

# USDA



## Farm Service Agency

# Kentucky NEWS August 2004

## President Expands Conservation Reserve Program

On August 4, 2004 President Bush highlighted his continued commitment to improving the environment and the strong conservation ethic of America's farmers and sportsmen by announcing three important new conservation initiatives that will help protect wildlife, water, and precious land resources. These new conservation efforts will further support the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a 20-year old voluntary program that works with farmers and sportsmen to conserve environmentally sensitive land and provide habitat for waterfowl and birds.

## CRP General Sign-up Begins August 30

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will hold a CRP general sign-up from August 30 to September 24, 2004.

CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help safeguard environmentally sensitive land. Producers enrolled in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers to improve the quality of water, control soil erosion, and enhance wildlife habitat. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Contract duration is between 10 and 15 years.

Land that is not currently enrolled in CRP may be offered for enrollment during CRP sign-up 29. In addition, CRP participants with contracts expiring on September 30, 2004 or September 30, 2005, may submit offers during CRP sign-up 29.

To submit CRP offers, you must visit your local FSA office.

## County Committee Elections

FSA County offices are now accepting nominations for the 2004 County Committee elections. A nomination form is included as an insert with this newsletter. The deadline for submitting nominations is September 3.

"Farmers are urged to participate in the election of FSA County Committees," said Jeffery S. Hall, FSA State Executive Director. Each FSA County Committee is composed of 3 to 5 elected members, each serving a 3-year term. "County Committees are critical to the implementation and oversight of FSA programs," said Hall.

Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. In addition, eligible candidates can be nominated by community-based organizations in the county or area before the close of the nomination period. Nominations and elections are open to all eligible candidates and voters without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or disability.

## Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program General Sign Up Period August 30 - September 24

Contact your local FSA County Office or USDA Service Center for information.



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## CRP Sign-up 29

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### Eligible Producers

To be eligible for CRP enrollment, a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to close of the CRP sign-up period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right of redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

### Eligible Land

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity;
- Certain marginal pastureland that is enrolled in the Water Bank Program; or
- Certain land devoted to hardwood trees that was under CRP contract which expired on September 30, 2001, or earlier.

### Additional Cropland Requirements

In addition to the eligible land requirements, cropland must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a weighted average erosion index of 8 or higher;
- Be expiring CRP acreage; or
- Be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area.

### CRP Payments

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance:

#### • **Rental Payments**

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average cash rent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. You may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that your offer will be accepted.

#### • **Cost-share Assistance**

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland.



### Continuous CRP Sign-up

Do you own cropland that borders a stream? Your acreage might qualify for enrollment under the continuous sign-up provision.

With Continuous CRP, owners can sign-up anytime of the year for certain high-priority conservation practices without competition. Acreage is automatically accepted into the program providing eligibility requirements are met. Incentive payments and cost-share assistance are available for certain practices.

## Loans and LDP's

Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) are currently available for some 2004 crops. Before harvesting a crop that will be carried direct to market and control of the crop will be lost, you need to complete form CCC-709 to retain eligibility for a Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP). If form CCC-709 is not completed before interest in the crop is lost, any eligible LDP payment will be lost.

Form CCC-633LDP is used to request an LDP for grain stored on



the farm or at a commercial elevator where the producer retains control, title and risk of loss for the crop.

To find out if an LDP is available for a crop on a specific date you can call the local FSA County Office, or go on-line to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ky/>.

## FSA County Committees

### How is one nominated to the COC?

FSA is encouraging people representing a variety of crops or different types of operations, women and growers of different ethnic backgrounds to seek nomination. A completed nomination form must be returned to the local FSA office by September 3.

### Are there eligibility requirements?

Persons interested in holding office

### Your Input is Important...

On August 4, President Bush visited Katzenmeyer Farm in LeSuer, Minnesota, to announce several key new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) initiatives that will help protect wildlife, water and land resources.

### Public Comment

The President invited public comment on the future of CRP. Through 2008, about 22 million acres will expire. All told, that's 56 percent -- well over half -- of the land authorized for CRP enrollment. Also, new farm bill discussions are fast approaching. A notice seeking public comment on CRP was published in the Federal Register on August 10, 2004. The notice is available on FSA's Web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crpcomments/>.

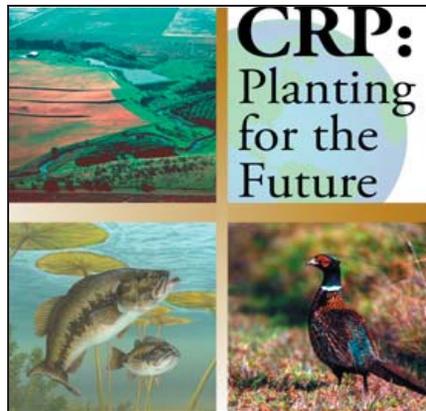
FSA is seeking public comment on the following issues:

- How to manage the large acreage set to expire from CRP;

as a county committee member may check eligibility requirements with the local FSA office.

### Do COC members receive some benefit for their service?

Yes. Elected county committee members receive an hourly wage for their attendance and representation at county committee meetings.



- How to manage future CRP sign-ups 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. Mail to: Director, CEPD, FSA, Room 4714-A, Stop 0513, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-0513. Comments may also be submitted by E-mail to: CRPRULE. CRPRULE@wdc.usda.gov.

## CRP Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative

To build on the success of CRP, the President announced a new initiative to increase the population of northern bobwhite quail by 750,000 birds annually. The CRP Northern Bobwhite Quail Habitat Initiative will create 250,000 acres of grass buffers along agricultural field borders. Because the initiative is limited, Kentucky is allocated 9,000 acres. To be eligible, conservation practice CP 33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, must be applied around field edges of eligible cropland. Buffer species may include native warm-season grass, legumes, wildflowers, forbs, and limited shrubs and tree planting, as specified in the program participant's approved USDA conservation plan.

Program sign-up at local FSA offices will begin October 1, 2004 and will run on a continuous basis until eligible acres have been enrolled, or December 31, 2007, whichever comes first.

For additional information contact your local USDA Service Center.

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### Reminder

*Applying for a loan or LDP...*

**You must retain beneficial interest in the crop**

## Important Dates

- ✓ **Sept 3** Last date to file nomination form with FSA
- ✓ **Sept 24** Last day to file for CRP Sign-up 29
- ✓ **Nov 8** Ballots mailed to eligible voters
- ✓ **Dec 6** Last day to return voted and signed ballots to FSA
- ✓ **Jan 1** Elected committee members and alternates take office



## Signature Authority for Spouses

A husband and wife may sign FSA and CCC documents on behalf of each other unless written notification has been provided to the FSA office denying a spouse this authority. Spouses may sign most documents, except promissory notes, CRP easements, and certain security agreements.

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**Contact your local  
FSA County Office to:**

- ✓ Obtain additional information on FSA programs, or
- ✓ Report a name and/or address change.

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