



On August 4, President Bush announced several key new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) initiatives that will help protect wildlife, water and land resources. CRP has provided significant environmental benefits across the nation, primarily by providing wildlife habitat, improving stream quality, and reducing soil erosion. USDA is committed to full enrollment of CRP up to the authorized level of 39.2 million acres. To ensure that the environmental benefits of CRP continue, and because of the significant acreage expirations beginning in 2007, USDA will offer early re-enrollment and extensions of existing contracts to current CRP participants.

On August 10, 2004, USDA published in the Federal Register a notice requesting public input on:

- How to manage the large acreage set to expire from CRP;
- How to manage future CRP signups and acreage;
- How to evaluate the program's environmental effectiveness;
- How to better utilize information technology, such as Geographic Information Systems, that evaluate acreage for enrollment; and
- How to improve CRP, including the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), through partnerships that better address local environmental issues.

Comments on the issues must be received in writing by December 8, 2004. Comments can be sent by mail to: Director, CEPD, FSA, Room 4714-A, Stop 0513, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-0513 or by E-mail to: CRPRULE.CRPRULE@wdc.usda.gov.

The Federal Register notice and an electronic form to submit comments on the rulemaking is available on-line at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crpcomments/>.

