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USDA Extends Certain Conservation Reserve Program Contracts

Bozeman, MT May 8, 2009 – The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced that FSA will offer certain producers the opportunity to modify and extend their Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that are scheduled to expire on September 30, 2009.

FSA can extend CRP contracts on only about 1.5 million acres out of the 3.9 million contracted acres expiring nationwide this year. This targeted extension is to maximize potential extension acres while ensuring that FSA stays within the statutory CRP limitation of 32 million acres established in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

CRP contracts with the highest environmental benefit or with the highest soil erosion protection potential will be selected for the extension option. CRP contracts cannot exceed 15 years and chosen CRP contract holders will generally be offered a three or five year extension.

FSA will notify participants of their options by letter beginning May 6, 2009. The sign-up for this voluntary extension will begin on May 18 and run through June 30, 2009. Farmers and ranchers may apply for this extension at their FSA county office. FSA administers CRP on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

CRP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. Participants receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland and to protect adjacent waterways. These long-term conservation contracts require a 10 to 15 year commitment.

A general CRP signup is not scheduled during fiscal year 2009. However, producers may continue to enroll relatively small, highly-desirable acreages, including land that is not extended, into Continuous CRP. Continuous CRP includes such practices as grass waterways, wetland restoration, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, filter strips and riparian buffers.

Producers electing to extend their current CRP contract period will receive their current contract rental rate. All or a portion of the acreage under contract may be included in an extension, but no new acreage may be added.

In the 21 years this FSA conservation program has been in effect, much has been accomplished including:

- soil erosion reduced by over 400 million tons,
- more than 2 million acres of wetlands protected
- protective buffers established on over 100,000 miles of streams and rivers.

For more information about CRP and other FSA programs, please visit your county FSA office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mt> .

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