



**MARCH 2012**

**Lenawee County  
Farm Service Agency**  
1100 Sutton RD  
Adrian MI 49221

517-263-7400 (phone)  
517-265-9121 (fax)  
www.fsa.usda.gov/mi

**Hours**  
Monday - Friday  
7:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**County Committee**  
Michael Feight  
Eugenie Hillard  
Dale Terry

**COC Advisor**  
Bonnie Hunt

**Staff**  
Constance Reid Guffey  
County Executive Director  
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Farm Program Section:

Debra Shiels	105
Barbara Wagner	107
Beth Wagner	106

Farm Loan Section:

Michael Jordon Farm Loan Manager	110
Brenda Andrews	113
Rebecca Deline	111
Jodie Johnson	112

## General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Signup!

A general sign-up for the popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will be held from March 12- April 6, 2012. During this period, farmers may offer eligible land for the competitive general sign-up. In addition to general sign-up, CRP's continuous sign-up program and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will be ongoing.

CRP is a voluntary program that assists and owners and operators to use their environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. Producers enrolling in CRP plant long-term, resource-conserving covers in exchange for rental payments, cost-share, and technical assistance. CRP protects millions of acres of America's topsoil from erosion and is designed to improve the nations natural resources base. Participants voluntarily remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production to enter into contracts for 10 to 15 years. In exchange, participants receive annual rental payments and a payment of up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing the conservation practices. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP also protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to specific vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to wildlife population increases in many parts of the country.

Cropland may be offered in this sign-up provided all eligibility requirements are met. Current CRP participants with contracts expiring this fall may make new offers for contracts to start on 10/01/12.

FSA will evaluate and rank eligible CRP offers using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) for judging the environmental benefits to be gained from enrolling the land in CRP. The EBI consists of five environmental factors (wildlife, water, soil, air and enduring benefits) and cost. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign-up ends and after analyzing the EBI data of all the offers.

To be eligible, land had to have been planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity in four of the years 2002-2007. Land in CRP in those years which is no longer under contract, or land seeded to hay in one of those years is also eligible.

To be eligible, the land must be owned for 12 months prior to the end of signup (some exceptions apply). All land owners must sign the CRP offer and contract. Offers are binding if not withdrawn by April 6, 2012.

Successful offers will become effective on 10/01/12. Land that is leased may not be taken away from the operator to be enrolled in CRP. Operators must voluntarily give up the land or be offered a share of the CRP contract payment.



**SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS WILL BE MADE UPON REQUEST FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, VISION IMPAIRMENT, OR HEARING IMPAIRMENT.**

**IF ACCOMMODATIONS ARE REQUIRED, PLEASE CALL CONSTANCE REID GUFFEY AT: (517)263-7400.**

Farming Operation Changes :  
If you have bought or sold land, or if you have added or dropped rented land from your operation, make sure you report the changes to the office as soon as possible. You need to provide a copy of your deed or recorded land contract for purchased property. Failure to maintain accurate records with FSA on all land you have an interest in can lead to possible program ineligibility and penalties. Making the record changes now will save you time in the spring. Update signature authorization when changes in the operation occur. Producers are reminded to contact the office of a change in operations on a farm so that records can be kept current and accurate.

CRP covers must be established according to a written conservation plan.

CRP cover maintenance is an annual responsibility. CRP land must be free of noxious weeds/woody vegetation.

At mid-contract, maintenance measures will be required to enhance the cover and bring its diversity back.

Annually, CRP producers must file an acreage report by July 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Steps to making a CRP offer:**

- Decided what land to offer. Must be eligible cropland that is physically and legally capable of being cropped.
- Learn about the conservation cover choices and the EBI. Make a decision on the cover you would install on the area should the offer be accepted. We will work with producers to maximize the environmental benefits of a CRP offer. This will increase the chance of acceptance.
- Offers will be highly competitive. Points will be assigned based on soil types, dollar amount bid, and the conservation cover that will be established.

- Producers submitting an offer must complete several documents including CCC-926 Adjusted Gross Income, AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification and CCC-902 Farm Operating Plan
- Producers submitting offers will receive a written response regarding acceptance.

**Landowners and operators are encouraged to call for an appointment soon.**

**Bring the recorded deed or other evidence of ownership to the appointment.**

**Public meetings will be held on CRP. Please call if interested in attending a meeting.**

#### **National Agricultural Classification Survey:**

The National Agricultural Classification Survey (NACS), which asks landowners whether or not they are farming and for basic farm information, is one of the most important early steps used to determine who should receive a 2012 Census of Agriculture report form. The Census of Agriculture, conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Surveys are now arriving in mailboxes around the nation to help identify all active farms. Please respond timely.

**OUTREACH TO  
WOMEN AND NEW  
PRODUCERS:**

Perhaps you have recently become involved in farming, or have been involved in farming for years with your spouse, but you want to learn more about Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs?

Do you want to better understand the benefits or requirements of a program?

Want to know what we offer specifically for "Beginning Farmers"?

Do you want to be more informed on the County Committee election process and be more involved?

Please join us for informal meetings, especially for you, on any first Monday of the month from 9:00 -10:00 a.m. The topics will vary depending on your interests. These will be informal presentations and discussion.

Please call 263-7400 and press extension 114. Ask what the topic for the next meeting will be and let us know if you want to reserve a spot.

