a manual CCC-857 must be completed within 30 calendar days of the restoration. See 1-ARCPLC, paragraph 42.

Note: The election must be completed before loading the restored base acres into FRMS and MIDAS as software requires the entry of an election when base acres are added to a farm.

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9 Action

A Processing Acceptable and Rejected Offers

To process acceptable and rejected offers, County Offices must:

- set workload priorities and plan office activities to devote all available resources to CRP
- access and review the offer data according to paragraph 3 and 2-CRP, paragraph 401
- for all offers which are not erroneous, after all data and eligibility reviews, immediately notify producers of their acceptable and rejected offers according to this notice using CRP-27 and CRP-28 (2-CRP, Exhibit 5)

Notes: As a cost savings measure, County Offices should consider notifying producers through e-mail by scanning and emailing CRP-27's and CRP-28's with return receipt. If return receipt is not received by the County Office within 15 calendar days, County Offices should contact producers or mail CRP-27 and CRP-28's to producers. The original scanned notification form shall be retained with the offer.

See subparagraph C for additional procedure for rejected offers.

- notify producers of contract approval using CRP-27 (2-CRP, Exhibit 5)
- upon request, release all general information used for payment rates and ranking scores.

Note: This general information requirement does not include information about individual offers or producers that cannot be released according to 2-INFO.

B Preparing CRP-1 for Approval

To prepare CRP-1 for approval, County Offices must:

- review 2-CRP, Part 12 for activities to complete before approving CRP-1
- ensure that practices accepted under continuous signup provisions, offered during signup 200 are recorded as signup 200 contracts
- effective dates of CRP Grassland contracts will follow the same rules used for regular continuous signup.

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9 Action (Continued)

C Assisting Producers With Rejected Offers

County Offices, with NRCS assistance, must assist producers whose offers were not determined acceptable with:

- technical assistance for management of existing grasslands, or bringing acreage back into production
- conservation compliance provisions
- understanding how their offer could have been adjusted to be more competitive
- information about enrolling in ARC/PLC, if applicable.

D State Office Action

State Offices must:

- set workload priorities and plan office activities to devote all available resources to CRP
- ensure that all applicable County Offices:
 - receive a copy of this notice
 - properly follow the processes contained in this notice
 - begin notification to producers immediately upon completing required actions as provided in this notice.

Note: Report County Offices that have not begun notification to producers according to subparagraph A and provide the reason to the Director, CEPD,
Attn: Jim Williams, by:

- e-mail to jim.williams@wdc.usda.gov
- noon e.t. May 20, 2016.

After the Secretary's signup 200 announcement, additional summary information will be posted and may be obtained from

<https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/200rp1/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

Key Completion Dates

Key dates in processing signup 200 offers are identified in the following table (for non-provisional offers).

Action	Completion Date
County Offices must review offers on the ranking reports, and conduct eligibility and data reviews according to subparagraph 3 B and 2-CRP, paragraph 401, to detect any erroneous and omitted records.	Immediately
County Offices must begin notifying producers with accepted and rejected offers.	Immediately upon completing actions required in subparagraph 8 A.
Conservation plans must be completed and approved.	September 9, 2016
CRP-1's must be approved and entered in COLS.	September 16, 2016