**NAP Deadline Approaching**

The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) can soften financial losses caused by natural disasters, but only if you've applied for coverage and paid the application fee. (NAP) was designed to reduce financial losses that occur when natural disasters cause a catastrophic loss of production or prevented planting of an eligible crop by providing coverage equivalent to catastrophic (CAT) insurance. The application deadline date for the 2012 NAP coverage for small grains, fall mint, fall speltz and forage crops is September 30, 2010. The deadline is November 20, for asparagus, strawberries and other berries. NOTE: All significant crops must be covered by multi-peril crop insurance or NAP coverage in order to remain eligible for Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE).

**ATTENTION CONSERVATION RESERVE PARTICIPANTS:**

Those with conservation covers to plant this spring and summer, need to prepare now. You will need to hire someone to do the seeding or do it yourself. If you do it yourself, and you have just a few acres to seed (under 10), you can rent the drill from the Soil Conservation District. Get on the reservation list, by calling 263-7400 and pressing 101.

If you are hiring it done, arrange for the work now. **IN ANY CASE, THE SEEDING MUST BE DONE ACCORDING TO THE CONSERVATION PLAN AND ATTACHMENTS MAILED TO YOU AFTER ENROLLMENT.** The seed to be used and how much is found on your Design Worksheets. Native grass mixtures may be seeded in May and June. Introduced grass mixtures can be done then too, or in August. In any case, refer to your conservation plan and plant as soon as possible. Extensions of time cannot be given without a good reason. Covers need to be seeded within one year of contract approval.

Come in to certify your CRP land in the next couple of months. The deadline is July 15, 2012. Fees will be charges after that date. Check your cover for noxious weeds and call us for permission to clip or spray them **BEFORE** they go to seed.

**DCP/ACRE Sign-up**

2012 Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program (DCP) enrollment runs through June 1, 2012.

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS:** All producers planting on **DCP base** acres must be identified on the DCP/ACRE contract and receive a proportionate share of the payment for the farm. Changes on the farm after enrolling **must** be reported to your FSA office such as:

Ownership changes  
Producer changes (Individuals and Entities)  
Change in crop shares arrangements

USDA has amended the rules that govern the requirements to be 'actively engaged' in farming. These rules apply to eligibility for payments under the Direct and Counter-cyclical Program (DCP) or Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program administered by FSA.

Normally the stockholder or a member of a legal entity **must** make contributions of active personal labor and/or active personal management for the farming operation. The contributions are to be performed on regular basis, must be identifiable, and separate from the contributions of others.

The exception to this rule for a stockholder or member of a legal entity only occurs when both of the following apply:

- At least half of the interest in the legal entity is held by stockholders or members who are providing active personal labor or active personal management; and
- The total direct payments received by the legal entity and each of the members can't exceed \$40,000.

## **MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT - CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)**

If your CRP cover was planted four or more years ago, you should be completing the *Mid-Contract Management*. Mid-Contract Management means taking actions to *improve* the CRP cover. The idea is to manage the cover and to make it more useful for wildlife such as ground nesting birds. As your CRP cover matures it may become thick with a single type of grass, or have thistle problems. The cover may benefit from light disking, grass-specific herbicides, interseeding with legumes or wildflowers, or prescribed burning. These activities will create the plant diversity that was once there.

Please check your enrollment document packet. That is where you will find the cost share paperwork. It tells you how many acres to do management on and has an expiration date in the upper right. Please read the information and complete the work, and turn in the completed documents before the due date. Cost sharing is allowed at 50% of eligible costs up to \$50 per acre, per year, not to exceed \$100 per acre for the life of a 10 year contract or \$125 per acre if your contract is for over 10 years. ***Mid-Contract Management is different from your responsibility for general maintenance of the CRP cover.***

CRP cover must be kept free of noxious weeds and woody vegetation. To *maintain* your CRP cover, you may spot mow between August 1 and 20 (only the specific areas that need weed or brush control). You may mow these areas only once a year and you may do that without contacting FSA. However, if maintenance is needed earlier in the year, to control thistles before they go to seed for example, write to the County Committee or call FSA for permission to treat these spots. This should be done BEFORE they go to seed. Also contact FSA if you need to mow more than once per year to keep weeds controlled.

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**Farm Storage Facility Loans are available at great rates and terms! For more information please visit your FSA county office or [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)**

**Check the Soil Conservation District website for USDA News from FSA and NRCS!**

**[www.lenaweeconservationdistrict.org](http://www.lenaweeconservationdistrict.org)**

### **Maintaining the Quality of Loaned Grain**

Bins are ideally designed to hold a level volume of grain. When bins are overfilled and grain is heaped up, airflow is hindered and the chance of spoilage increases. Producers with marketing assistance loans use the farm-stored grain as collateral should remember that they are responsible for maintaining the quality of the grain through the term of the loan.

### **Unauthorized Disposition of Grain**

If loan grain has been disposed of through feeding, selling or any other form of disposal without prior written authorization from the county office staff, it is considered unauthorized disposition. The financial penalties for unauthorized dispositions are severe and a producer's name will be placed on a loan violation list for a two-year period. Always call before you haul any grain under loan.

<b>Interest Rates for March 2012</b>	
7 yr. Farm Storage Facility Loans	1.375%
10 yr. Farm Storage Facility Loans	2.00%
12 yr. Farm Storage Facility Loans	2.25%
April 6, 2012	Final date to apply for CRP General Signup 43

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).